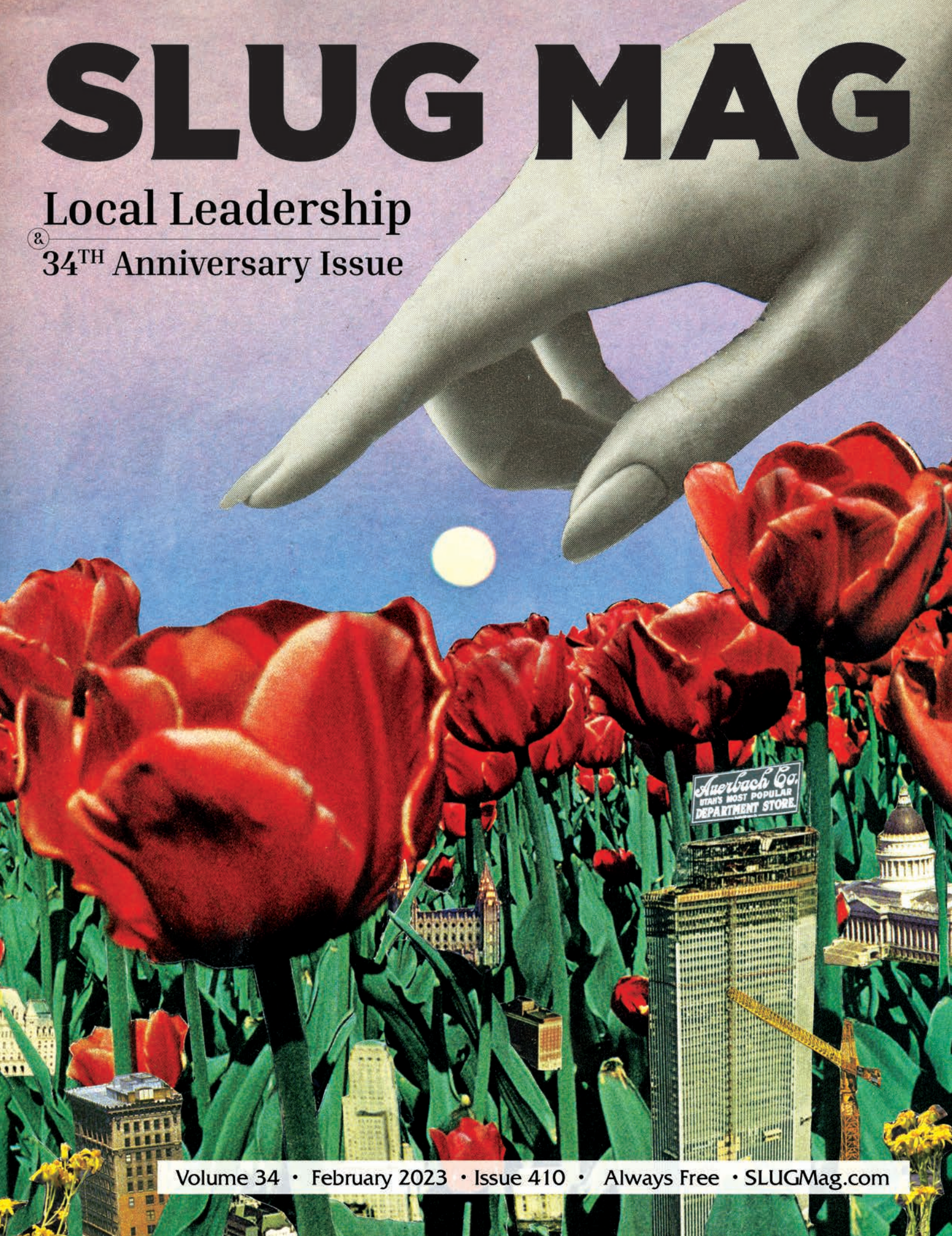


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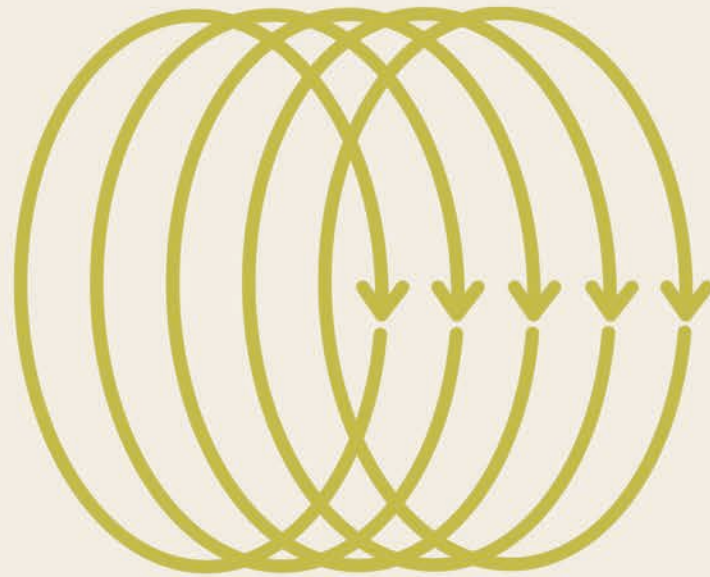


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ABOUT THE COVER: Our *Local Leadership* cover features a collage from **Hannah Dwertman** (@holybananacollages). Dwertman's typical surrealism, as well as her focus on disembodied hands, meet recognizable, Salt Lake imagery in this abstract representation of Utah leadership.

Dom Sweat

Contributor Limelight
Front-end Developer



SLUG's Front-end Developer, Dom Sweat, has been creating, adapting and supporting everything that goes into the structure of *slugmag.com* since Jan, 2022. Solving problems on the fly and tweaking our site's design, Dom's work is the glue that holds our website together—plus, it looks super cool. Thanks, Dom!

Elizabeth Leach

Contributor Limelight
Contributing Writer



Elizabeth Leach has lent her voice to covering SLC's community and arts events since February of 2022. Her informative, human-oriented style of writing shines in all of her expertly crafted SLUG features. Be sure to check Elizabeth's coverage of **Unsheltered Utah's Wendy Garvin** on page 6 in this issue.

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Videographer:

Nate Schwartz

Community Development & Advertising Sales:

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

Angela H. Brown:
sales@slugmag.com
SLUG HQ: 801.487.9221

Community Development Assistant:

Lexi Kiedaisch

Marketing Interns:

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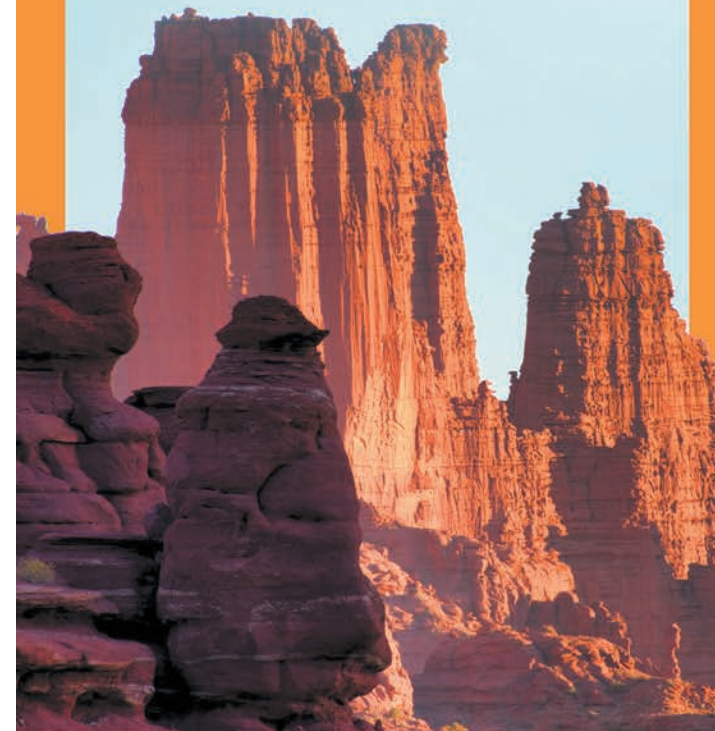
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UNSHELTERED UTAH

SURVIVING THE MORATORIUM

By Elizabeth Leach • elihanlea@gmail.com

Wendy Garvin is Executive Director of Unsheltered Utah. She humbly claims that Unsheltered Utah happened by chance. She has always been a fervent advocate for the unhoused folks in our city, so it's no surprise that she's leading the charge to help those in need of shelter.

Garvin used to work as the receptionist at a local community center. "We had ramen and coffee set out. [Some] unsheltered people became regulars," she says. "They were always polite and followed all the rules, but my bosses didn't like them. They told me I had to kick them out, and I didn't. I came to work at a community center where they wanted to kick the community out, and that didn't sit well with me." Garvin was laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic and was happy to leave. She then organized a few dinners at *Camp Last Hope*. "I posted on social media, and people started to show up. After a couple thousand dollars in donations, I decided to start a 501(c)(3)—in a way it happened to us," says Garvin.

Garvin has implemented three programs with Unsheltered Utah. First is the outreach program, where "we go to the camps and give out as much survival gear and hot meals as we can," she says. Second is a housing sponsorship program. Due to recently received funds, Unsheltered Utah can put four families at a time into motels. Federally funded programs have strict requirements that folks receiving the help have to meet. As a privately funded group,

Unsheltered Utah can help broader groups of people. The housing sponsorship program is a great intermediary step for people to get into a government funded program. The third Unsheltered Utah program is *Movie Night*, which is hosted at the *First United Methodist* church on 2nd South and 2nd East when the weather dips below 20° Fahrenheit. Unsheltered Utah will play movies all night and provide those who need shelter protection from hazardous conditions.

Movie Night is a special program in that it's an intentional obfuscation of the city's protocol. Garvin elaborates, "We cannot call it a shelter due to Erin Mendenhall's moratorium on shelters, so it's a 'movie night.' The church's protective status also means that people cannot go in and make sure that people are not sleeping during the movies that are played." Since the church is not zoned for habitation, it would technically be deemed bureaucratically inappropriate for people to use the *Movie Night* for sleep. The church's protective status plays a pivotal role in extending protection to those who need it most.

Garvin is writing a bill called Code Blue, sponsored by **Steve Eliason**, that would formalize *Movie Night* into a state-funded program. "This bill would cover weather situations (temperature dropping below a threshold, or high levels of precipitation) and allow buildings to participate in *Movie Night* and open up during extreme

conditions to provide safety for the people in need," says Garvin.

It's important to note that Unsheltered Utah is not the answer to ending homelessness. Garvin reminds us that "the major goal is to KEEP PEOPLE ALIVE until they find housing and assist in securing housing." Remembering that homelessness is a complicated issue wrought with misconceptions can help humanize the issue in our city. "[Many of us] are ... two paychecks away from being homeless; It could happen to any of us at any time. If I ended up on the street two paychecks from now, I would not be a criminal. I would not be an addict. I would be exactly who I am," says Garvin. And so would you.

To get involved, join @UnshelteredUtah on Facebook and Instagram. Monetary donations are preferred, and socks and underwear are needed to battle frostbite.



As Executive Director of Unsheltered Utah, Wendy Garvin has always been a fervent advocate for the unsheltered population of SLC.

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Free Iran SLC is a collective of activists working to raise awareness about the movement towards an egalitarian Iran.



WOMEN. LIFE. FREEDOM

A CONVERSATION WITH FREE IRAN SLC

Words and Photos By Ashton Ellis
ashton@slugmag.com

Free Iran SLC comprises an assortment of parents, scientists, students, professionals and educators that share an unbreakable commonality: a lifelong goal for a democratic and liberated Iran. **Syd** collects and organizes academic data on Iranian citizens' desire for autonomy; **Medhi** tore down photos of **Ruhollah Khomeini** in classrooms as a child; **Shanti** and **Shaveez** were in the streets of Tehran during the Green Movement of 2009; **H.H.** refused to follow the barbaric orders of the Basij militia. Propelled by a devotion to humanity, these five share their stories and skills in order to build a better future.

The dream for a Free Iran has always existed among its people. The country was once a vibrant epicenter of cultural cross-pollination, education and the arts in the Middle East before the Islamic Republic (IR) Revolution in 1979. "The Iran I grew up in was a lovely country—the Iranian people gave me a lot of love," says Shaveez. "I felt a lot of brotherhood, [and] everybody was connected. I see Iran through a very complex lens, as a place that has always had democratic aspirations."

Any remnants of a free society crumbled under the IR. The regime mandates complete compliance of the regime's law, forcing the Iranian people to exist under a strict theocracy. Noncompliance results in extreme and often life-threatening consequences. "In Iran, you have to live a double life," says Syd. Shanti agrees, "I

was never religious since I was a 6th grader, but you had to lie to be safe."

Last September, IR's morality police arrested and murdered 22-year-old **Masha Jina Amini**. Her crime was immodesty. Amini is revered as a martyr for the Iranian liberation, as Iranian women, religious minorities and LGBTQ+ individuals are bound with tighter shackles of oppression. Many activities Americans take for granted—going to a bar, smoking a cigarette, wearing nail polish—are prohibited for women in Iran. Shanti recalls being apprehended for walking in public with a man to whom she was not married. "I remember thinking, 'I've done nothing, I was just walking with a classmate, and I've been put in jail,'" she says.

The tyrannical justice system of the IR is supported by a network of censorship and isolation tactics. For 44 years, Iranians have not been able to express political dissent against the IR without fear of imprisonment. Further, media outlets internally and internationally aligned with the IR perpetuate propaganda in order to create widespread misrepresentation of the humanitarian crisis in Iran. "We need all of these independent sources to get this information out of Iran," Medhi says.

While the members of Free Iran SLC are protected and established in Utah, they are inspired by the young people in Iran who are risking it all to practice their beliefs. "After what happened to Masha Amini, some of us

wanted to express concerns and thought that we could have a better outcome if we organized," says H.H. "We were in a coffee shop thinking, 'What can we do to help the people in Iran?'" They worked together in different ways, creating a platform, flyers and a podcast, writing proposals and petitions and tying their hands to trees at *President's Circle* while singing Kurdish songs in an act of solidarity.

The group emphasizes that raising awareness of what Iranians are fighting for is necessary to incite change at a global level. "There is a lot of misinformation [that] belittles this movement to economic hardship or hijab," H.H. says. Medhi adds, "The notion that 'This is just how their culture is' needs to be erased." The goal is to not reform the system, but to create something entirely new. Shanti says, "We need to stop recognizing this system, and then we can make a difference that is good for the people of Iran and the world. If it is good for women, it is good for everyone."

Head to @freeiran.slc on Instagram and free-iran-slc.com for updates on rallies, petitions and other ways to get involved.

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FIT TO RECOVER

a community for lasting change

By Alexie Zollinger • alexiewritesslc444@gmail.com

Fit to Recover is making lasting sobriety a reality for those in recovery by providing a place for members of the recovery community to gather, get vulnerable, get creative or break a sweat. This nonprofit is built on four pillars—nutrition, creative arts, fitness and community service. What started as a Facebook invite to an exercise “boot camp” in *Sugarhouse Park* in 2013 has snowballed into a full operation that opens its arms to the addiction and recovery community with love.

FTR’s Founder and Executive Director, **Ian Acker**, is in recovery, describing it as an everyday battle where you choose sobriety each day. When Acker left recovery programs after getting sober, he found he was spun around and thrown back into “regular life,” which made it hard to maintain the changes and keep distance from substances. “The motivation for me was to make this something accessible to as many people as we could because I saw a need for it. I went to treatment a number of times, and every time I got out of treatment, I didn’t know where to go,” Acker says. “What I found is you need connection [and] to stay plugged in to some sort of recovery, whether that’s meetings [or] therapy.”

These connections can include making new friends, exercising or learning new skills. FTR members might be in class painting, exercising or learning how to make music on studio equipment. Acker says these activities give members more confidence in themselves and their ability to stay sober. He compares this to the feeling of eating a meal you have cooked yourself versus a take-out meal, describing these acts as “esteemable.” “The more ‘esteemable’ acts you do and the more times you give back [or] help somebody, the more confidence you get,” Acker says.

FTR’s fitness programming is built around the needs of the community—all of the curriculum is trauma informed and designed to help members battle addiction. Acker says, “The first part is connection, the middle part is empowerment and the last part is accountability. It’s all programmed with barbells, kettlebells, bodyweight and it gives everybody an opportunity to finish what they started. So, people aren’t timed.” The exercise classes often include lots of partner exercises that foster connections and friendships.

FTR’s creative arts pillar draws dozens to weekly art groups where members check in with each other, explore their emotions and share their feelings over paint canvases or through song and poetry. “I think people in recovery are incredibly creative—they just don’t know where to put their creativity,” Acker says. “It’s unbelievable what is misplaced in drugs and alcohol [or] crime. If you give somebody a blank canvas, it’s amazing what they create.”

FTR’s biggest priority is nurturing emotional safety—if people don’t feel safe, they don’t connect. “If they don’t connect, they disengage; if they disengage, they feel isolated, [then] they get depressed. The whole root of this place is to be inviting enough that you feel like you can take your guard down and connect with other people,” he says.

FTR aims to keep membership options accessible. The full membership, which grants access to all classes, groups and programs, is \$40/month, while if someone only wants access to the creative arts program alone, it costs \$10/month. FTR also offers **Nicholas Zurn** scholarships, which cover a month of programming.

FTR’s new facility in South Salt Lake (1335 S. Major St.) opened on Jan. 7. The new location has two separate buildings, giving each pillar its own space and priority. Although the gym has just opened its doors, Acker is always looking ahead. His long-term investments and goals are to build community support in the ballpark area and Major street with accessible, neighborhood-run food trucks, cafes, a workforce services location and housing.

To check out FTR’s programs, purchase a membership or learn more, head to the organization’s website, fit2recover.org. Keep up with them on Instagram at [@fit_2recover](https://www.instagram.com/fit_2recover).

FTR
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EXERCISING RECOVERY



Photo: Katarina Duerr

Ian Acker founded Fit to Recover to offer the addiction and recovery community a space to connect, heal and grow together.



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Utah Abortion Fund:

Aiding in the Fight to Sustain Reproductive Wellness

By Jamie Christensen • jamie@slugmag.com

On Friday June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, a piece of legislation that made abortion access a federal right within the United States. Many joined together this summer to protest at the *Utah State Capitol* to let government officials know they would not settle for unjust legislation that controlled their bodies. Slowly, protests and events became less frequent, but the fight for abortion healthcare continues. *The Utah Abortion Fund (UTAF)* continues to advocate and fight for reproductive justice for individuals in Utah seeking support and assistance.

As well as being advocates for reproductive rights, *UTAF* is an “autonomous, grassroots collective offering abortion funding, education and solidarity-centered support,” says a representative of the anonymous-facing group. “Our vision is to increase reproductive justice by redistributing resources, sharing information and providing support to anyone experiencing barriers and oppression under Utah’s restrictive abortion laws.” With the belief that every person deserves access to abortion care, *UTAF* operates under frameworks of racial, economic and gendered healthcare inclusivity. The fund was created in 2019 and has been working alongside *The National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF)*—an organization created 30 years ago to support smaller, grassroots funds—since they were founded.

UTAF offers a variety of resources to aid those seeking abortion care, but they primarily dedicate time to operating their healthline. “It takes a lot of work behind the scenes to coordinate with our callers, clinics, volunteers and other funds,” they say. Reasons why an individual may call or reach out to *UTAF* is because they need financial assistance to pay for an abortion, assistance finding or getting to a clinic or help navigating healthcare barriers. Those requiring financial aid may email *UTAF* at hello@utafund.org, but since they are a small, volunteer-run collective, it may take them up to 48 hours to get in touch.

“We have a monthly budget that we allocate to support callers,” they say. “*UTAF* doesn’t have any eligibility requirements for funding support, and we trust callers to communicate what they need so we can support the best we can within our monthly budget.” *UTAF* offers financial assistance for anyone within—or traveling to—Utah. This can include paying the portion of an abortion procedure or gas and hotel payments. They say, “Our callers are navigating travel, childcare, work schedules and other obstacles in order to get abortion care. We try to lighten that burden as much as we can.”

Beyond guidance about the nearest abortion clinic and general education about the legal status of abortion in Utah, *UTAF* also offers free reproductive wellness packages that anyone can request. Within their “Repro Wellness Kits,” one can find emergency contraception pills, condoms, lube and pregnancy tests. “We want to give folks as many options as possible, so we have lots of condom varieties and add ons like dental dams and ovulation tests,” they say. “We hope that by making them available

by mail, folks can learn about different sexual and reproductive health tools and learn more about our work.”

UTAF accepts one-time and recurring donations, the link for which can be found on their website, utabortionfund.org. Their Amazon wish-list is another resource where you can donate more practical items such as shipping materials for their wellness kits and paper and toner for outreach materials. For those looking to get involved or volunteer, *UTAF*’s *Fund-a-Thon* begins in March and is their biggest fundraising event of the year. Their social media accounts are the easiest way to find volunteer opportunities and information on future events as well as how to request a wellness kit.

With an uncertain future for abortion healthcare in Utah, *UTAF* provides crucial solidarity and stability. Check them out on their socials [@utabortionfund](https://twitter.com/utabortionfund) for the latest updates and consider donating to their cause.



The *Utah Abortion Fund* supports reproductive justice by redistributing resources, sharing information and providing aid for those seeking abortion care.



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When you've been entrenched in Salt Lake's underground musical community, you've seen plenty of venues go up and come down, no matter their prominence, cultural significance or the amount of history between their walls. Two years ago, **Jeremy Spence** and **Katie "Gunner Bandura" Maloney** bought a vacant building on State Street that was once a little café. They gutted and rebuilt it to the mold of venues past, creating *Aces High Saloon*, a venue-bar hybrid in the style of an "outlaw, biker bar" whose very name references two of metal's biggest caveats, calling out to the metalheads, punk rockers and all other outlaws and burnouts.

"When you meet another punk rocker or metalhead, it's kind of an instant connection," says Maloney. "When people come into the bar from anywhere else, it's an immediate, 'This is where I belong.'" You'll know exactly what she means when you set foot inside *Aces*—the walls are plastered with stickers, posters and show flyers from as far back as 40 years ago. The windows are draped with band banners, and a mural of the artwork from **Judas Priest's** *Screaming for Vengeance* takes up an entire wall near the bathrooms. "Sort of looks like the bedroom you had when you were 17," says Spence. Maloney adds, "But nicer—all the posters are framed."

Spence and Maloney's push to open *Aces High* stems from their passion garnered through years of experience within the local, underground music scene. "It's definitely part of the fabric of our existence," says Maloney. "We get to meet the best people, not only in SLC but around the world." What started as pillow talk between her and Spence turned into reality when they signed their lease in January 2020. Despite the pandemic jeopardizing their original plan, the duo pulled through and



(L-R) Jeremy Spence and Katie "Gunner Bandura" Maloney created venue-bar hybrid *Aces High Saloon*.

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officially launched *Aces* in September of that year. "We ran out of our building funds, so we had to do it," says Maloney. "2020 was pretty scary. We didn't have a liquor license, and we couldn't do shows, but by January 2021, we got our license and it's been uphill from there," she says.

Spence and Maloney modeled their order of operations after historic SLC venue *Burt's Tiki Lounge* in that *Aces* is practically "open all day, every day." You can come in, order food, shoot pool, play pinball, hang out with the bartenders and listen to metal. *Aces* is, first and foremost, a venue for its local community—everyone knows everybody and anyone can book a show. Their patrons, as well as their staff, are somehow involved in the music scene and use their skills and connections to help solidify *Aces High* as a crucial destination in both the local scene and on bands' tour rosters.

Scott Wardle (Folk Hogan) used to do sound for *Burt's* and now harnesses his skills for *Aces'* soundboard, and **Jake Rogers (Visigoth)** invites his friends from international touring bands to come hang out when they are rolling through SLC (he even set up a meet-and-greet with **Katatonina**). "We have **Ron Martinez** from **Crawlspace Booking** sending us huge shows," says Spence. "He knows what we're doing. He gets feedback from bands that play here and love SLC because of it."

Spence and Maloney's passion is prominent. Until it fades, they're going to take *Aces* as far as they can. "At the end of the day, we're just punk rock and metal nerds to the point where it's ingrained in our soul. It was just a place that needed to be," says Spence. If the phrase "the sky's the limit" reads true, then that is how high these aces are going to fly. Cheers!



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Sapa Investment Group: SUCCESS AS A "HEART-CENTERED" BUSINESS

By: Carlyle Price • Carlylep@gmail.com

Sitting down inside of *Sapa Sushi Bar & Asian Grill* in midtown, I couldn't help but admire the cool tones and abstract light fixtures. Even the bottles behind the bar matched the color scheme, creating a fluid, put-together space. I sat across from **Hoang Nguyen**, the Managing Director and Co-founder of *Sapa Investment Group (SIG)*, which was founded in 2020. *SIG* has founded and invested in multiple businesses dealing in hospitality and real estate, even opening their own pharmacy. As one of seven children of the family-owned and -operated business, Nguyen focuses mainly on public outreach.

The Nguyen family fled Vietnam after the war and moved from Northern California to the Salt Lake Valley in 1992. "It's a very close, tight-knit family," Nguyen says, "and the majority of us work within the company." *SIG* are able to keep their business vertically integrated by employing over 500 people in *SIG's* construction company, commercial real estate company and a nonprofit food equity enterprise called *The Foundry Food Hub*.

SIG's early business ventures centered around hospitality, starting with restaurants including *Purgatory Bar*, *Fillings & Emulsions* bakery and *Fat Fish*. Beyond restaurants, Nguyen says her family wanted their businesses to focus on a "heart-centered community," one where they could improve people's lives.

The Nguyen family struggled for years before starting *SIG* and were grateful for the people who

helped them make it through hard years. "How do we touch people in a meaningful way that helps improve each other? That part centers communities; it drives our direction of growth and whatever we decide to spend our time and energy on," Nguyen says. She smiles and points out the window to a large building across the street, *Dragonfly Wellness*, Utah's first medical cannabis pharmacy and one of *SIG's* investment properties.

Sapa has another medical cannabis pharmacy in Price, which opened in 2022 to increase access in eastern Utah. "When we looked up Price, they had the highest opioid and meth epidemic back in 2018," Nguyen says. *SIG* presented their research and proposed their pharmacy as a way to ameliorate opioid dependency. "They were more than willing to welcome us with open arms because we could show that medical cannabis is a much safer alternative than prescribing opioids." *Dragonfly* donates monthly to the **Last Prisoner Project** to help work towards policy changes to fight for those who have been incarcerated for cannabis-related crimes.

Nguyen uses her position to advocate and help those in her community by serving on many boards throughout the state. She is chair of several boards,



Photo: John Barkiple

Hoang Nguyen is the Managing Director and Co-founder of *Sapa Investment Group*, which has founded and invested in multiple successful businesses since forming in 2020.

including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of *ULLI Utah*, a nonprofit organization, as well as the Midtown Business District Board, which reaches 500 local businesses in the downtown Salt Lake area. Notably, Nguyen is a member of the advisory committee for *Geraldine E. King Women's Resource Center* which sits cater-corner from *Sapa Sushi*. *SIG* made it a priority that the women and others in the community have a clean environment. "Every Thursday morning, we do what's called a 'rise and revive' to help clean up the neighborhood," Nguyen says. Residents of the resource center, as well as *SIG* employees, join together to clean up trash in the neighborhood.

"Serving on these boards is my way of being able to bring my own background and experiences ... I'm trying to see how we can bring more diversity, equity and inclusion into everything," Nguyen says. She hopes that she can make a difference for the next generations by using her time to push for issues that matter. With these efforts and their care for the community, *SIG* has been a force for change in Salt Lake, shaping the midtown scene with their leadership.

Always pushing for progress, the Nguyen family is excited to foster their current businesses while also working on new ways to expand their outreach for years to come. Learn more about *Sapa Investment Group* at sapainvestment.com.

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A Cross-Cultural Embrace at Afghan Kitchen

By Addison Rose
addiesan.sl@gmail.com

It takes immense courage to uproot one's life and start over on unfamiliar soil. It takes even more courage to enter the restaurant industry in a country whose mainstream culture isn't familiar with, or is even fearful of, your heritage and cuisine. **Wali Arshad Salem** and **Naeem Amel** persevered through culture shock and a hostile political climate when opening *Afghan Kitchen* in 2015.

The two childhood friends moved to Salt Lake City a decade apart, drawn by its similarity in landscape and climate to their home city of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. Salem had spent years working on cultural revitalization projects and as head of HR for the United Nations, which put a target on his back with the Taliban. He started as an online bank teller after arriving in Salt Lake City but found his work devoid of fulfillment. Amel approached Salem about opening a restaurant with a goal "to present our food and let people know Afghanistan better." Salem saw an opportunity to return to his roots and share his culture with the Salt Lake community.

As an epicenter on the Silk Road, Afghan culture has millennia of cross-cultural influence. Their food is richly spiced and fragrant, based around various preparations of rice. Mutton, beef, and poultry are used when finances allow, and, due to economic restrictions, many families rely on vegetables for most meals, which makes Afghan cuisine an approachable and flavorful choice for vegetarians. Korma, kabob and a traditional dumpling called Mantu are also common offerings. Afghan cuisine is a "Goldilocks situ-

ation," Salem says, "... somewhere between Iranian and Indian food—Afghanistan is literally located between the two countries."

At first, the going was rough. Despite having great skill as a chef, Amel had little managerial experience, and Salem knew nothing about the ins and outs of restaurant ownership. Another challenge was narrowing down which Afghan dishes would appeal to Utahn palates. Naeem learned to cook from his mother and emulates her recipes in *Afghan Kitchen's* menu. "[We] cook them with passion. Everything comes out of love," he says. To their surprise, the community embraced these traditional meals. The result has been a streamlined menu of Afghanistan's best offerings, giving Salt Lake City a transportive dining experience. Salem's menu item of choice is a dish called Borani Banjan, which is fried eggplant



Photo: Bonneville Jones

Afghan Kitchen's Wali Saleem offers beef Mantu, a palette of colorful flavors.

stewed with tomatoes and topped with a tangy, garlic-yogurt sauce and sprinkle of dried mint.

Seven years and two locations later, Salem and Amel continue to provide a cornerstone for the Middle Eastern community in Salt Lake City. Outside of sharing their culture via the restaurant, *Afghan Kitchen* takes an open-handed approach in their local leadership by sponsoring events for a home-grown nonprofit called *Women of the World*. Founded by long-time Utah resident and Iraqi immigrant **Samira Harnish**, the organization serves to empower women of all nationalities—regardless of status—to build social and economic independence. A pillar of *Afghan Kitchen* is creating reciprocal support to immigrant and refugee Utahns through collaboration and compassion.

Afghan Kitchen is a testament to what it means to thrive in the face of adversity. Salem and Amel stand as courageous and dynamic representatives of a misunderstood and misrepresented culture. Their hope is that by using food as an avenue for connection, they can rewrite the media's narrative around Afghanistan. "I want people to know that [Afghanistan] is a country full of rich culture ... People [who] have never seen or heard about the true culture, it is an amazing place," says Salem.

Afghanistan is a country as warm and welcoming as its cuisine with mountains not unlike our own. Fostering a deeper understanding of Afghanistan's traditions, hospitality and history begins with taking the time to savor and learn. For more about *Afghan Kitchen*, head to afghan-kitchen.com and [@afghankitchenslc](https://www.instagram.com/afghankitchenslc) on Instagram.

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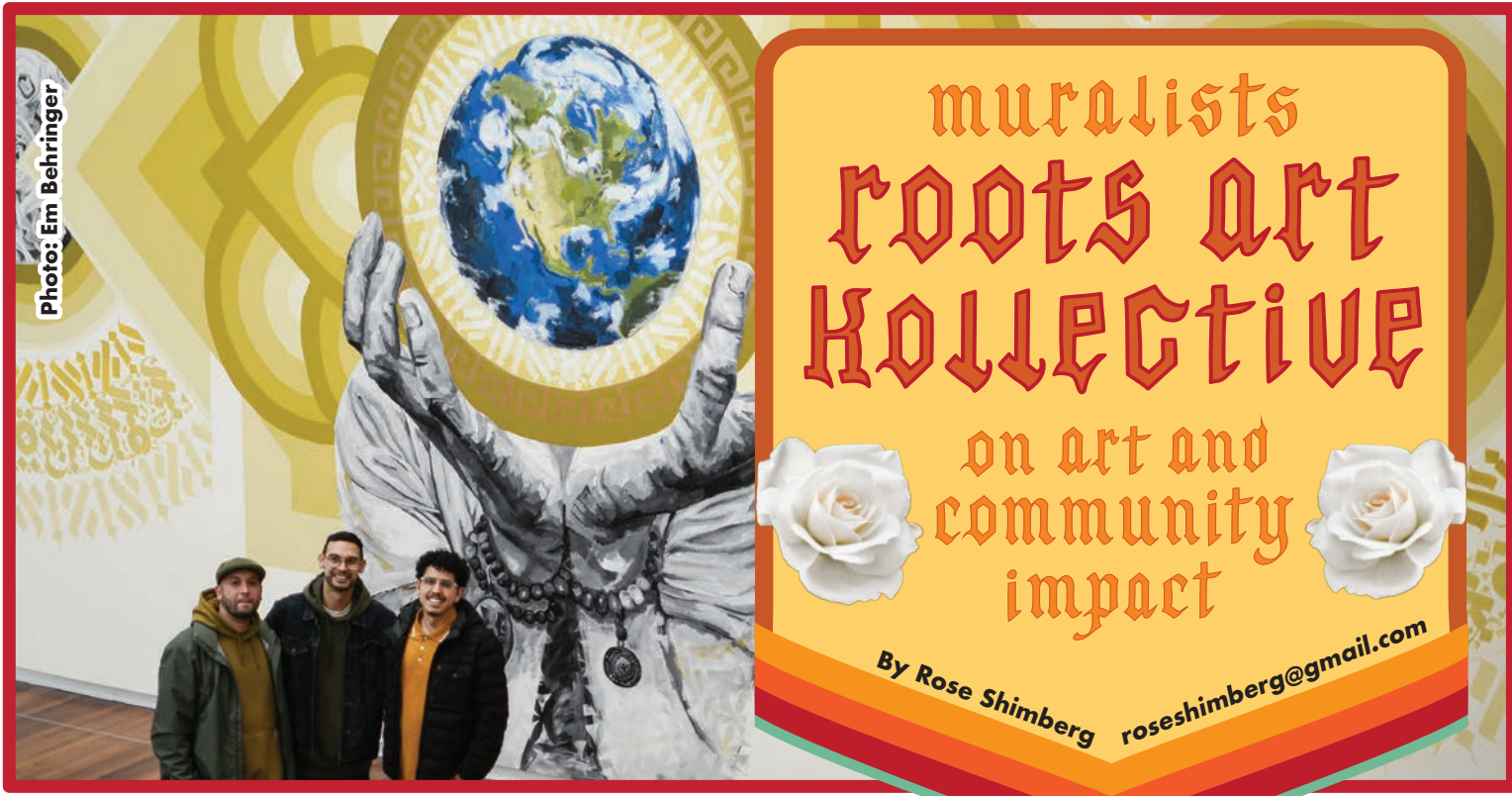


Photo: Em Behringer

Showcased in UMFA (pictured), Roots Art Collective muralist trio of (L-R) Miguel Galaz, Luis Novoa and Alan Ochoa hopes their murals inspire youth to dream big.

As a kid, **Luis Novoa** was transfixed by *Ave Maria*, painted in 2009 by famous duo **El Mac** and **Retna**. The mural towers as a 44-foot-tall depiction of the Virgin Mary on the side of the old *Guthrie Bicycles* building in downtown Salt Lake City, with prayers surrounding her in calligraphy. “This Virgin Mary mural ... it’s one of the main reasons why I paint murals,” says Novoa. “Those artists probably don’t even know me ... but they impacted me my whole life.” Novoa is one third of Roots Art Collective, or RAK, a group of muralists and leaders in the Salt Lake City art scene. The group’s other members, **Miguel Galaz** and **Alan Ochoa**, also reference the work’s importance on them growing up. Now, their studio is in that very building. “It was kind of a full circle moment for us,” says Novoa.

The trio shares a Mexican-American heritage and a West Side upbringing, and each member has a distinct style they bring to their collaborations. Galaz’s bold, symmetrical patterns, inspired by Meso-american motifs, form the backbone of the work. Ochoa paints detailed flora and fauna, incorporating his knowledge of ecology. Rounding out the group, Novoa adds his calligraphy. The words inspire the title of each piece and tie together its greater theme.

The three sections, though stylistically distinct from each other, synthesize into an immediately recognizable look. RAK brainstorms each mural together, bouncing ideas back and forth. At the wall, they start with measuring and drafting for Galaz’s geometry. “Once that’s laid out, we split up into our separate focal points,” says Ochoa. Galaz adds, “We each have our section that we paint, but we tend to finish at around the same time, which is cool.”

Inspired by the influential trio of 1920s Mexican muralists **Los Tres Grandes**, RAK joins in a rich tradition. “It’s kind of cool to see that we’re following those paths but also adding to that legacy... of storytellers on the wall,” Novoa says. As a group, they’ve painted murals all over Salt Lake City and in other states. Recently, their work was featured at the *UMFA*. But, they didn’t start because of these opportunities or the money that came with them. “We were just trying to paint,” says Ochoa, “for free or even at a cost to us.” Novoa agrees: “These are our communities, right? So, we want to add to them,” he says.

The three members of RAK are reluctant to describe themselves as leaders, but they view the acknowledgment to be validating of their efforts. “That took us by surprise,” says Galaz. “That was our goal—to kind of

have an impact.” Ochoa adds, “If we are leaders in community art ... it just makes me [think] we need to do more. We gotta do more murals that are free for the community ... just figure out a way to make that happen. Because ... even though we started painting in the West Side area, there are still not a lot of murals over there.”

The three artists were drawn to murals because they share a drive to create something big with a tangible impact. They are mindful of their power in the community and their role in adding to its beauty. “As soon as we finish [the murals], they become yours, you know? They become the community’s,” says Novoa. “So we try to take into account who will see it every day. Enjoy it, feel it, experience it.” They hope their work will encourage more local kids to make art and dream big. They are both adding to a legacy and laying the groundwork for whoever’s coming next. “[Murals] serve as inspiration while growing up and seeing that it’s possible,” Galaz says. “There’s so many ways to create art ... and send a positive message that people can connect with.”

Learn more about Roots Art Collective at their website, rootsartcollective.com, or on Instagram [@therak.murals](https://www.instagram.com/therak.murals). Novoa’s art will also be featured at *Urban Arts Gallery* in their February show, *Notes from the Margins*.



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2/11 Sat. DJ : James Beard

2/17 Fri. DJ : Rahkeem

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2/19 Sun. DJ : Spaz - R&B Night

2/24 Fri.. DJ : Bo York

2/25 Sat. DJ : Spaz



SLUG MAG 34TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

By Andrew Christiansen • achristiansen01@gmail.com

For 34 years, *SLUG Magazine* has been amplifying Salt Lake City's thriving alternative and underrepresented music, arts, events and community subcultures with thoughtful media coverage and exclusive event curation. In celebration of the anniversary, we're holding a one-of-a-kind night of live music where 34 local artists will perform one song each on Saturday, February 11, at *Urban Lounge* and *Blue Gene's*, with doors at 7 p.m. and music starting at 8 p.m.

Angel Magic

@angelmagicband

Angel Magic, an experimental electronic duo comprising of Lauren Smith and Andrew Aguilera, pieces together elements from their individual music projects to create texturally blissful songs.

Ben Ra

@fakebenra

A important part of the local hip-hop scene for the majority of the last decade, Ben Ra provides reliable high-energy rap with engaging lyrics that always keep it real.

Cera Gibson

@ceragibson

Cera Gibson writes authentic, dark pop songs with musical influences ranging from '80s synths to electronic hip-hop beats about her lived experience—heartbreak, frustration and feelings of empowerment.

CLUB MUNGO

@clubmungo

This five-person collective boasts confidence in their accessible and dynamic rap and R&B sound that embraces their chemistry, with lyrics exploring the struggles of navigating life as a young adult.

Doom Cupcake

@doomcupcakeuwu

DoomCupcake has exciting potential in the local scene with an alluring, alternative

metal sound that is as calculated as it is a display of raw, fresh energy.

Doumie

@_doumie

Through to-the-point lyrics and smooth, soulful melodies, Doumie's music showcases her talent as a vocalist as she speaks to relatable experiences that evoke both sorrow and happiness.

Duncan Clawson

@duncy_poo

Consisting of mostly slower-paced instrumental guitar and piano compositions, listening to Duncan Clawson's music is relaxing, but it also manages to tell a story through the rhythms and strumming patterns.

Ferrari\$Smoke

@FERRARITWOX

Originally from North Carolina, FERRARI\$SMOKE makes hard-hitting, modern trap tracks that also incorporate pop and hip-hop that display his talent as a rapper with impressive varying flows.

FERN

@fern.sl.c

FERN's music is beautifully chaotic and rough around the edges, with a sound that blends punk, psych and surf-rock with doom and shoegaze to explore dark corners of depression and alienation.

Fight the Future

@fight.the.future

The Salt Lake punk band's music combines heavy, hard-core guitar, melodic bass lines, driving drums and yelled vocals that discuss subjects including trans rights, feminism and *The X-Files*.

Filth Lords

@filthlords

Filth Lords' music can best be described as aggressive street punk that shines in its raw, intense energy and catchy guitar riffs that should make all listeners bang their heads along.

Freemind Movement

@freemindmvt

Freemind Movement, which consists of 3 MCs and one DJ, brings a combination of piano, classic snares, traditional beat breaks and engaging, substantive lyrics.

Fuck The Informer

Legendary Utah punk group Fuck the Informer has been making waves in the scene since the mid 2000s, blending equal parts politics and partying into their unique music.

Gavanni

@gavanni.exe

Gavanni, who immigrated to the U.S. from Nigeria when he was 17, has crafted a unique sound that blends a mix of traditional R&B, Western pop and afrobeats.

Icky Rogers

@ickyrogers

Icky's music can best be described as cosmic hip-hop with witty lyrics that are lighthearted and introspective as he explores mysticism, nightlife and underground street culture.

it foot, it ears

The avant-garde duo's music displays impressive technical ability and compositional intricacy with unconventional percussion and frantic vocals, as well as lyrics that embrace the duo's unique personality and wit.

Jon Bean & The Eyerollers

@jonbeanandtheeyerollers

Jon Bean and The Eyerollers are a relatively new band on the SLC music scene, but the members have all been a part of various punk and rock groups for decades.

Josaleigh Pollett (solo performance)

@brosaleigh

A mainstay in the local scene, Josaleigh Pollett wields an intimate, indie sing-songwriter sound when they perform solo with personal lyrics that are cautiously vulnerable.

Lindsay Heath Orchestra

@lindsay_heath_orchestra

Lindsay Heath Orchestra's music displays incredible

talent in its varied, orchestral instrumentation and Heath's versatile and full voice, resulting in what could be summarized as cinematic doom metal.

maximradar

@maximradar

maximradar makes synth-forward, new wave-inspired music that simultaneously makes you want to dance your heart out and feel your emotions through angsty, poetic lyrics about love and grief.

Milne

@milne_official

Milne's music pulls inspiration from dream pop and post-punk with reverb-infused synth arpeggios and beautifully tender, falsetto vocals that create an easy-listening experience.

MOD

@onetruemod

It's difficult to categorize MOD's unique musical style because it reaches beyond the borders of genre, welcoming a collage of different sounds and musical approaches including alternative pop, R&B, rap and rock.

MYKAH

@mykahmusic

Originally from Portland, Oregon, MYKAH's dance-pop sound is filled with catchy hooks and raw lyricism that invites listeners to resonate with the message while grooving along.

PFuzz

@pfuzzofficial

PFuzz makes music that combines her background as a classically trained violinist with a psychedelic, bass-heavy sound that incorporates detailed sound design and melodies interspersed with welcomed ear candy.

Petr Chubak

@petr_chubak

Petr Chubak's music can best be described as emotional folk that features a unique, raw voice that sings about his struggles with mental health and communicating with others.

Rachael Jenkins

@rachiichachii

Rachael Jenkins' music invites the listener to a melancholic, acoustic landscape that features her beautifully tender voice and vulnerable lyrics that speak her truths on emotional wounds and religious trauma.

Red Bennies

@red.bennies

David Payne's ever-rotating experimental punk ensemble, Red Bennies, describe themselves as a "techsoteric theist worship music group" and delivers on the esoteric promises of this description.

Ryan Jensen & Friends

Ryan Jensen, who previously played in Vile Blue Shades and The Corleones, brings raw energy to his music that incorporates infectious electric guitar rock with raunchy lyricism.

Scott Lippitt

@scott_lippitt_music

For the past decade, Scott Lippitt has made gloomy, thoughtful and engaging indie pop with narrative lyricism that explores self-examination while remaining hopeful.

Stella Standingbear

@stellastandingbear

Originally from the Lakota Nation, Stella Standingbear embraces a melodic rap sound that is affecting in its uplifting lyrics about persevering through her struggles to succeed.

Stephan and the Pachyderm

One half of the band Fur Foxen, Stephan and the Pachyderm provides an independent, folk sound that features keys, guitar, occasional drums and Stephan Darland's intimate vocals.

Tomper

@tomperband

Tomper, a new band in the local scene, make romantic contemporary pop that embraces '70s nostalgia, danceable grooves and harmonious vocals that come from the heart.

VVNroyel

@xo.vnroyel

With a melodic electronic, hip-hop sound, VVNroyel's music is irresistibly catchy with bass-boosted beats, auto-tuned-soaked vocals and personal lyrics that explore topics like self-expression, understanding and relatability.

Zigga

@ziggabiz

Zigga makes energetic and aggressive hip-hop songs with sincere lyrics about love and the values he holds over a mix of hard-hitting beats and more recently, rock instrumentation.



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Photo: John Taylor

THE BAGEL PROJECT

old world bagels and bialys

By Kara Dempsey • karadempsey@karadwrites.com



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Robb Abrams bakes fresh batches of *The Bagel Project's* delicious and allergen-friendly menu every morning for hungry bagel enthusiasts.

Bagels are the king of breakfast foods. Pancakes have a time and place, and burritos are great when you're hungover, but bagels are another story. Perfect for dine-in or to-go, they can be sweet or savory, and finding a legit bagel maker can change your life. Outside of New York City, *The Bagel Project* is as close to the real thing as you can get. Sold out daily faster than you can blink with a line that wraps around the building, this gem is located a block from Liberty Park and produces some of the greatest bagels available in Salt Lake City.

They pride themselves in making most of their products from scratch or by sourcing items from local artisans such as *Salsa del Diablo*. A proper bagel is well-baked, with a thin, even-colored crust and a dense, chewy interior. *The Bagel Project's* vegan-friendly bagels are also inclusive to customers with food allergies and are baked fresh every day that they're open. The store offers an extensive menu including an array of schmears, bagel sandwiches and popular bagels such as the Everything, Cinnamon Raisin, Onion and Poppy Seed.

Owner **Robb Abrams** perfected his bagels after six strenuous months of trial and error and knew they were something special when he turned around to sell 300 in 45 minutes at the *Salt Lake City Winter Farmers' Market* in 2013. With the support of friends, family and **Jorge Fierro** of *Rico Brand*, Abrams opened a brick and mortar just two years later and became a renowned SLC hotspot, establishing *The Bagel Project* as the city's first bagelry.

My favorite combination is a toasted Everything bagel loaded with *The Bagel Project's* house-flavored Scallion Cream Cheese (\$3.25). If you're wanting something sweeter, try the delicious Nana Bea (\$5.50), which is a bagel of your choice (Cinnamon Raisin being highly recommended here) with house-made, seasonal jam and plain cream cheese. A classic on the menu is the Lox & Loaded (\$10.00) that comes with house-cured, responsibly sourced Gravlax, red onions, capers, lemon juice and cream cheese on the bagel of your choosing.

Free of conditioners, preservatives and sugars, their proprietary dough formula proves that you don't need New York City water to make a good bagel. Abrams says, "*The Bagel Project* is its own culture" and works to provide the "community with the freshest, [most] soul-full ingredients."

The Poblano Picasso (\$8.50) boasts *Salsa del Diablo's* Pumpkin Seed Poblano spread with Manchego cheese, fresh tomato, arugula, and cilantro. My coworkers can't get enough of the Fried Egg, Cheese & Bacon (\$8.00),

which comes with organic, cage-free eggs, cheddar cheese and crispy, smoked applewood bacon and is grilled to perfection on the bagel line. An add on called The Works (\$1.75) throws fresh arugula, red onions and house-made pesto on any sandwich. (Unless you are an adventurous eater, The Works may not pair so well with the Nana Bea).

One thing that sets *The Bagel Project* apart, other than their unbelievable bagels, is their selection of Challah (\$6.75) and Bialys. Challah is a golden, braided loaf of bread and makes amazing French toast or, my personal favorite, eaten fresh from the oven drizzled with honey. Bialys are chewy rolls with an indented middle filled with caramelized onions and poppy seeds. Both are classics in the culinary world and should be tried by everyone at least once.

Order online as early as you can to avoid a dreaded "Sold Out," or tempt the fates by swinging by in person. The adorable little shop is welcoming and always smells intoxicatingly of baked bread. Don't forget to grab a piping hot cup of coffee on your way out. Help a small business by leaving a review on Google and/or Yelp, and follow them on Instagram @thebagelproject_slc and Facebook @thebagelproject for great photos and updates.

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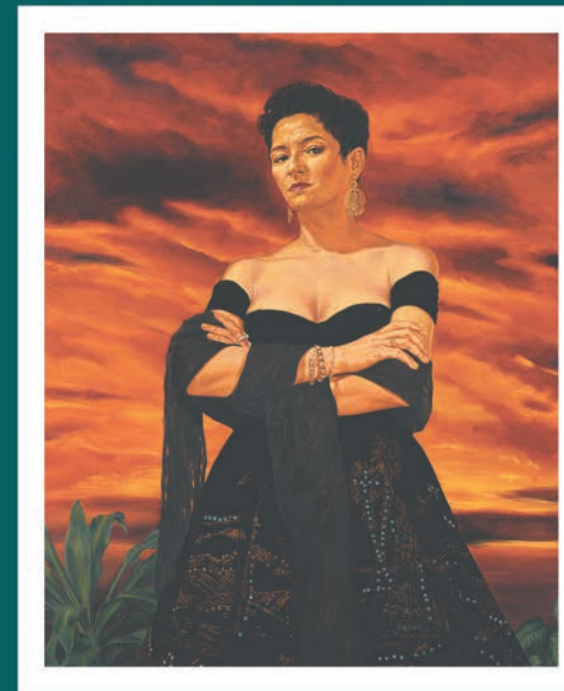
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SNOW

"The mountains are where I feel most alive, and snowboarding allows my soul the creative expression to escape from the world around," says Austin Brake. Austin grew up in Kentucky but decided to relocate to pursue bigger mountains and a place where

By Jovanny Villalobos • countercultureconscious.com

he belonged. Not too long after, *Brighton* became his home away from home. Austin is currently enjoying one of the best winters Utah's had in decades. Jumping off of cliffs is a bit easier knowing you have 400" of Utah powder to brace your landing



Austin Brake - Brighton Resort, Utah

MUSIC REVIEWS 34TH Anniversary Issue



Black Belt Eagle Scout – *The Land, The Water, The Sky*

(Saddle Creek, 02.10)

Black Belt Eagle Scout = Sleater-Kinney + Japanese Breakfast

–Mekenna Malan



M(h)aol – *Attachment Styles*

(TULLE, 02.03)

M(h)aol = LCD Soundsystem + Bikini Kill

–Alexis Perno

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ALICE PHOEBE LOU DEERHOOF DREAMER ISIOMA WEDNESDAY
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MAY 12 - 14 2023

WHERE'S THE SHOW?

THE UTAH STATE FAIRPARK - 155 N 1000 W
★ SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH ★
GATES WILL OPEN @ NOON DAILY

WHERE CAN I FIND TICKETS? MORE INFO?

24TIX.COM + KILBYBLOCKPARTY.COM

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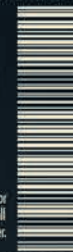
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