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ISSUE 9



ALTERNATIVE CULTURE MAGAZINE

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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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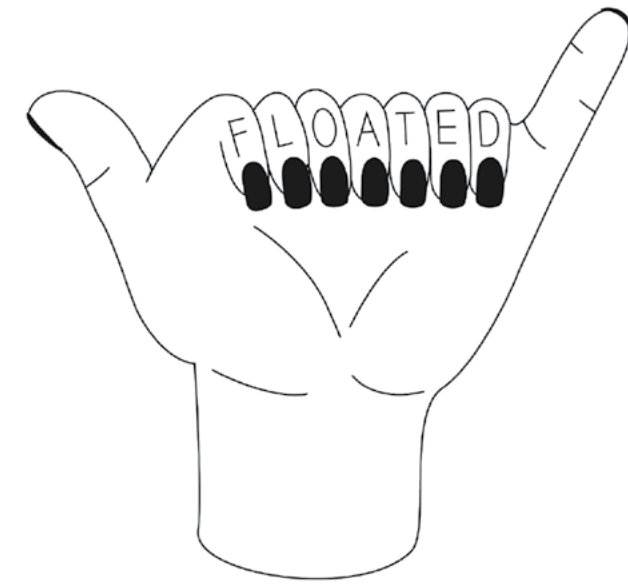
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Jenna Gagnier

Creates Sustainable Vintage Fashion

Words by: Teagan West

Photography by: Olivia Edvalsen

Jenna Gagnier, a self-taught fashion designer based in Rochester, is the embodiment of an artist who puts immense care, effort, and time into each of her unique clothing pieces. She has worked for years to create her gorgeous designs. Each of her pieces begins with elaborate drawings of her ideas, that are then created into unique creations that will last longer than anything you'll find in fast-fashion stores. Her work is beautifully handcrafted, and made with sincere love and care, guaranteed to live through years of wear and still retain their charm.

Jenna's work captures the beauty of slow fashion, as she carefully crafts her unique pieces from vintage patterns. Taking it to the next level, she makes these silhouettes her own, by drawing inspiration from a myriad of eras. Her pieces capture the delicate and dreamy divinity of the feminine,

with a dash of playfulness and puffy shoulders. They're comfortable, wearable, yet still make a noticeable statement and push the boundaries of casual daily wear. There is as much character in her pieces as in her process, which is mindfully informed by keeping sustainability at the forefront of her priorities. Gagnier aims to create pieces that can be recreated from silhouettes of patterns past, reducing the waste involved with making clothes, which inevitably requires the occasional extra foot of fabric sacrificed in the learning process. She uses a lot of vintage and secondhand fabrics to keep her process green, and the scraps are turned into further creations, from reusable bags to scrunchies. Always learning and reaching for more ways that she can improve her production and incorporate a myriad of ways to keep it sustainable.





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YOUNG SALUT

BRINGS CREATIVITY TO THE WALLS OF ROCHESTER

WORDS BY: NEAL KUMAR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT UPRA

It's 11am on a Sunday morning. You've got your favourite sugary cereal, you're still in your PJ's and you flip on TV to find your favourite cartoon playing. The soft glow of the late morning sun spills around the edges of the drawn curtains as you lose yourself in the shapes, colours, and overall fantasy of a world you know so well. Think about how you'd feel in that scene and cast it onto a canvas – this is the work of native Rochesterian Bradd Young. Under the artist name Young Salut, Bradd is painter, sculptor, graphic designer – a creator in every sense of the word. Since he was a kid, Bradd was always fascinated by cartoons and the feelings that come with enjoying them. He explains that “I think I first fell in love with TV shows like cartoons, old animations – like Wallace and Gromit – I always thought that was the coolest form of art, so that's what I first thought I was gonna do.”

In college, Bradd found himself working with fine art and developing his technical skills, but he still held an interest in the artwork of cartoons. His current body of work reflects the union between the youthful spirit of his childhood self and the fine artists of his present self. Bradd's creative process is just as intuitive and fluid as his work. Using bright colours, soft and round shapes, and surreal characters, Bradd's work directly follow the themes and vibes of what inspires him. Bradd will often watch cartoons or listen to music and in the moment, measure his feelings and put them directly into his art in an attempt to capture the purest form of the mood. He expresses that “all my work goes off of vibes – it's like an initial reaction and I try to put it on the canvas before I forget it.”

While the subject matter of his pieces remains fairly light, Bradd isn't afraid to represent the more abstract forms and ideas from cartoons and music. Even at twenty-five years old, Bradd still remembers

what it was like to watch cartoons as a kid and how moving the visuals were, even if he didn't fully understand the story. Often these shapes will be direct representations of characters from the shows he's watched, from Power Puff Girls to Wallace and Gromit; the representation of these fantasy worlds is consistent throughout Bradd's work. The artist shares that “all my pieces are very smooth and kind of flowing. Those are some things that I incorporate into all my pieces, regardless of what I'm creating. I just try to keep it in that cartoon-y, fantasy vibe.”



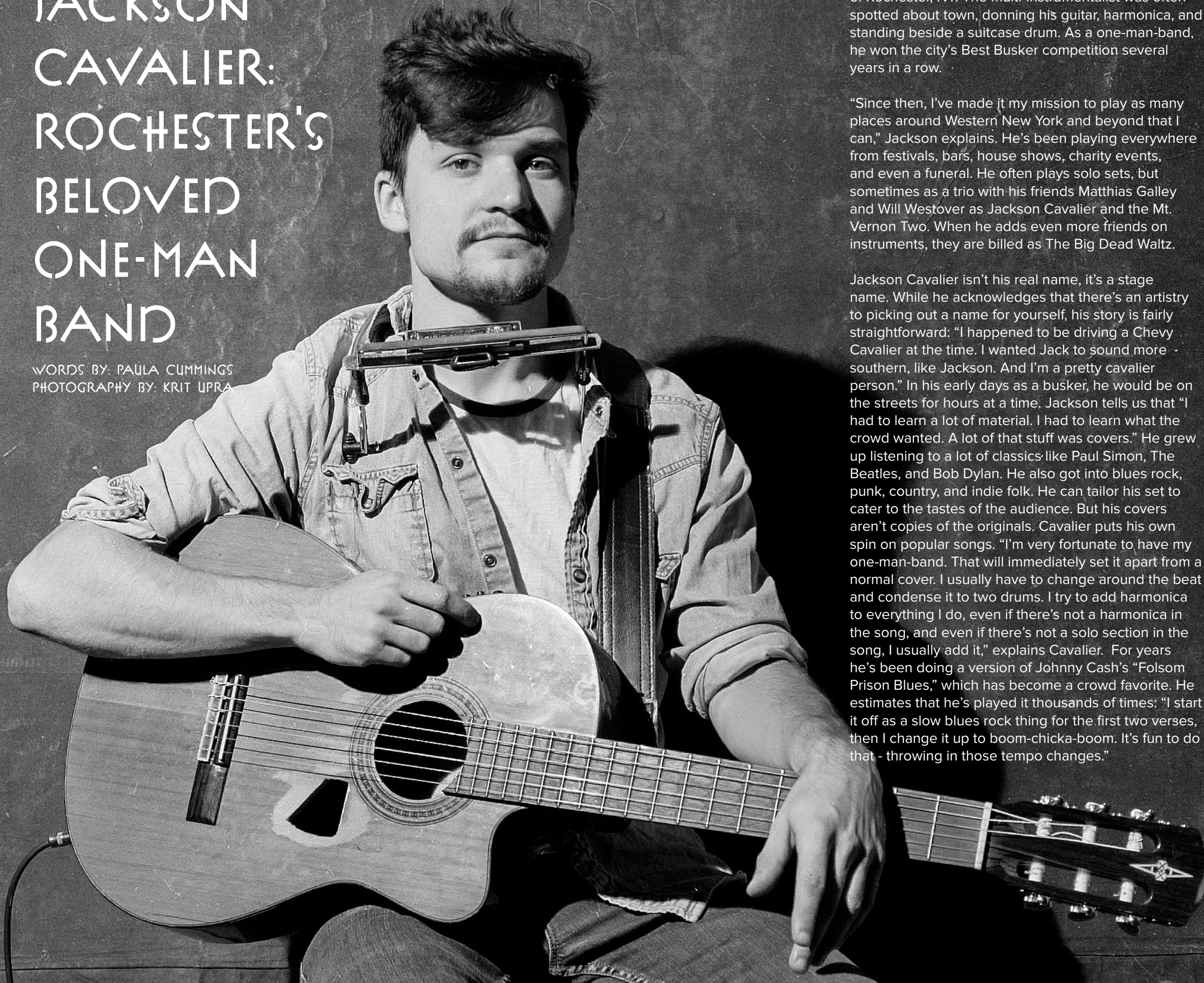
Keeping the subject matter light is important to Bradd – a self-described indoors-y type – in keeping his work accessible. Everyone has those comfort places and safe memories, and through painting, he's able to communicate the ideas of his personal safe havens in hopes that others will reminisce upon theirs. One of those comfort places for Bradd was his mother's garden. A yard filled with flowers and fruit had him develop a love of nature that continues to carry into his work. Being an adult with adult-like responsibilities and such strong ties to the past is what Bradd works to balance in his everyday life.

When you're looking at a painting from Young Salut, you're looking at the result of that balance: “What I do with all my work is take every day scenarios and put a lens over them, like put a cartoon-y vibe over them to make it kind of satirical. All my pieces are just based off of day-to-day shit, nothing too crazy.”

It seems the pace of our world is getting faster and faster, and it's becoming increasingly harder to take moments for yourself. Remember when you were a kid? Think about what you did with all that free time. Think about all those moments that you had to yourself. When was the last time you felt the same way? These moments are often as personal as they are ethereal, and it can be extremely difficult to accurately translate their true nature into words. Bradd has done so through the medium of painting and sculpture, all to bring back the sense of nostalgia, the light mood, and the homebody vibes. As clear as the inspiration for Bradd's work is, there's no denying its ability to invoke the most personal feelings in those that interact with it.

JACKSON CAVALIER: ROCHESTER'S BELOVED ONE-MAN BAND

WORDS BY: PAULA CUMMINGS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT UPRA



Jackson Cavalier cut his teeth playing on the streets of Rochester, NY. The multi-instrumentalist was often spotted about town, donning his guitar, harmonica, and standing beside a suitcase drum. As a one-man-band, he won the city's Best Busker competition several years in a row.

"Since then, I've made it my mission to play as many places around Western New York and beyond that I can," Jackson explains. He's been playing everywhere from festivals, bars, house shows, charity events, and even a funeral. He often plays solo sets, but sometimes as a trio with his friends Matthias Galley and Will Westover as Jackson Cavalier and the Mt. Vernon Two. When he adds even more friends on instruments, they are billed as The Big Dead Waltz.

Jackson Cavalier isn't his real name, it's a stage name. While he acknowledges that there's an artistry to picking out a name for yourself, his story is fairly straightforward: "I happened to be driving a Chevy Cavalier at the time. I wanted Jack to sound more southern, like Jackson. And I'm a pretty cavalier person." In his early days as a busker, he would be on the streets for hours at a time. Jackson tells us that "I had to learn a lot of material. I had to learn what the crowd wanted. A lot of that stuff was covers." He grew up listening to a lot of classics like Paul Simon, The Beatles, and Bob Dylan. He also got into blues rock, punk, country, and indie folk. He can tailor his set to cater to the tastes of the audience. But his covers aren't copies of the originals. Cavalier puts his own spin on popular songs. "I'm very fortunate to have my one-man-band. That will immediately set it apart from a normal cover. I usually have to change around the beat and condense it to two drums. I try to add harmonica to everything I do, even if there's not a harmonica in the song, and even if there's not a solo section in the song, I usually add it," explains Cavalier. For years he's been doing a version of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues," which has become a crowd favorite. He estimates that he's played it thousands of times: "I start it off as a slow blues rock thing for the first two verses, then I change it up to boom-chicka-boom. It's fun to do that - throwing in those tempo changes."

He now has well over a hundred songs in his repertoire, including originals. He recently finished recording a few songs with the help of Ben Morey and Katie Preston. "They're two of the most talented people in Rochester, and they're into country western music. I knew from the get-go that it would work out perfect. It was interesting to hear the colors they brought to the palette. I had some ideas, but I didn't know what direction it was going to go in. And Ben, I trust his guidance one hundred percent... and Katie is brilliant at harmonies."

The first installment of the four-part album was released in September. It's simply titled 'One//Four.' He leans heavily into the styles of other musicians, but in a way that is distinctly his own style, a cross between indie folk and country western. The popularity of different genres are cyclical, but some never really go out of style. "I think Americana and alternative country and indie folk are all in this weird subspace." Cavalier is well-versed in classics, but as far as contemporaries, Cavalier cites the musicians in his hometown as his main source of inspiration. "I'm more influenced by the local scene than anything. Like Tyler Westcott of Folkfaces, and Aaron Lipp. When I first started playing folk music, they had both been doing it a couple years. I've always looked up to them, and they've always been very friendly and helped me out whenever they could." Cavalier added, "I'm at that point where I wanted to be when I was sixteen, looking up to these people." Working the local scene and beyond for the better part of the decade, he's learned some important lessons about the music business: "You need to treat your art as a business. I started taking music seriously about five years ago. This woman took me under her wing and said 'Hey, you need to start asking for pay.' The second lesson is not to care what people think about what you're doing. For a long time, I let my music be dictated by what I thought people would like as opposed to what I like. I was way more successful when I started doing things my own way. The third thing is don't talk crap about other people. I have made that mistake - I ran my mouth and it was bad." Cavalier concluded: "Those are the main three things I've picked up - just be kind, constantly work on what you're doing, and you'll go places."

Who in the World is Major Niño?

Words by: Joe Massaro

Photography by: Kirt Uppe



The ethos of the unconventional musical duo Major Niño is hard to grasp at times. Led by members Runey Ghosh (aka L Niño) and Major Capers (his real name is a mystery) their music is always evolving, but certainly there's a balance of genres—sometimes they're a lo-fi psychedelic hip hop band and at other times they're a dance-punk duo. Emerging from a "sleepy town" in Albany, New York, Major Niño's origin is unknown at times. If you ever run into Ghosh or Capers, they may tell you that they met at Trump University, where Capers was a

Residential Assistant and caught Ghosh "smoking on the greens" while "stacking TV screens." However, since Ghosh was bumping some really good music that was appealing to Capers, such as Vanilla Ice and Nickelback, Capers didn't write him up. Instead, he joined in on the fun and since then, the two have been "inseparable." As interesting as this story is, it's complete bullshit.

As much as Ghosh and Capers would be down for some sort of myth about them, the two actually met from a mutual friend of theirs in 2013 and since then, they've been combining their powers and complimenting each other's growth, Megazord-style. In-between the release of their first EP 'Smash Bangdacoot' to their debut album 'Microwave Society,' which were both recorded at each other's homes, the chemistry between Ghosh and Capers strengthened. "I feel like on the first release we were kind of feeling each other's styles and what we can put together, but on the last one, we came out with more of a vision of how we would blend different styles together, where 'Smash Bangdacoot' was a juxtaposition of the two," Capers says.

Some of their influences combined include: hip hop record producer 9th Wonder, Jay Z, Nipsey Hussle, Brian Wilson, James Mercer, and Cedric Bixler-Zavala. This brief list of influences shows how genre-bending their sound can be. When these types of styles are combined, it's like listening to a song by Animal Collective that features MF Doom. As witty as they typically are, the single "French Honey" carries more of a serious tone along with "B98.6" compared to their more playful songs like "I'm So Fitness" off the EP. Ghosh explains that this is mostly due to the overarching concept of 'Microwave Society' that deals with identity, humanity and the fu**boy society with some comedic elements in the Information Age. "What triggered these themes is today's society with social media," Ghosh says. "Everything is so instant now especially with relationships and social media. People just move onto the

“It’s significant to a musician to meet other musicians even if their style is different from yours to really just connect over the common bond of playing.”

next person, particularly with apps like Tinder.”

For both Ghosh and Capers, having fun with their music is much more important than being successful, especially when connecting with fans or others from their scene in a creative space with a lot of liberty. “We both work very steady jobs and we do this to have fun and unwind, but the more this is growing, the more this is becoming actually some sort of work,” Ghosh explains. “And I’m fairly social, but once you graduate college, it becomes a lot harder to make friends automatically with no effort. So with the music, that’s how we hangout and slowly as we put ourselves out more, we started meeting so many more people who dig music and art. And then we’ll just have these shindigs together and it’s quite a community.”

Ghosh doesn’t see any competition within his circle. Instead, hanging out and playing music together is one of the biggest developments that he’s experienced as far as being in a band. And for Capers, there was a connection with some local artists when the duo came to Rochester to play at one of our mix-genre showcase concerts at the Bug Jar—the perfect aesthetic for the unconventional musical duo. “When we came out to Rochester, we met some artists out there and got a feel for what inspired them, where they came from and hearing their sounds, which is something I definitely enjoy when playing music,” Capers says.

“It’s significant to a musician to meet other musicians even if their style is different from yours to really just connect over the common bond of playing.”

This is truly the ethos of Major Niño. Two guys that play music and come from different backgrounds, and blending their musical sounds to make a rare and innovative style of music.





CHARLIE B L U JEWELRY THAT EMPOWERS WOMEN ACROSS THE GLOBE

WORDS BY: TAYLOR SOLANO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: OLIVIA EDVALSON

Caitlin Moody is the creator, owner, and artistic powerhouse behind Charlie Blu, a local, hand-crafted jewelry line that empowers its wearers to make a statement. “I can’t even believe that I’m doing this,” Moody expresses. For Caitlin Moody, her jewelry line Charlie Blu is a dream realized, one that has come after years of hard work and learning how to grow a business. What started as a kitchen project, creating gifts for family and friends, has scaled into a full-time endeavor, selling out pieces regularly. With aesthetically dreamy social media platforms and increasing requests for pop-ups, Moody and her brand are not slowing down any time soon.

Early on, Moody encountered some challenges getting the business off the ground. Start-up money was tight. Working full-time as a caregiver left her with little time for creative experimenting. Learning how to start a business on her own was intimidating. Moody came to the project with a solid artistic background as a craftsperson but “didn’t know much about anything besides creating.” Her work started as simple stud earrings and other minimalistic jewelry. For about two years, Moody kept Charlie Blu quiet because she was worried about keeping up with the demand for orders.

Turns out, keeping a low profile wasn’t all bad. It allowed Moody to try different artistic approaches to her craft without the pressure of harsh social media criticism. She honed in on her medium – polymer clay – and fell in love with a style – bold, statement earrings. Finally, Moody struck gold on Instagram. She began to sell out collections and garner a passionate following of #BluBabes all around the world. About a year ago, Moody was able to turn Charlie Blu into a full-time career. She is still the sole creator and executor of the project, but she now reaches out to local artists for support and inspiration. Moody mentioned Laura Seymour of Hitch and Cord as a kind of quasi-mentor, coming out to her first pop-up on a snowy Rochester night and showering her with encouragement ever since. In addition to love and backing from her family and friends, Moody now finds herself among a solid circle of local artists and creatives. “To be on the inside and know the people has been really great,” Moody explains, citing the community for helping her boost her confidence as a creator and business owner.

This kind of community building and personal connection drives Moody’s passion. She looks forward to meeting patrons at her pop-ups and seeing her pieces come to life on a person. “Women, girls, they put on stuff, and they start glowing. They get this confidence. It’s one of the greatest feelings.” In an era of Etsy and Insta-sales, Moody finds the face-to-face interaction at pop-ups refreshing and invigorating. This personal connection has translated to her online business model as well. She replies to each one of her Instagram messages. “That is part of my brand,” Moody says. “I want to be reliable.”

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When speaking to her creative process, Moody thinks through the whole spectrum, from “clay on the table” to when the piece is “finally on the person.” She qualifies that her pieces are not just jewelry, but an art form. Like any good artist, Moody studies aesthetics from a multitude of sources and infuses them into her work. Recently, she has been inspired by home décor: “I like the shapes, the architecture, how people put their homes together, the colors.” Her earrings, necklaces, and accessories catch the eye with bold coloring and geometric structure. The edgy pieces are balanced out by their comfort and wearability. Moody won’t be pigeon-holed into statement pieces. She is looking into metals for her next collection, in which buyers can expect more delicate pieces and jewelry with “more movement.”

In the meantime, Moody continues to roll up her sleeves and put her heart and soul into Charlie Blu. She has pop-up shows scheduled in Rochester, New

York City, and Vermont. She is reaching out to local artists for collaborations and materials sourcing. A rebranding campaign and an expansion beyond jewelry are also on the docket for Moody. The word evolve is huge for her right now. “I want to take opportunities even if they scare me. I want to say yes, yes, yes, yes!”

Most importantly, Moody wants to be a mainstay for her community here in Rochester. She loves the close-knit, creative circle in which she has landed. “Everyone is appreciating and supporting everyone in Rochester,” Moody affirms, and she is a huge part of that herself. She actively strives to engage people outside of her typical audience as she promotes positivity and confidence through her jewelry line. As Moody continues to “build relationships with people who are badass in Rochester,” we wish her nothing but success with her business.





Fully Blossomed

Pamela Carol Talks Tattoos, Life, and Gardening

Words by: Anthony White
Photography by: Amber Doerr

We recently had the privilege of sitting down with one of Rochester's premiere tattoo artists, Pamela Carol. If you are not familiar with Carol's work, then use this opportunity to get to know her and what she can do. It's amazing, colorful, and beautiful, and she's one of the kindest people you can sit across from while getting stuck repeatedly with an ink filled needle. Her passion for art has fueled a successful tattoo business. Her sweet demeanor can most easily be described as 'floral'.

Pamela's work is illustrative and realistic with delicate lines that have developed over time into gorgeous floral work. "I love doing flowers. I could draw them forever," she states. However, there's versatility in her style that lets her create heavier lines of black and gray as well. When she was growing up, one of her past times was drawing portraits, an interest that she has translated into portrait tattooing.

"I've been drawing for as long as I can remember," she exclaims nonchalantly. Before tattooing, she used charcoal and graphite as her most comfortable medium, especially for portraits. Although it's not requested very often of her now, it still remains in her repertoire. "Whether it's realism or a bit more illustrative, I love it," she says. One look at her work and you'll love it, too.

One week away from heading to cosmetology school, Pamela's boyfriend at the time was impressed with her artwork, so much so that he showed it to the staff at Living Color on Park Avenue. They offered her an apprenticeship on the spot, which

she accepted. It all happened so fast that she hardly had time to reflect on her decision. She was only there for a year, and wishes now that her apprenticeship was somewhere else, citing lack of engagement from those who were supposed to be looking after her. Luckily for us she stuck it out.

She soon landed at White Tiger Tattoo and was able to learn many different things. During her time at White Tiger, she blossomed as an artist, soaked it all in and enjoyed being a student of the craft. Now, six years into her time as a tattoo artist, she feels confident that her work will continue to evolve and grow. Tattoos are forever and Pamela believes that each tattoo edges people closer to loving their own body, uniquely shaping memories into images that can attest to their greatest strengths. "I can't force someone's feelings but it's cool to have a hand in contributing to someone's outlook on their bodies," she says. Spending hours of time with her clients has gotten her close to many of them, feeling a strange intimacy that does not exist in many other professions. Her astute appreciation for the human persona and natural world has artistically drawn her towards the depiction of flowers and plants in her pieces. "I love the intricacies and beauty of plants and am inspired by the colors. I'm interested in getting that to translate in a tattoo medium." Vintage botanical prints have also shaped her work as they look realistic but have "an illustrative quality in them that translates well into tattooing." Her clients would agree, her floral art is emotive and bursting.

It's important for Pamela to continue to challenge herself as an artist without working in an area that makes her completely uncomfortable. She loves everything botanical but knows that she is capable of so much more, which is why she wants to constantly make sure she is learning, progressing towards unleashing the rest of her vitality. One of her greatest challenges is that "no one's skin is the same. That creates a challenge that I constantly have to adapt to," she says. In order for her art to meet the client's vision, this impending and necessary adaptation is pivotal and important. The discourse of ideas from that vision to the germane details offers her a daily artistic challenge as well as an interpersonal one. "I'm working by myself at the moment and I want to please everyone, so I never want to make clients feel like I'm pushing them away." Her adaptation skills cannot be so easily measured, but the art speaks for itself. This mom of two, deeply involved with her church where she assists her husband as the youth pastor, lives a quiet and sometimes introverted life in Dansville. "I play D&D," she playfully says. "I try not to spread myself too thin socially. I feel pretty busy now. Tattooing takes up a lot of time, and so does drawing for work and for myself, and so do children!" she admits. Outside of tattooing, she has started developing her green thumb. "I'm learning from friends. They're helping me a lot and I love to do it." Her new hobby has spilled over into her shop. "I won't rest until that place is a rainforest."



THIS IS THE NEW ETHIC

WORDS BY: IAN PHILLIPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT
UPRA



"This is the new ethic/animals' lives are their own and must be given respect/reject the anthropocentric falsehood that maintains the oppressive hierarchy of mankind over the animals/it's time to set them free." So opens the Earth Crisis song, "New Ethic," which is evidence of Matt Nersinger's philosophy. Veganism is not a fad. It is much too powerful and relevant for that. It is a reoccurring theme in our culture which speaks to our future, and it is becoming the new normal. Young people, and indeed, people of all ages have embraced the vegan lifestyle if not simply for logical reasons: the meat and dairy industry is not sustainable. Nersinger talked at length about the unbreakable link between human liberation and animal liberation—one can't happen without the other.

Starting up a business, in one form or another, had been floating around Nersinger's brain for a long time. As far back as high school, he knew he wanted to do something where he could work for himself, hang out with friends, and give back to the music scene. He explains that "Straight Edge was huge for me. Even though I was a pretty shitty skater I still wanted to open a skate shop. But after a while I was like, I don't think I can do the skating thing cause I suck at it, but I really like cooking." As a teenager, Nersinger worked at a farmer's market. While studying History at Nazareth College, he worked for Wegmans. He had been in the food industry for his entire career before it hit him that food would be the path for his success.

Nersinger was raised by his mother, grandmother, and aunts; in short, women, and they were constantly cooking. He originally wanted to open a family run Italian restaurant,

but when his grandmother passed away, he lost the opportunity to work with her. Then, his mother married Tony Proietti, who owns 2 Ton Tony's, and whose family had Proietti's Restaurant for twenty-seven years. He was able to see firsthand what it meant to run an independent restaurant. Nersinger became serious about opening a restaurant of his own. He had the experience of cooking with his family, had a business oriented outlook, and only needed a small favor to make it all happen. "The only thing I had to do was convince my stepfather to use his space once a month. I promised him it was a good idea. And the first night we opened the pop up it was insane. I knew vegan pizza was a great idea, but it wasn't until that night that he saw it would work."

While the Buffalo marinated chickpea pie is a delicious work of art, and creamy tofu ricotta brings lushness to the homemade crust, the philosophy behind New Ethic is as important as the food itself. In fact, the two are intrinsically linked. Nersinger is always studying the social impact of his restaurant. Whenever possible, he uses small companies like May Wah Foods. "May Wah is the perfect immigrant story. They came here in the eighties and there was no faux meat industry at the time. Now you have Impossible Foods, or Beyond Meat, and they have their Pepsi/Coke

competition thing going, but May Wah has been around doing the same thing as a family based business. When I do my ordering with them I literally just send a text." Community is at the forefront of the business's structure. This month, New Ethic is donating to an organization that supports resources for the transgender community. He wants to give exponentially as the company grows.

"Rochester has art too. The art industry and the food industry are connected. You have to be artistic with food the same way you would with a canvas," Nersinger explains. There is a definitive sea change in the way we are eating. This change has allowed for pure vegan businesses to thrive. Impossible Foods developed a factory back in 2017 with the capacity to produce 48 million hemp-based burgers a year. When American's eat almost 50 billion beef burgers a year, that number becomes a fraction of the market share, but compared to just a few years ago, the demand for plant based meat is exploding. Food is big business—vegan or otherwise— but when we buy

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REALLY LIKE COOKING."**



locally sourced and carefully crafted products we become a part of the movement to sustain our future lifestyles. Nersinger expresses that “My brand of veganism is that you can’t have animal liberation without human liberation. Those are not two separate issues. You can’t call yourself vegan if you don’t care about humans.” Even if capitalism is still the basic philosophy in this country, creating vegan proteins that can replace meat products is undoubtedly creating a better future. At the same time, there are companies

like Brazilian based Corteva Agriscience who are working to increase meat production by using so called sustainable methods. The very existence of such a business is an oxymoron and the company is a thinly veiled money making machine. Nersinger refers to how marginalized people are most affected by meat production and waste. In South America, whole populations are being displaced and killed due to increasing meat production. When businesses such as New Ethic are successfully able to change our eating culture, a vegan world finally comes to fruition. What’s different now is that while veganism was always philosophically the right choice, it is now an option for the masses that might not eat vegan otherwise. We cannot call this simply local change, because it is all of these micro-level changes which will create a global paradigm shift.

RAMOS GIN FIZZ

a cocktail collab from Amber E Doerr & Briget Hagen

Ever wonder what it would be like to sip on a cloud?

Henry C. Ramos created this *floral, fluffy* bev in 1888, making it one of the many classics born in beautiful New Orleans.

This cocktail was such a hit that dozens of “shakermen” were hired to stand behind the pine alongside Henry just to shake this cocktail.

As its rise in popularity soared, so did the *rich, frothiness* from the egg whites and cream.

Egg whites can be a little intimidating, but trust your bartender; they shake with specific technique called a ‘dry shake’ to essentially cure the egg, making it safe to consume.

The citrus and alcohol also sterilize any bacteria, so the risk is similar to that of eating a medium rare steak.



Gin
Cream
Egg Whites
Lemon Juice
Lime Juice
Sugar
Orange Blossom
Soda Water
& Orange Twist

Beloved and bemoaned by bartenders around the world, this drink takes a solid 5-7 minutes to shake.

So, be kind, order appropriately (not when your bartender is pouring 12 “vokkasodas”), and take a chance on this gem. It’s worth the wait. Trust that.



540 WEST MAIN IMPROVING COMMUNITIES, GREATER ROCHESTER, AND THE WORLD

WORDS BY: NALA WARD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: CLAUDIA PAULSON

If you wanted to run for local office, would you know where to start? How about if you wanted to start a sustainable social movement? Owner of 540 West Main, Calvin Eaton, explains that it's possible to start a small movement in response to social injustice, but there isn't much of a model or template that is written down for people. There's "a barrier of access, especially for marginalized communities" to organize in a successful manner. Calvin strives daily to "create an educational space that is a disruption of what we think about in terms of educating ourselves." He is inspired by the involvement and support of the community, and believes he can cultivate a space that will "improve the community, improve greater Rochester, and improve the world."

The vision and goal of 540 haven't always been direct and clearcut. At first, Calvin was an avid blogger on "The Gluten-Free Chef." In 2011, he ran the blog in Nashville with posts about mindful eating and general wellness. His time as a blogger allowed him to make connections with people across the globe and develop an interest in community education. Moving back to Rochester in 2013, he opened a bakery sharing the same name as his blog. While the bakery was a success, he soon realized that his passions of community building and education could not be fulfilled in this setting. During this time, the address and building of 540 West Main existed as an ad hoc rentable space that was already being used in a community-forward manner. However, the organization that occupied the building realized that the location was no longer needed to continue their business. The owners approached Calvin and offered him the space. Despite some reservations, Calvin explains that "people were persuasive," and in June of 2016, the formal efforts of 540 West Main began at this location.

The communiversity facilitates social justice conversations for the Rochester community including "Intro to Implicit Bias," "Intro to White Privilege," and "Intro to Understanding Structural Racism." One of the first classes to gain popularity was an "Intro to Gentrification and Redlining" course, which became a conference that was hosted earlier this spring at MCC. An exciting new course called "Intro to Running for Office" will be co-facilitated by Mary Lupien and Ravi Mangla of Citizen Action of New York. These culturally driven topics are often seen as political, but Calvin doesn't see them that way. Rather, he

views them as important and vital conversations that people do not generally know how to begin on their own.

540 West Main is a grassroots organization thriving on community support. Earlier this year, a grant of \$15,000 was given to them by the Rochester Community Foundation in support of their teaching and nutrition courtyard, which has been in the works for two and a half years. Funding is always a big challenge; paying teachers, educators, and supporting the people who put in hours of work are all financial considerations. It takes a lot of effort to curate classes and an orderly website to showcase these courses, and funding is necessary for growth. However, the 540 West Main community has been growing. There have been more volunteers, more engagement, and more people renting the space for meetings and retreats. Calvin has seen growth through their social media platforms and has continued to build relationships with organizations that have existing audiences. They have even had the chance to collaborate with The Yards at the public market, hosting an event in their space at least once a month.

The goals that Calvin Eaton has for 540 West Main can be summed up in two words: scale up. As a leader, he tries to have a theme to work towards professionally, and scaling up will be the goal in 2020. Listed in smaller goals, the efforts will be towards soliciting more foundation funding, hiring at least two full-time staff members, and increasing a digital presence outside of Rochester. 540 West Main has been good at building relationships beyond the small community and into greater Rochester, but one major goal is to have a sustainable

platform to offer their courses online. In the spirit of scaling up, a long term goal for their brand is taking the heart of 540 beyond Rochester. Calvin pictures building a model similar to "TedX" where communities can be given a binder and a license to bring the 540 model to their neighborhoods and affect positive change. Improving and enriching the Susan B. Anthony neighborhood has always been the starting point for the organization, but building an active audience outside of the city is in their future.

Overall, organizing 540 West Main has been a great experience for Calvin. He has grown to be more transparent through the efforts and hard work that he does behind the scene. He's said before that he's a man that lives at many intersections of life: being a black man with an invisible disability and coming from a low-income background has enabled him to experience a lot of firsts, professionally, in this business endeavor. He's learned that it is very important for him to pace himself, but it's also crucial to keep going. "Nothing happens when you want it to," and patience is still a lesson being learned. The work of meeting new people and learning about different backgrounds and walks of life has been life-giving, as well as asking the hard questions to individuals and organizations about diverse board members and employees in the workforce. He has had his doubts along the way, but realizing that so much has transpired in the last three years puts things in perspective for him as he looks towards the future of the organization.



LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PAST: GIANT PANDA GUERRILLA DUB SQUAD CONTINUES THE LEGACY OF THE ROCHESTER REGGAE SCENE

WORDS BY: EMMARAE STEIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT UPRA

Each origin story surrounding a stellar band has its mystifying elements. In the case of Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad, their mantra has remained consistent from their first jam session: stay together and make each other proud. This reggae-rock band rooted in the heart of Rochester, New York, has single-handedly proven the power that music has to create transformative experiences.

James Searl (bassist/vocalist) and Chris O'Brian (drummer/vocalist) are lifelong friends, and the two of them bonded early on over their love of African-influenced reggae music. Growing up in Brighton, a small suburb near the downtown area, James and Chris were both connected to older musicians in the Rochester reggae scene in different ways. James had been taking lessons from the acclaimed

guitar teacher Tony Cavannaro, and soon learned about the skillful playing of Dylan Savage (guitar). Dylan had only recently moved to Rochester from Puerto Rico in 1992, but he had already established himself as a key player in the local music scene. At the time, Dylan worked at the gas station behind the Brighton Middle School, and the two aspiring musicians would make it a habit to walk over and

listen to him play on a regular basis. James explains that “we grew up knowing two things about the music scene in Rochester: the older people were playing original music and specifically, reggae African-inspired music. We didn’t know all of the details or even where it all came from, but we knew that it was the vibe.”

In 2001, the duo graduated high school, and James went off to Ithaca College. Despite this transition, he made frequent trips back to Rochester to play gigs with Chris and his brother Matt O’Brian. James and Chris were traveling across the East Coast to play with fellow reggae group Mountain Mojo Authority, and everything seemed to be lining up for the young musicians. However, not too long after their graduation, the friend group faced a difficult series of events in an incredibly short span of time. Chris and Matt’s father passed away, one of their closest friends committed suicide, and 9/11 hit the nation. James reflects on the rapid series of events and states that “At nineteen years old, I had an epiphany. I remember thinking to myself, ‘You thought this was a lot of fun, didn’t you? Well, the time to be a child is over.’ It made us prioritize what we truly found to be important.” After experiencing these losses, the companions came together and decided that they had to make a commitment to music. James shares that “we wanted to use the pieces of reggae that inspired us to talk about the things that were affecting our lives,” and so the trio decided to book their first official gig.

Before the performance, they paired up with Dylan to complete the group and reached out to Castaways, a medium-sized venue in Ithaca. Performing under the name Bomb Squad, the newly formed reggae outfit had little idea that these defining moments would play such a crucial role in their lives, and act as the foundation for Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad.

Since their inception in the early-2000s, Giant Panda has toured across the United States and played sold-out shows in Rochester and beyond. While their lineup of band members has shifted throughout the years, the group’s communal mentality has undeniably stuck with them. Around five years ago, Tony Gallicchio (keyboardist) joined the band, and only six months ago, the group welcomed Eli Flynn as their lead guitarist. Growing up, Eli shares that he was an “ultra fanboy” of Giant Panda, and became connected with James through his grandparents. The two laugh and reminisce about the situation, and James happily exclaims that “music is a reflection of everything that’s going on in the world. It’s not telling you what to do or not to do. It’s telling you about what’s happening in the world from someone’s point of view. We are the sound of each other’s reflections. When a new person comes in, it adds a whole different layer to the sound and image.” As the band works together in Black Dog Studios in the East End of Rochester, it becomes

apparent that Eli has already made an imprint on the future of Giant Panda. Former keyboardist Matt Goodwin sits at the mixing board and adds the finishing touches to the band’s latest single written by Eli himself. After feeling unsteady for several years in the recording studio, Chris admits that the band has found comfort at Black Dog. The space is rich with history, including the legendary recording session of Metallica’s 1983 release ‘Kill Em’ All.’ James smiles and recalls the significance of this album in his childhood, explaining that “the first time that I ever noticed the bass guitar was when I was in fifth grade listening to Metallica’s track ‘Anesthesia (Pulling Teeth)’ off of that album. Cliff Burton does this crazy bass solo, and I completely lost my mind. I was at my friend’s house at the time, and he happened to own a bass guitar. So, I picked it up, and I have been playing it ever since.” For Giant Panda, these connections to the past are intrinsic to their process as musicians and songwriters, and the comfort that they have found in Black Dog Studios has allowed them to focus on their role as musicians outside of live performances.

While the band hopes that their latest song will contribute to a larger release, the immediacy of the digital age has pushed them towards creating singles

and EPs rather than full-length albums. Chris touches on these changes, noting that “with the fifteen-second news cycle, it seems that you have to be putting out fresh stuff all the time. Back ten years ago, you could put out an album and tour on it for a month, but now everything is happening so quickly. For example, with the song we’re making today, we could sell it tonight, and there are people who do that. There is so much information flying at people, so you have to catch it quickly.” The era of full-length releases is taking a hiatus, but for Giant Panda, the resurgence of singles has allowed them to pay homage to the recording process of Jamaican-based artists from the 1970s. James points out that “ironically, the reggae music that took off in Jamaica was completely focused on putting out singles because of the economics. They would go into the studio, and the band was there all day. It was a quick process. They would record the song, cut it, and send it to the sound system later that night. On the next day, it would play to the people.”

Discussing this process brought up several prominent names in the Rochester reggae scene from the 1970s and prompted a conversation on the history of reggae music in the city. At the time that Giant Panda came together, the Rochester music scene was lacking the presence of prominent reggae groups. However, James carefully asserts that “there had been a



"MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE WRITING AS MUCH AS YOU CAN AND KEEP YOURSELF INSPIRED. IT WAS CRITICAL FOR US TO BE OUT ON THE ROAD AND PUT IN THE GRIND BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO GO FAR. AND ABOVE ALL, PLAY WITH GOOD PEOPLE AND KEEP IT TOGETHER."

legacy of bands before us. In the 70s, since reggae went international, there has always been reggae in this town: The Bone Dippers, Bahama Mama, The Majestics, are part of reggae history. And Lee Scratch Perry, who is one of the most influential people in reggae music and got Bob Marley on the map, after he burned down his Black Arc Studio in Jamaica, he moved to Rochester. There are all sorts of wild stories about him freaking out on Monroe Avenue and hanging out with Ron Stackman and the Majestics. That puts us on the map as a reggae place."

When speaking on their Rochester origins, the members of Giant Panda express pride about the historical and contemporary presence of a diverse range of genres in the city. In the future, the band hopes that the city will continue to have cross-genre collaborations and an intermingling of musicians throughout the scene. James emphatically illustrates this vision and exclaims that "there are so many different genres and scenes that people are not aware of in Rochester. The noise scene here is absolutely crazy, and the heaviest of the heaviest metal has always existed here. I grew up listening to Lethargy, which became Mastodon-- and of course, there's tons of hip hop. There are folks from the bands Triglactagon and Harmonica Lewinski that grew up around the same time that we did. Now, we could've intersected, but we didn't because we all had our own scenes. Now, looking from the outside and understanding that there are all of these original pockets is fascinating. Perhaps other cities are like that, but I don't think that they are." Eli and Tony have experience with the cooperative nature of the Rochester music scene. The two musicians play together in The Able Bodies, which has been an opportunity for learning and growth. Eli feels lucky to play with Tony in two separate projects and states that "it's an excuse for us to play with each

other in many different settings and learn together. No matter the genre, it's about getting better and learning what you enjoy as a creator."

As the music scene continues to flourish over the next decade, the group hopes that several additional small and medium-sized music venues will open up in the area to accommodate the city's surge of creativity. On a structural level, James would love to see programs open up in the Rochester area that would allow students of all generations to pursue their interest in music. Looking back on his personal experience as a young musician, he notes that the only "traditional" space that children could pursue music was through school band or orchestra. Now that these programs are being cut across the country, resources on the city-wide level will have to step up to fill this artistic gap. Similarly, James believes that the creation of non-traditional music education spaces could help counteract the negative stereotype that the public has of young musicians outside of the classical world. He explains that "if you weren't making music in a straight-laced environment, you were making music with people who were seen as 'bad kids' or even rebels. If you could objectively look at the situation, you would see that these are young kids staying at home and being creative. When you give them an edge, you perpetuate the stereotype of making these kids feel that they have to be badass to be a part of this music. There's a whole period of time where many young musicians were doing drugs because of this." By creating these non-traditional music education spaces in the Rochester area, James hopes that teenagers getting into the music scene can focus on being "happy and having sustainable friendships and relationships with their music." In terms of advice for the future generation of musicians, the group takes a look back at their original matra of support and self-improvement. Chris explains that musicians must know their worth and "play hardball" if venue owners are refusing to pay them fairly because of their age or experience. By establishing their self-worth, young musicians can start to focus on what is ultimately important: staying inspired. Dylan tells young musicians to "make sure that you're writing as much as you can and keep yourself inspired. It was critical for us to be out on the road and put in the grind because if you don't, you are not going to go far. And above all, play with good people and keep it together." It's apparent that Giant Panda are leading by example, and though James describes the future of the band as "flying by the seat of [their] pants," all signs point to continued success and happiness for their growing musical family.



**AS A
MUSICIAN IN
THE DIGITAL
AGE ON THE
SEARCH FOR
SELF-COHERENCE:**

**A
CONVERSATION
WITH
B A R N S
C O U R T N E Y**

**WORDS BY: JOE MASSARO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT UPRA**





After his show in Buffalo last month, the charming and unafraid Barns Courtney went backstage drenched in sweat after his dizzying and energetic on-stage performance. Then once he was all cleaned up, the 28-year-old singer-songwriter sat down and suddenly began singing a made up Christmas jingle he wrote for his younger brother about a llama, which references Barack Obama. Last month, Courtney released his second studio album '404,' an intense blend of swaggering and glittering rock and roll, thrusting synth-pop hooks and some pounding drum beats. But it was Courtney's rich and soulful vocals that carried the album. However the recording process didn't come easy this time around for Courtney like with past releases such as the 'The Dull Drums' EP and his major-label debut, 2017's 'The Attractions of Youth.' Courtney was used to relying on his depression and anxiety for his creative drive.

"It was difficult for me going into the studio for the second time because I was used to this extreme well of like depression and frustration that had always fueled

my musical pursuits for the three years prior," Courtney says. "So now having been introduced to a life where I get to do everything I want all the time and feeling much happier, I was trying to search for something deeper within myself."

Going back-and-forth in tempo, many of the tracks deal with isolation and feeling lost in the Digital Age, especially in the life of a touring musician. According to Courtney, the album's concept is much more than just dealing with the pitfalls when on the road.

"The album is about the sort of departure from your authentic self as you age," Courtney explains. "The idea that we sort of become ghosts of ourselves as we grow older. And the people we are as children who may be a bit more pure and awe-stricken by the world become somewhat jaded if we're not careful. And unfortunately we all fall into that trap in some way or another." The title for his new album comes from the "404 error" of a URL, which means that the page you were trying to look for cannot be found on the server. However, it's also clearly a metaphor for the

"THE PEOPLE WE ARE AS CHILDREN WHO MAY BE A BIT MORE PURE AND AWE-STRICKEN BY THE WORLD BECOME SOMEWHAT JADED IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL. AND UNFORTUNATELY WE ALL FALL INTO THAT TRAP IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER."

“I FEEL LIKE THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I ACTUALLY GENUINELY REFLECTED THE SORT OF NERDIER PART OF MY PERSONALITY IN TANDEM WITH A ROCK SONG”

never-ending search for something that would always be there, but then wasn't. Courtney compares his present self to his past self that only exists in memory. There's time to grow and develop for your present self instead of pondering things in the past. "I loved that as a metaphor for searching for parts of yourself, memories or emotions or traits that when you really dig down and have gone with the present moment that they existed in," Courtney says. "The whole album was really an attempt to explore all of that."

As human beings who have grown throughout the times, it's not easy to take a step back to take in what's going on around the world, especially when in a state of sorrow. Even if Courtney is a musician, he is a human first with views on issues from gun violence in America to climate change, in which he wrote a number of songs about but has shelved. "It was a tricky process because I tour a lot, which I love to do, but fitting in a real large amount of time to work on the record, was difficult," Courtney says. "I've been wanting

to write a song about the global crisis of climate change, which has been compared by some reputable scientists to a crisis on the level of World War II, due to the fact that our own destruction literally hangs in the balance, which sounds like sensationalism to a lot of people, but actually is very true. It's so rooted in reality and we're

all burying our heads in the sand because it's such a monumental problem such as the world's never seen before that it's almost as though humanity can't process it. But our planet is dying and we're a very delicate species and a small change in our environment will be the destruction of our civilization as we know it."

Aside from global issues, like most millennials, Courtney doesn't shy away from being a nineties kid. He embraces his nostalgia perfectly on the reminiscent "99," by pulling from the core of his childhood memories like from trading Pokémon cards to playing Nintendo 64. On the track, he also dives into and compares the differences of finding love from simply growing up in the nineties to now as an

adult. Lyrics such as "Back then we were trading cards behind the swings / oh no, now it's money, gold and diamond rings," point to this fundamental theme. This is also one of Courtney's favorite songs he wrote from the new album. "I feel like that was the first time I actually genuinely reflected the sort of nerdier part of my personality in tandem with a rock song," Courtney explains. "So I feel like lyrically that touched on something that I wanted to say."

Another track Courtney is fond of off his new record is the hypnotic and dark, but bittersweet

that instant reaction from his fans, especially with this song. "I feel like after a few times it brings you more of that place where you feel that bittersweetness of nostalgia. I kind of like how the lyrics slowly transmute from the image of a child coasting through classes and skipping school and culminate into this strange lost depressive area with lines like 'The skeleton living inside your head, rattling and gasping, coming up for

"The Kids Are Alright," which isn't a cover of the classic The Who song. Even though it might be one of Courtney's favorite tracks off his new album, he was hesitant in releasing it. "I was conflicted on that song because on the one hand, I could see the potential for it to be a big pop banger. On the other hand, there was this more The Cure-influenced direction, which ultimately made the track less of an immediate and satisfactory record to listen to," Courtney expresses. He wants to make sure his listeners are paying attention and absorbing his music instead of having his music on in the background. Courtney wants

breath / Maybe in your memory, I'm still not dead' almost as if these were all memories you were visiting, and then you're faced with the realization that you're no longer in that part of your life," Courtney says. "These are all things that you really have to be paying attention to absorb and as a pop songwriter as well as a rock songwriter, I do often tend to prefer things that can be immediately felt by my listeners. I went on a limb for that one, and I'm glad it did." Courtney's live shows can be sweaty affairs. It's no wonder he opened for major acts like The Who and The Libertines—both some of the greatest live acts of all time. Courtney reflects this at his shows and goes all out. As swaggering and bold we as humans can be, Courtney shows us that it's okay to be vulnerable.



GREEN BEANS

WHAT DOES ETHICAL AND SUSTAINABLE COFFEE LOOK LIKE IN ROCHESTER?

WORDS BY: MARC GABRIEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: JEREMIAH O'REILLY

When you're working with a plant that can only be cultivated in some tropical corners of the world and with demand and production that hurtles forth at the pace of burgers and fries, it is no surprise that being ethical in the coffee game is difficult. Rightfully so, consumers today are warier than ever about being informed on the sourcing and environmental impact of their goods. Where en masse commodification and distribution do not guarantee sustainability or quality, Rochester-centric roasters and sellers have the hook-up with good, green products on an ethical basis and the savvy approaches to achieving it.

At Fuego Coffee Roasters, right on 1 Woodbury Blvd, Renee Colon sheds some light on exactly what your local roaster does in the first place. The job at Feugo gets done with a 15 kilo Ambex which Colon gives an affectionate nickname. She -- the machine -- operates a large drum for the beans, which rotates above a bed of flames to roast. Everything about this process is regulated with a computer that gives Colon control to set temperature and duration. "It's a fairly small roaster, we're going to have to upgrade very soon to keep up with our demand," says Colon. Even with the helpful technology involved, the process requires expertise about the beans and isn't void of obstacles. If the computer gets out of line, for example, both the beans and the roaster's time are at risk. The roaster recalls a mishap that happened a few weeks ago. "So I roast three times a week. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday," says Colon. "I need to roast for the shop and then we have fifty wholesale accounts down. So, fortunately, we got all the wholesales down but I have yet to do

the shop beans -- and the computer goes haywire." Due to fluctuating temperatures from the computer malfunction, Colon lost a batch of beans. The roasting process is a fickle and technical one, but for all that grief, roasters are still obsessed with the artisanal nature of making good java. Kathy and Ben Turiano of Joe Bean Coffee Roasters have made the concept of specialty coffee the cornerstone of business at their new 565 Blossom Rd Suite E1 location. "People forget that coffee is truly an agricultural product," says Kathy. It's absolutely true. As with any other product, commodification -- or standardized mass production of goods -- distances consumers from the origins of the product and labor that creates it. What Ben, Kathy, and Renee are all doing as local roasters not only serves to foster a community around the beverage in Rochester but also cuts that distance between consumer and product.

Coffee begins to shape a story and a character when consumers can learn about the farmer who grew the product directly from the roaster who met them. In fact, you might even meet the farmer there at the shop. "We held an educational event with Christian Starry, who is one of the farmers we interface with in Guatemala," says Ben. The event was a public cupping that happened in August and gave Rochesterians an opportunity to learn the tasting process and glimpse into that agricultural side of the beans. The cupping was a hit and drew nearly 60 attendees. So, for the uninitiated, what is cupping? "Cupping is the traditional tasting method everyone uses," explains Ben. "Basically you have an 8 oz ceramic bowl of

ground coffee. You'll evaluate the dry aroma, add hot water, let it sit for four minutes. Then it will form a crust which you'll break with a spoon and it will release all these vapors. Skim off the top and then slurp the coffee when it reaches a palatable temperature." Cupping is nothing new, but if you're a specialty roaster like Ben, sharing that element of the trade to the consumer introduces a whole new level of complexity and depth for someone who may only use the product for their morning motivation. In turn, coffee drinkers begin to ask better questions about the processes that derive their favorite product. Ideally, this translates to better quality purchases from consumers, which affect everything down to the farmers themselves. The existing traditional market for coffee, what Ben refers to as the "C-market," is not good for farmers. It is the global commodity market in which the raw resources are extracted from growing sites and pricing remains unpredictable, which also makes existence precarious for the labor force on farms. For the buyer, it makes obtaining product from the same farms challenging year after year. Direct trade, the approach adopted by sustainable specialty roasters like Fuego and Joe Bean, is the antithesis of that. The focus is to have growers abroad make more long term and environmentally conscious investments that is both better for the quality of the product and more stable for the farmer. "We have a handful of farms we work directly with," says Colon. "We want to do more direct trade because we like working with farmers - we get to know them, they get to know us," she says. The open dialogue maintained with these farms ultimately allows for these personal experiences with coffee like the public cupping event. "There's a lot of labor and resources that get



“WHEN YOU’RE BUYING IN A METHOD THAT’S TRADED AGAINST THAT VERY VOLATILE MARKET, IT DOESN’T ENCOURAGE FARMERS TO MAKE HIGHER-RISK CHOICES. THOSE HIGHER-SCORING COFFEES ARE REPRESENTING SOMETHING THAT IS MORE ECONOMICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED. SO IT’S REALLY IMPORTANT TO GIVE A STRONG INCENTIVE TO BUY THOSE.”

dumped into those higher scoring coffees,” says Ben. “When you’re buying in a method that’s traded against that very volatile market, it doesn’t encourage farmers to make higher-risk choices. Those higher-scoring coffees are representing something that is more economically and environmentally sustainable for everyone involved. So it’s really important to give a strong incentive to buy those.” It isn’t entirely that simple. For smaller operations like Fuego and Joe Bean, the resources needed to maintain the challenges involved with importing, exporting, and tariffs make direct trade and connecting with farmers as opposed to large distributors difficult. In line with the acknowledgment that coffee is such an agricultural experience, Colon back at Fuego reminds us how much of that labor takes place before the roaster even gets involved. “On average, about 12 people handle the beans before they even get here,” says Colon, “we are very particular about the green beans we source.” Fun fact: “green beans” are effectively the coffee beans before they are roasted. Coffee beans are actually the pit of a coffee cherry,

and the green beans have a shelf life or approximately ten months before they must be roasted. When all the pre-roasting processes are accounted for “they must be picked, cultivated, cleaned, dried, and fermented before they even get here” says Colon, “twelve people on average touch the beans before we have them.” In consideration of this pre-roast process, Colon also touches upon Fuego’s responsibility to source equitably. “Before we work with someone we need to make sure that their beans are good quality and that their employees are being treated well,” she explains. So, what does all this focus on sustainability and stability mean for consumers? What does it mean for Rochesterians? Rich coffee culture is welcomed anywhere, but in Rochester, the specialty corner of the coffee industry necessitates ethically-minded consumers. The presence of these entities in Rochester enrich community involvement and concern with topics having to do with the trade, and of course, promote good coffee.



Ben & Katie Morey

A Collaborative Conversation

Words by: Ryan Yarmel
Photography by: Krit Upa



The spirit of collaboration is a potent fuel. When individuals are drawn to one other, their mere proximity is inspired by something as unexplainable as creative passion. Sometimes these unions are temporary, a passing cloud, made only for one rain, and other times these unions become mountains. For Ben and Katie Morey, it started with the Beach Boys and continues with The Submarine School of Music. Ben remembers the moment their music making began: “We met 11 years ago when our bands played at the same show. We didn’t see each other again for a few years and ran into each other at the Bug Jar after we had finished college and moved to Rochester. The first night that we talked, Katie mentioned that she wanted to do a Beach Boys tribute show, which is my favorite band.”

Like wildfire, Ben and Katie began working together, first covering the Beach Boys’ ‘Pet Sounds,’ then a Fleetwood Mac revue (a benefit for Girls Rock Rochester), next on a single to benefit WAYO 104.3FM, until finally formalizing their musical relationship during the making of Ben Morey & The Eyes release ‘Mt. Doom,’ which Katie co-produced.

Though tribute or cover shows are abundant in Rochester’s current musical landscape, the duo feels that even a temporary collaboration is a potent creative tool, providing musicians with new perspectives and ideas without the pressure of being in a band for years. There is a fear that local support for an artist’s original music can dwindle, however.

Katie explains that, “the people doing these cover shows in Rochester are really creative people, and I know their own music. It’s important that we support each-other in our original music first and foremost, but still go and see these cover shows.” Ben continues on Katie’s sentiment by explaining that “the thing that is negative about that scene, is that those are the shows that most people turn out for. When you are playing your original music, and sharing your art, it’s a lot harder to get people to come.”

In the age of instant art and pop-up gratification, the question of “should I take this gig” is as confusing as ever. How does a musician weigh the benefits of exposure versus payment versus fun? Does that fifty dollars you made even matter if no one was there to take a photo of the set?

When recording in Nashville, Katie was given some sage advice from a producer. The industry veteran explained that, “You’ve got to do it for two of three criteria. ‘It’s the hang, the money, and the music. If the

*I think we’re happiest
when we’re being
creative.*

music is good, and the hang is good, but there’s no money, that’s okay.’ We’ve been going by that ever since Nashville. It’s how we decide to take a gig or not.” Both long-time musical educators, Ben and Katie formed The Submarine School of Music in 2018 as a home for the large community of parents and students enrolled in lessons. Guitar, piano, ukulele, voice, and drum lessons are offered, as well as small group ensemble programs.

“Our goal with the school in general is to bring together the two communities that have been so important to us.” Ben explains, “The local musicians, a community that we’ve been apart of for a long time, and our community of families that we teach. We want to give more musicians an opportunity to make a living by giving them students to teach, and educate the next generation of musicians in Rochester.”

Currently, all lessons and operations of the music school occur at Ben and Katie’s residence in the South Wedge, but the pair hope to raise enough funds to find a permanent home next year. This bustling, musical home-life keeps the couple happy and creative, as Katie expresses that “I think we’re happiest when we’re being creative. Whenever we have lots of creativity in the house, we’re at our best. We try to always have something creative going on at night. Usually there is a band practice, or Ben is recording somebody...or we’re writing. It’s when there’s a lull that we get down.”

All current performance projects are focused on raising funds for the music school, which Ben and Katie see as another creative challenge. In October, they performed their original score to accompany the 1922 silent film Nosferatu. In the coming months, Ben and Katie will give a performance of Harry Nilsson’s The Point alongside the original film on November 23 & 24 at the Cinema Theatre, Songs of Christmas Past at the George Eastman Museum on December 13, and Songs for Winter Wishing (an original collection children’s choir songs written by Katie) on December 21 at the South Wedge Mission.

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Run River North:

the freedoms of a new sound.

Music has no parameters, no set of rules. It lays at the hands of its creator, to be molded and shared. We bring music into our lives every day. Serving as a narrative of our own stories, songs become the words, emotions, and perceptions that we write about ourselves. Capturing fragments of our imagination, they can also forge a crescendoing tale of characters or events we have yet to encounter. As a result, music is ever-evolving. Waning and waxing it shifts and shimmys into different directions, each move leaving a footprint of its own meaning and design. When it comes to an expanding sound, one band in particular has gone through this exploratory journey.

Breaking into the music scene in 2011, this Korean-American band originally consisted of six members and went by the name Monsters Calling Home. Based out of Los Angeles, the group underwent some adjustments, materializing with the name Run River North. With their first self titled album released in February of 2014, they went on to drop their second album "Drinking from a Salt Pond" in the same month two years later. Not long after, their EP "Superstition" emerged in 2017. With their earlier works revolving within the realm of indie folk-rock, they graphed their path by nurturing a harmonious blend of genres, taking an alternative edge and wedding it with delicate acoustic melodies. Coupled with the gravitating charm of gently woven strings, their emotional and grassroot instrumentals emitted an authentic soundscape. With the passing of time, their sound shifted, entering the sphere of predominantly alternative rock. These were not the only fluctuating pieces however, as three members departed along the way. The band currently consists of Alex Hwang (lead vocals/guitar), Daniel Chae (guitar/backing vocals) and Sally Kang (keys/vocals). Despite previous altercations, the trio still captures a robust and full-bodied sound. Continuing

to fine-tune their craft, they released in May of this year their EP "Monsters Calling Home, Vol. 1" with the name serving as a nod back to their beginning. Using this momentum, they dropped their most recent EP, a five-piece release titled "Monsters Calling Home Vol.2." Fashioning a revamped sound, these two EPs present a pronounced transition. Embarking upon new terrain, their unfolding sound has become a reflective declaration of cultivating their current mood and perspective.

Upon hearing their latest works, one can quickly discern these stylistic changes. Flashing zesty electro-pop synth and downright groovy beats, this current wave carries all the right amounts of rhythmic funk and alternative artistry. Transforming through an artistic renaissance of sound, this uncharted territory presents its

own appeal, all of which add to the rejuvenation of creating new music. Alex shares that, "the new sound allows for more freedom in expressing and trying to find the way we want to tell stories..." Since the process is different, not only is the product, but also the rising emotions that are drawn from it. Using the different elements and energy that this new genre holds serves as a platform for them to create the stories and messages that they are currently feeling. "We are being a lot more embrave about who we are as people and embrave of how to be hopeful and joyful given the climate of our lives and the climate of when we go off to play." Using the song structure as a bouncing board to dive into new sensations, they look forward to finding and interacting with these new ingredients. Aligning themselves with more positive approaches due to fractures from their past, instead of distributing blame, Run River North shares that "the brave and more honest thing to do is try to embrace hope and try to find a reason to dance...that is definitely what we are all trying to do." Daniel elaborates upon this, noting that "it's very easy to point the finger when things don't go your way. I think its learning how to deal with the hand you're dealt in the best way possible." In doing so, he believes that the world can become a more genuine and better place.

These new songs such as Wake Up, OKAY COOL, and I'm Amazing are bringing a lot of life and elation to the band, as well as their fans. Automatically turning spaces into dance floors with their bumping beats and

addictive lyrics, this is now looking to be one of the band's signature qualities. In light of this brightened approach, we wanted to know what makes them happy. For Sally, it comes down to the atmosphere that is created between them and their fans. Music holds the healing power of bringing people together, and also of bringing them back. People turn into fans, creating an electric connection. For her, it's when she gets to "...meet and see familiar faces. That kind of exchange of remembering why we are performing... that exchange of life happening with strangers and then slowly over time they're not strangers anymore. They are friends and family."

With exciting new plans in store, including the potential release of an acoustic album and their nation tour Lonely Weather, Favorite Sweater taking place in January and February of 2020, Run River North should be on any music lovers' radar. The band emphasizes that they are not just focusing on the next single, but the brand entirely. Looking at the bigger picture they are taking a more all-encompassing approach, thus pumping out more continuous content. With a lot to offer, the three are revved up about sharing a new side of themselves and not restricting their vision or sound to a single lane. With much more material to come and a new take on engaging with the music process, we eagerly await what they will bring forth next. In the meantime, do yourself a favor and throw on their tunes. Bust a couple of moves while you're at it, even if people are watching. We bet that they will start dancing too.



CENTRAL ROCK GYM FACILITATES MOVING MEDITATION FOR CLIMBERS OF ALL AGES

WORDS BY: NEAL KUMAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: BRITTANY OLIVERI

Whether you're an experienced climber with callouses of steel and sacks of chalk in your garage, or a complete novice gazing up at Central Rock Gym's 45ft walls, the staff at CRG have worked hard to create a space to engage climbers of all skill levels. Having opened in March of 2019, CRG has quickly become a focal point in the Rochester climbing community. CRG looks to provide an accessible challenge for all skill levels of climbers: the ultimate space where anyone can enjoy the sport of climbing. Brad Larew, one of the main instructors at the gym explains that "We want to provide an accessible challenge to somebody walking in off the street that has no climbing experience, all the way up to an expert climber."

Climbing engages both the body and the mind. CRG offers a whole host of programs; from climbing specific courses to work techniques to yoga classes to regular fitness and conditioning, climbing can be just as physically and mentally engaging as any sport. He tells us that "I have always called climbing 'Moving Meditation' – climbing is one of those few times where I'm able to focus only on what's in front of me." One of the most engaging aspects of climbing is how measurable one's progress is. Climbing routes are rated by difficulty and are set up with the intent to challenge climbers at their respective skill levels. Those responsible for creating routes, 'setters', put a lot of thought into what kinds of techniques or moves required to complete the different difficulties of climbs. As you get better at climbing, you 'level up' in a sense, as you engage with increasingly difficult routes. Of course, if you ever run into trouble with scaling a wall, those climbing around you are more than willing to help. While the act of climbing is up to the ability of the individual, it's common for climbers to take on a wall together and work through the maze of holds and moves to reach the top. Whether you reach out to an employee or the last person you saw scale the wall you're working on, you've always got support when you need it – a testament to the general good nature and encouraging spirit carried by most climbers.

Proper etiquette is incredibly important to maintaining a healthy atmosphere in any climbing space. The term 'beta spraying' refers to the giving of unsolicited advice, and unwanted information about completing a climb can ruin the challenge of solving a route yourself, and discourage or alienate new climbers. It's just as important for experts to create space for novices to grow, as Brad expresses that "We encourage people to first ask if they need help, and we also encourage those that do want that Beta that our community is very welcoming and to not be afraid to ask someone that's working the same problem you are."

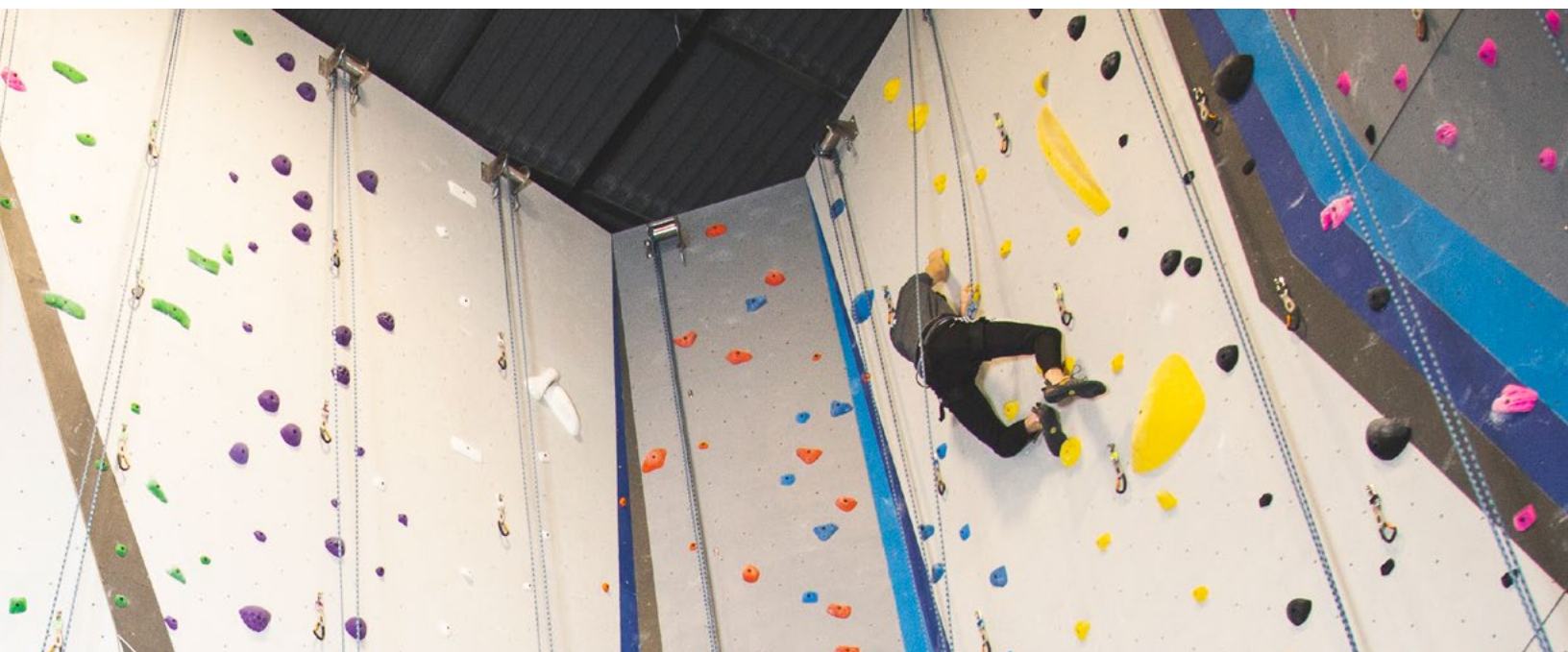


"THAT'S ONE OF THE BIG THINGS THAT DRAWS PEOPLE INTO CLIMBING, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PART."

Watching experienced climbers take on 45ft walls is rather mesmerizing – each hold is carefully considered; each move is designed to use their energy as efficiently as possible. Like a carefully choreographed dance, the best climbers think over every action they take in hopes of achieving whatever project they've set their sights on. Whether it's a 45ft top-rope wall or a 10ft boulder problem, the one question that every climber inevitably thinks about is, "what if I fall?"

It's not often the fear of heights that deters people from climbing, but the fear of falling. These feelings get stronger the less secure you feel when on a climb, and if you don't trust your equipment and ability, you won't be able to take advantage of it. Mental endurance goes hand in hand with physical endurance during climbing; if you are preoccupied with the worry


of falling over the intent to finish the climb, then you're likely to fail. If you trust your gear and your ability, you're much more likely to pull through and make that final hold. Brad shares that "If you get to the top of a boulder problem and you go for that last move and the only thoughts in your head are 'What if I fall? Am I gonna get hurt? Can I do this?' then you're probably gonna fall. If you take a second, breath, and go for it – chances are you're going to make that climb. That's one of the big things that draw people into climbing, the psychological part." Regardless of athletic ability or experience, the sport of climbing provides a safe but demanding challenge for both the mind and body. Central Rock Gym provides a great opportunity for anyone looking to climb, or to be apart of the community that supports the sport.



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DISCUSSING THE CHANGING MUSIC SCENE IN ROCHESTER with Doug Kelley

Words by: PAULA CUMMINGS
Photography by: MIKE TURZANSKI

Doug Kelley has a thumb on the pulse of the music industry. Hailing from a town north of Pittsburgh, Doug moved to New York to study sound recording and performance at Finger Lakes Community College. He went on to continue his studies in music business at SUNY Fredonia. Since then, he's become a fundamental member of the local music community. He wears a lot of hats as a booking agent, a musician, and a manager/consultant.

While in school, Doug completed an internship with Tim Avery, helping to carry out some of the many duties that come along with booking shows at Rochester's Bug Jar. Since finishing college, he has stayed on at the iconic bar, to continue the venue's long-standing commitment to providing live entertainment seven nights a week.

In addition to booking other acts, Doug has been playing in bands himself. At FLCC, he was a founding member of Storm The Bay, playing synth and providing backing vocals. "That era of Storm the Bay was very different from what they eventually evolved into," Doug explains. After that, he started Alberto Alaska with some close friends. He moved from synth to percussion. He currently plays drums in the post-rock outfit, Old Fame. He expresses that "over the years of working with the bands I was in, booking shows, and all of that, I got involved with some other bands as far as management and guiding them."

One of those bands is The Dirty Pennies. Doug started booking them as a two-piece band at Bug Jar. But he got really excited when he saw them soon after they added bassist Joe Mungo in 2016. "They had a great turnout, they put on an awesome show. It was really cool," Doug recalled. "I liked how

they had evolved. The bass was an essential piece of the sound." He now manages the band, helping with booking, merchandise, and providing guidance. He also does consulting work with other musicians and bands.

"I think a lot of bands are starting to grow into their sound more," Doug explains. One example is the math-rock band False Pockets. "I met up with Erik Happ a couple months ago to help him set up his EP release show. I remember years prior to that he was in a few different projects. They weren't quite there. He sent me a couple of new songs, and it's like 'Dude, this is where you need to be.'"

Doug has seen Rochester-based bands like Such Gold and Sirens and Sailors progress from playing in basements to selling out venues and touring internationally. He gets excited about local bands who are gaining momentum, like Carpool. And he enjoys spotting potential in student bands coming out of Eastman and Nazareth College.

From a musician's standpoint, Rochester is an ideal spot, not just because of access to resources (venues, recording studios, music schools) and a strong community, but also because of its geographical location. "For touring, Rochester's a perfect spot - an hour and fifteen from Buffalo, same for Syracuse, three hours to Toronto, and six hours from the East Coast. I just did a little four-day tour with The Dirty Pennies. We hit a bunch of East Coast cities. It was perfect."

The Dirty Pennies and Doug's band Old Fame each recorded their latest releases with Josh Pettinger at Rochester's Wicked Squid Studios. Doug was at the studio's fall open house, where they unveiled their new sound board.

“I think my band’s going to be recording here in December. I’m excited. Our first EP was recorded on an entry-level analog board, which sounded great. They definitely produced a lot of great singles, EP’s, and albums off of it. But since then they have gone from entry-level to top-of-the-line in one upgrade, so you’ll definitely hear a difference. Josh and the team are doing a lot of really great things there.”

Doug points to a lot of other innovative projects in the area as helping to grow the scene, including WAYO radio, Floated Magazine, and local music podcasts. The Dirty Pennies were featured on The 585 Music Scene Podcast, and Doug was recently a guest on Hell Weekly podcast, swapping stories with the hosts about the local scene over the past decade.

After these myriad of experiences in school and in his multiple roles in the community, Doug become savvy about the music industry. He’s developed good business acumen. There are rookie mistakes that he spots musicians making over and over again, especially when it comes to booking and promotion. “I think there are a lot of things that musicians in Rochester can and should be doing to further their music careers,” Doug shares. “Most of it has to do with being creative and innovative when marketing their music.” Times have changed, and a lot of people are still relying on the rags-to-riches dream of becoming discovered and launched from obscurity.

“Gone are the days of releasing an album, sending it to a few radio stations, touring, and having a long lasting career,” Doug explains. “People get bored, attention spans

are shorter with smartphones constantly derailing everyday life. Even though we have services like Spotify, Apple Music, etc small indie bands are still directly competing against the marketing dollars of large record labels.” Remember when everyone freaked out because the latest U2 single showed up in their iTunes? That is a perfect example, no independent musician could ever have that level of direct-to-consumer market penetration. To help combat the major players, indie musicians now have to become “content creators.” Social media algorithms favor those who are active, but not in a spammy way, active and creative. Users must also engage other users, the cliché introverted musician will not survive in this current technology dominated climate.

“ONCE YOU CAPTURE YOUR FANS ATTENTION AND MAKE YOUR MUSIC BETTER THAN A NIGHT OF SWIPING OR BINGE WATCHING, YOU WILL SUCCEED.”

In addition to using social media, there are a multitude of ways to boost attendance at live performances. But it takes a bit of forethought and imagination, plus a lot of hustle. “When it comes to promoting shows I’ve found that while it does help to be innovative, many musicians in town have forgotten the tried and true methods of promotion. They must put in the legwork to really get anyone’s attention. That involves hanging up posters, handing out flyers, creating a street team, actually telling everyone you know that you are a musician, own it.

Sharing your music with your circle, go on the radio to talk about your upcoming shows; Those are all old school things that should never have died.”

Another mistake is taking on every gig that gets offered. Too many shows too close together can actually hamper efforts to build a solid fanbase. “It really helps to space out your performances throughout a calendar year, over-playing is a huge issue in this town. We have world class musicians performing in a market that is not the size of NYC/Toronto/Nashville/LA, so there’s no way you can draw appropriately when your playing 3 shows a month.”

“In addition to spacing out performances, try to make each show an event, (remember the short attention span thing?) shows need to be a party/fundraiser/release show/collaborate with a clothing company launch or beer release, etc.” The bottom line is that people have to be willing to put in the work to engage an audience. “Musicians need to realize that they are competing against the easy dopamine rushes provided by their smartphone and Netflix. Once you capture your fans attention and make your music better than a night of swiping or binge watching, you will succeed.”





ILHAN ALI

(COMEDIAN FOR THE PEOPLE)

WORDS BY: NALA WARD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: CLAUDIA PAULSON

In her most difficult times, Ilhan recalls jotting down random moments throughout the day that she thought was funny. At times where she felt sad, she'd read aloud the notes to herself and realized it was more comedic than she thought. Growing up, she'd watch comedy specials with

controversial topics. Often, she'd translate these same specials for her mother and through that, they became interested in politics. Eventually, it would click for her that comedy isn't just a bunch of punchlines all the time, but it can be a vessel in which to share thoughts. With this revelation and

comedic method, Ilhan would soar as a comedian, and other aspects of her life would shine because of it.

Ilhan didn't explore comedy until she came to Rochester and befriended many in the comedy community. She moved up here from Virginia in 2011 for school

and a change of scenery. Having performed at quite a few open mics early on alongside local greats like Woody Battaglia and Malcolm Whitfield she was able to achieve her goal of becoming more comfortable on stage, though it was difficult. Balancing open mic sets with time for self care became blurred as being on stage bred an unhealthy need for validation. However, her efforts did not go unnoticed as she earned nomination on CITY Newspaper's "Best of Rochester" list within her first year of comedy. She was also nominated for a ROC Award and was the only woman on the list at the time.

Being the only woman on the ROC Award ballot felt like a novelty, and Ilhan struggled finding diversity amongst the comedians in Rochester. In terms of larger acts to be booked, the city's stages have been graced with phenomenal diverse talent such as Michelle Wolf and Derek Gaines, but locally, it's a different story. Instead of falling into a cycle of wondering why there wasn't much diversity in the lineups she was seeing, nor why she wasn't being booked as often as she could have been, she decided that she would curate shows of her own, and book herself. Hopefully, this practice would set her up toward achieving one of her long term goals of opening her own comedy club with the intention of having diverse lineups outside of the young, white men that are typically seen.

The importance of having diversity in comedy lineups is part of the issues spoken of through activism and social justice. What brings Ilhan the most joy is having a platform to speak about things that she believes in. However, without her diligent practice in activism and modeling, her strength and courage

in comedy might not have grown to its current level. Activism is where she feels that she has the most impact. It is what gave her the push to not be afraid to speak up. Earlier this year, she took a trip to McAllen, Texas to a respite center through Catholic charity services. There, ICE agents would drop off people being released from detention centers. Volunteers would help with clothes, and in the kitchen. The most memorable and life giving part for her was being able to braid the children's hair. Many of the children had matted hair, and some were having their first showers in three months. Seeing them look in the mirror after getting their braids and lighting up on the inside put it all in perspective.

Ilhan tries to work her activist muscle at least once a month in the form of hosting shows at the Hideaway and raising money for local charities such as the Out Alliance and Rochester Refugees. This past October, she did a show at the Riot Room for the Society of Protecting Children with the caveat that no jokes about harming children would be made. Jokes about hurting people haven't particularly been Ilhan's style, however. Typically she'll speak on touchy political subjects and joke that she's got every door locked and no one can escape. But censorship is not something she's a stranger to dealing with. Though it seems that comedy has been taking on a new role in the form of social activism, cancel culture and censorship have both been extremely helpful, and somewhat overbearing. Cancel culture, essentially, is bringing awareness to things that people say and do that could be perceived as "punching down." "If you're in the public eye, you should be ready for public criticism," Ilhan believes. Though in the same breath, she

continues that we're all human and make mistakes. We've all had to be pulled aside and kept accountable. Teachable moments and 'cancel culture' should coexist. Censorship is a dangerous line to teeter because on the one hand, you don't want the audience to feel uncomfortable or have reason to vehemently disagree, but on the other hand, telling someone that some topics shouldn't be spoken about breeds ignorance and creates taboo. "It's dangerous to tell certain people that they can't talk about certain things, and other people can - I think the audience does a good job of that." She believes that if a comic is intentionally racist, homophobic, ableist, and overall hurtful on purpose then it's incredibly irresponsible, because ultimately, their job is to make people laugh.

In her words, Ilhan loves using comedy "to make awkward situations funny so that we can talk through those uncomfortable conversations." Being on stage isn't always a happy, inspirational place - sometimes, it's a scary place, for many reasons. Sometimes, jokes that are funny don't get a good response, and she used to beat herself up about it. She's learned that it's all about reading your audience and trying again next time. Unfortunately, as bold and opinionated as she is, this confidence hasn't come without internet trolls mocking her, making pictures of her with quotes she never said, and trying to disrespect her at every turn. Luckily, for every negative message about what she stands up for, there comes a positive one, thanking her for shedding light on a particular topic. The comedy scene in Rochester is strong, and the local community of performers continues to pull together to support her and ensure that she feels valued.

A Glimpse into the Greatness of Greenery with Shelby Beyler

Words by Alyssa Brault
Photography by Kristen Pope

Nature surfaces elements within ourselves that draw us back to a more raw and genuine form. Sustaining an untainted authenticity, it holds revitalizing qualities. This harmonious connection is felt in various ways, a prominent one being caring for plants. Tending to a plant is much more than simply meeting its basic needs, it's about the process and the person you become through it. For Shelby Beyler of The Botanist, this bond holds truth, comfort, and nourishment.

Shelby Beyler has a deep rooted appreciation for the outdoors and grew up admiring the living elements around her. Immersing herself within the wonders of the woods, they became her sanctuary. As she grew up, Shelby decided to create her own indoor oasis to preserve this nurturing relationship. She is a lover of "all things green," and started gathering plant cuttings from family and friends. Enchanted by the process, she learned about plant propagation and even how to germinate seeds. Today, she has

an impressive and vast collection of over two hundred different varieties of indoor plants. Devoting herself to the fundamental and scientific factors of plant biology, she continues to learn botanical names, the scientific properties of soil, plant ailments, and effective methods of disease control. Shelby recognized that there was no place in Rochester that served as a reliable source for houseplant upkeep. As a proud plant parent herself, this was disheartening. She decided to step in and nurture this neglected market, and The Botanist was born.

Offering a wide array of services such as purchasing plants, private consultations for residences and local businesses, classes, and plant rental services, Shelby's extensive plant based knowledge is apparent. The Botanist has been open for a year, and she is constantly learning about ways that the business could be improved, explaining that, "I always want to keep learning and growing, which is great when you are in the plant world because everything is changing." In addition to her endeavors with The Botanist, she has created the non-profit club Plants ROC, which caters to the plant enthusiasts of Rochester. Getting these individuals connected and providing them with accurate information and proper plant resources has been a fulfilling adventure. Their first event, "The Spring Equinox Plant Swap," was held earlier this year and brought a positive response. This success has galvanised Shelby to venture out, having cast the vision to one day lead plant tours of neighboring botanical gardens.

Plants ROC is not her only passion project. Shelby has a hand in Flora Cotta, a collaboration between The Botanist and Ritual Clay. Concentrating on bringing people closer to nature, they emphasize

"We want to share the therapeutic joy that comes from the feeling of earth by both clay and soil."

the significance of sustainability and the vitality of working with your hands. Shelby describes the partnership and asserts that "we want to share the therapeutic joy that comes from the feeling of earth by both clay and soil." Working with plants for as long as she has, Shelby shares that they are the ultimate teachers, instilling valuable life skills and a strong work ethic. The process of nurturing and the exploratory journey of investing your time and care so intricately into something is existential. Keeping her in touch with reality, they also unfold the truths of what it means to be living and what it means to coexist. Putting everything into perspective, Shelby notes that "being involved with plants has made me so much more aware and grateful." It's

rewarding to see the plants grow, mature, sprout new buds, and know that you had a role in keeping something alive.

A component of stewardship and unity has been lost between ourselves and our foliage friends. Admiring the qualities that soil possesses, Shelby artistically paints the image that "soil is stardust." With its magical composition and the wondrous nutrients that it contains, "...all life is in it." It holds an honesty and balance, one that weds decomposition and growth. "Science is making me realize why there should be an emotional component and why there should be more care." Through gaining this insight, Shelby's classes are specifically tailored to the Rochester climate, providing

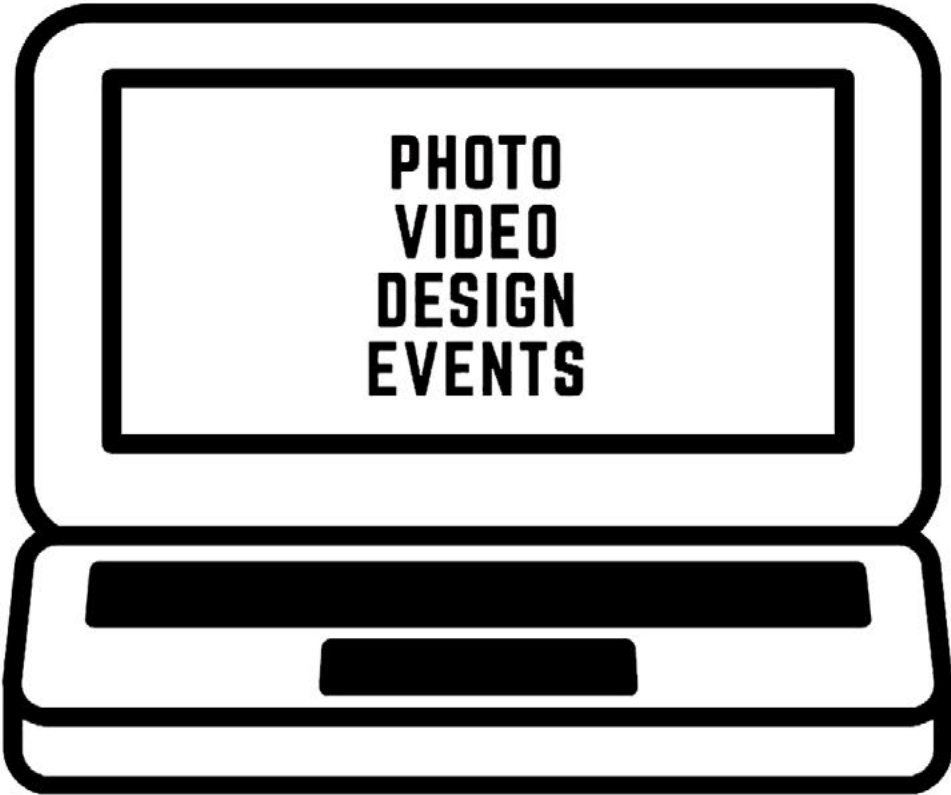
more accurate and specialized information for regional plants. Shelby is known for more than just her classes. She holds various pop-ups and has worked with several local businesses. She has “been enjoying collaborating with all the businesses that have given [her] the opportunity to put [herself] into their space.” It’s been enlightening to see little parts of herself embedded within the city.

As for interior design and emerging trends, Shelby notes that the majority of spaces are still pursuing the “minimalist” approach. Stark white walls with a splash of green here and there, this aesthetic can sometimes fall prey to repetition. However, Shelby has noticed the slow resurgence of a look that gestures back to a previous era. Currently coming around the corner is the, “dark green and terracotta dichotomy.” Coupled by art deco configurations and the grand curvature of decorative archways, Shelby is animated by the artistic innovations that this brings. Getting to experiment with different color schemes, shapes, and textures, she gets to showcase the playfulness that different plants possess.

Planting little seeds throughout the city and leaving a big mark on the community, Shelby’s work is impactful. Serving as a leader for all things indoor plants, she is enriching the Rochester area with more than just her green thumb. Deeply invested in wanting people to, “...start having this love for getting their hands dirty and being a part of making things beautiful,” she continues to educate herself and others. So don’t be afraid to sully your hands, for within soil is life itself.



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ANDREA DURFEE SURVEYS THE TERRAINS OF OUR LIVES

WORDS BY ALYSSA BRAULT
ARTWORK BY ANDREA DURFEE



What is our own narrative? What is the storyline that is taking place around us and how do we find ourselves fitting within it? Pieces of ourselves, slivers of our personal character, embedded within the various landscapes of our rotating lives. The changing scenery, ourselves a seed, nestled within the soil. Surrounded by crystallized rocks, decomposing leaves, marshy wetlands, and windswept fields, we find the courage to take root. Spreading our fingers, outstretching our arms, we reach further. This exploratory journey, a tale of growth as much as it is reflection. Our beings and our stories merging with nature.

Andrea Durfee is a Rochester based artist who has had art infused throughout her entire life. Growing up with a mother who was a dance teacher, creative movement was always encouraged and celebrated, whether that be through dancing or drawing. Durfee has a degree in Studio Art from Nazareth College along with a Masters in Creative Arts Therapy. However, it wasn't until later that she gave herself permission to make art her livelihood and pursue it full time. Her home studio serves as the cultivating grounds for creation. The environment that she has created is airy and serene. Not wanting to draw on materialistic influences, she instead reflects inward for meaning and understanding.

“EVERYTHING
IS TEMPORARY.
FOR GOOD AND
FOR BAD.”

Andrea originally had a focus in printmaking, but found that it was difficult to pursue without easy access to a press. This is when she crossed paths with gouache, a method of painting known for its opaque pigments. Experimenting in this foreign realm, she started to incorporate other elements, such as overlapping watercolor with pigma-micron ink. Enticed by the striking colors that gouache provides and the vibrancy it adds to the storyline, she kept with it. Coupling this with the meditative process of the inking, Durfee states that her work exhibits the “dichotomous building and breaking down of things at the same time.” A pulsating dance of waning and waxing, tides surging forward then retreating. For Andrea, art serves as a way to embody these fluctuating elements and to further examine their emotional pull. She explains that “as we grow and have new experiences, we are constantly taking on new problem solving and new challenges. Art is that time for me to slow down and work through what I am experiencing.”

Art takes on multiple forms, some displaying futuristic fashions, while others draw from the past. For her series titled “Sleeping Giants” Durfee gathered inspiration from ancient mythologies. Captivated by the chronicles of empowering women such as Persephone, Athena, and Artemis, their stories started to seep into the narrative of her work. As these giants marched on, venturing into new terrain, they started to create tales of their own. Overtime, Durfee started to insert her own personal storytelling, intrigued by the “myths” that we share with others and “the stories that we make about ourselves.”

Painting is more than a medium, it is an author's tale. The creative process carries conversation and the internal dialogue that an artist has with their own work is vital. Sitting in the studio, the stillness of the air, seconds tumbling over one another, when alone with yourself, what do you say? Durfee shares that she is in tune with the conversation that she is having with her mind and body. Paying attention to her physical being, she analyzes how she interacts with the resources around her. Taking note of the way she holds her tools, or the energy in which she is picking up the paint, “all the things I learned in art therapy I use on myself.” Whether that's identifying mannerisms or facial expressions, this self awareness gives her the flexibility to allow her mind to briefly wander, before centering back to the task at hand.

Her latest collection titled “Flood Plains” highlights that, “geographical processes often serve as a metaphor for human experience.” In her previous pieces, the sleeping giant figures represent, “...that balance of strength and fragility.” Taking this concept a step further, “Flood Plains” reveals that “we are all susceptible to the same processes, the length of time is the only difference. Everything is always being broken down and recycled, whether it’s a mountain or us.” Knowing that things are not always as they appear on the surface, one must examine the storyline that lies beneath. Saturated with varying emotions and experiences, these elements take root within our own landscapes, seeping into the soil and carrying a weight of their own. Durfee explores the questions of, “how do we take care of ourselves in times of emotional flooding... how do we then take that plain and make space for it?” Though destruction lies within the equation, so does growth and vitality. Floods may leave trenches and scars in their wake, but they also surface nutrients and make way for new life.

Gathering inspiration from the outdoors, Andrea bears witness to this continuous flux. Touching on the importance of acceptance, her art kindly reminds us that “everything is temporary. For good and for bad.” Being aware of this altering environment serves as a reminder to be anchored within the present moment. Upon viewing her artwork, she hopes that people feel at ease and that “they go out into their world and look at things differently...pay attention to the shapes that they see and be a little more present in their walk through their lives.”

With this complimenting duality, we dwell within a dreamscape. Our craft is cosmic. Through art, we can process these shifting elements and through nature we can see them take form. So when gazing out over your own flood plain, remember, nothing is ever truly gone.



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IMPACT EARTH: ONE CHOICE AT A TIME

WORDS BY: TAYLOR SOLANO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: LRI TUPRA



When it comes to bettering the environment, people often feel overwhelmed with where to begin or that their efforts are merely a drop in the pan. Enter Impact Earth and experience its “one choice at a time” mantra. Co-founder and CEO Robert Putney encourages people to “make one change and stick to it.” This can be a simple change, like bringing reusable shopping bags to the grocery store, or a larger lifestyle change, like considering your transportation choices or your food sources. All these changes add up to a growing level of eco-consciousness across Rochester that excites and motivates Putney and his team at Impact Earth. Impact Earth’s mission is clear and commendable: to create zero-waste communities, together. “There’s an awful lot of waste that’s been built into the system,” says Putney. The organization works to divert this waste in sustainable ways ranging from organics hauling and zero-waste event services to consulting and school-based education programs.

Although not from a traditional educational background in sustainability, Putney explains that his “life’s work led me to this path.” He interned as a college student at the Erie County Waste Water Authority, where he learned about water treatment and systems. He spent twenty years working in packaging sales and saw first-hand all the waste involved. More recently, Putney wrote grants for the green industry in New York State as part of his consulting company, R.M. Putney & Associates. Finally, the time came for Putney to open his own business. He teamed up with Cassidy Putney, who has a degree in sustainability, and Elizabeth Carey, who has a background in food service.

Eventually, Impact Earth was contacted for municipal projects. They are currently a part of the City of Rochester’s Single Stream Organics Feasibility Study. The city launched this study in preparation for the plastic bag ban that will go into effect in March of 2020 and the food waste ban that will be enacted January 1, 2022. “That’s a great project we’re really excited to be a part of as the City of Rochester decides how it’s going to divert its food waste,” explains Putney. The city is responding to a growing demand from its residents to become more sustainable and lessen its waste.

Today, Impact Earth is a twenty person operation and offers five major services: a school-based education program, organics hauling, zero-waste events and products, food service packaging, and their flagship zero-waste consulting program. The organization is actively involved in the Brighton and Hilton school

districts, where they work with students as part of their own curated environmental education program. Putney and his team enjoy exposing students to “a different way of looking at their natural world.” The program emphasizes the need for a community effort to promote “respect for each other and the land, for farms and where food comes from.” Students respond well to getting their hands dirty and connecting to their own backyards for new educational experiences. The education program is expanding and adding new school districts. Putney notes the importance of education in the zero-waste initiative. He describes the chain of responsibility as “awareness first, then education, then implementing new processes, products, and services, then taking ownership of that, and then pushing it out to other people.”

To make a zero-waste initiative feasible and attractive, it must be accessible to people and businesses. Impact Earth is doing just that with its organics hauling service. Residents can drop off their organic food materials and compostable items at the Rochester Public Market, First Unitarian Church, or Brighton Farmers Market for a nominal monthly fee. Commercial groups can work directly with Impact Earth to tailor their own organics hauling service. Impact Earth is active and visible in the community via its zero-waste events and products. They are regulars at farmer’s markets and festivals, and their zero-waste products, made locally, are available for sale online and at local events. Furthermore, the organization works with community groups to provide alternatives to food packaging as well as a range of customizable consulting services.

Looking ahead, Impact Earth plans to continue its work in the Rochester-Finger Lakes region while expanding to other communities that could benefit from its sustainability model. They recently opened an office in Chicago and are eager to work with new cities to carry their message nationwide. “It’s great to talk to people who get it,” Putney says. However, he is fully aware of the challenge of getting people to change their behavior and routines. “Part of it is the mindset,” he explains. Some people still do not internalize that worldwide resources have a limit. Reusing resources soon will not be an option but a requirement, and we will need systems ready to maintain that. Still, Putney lauds a “culture [that] is slowly changing,” and he is steadily witnessing people making different lifestyle choices. One choice at a time, Putney and Impact Earth call on us to “keep taking the next step, keep pushing forward.”

TAKING MEDS

STRIVING FOR STABILITY AND IDENTITY THROUGH SOBRIETY

WORDS BY: JOE LARKIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: FRANKIE BONN

The label of a “side project” can be a pejorative term. Bestowed by fans and critics alike to describe a musical endeavor which stems from a larger project, the phrase ultimately connotes inferiority in some way. In the case of Taking Meds, an alternative math rock/post-emo band stemming from Rochester-based punk rock act, Such Gold, the use of the term “side project” categorically fits, as three out of the four members are current or former members of Such Gold. However, Taking Meds directly pushes against any disrespect the term can hold by constantly touring and recording unique and quality material that holds its own ground.

Taking Meds started when guitarist Ben Kotin created math rock inspired riffs on tour, and Skylar Sarkis, who at the time was playing guitar in Such Gold, decided to sing over them. The band recruited bass player Jon Markson, and then drummer Matt Battle to complete the lineup. Upon coming together, Taking Meds, opened their own headline set at the Bug Jar while on tour with Drug Church in December of 2012. They decided to call themselves Taking Meds, as a play on the name Talking

Heads while listening to the band in Europe. Taking Meds recorded a phenomenal three song demo released in January of 2013 and quietly played a handful of shows, opening for acts such as Hop Along and booking tours primarily across the Northeastern side of the US. Taking Meds eventually released their first full length, ‘My Life as a Bro,’ in late 2016 on Broken World Media which focalized in on the power of the quartet to release intricate, yet memorable music. During the time period of the band’s inception to their first full length release, Sarkis admits that he “was not in a place in [his] life where [he] could have it together. No one in the band was taking charge.” In 2017, Sarkis made a conscious decision to go sober and push the band into a full-time touring act that not only frequently travels DIY-scenes scattered across the basements of North America, but also plays shows opening for national acts as diverse as Against Me!, Neck Deep, and Defeater.

Sarkis’s sobriety has become a catalyst for the band’s organization and consistent activity. Sarkis is honest about the role partying can hold over some people’s lives in terms of stagnating

accomplishments: “I loved drinking and drugs so much they became my priority” and “having the money” to engage in these activities took precedence over focus on the band. Of course, being in a touring band presents endless possibilities for abusing drugs and alcohol, as it’s not only available, but abuse is seen as normal, or even encouraged. Sarkis tells me a lot of his time was spent immediately leaving gigs after the set and heading to the bar. Sarkis explains that the process isn’t easy and the negative emotions that he once numbed out are now at the forefront of his thoughts, but it’s the best decision that he has made.

While attending AA meetings, Sarkis began penning the lyrics to their latest release on Near Mint Records entitled ‘I Hate Me’ which came out in July of 2019. The record is undoubtedly their strongest release yet, and opens with an absolute bang. The track opener “Big Fish” is a cathartic mass of noise that could leave an untrained ear puzzled with the rapid twists and turns its takes, but regardless of your personal musical training, it is obvious that the band has chemistry together. Sarkis asserts that the band “shares





a musical language” and oftentimes you have to “keep pressing record” to solidify and remember ideas. Part of the lyrical themes respond to and reflect Sarkis’s personal feelings of imposter syndrome, which means to feel inadequate, anxious, and untrusting of your ability to succeed. On the title track, he sings “Approach a stranger, like a honeymoon phase. Approach an old friend, like a plaintiff. I ain’t me, I hate me.” Sarkis’s lyrics are deviant of what is expected from bands in the punk scene, avoiding topics like defying authority or lyrics of heartbreak, and relating more to the struggle of finding identity in contemporary society. The song “There’s No Way” finds Sarkis panicking in overcrowded traffic about his future. A magical component of the record relates

to the production, as bassist Jon Markson handles the recording/engineering duties. The standout song of the album “Stranger Who Stares” features a guitar riff in the background of the chorus that carries behind Sarkis’s melody perfectly. ‘I Hate Me’ finds the band positioning themselves as a creative powerhouse that continues to push boundaries through their music and introspective lyrics.

Taking Meds has been non-stop lately, doing over five tours in the last two years. Sarkis began booking tours through e-mails via connects that he made on the road. He argues that success in the music industry all comes down to putting in the work for exposure: “don’t wait for anybody to do anything for you, you have

to do it yourself, you have to put in the work, you have to tour.” In the hardcore scene, touring is an essential component of not only finding fans, but maintaining an audience. The chance of going viral or people casually finding you on streaming sites is unlikely, and people generally remember the bands they see in their town and the memories they connect with seeing them. Sarkis hopes for the band to become more prolific, aiming for another full-length release in 2020, more tours, and to hopefully solidify their rotating cast of drummers through new addition Alex Salter. Taking Meds and Sarkis’s story is a clear-cut example of taking ownership of your life and pushing your art, regardless of your own insecurities or self-doubt.



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