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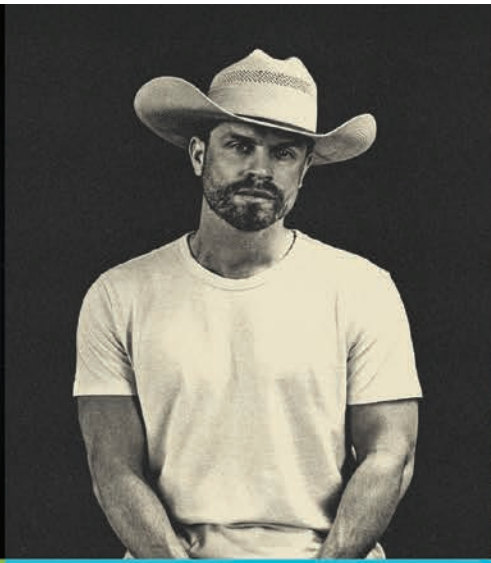


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ABOUT THE COVER: *DIY Festival* vendor Arte di Vita (Courtney Wood) photographed a sampling of her eclectic collection of craft supplies and other vintage ephemera. “Arte di vita” means “art of living” in Italian, which is exactly what her tiny treasures exemplify.

Katya Pogodaeva

Contributor Limelight Events Coordinator



As *SLUG*'s Events Coordinator, Katya irons out the behind-the-scenes details that make *Anniversary Party*, *SLUG Cat* and *Brewstillery* succeed! From coordinating staff, sponsors and vendors to overseeing marketing and merch, Katya puts in the hard work each day with a smile.

Kirby Dorsey

Contributor Limelight Contributing Writer



SLUG has been blessed with Kirby's immaculate skills as a Contributing Writer and Copy Editor for just over a year. She brings an affinity for poetic writing to each piece and uses her razor-sharp editing to boost *SLUG*'s voice. Read her interview with Sin Eaters Lament on page 10!

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Videographers:
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Community Development & Advertising Sales:
John Ford, Community Development Manager: johnford@slugmag.com
Angela H. Brown: sales@slugmag.com
SLUG HQ: 801.487.9221

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The 16th Annual Craft Lake City DIY Festival Presented By Harmon's will feature over 500 local creatives this year, from artisans, vintage vendors and craft foodies to youth entrepreneurs, STEM exhibitors and performers. Get a taste of what's coming to the Utah State Fairpark this August in the following pages and get tickets to experience it yourself at craftlakecity.com. With a dog park, VIP lounge, a national headlining musician and brand-new *DIY Fest After Dark* programming, this year's festival is not to be missed!



Forget lemonade stands and mowing lawns. Local reporters **Mei**, age 9, and **Ren**, age 6, are running a business to amplify the voices of kids like them. As founder and editor-in-chief of *Kid News*, Mei came up with the newspaper's motto: "When you've got something to say, you've got to say it for the world!"

It all started with an old copying machine and a mom who encouraged their entrepreneurial spirit. They create artwork, write jokes, interview people in their community and solicit contributions from other kids. "My funnest [drawing] was probably my Godzilla. He was smashing down cars," Ren says. There's always an interactive element, too—quizzes, puzzles, tutorials and surveys.

New editions come out a few times a year, with past themes ranging from

travel to *Harry Potter* to Earth Day. "I did a cars edition one time," Mei says. "I interviewed some people, and I actually got to go inside a Maserati muscle car. The day after that, I was like, 'Hey Mom, I'm gonna interview somebody about boats so I can go on a boat.'"

At the *DIY Festival*, Mei and Ren will be selling packs of old issues and handmade paper cranes. The newest edition will be a fashion newspaper, which includes tutorials on bleaching, cutting and sewing clothes as well as an interview with a seamstress.

Pick up a copy on Saturday, August 10 from 12:00–4:00 p.m. at the festival's Kid Row or order a digital version at kidnewspaper.org. All of the money from sales is deposited into the kid reporters' college funds.
—Asha Pruitt



Photo: Gilbert Cisneros

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SIN EATERS LAMENT



Photos: John Taylor

In the stifling quiet of pandemic lockdown, **Cathy Cartwright** found an unexpected path to resilience. She turned inward, channeling her anxiety and grief into the creation of haunting, handcrafted dolls. Each figure emerged as a silent witness to these turbulent times, their glass eyes reflecting both sorrow and hope.

Cartwright had long dabbled in fiber arts. But it was the isolation of COVID-19 that transformed her hobby into a profound artistic expression. Her “relics of grief and grace” begin as simple wire armatures, carefully wrapped and needle-felted into being. Cartwright lets the materials guide her hands, eschewing sketches for a flow of pure creativity.

“Dolls can carry memories, hopes and aspirations,” she says. “They can be healing.” Indeed, crafting these figures became Cartwright’s lifeline

through the pandemic’s gloom, each stitch a small act of resilience.

The name of her artistic business, *@the.sin.eaters.lament* on Instagram, delves deep into folklore and its modern parallels. In medieval villages, sin-eaters were outcasts tasked with ritualistically consuming the sins of the dead, bearing the community’s spiritual burdens. Cartwright saw a connection to modern essential workers who shouldered society’s weight during the pandemic, often at great personal cost. Her dolls, like sin-eaters, become vessels for processing collective grief and finding moments of grace.

At the *DIY Festival*, Cartwright’s booth promises to be captivating. Each doll stands as a silent storyteller, waiting for the right soul to take them home and unravel their secrets.
—Kirby Dorsey

ARTISANS

ARTISANS

Terra Pace, owner of Ten Cent Pistil, is a cyanotype photographer whose work is inspired by folk art and nature. Cyanotype photography is not like polaroid or film, as it is made without the use of a camera. The scientific difference is that cyanotype photos are made using light-sensitive iron salts, while traditional photos are made using light-sensitive silver salts.

Pace’s inspiration for her craft comes from the connection of humanity to earth. “I think that nature has always been and always will be something that people connect with in such a beautiful way. Making botanical prints with pressed flowers, stencils and photo negatives is just one of the ways I maintain that personal connection,” she says.

Unlike many other art forms, pattern and color are irrelevant

to the creative process of a cyanotype. Because of this, intriguing shapes and sizes of natural material are what Pace has an eye for. She became partial to cyanotypes after using a starting kit to capture tomato stems and wildflowers, which drew her to the simplistic magic of the art. “I felt like a lot of ideas I had swirling around in my mind finally had a place to land,” says Pace.

After going to the *DIY Fest* as an attendee for over a decade, Pace is most looking forward to connecting with people over local art and sharing her own work, as this year’s festival marks one of her first-ever markets as a vendor! Keep up with Pace and her art through her Instagram *@10centpistil* and at her *DIY Fest* booth this year! —Aliyah Beringer



Photos: John Taylor

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CHEEKY DISH VINTAGE



Photos: John Barkiple

After her business debuted at the 2023 *DIY Festival*, **Chanel Cartier** of Cheeky Dish Vintage will be returning this year to share more upcycled vintage plates, plus some new products with the same cheeky feel.

"I love *Craft Lake City's DIY Fest* so much, I knew it was the perfect way to launch my store," says Cartier. She has been preparing for this year's festival since the 2024 applications opened, after selling out of vintage plates almost every day in 2023.

"Every time I put plates out for a market, I think to myself, 'If somehow this makes it [through] the week and hasn't sold, I'm keeping it.' Inevitably, they sell, so I've made some especially for me to keep," she says. "I learned that the cheekier the dish, the better. Shoppers aren't afraid of crass, irreverent or

straight-up rude phrases." Cheeky Dish Vintage was created through an inheritance of dust-collecting vintage plates and the idea to do something special with them.

Cartier is a graphic designer, crafter and vintage lover who wanted to combine all of these qualities into one product. "Crafting is in my blood. I have always been a crafty kid," she says. Cartier has taken some of her best-selling phrases and turned them into stickers, which she will be selling for just \$1 at the *DIY Festival*.

"No matter the budget, someone can find something to take home from my booth," she says. Follow [@cheekydish.vintage](#) on Instagram to get a sneak peak of what Cheeky Dish Vintage has to offer, or to create a custom order! —Bailee Elaine

VINTAGE VENDORS

Mary Turney has been making vintage quilts for the last four years, and sewing since she was 10 years old. Her mother-daughter business, Merry Marmot Designs, will officially launch at this year's *DIY Fest*. This vintage vendor hunts for thrift store quilts to upcycle what is already available.

"Quilt-making is a labor of love. Time, patience and perseverance are all woven into the quilt as it is made," Turney says. "We are taking beautiful creations that have been cast aside and breathing new life into them." Merry Marmot Designs turns vintage quilts into other heirlooms such as clothing and bags. Turney honors the effort, skill and artistry of the original quilt-maker by maintaining the quilt's integrity. "Thrifting has been an activity my girls and I have enjoyed doing

together for years. Estate sales, rummage sales and thrift shops all hold treasures waiting to be rediscovered, repurposed and used again," she says. "An added bonus of this new venture is doing it with my daughter [**Midge Reschke**]. Creating and sewing with her are special days I treasure."

Turney has a background in education, which includes teaching middle school science, sewing classes, special education and homeschooling. "As an educator, I love learning, especially new things," she says, which has led to taking quilting classes, watching quilting videos on YouTube and going to quilting conventions. Follow [@merrymarmotdesigns](#) on Instagram to catch a glimpse of the items they will be offering at this year's *DIY Fest*. —Bailee Elaine



Photo: John Barkiple

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PARAMI



Photo: Gilbert Cisneros

It's high time we took a closer look at our pantries. **Nika Noun**, chef and owner of Parami, can help you kickstart your pantry renovation with her fresh, authentic curries. When she moved from Cambodia to Utah to attend *Brigham Young University*, Noun didn't see her favorite foods and culture represented. So, she began cooking curry in her college apartment and realized that shelf-stable curry could be just as accessible as pasta sauce.

When asked what she wants the average American home cook to learn from using her curries, Noun says, "The idea is to make cooking as simple as possible while saving a ton of money. Using our sauces, all you have to do is add your own protein and vegetables." And in under 30 minutes, you have an authentic, home-cooked meal.

Parami's legacy is more than just their delicious curries, though: "As a female entrepreneur and immigrant, I want to inspire more women to explore their creativity," Noun says.

When asked if she has a favorite, Noun couldn't possibly choose. "They're like children: I love them all," she says. "The best seller is the yellow curry. It's a medium spice range and it's something people are familiar with. But we offer anything from a mild green curry to a spicy red curry sauce." If you can't pick a favorite child either, purchase the bundle from their website *paramitaste.com* or find their booth at the *DIY Festival*. And if you need inspiration, check out their recipes tab, where you'll have access to plenty of helpful advice. *-Lucy O'Connor*



Amid the drudgery of health-food jargon, an oasis emerges, wrapped in a vibrant package. Raw Eddy's is seeking to inspire the minds and taste buds of everyone through thoughtful ingredient selection. While sitting down to talk with **Kaitlyn Maestas**, CEO and founder of Raw Eddy's, I learned exactly what inspired such fun and healthy snacks.

Growing up on the "stereotypical American diet," as she calls it, Maestas struggled with many dietary issues. After recipe testing and crowdsourcing, Maestas settled on a protein bite that matched her high standards, which tastes like "a Reeses and KitKat put together," she says. The power, Maestas says, is how "we use ashwagandha as one of our main ingredients—and also mucuna pruriens—because those two together help with brain

support. They help with stress [and] anxiety." She also says that "the gut is your second brain" and "if you do entertain [your] inner child with the tasty foods in a plant-based way, your brain is truly going to enjoy them and be open to absorbing those nutrients."

Raw Eddy's is named after Maestas's uncle **Eddy**, who struggled with mental illnesses in the 1970s. She commemorates her uncle through community: "Anyone can come together and eat a snack. That really breaks down those barriers of having those conversations around mental health," she says. The next time you're checking on a friend, consider bringing them a bag of Raw Eddy's protein bites, which you can find at their booth at the *DIY Fest* or at *raweddys.com*. *-Lucy O'Connor*



Photo: John Taylor

RAW EDDY'S



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CODE GETS CREATIVE



Photos: Gilbert Cisneros

Andrew Jensen is a software engineer working in generative art, a process where he writes code that, in turn, creates visual art. This art form transforms software into a medium for creative expression and exploration.

“Generative art combines that organization with a certain amount of randomness and chaos, just like we see in nature,” says Jensen, who discovered this medium 15 years ago. “I love the chance to explore the concept of ‘emergence,’ where simple systems can lead to beautifully complex outcomes.” His work often starts out as a sketch in his notebook. From there, he writes code to create the visual programmatically.

Jensen strives to develop systems that produce a variety of artworks. When the results lack diversity, he finds it disappointing and unin-

teresting. However, it’s thrilling when the algorithm exhibits a wide range of behaviors. It’s important to Jensen that his art form is distinguished from AI-generated art. “I see AI art crowding out some forms of traditional art and the artists that create it, and I’m unhappy about that,” he explains. “At the same time, I’ve also seen some animations and interactive art installations incorporate generative AI as a small building block alongside other techniques, and some of those are truly beautiful in a way that I don’t think has been done before.”

DIY Fest attendees can observe and participate in Jensen’s generative art process, purchase pre-drawn pieces and create custom designs. For more information, visit Jensen’s Instagram @andrewjensen90. —Leah Call

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STEM EXHIBITORS

STEM EXHIBITORS

Mike McAinsh has been involved in the Salt Lake Crossroads Amateur Radio Club since 2017 and is a special events co-producer and net control operator. The main purpose of the club, McAinsh says, is “to provide communications in emergencies” as the group is heavily integrated into the Utah Department of Public Safety.

According to McAinsh, a net control operator is a “ham” who moderates a net (a meeting on the airwaves) in order to keep chaos to a minimum. A net is a group of hams with a special purpose. The net control operator directs traffic during the net, which allows many stations to use the same frequency without bumping into each other for these gatherings over the air.

“An amateur radio club helps an operator to grow in the hobby

among like-minded individuals,” McAinsh says. “We can share our knowledge and experiences with—and learn from—others.”

The station collaborates with commercial and community radio and TV stations, although it operates under its own radio call sign, K7XRD. Amateur radio operators volunteer their time to serve the community of Salt Lake City.

At DIY Fest, the club’s booth will have a “Get On The Air” station where festival attendees can experience radio for themselves. “Ham radio involves cutting-edge technology, inspiring DIY projects and innovation,” he says. “We want to spread the word that ham radio is a great hobby for people who like to experiment.” For more information, visit slccarc.com. —Leah Call



Photo: Evan Hancock

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FEZMASTER



Photo: Ashley Christenson

Jon Philpott, aka fezmaster, is a talented musician/computer nerd. Creating his own synthesizers and slinging his trusty trombone, fezmaster creates a unique musical set, and Salt Lake City is fortunate to have him rocking the music scene. He is constantly building his computers again and again, making sure they play along with his vision. Working hand-in-hand with his creation, he not only stimulates his audience's ears, but also their sight with synchronized visuals.

When asked what feeling he wants to invoke in his audience, he replies, "nostalgia for something you weren't there for, a feeling of deja vu for something you don't remember experiencing."

If you were to try to categorize his music, it would be a blend of ambient lo-fi, hip-hop and drum and

bass. fezmaster incorporates '90s rough-sounding electronics along with recordings from nature, such as bubbling rivers and birds. During his shows, he is the king of improvisation. His music and his sets are never exactly the same, setting him apart from other musicians. It keeps it unique for the audience as well as for fezmaster himself. "It definitely makes rehearsing interesting," he says.

His favorite places to showcase his masterpieces are Salt Lake's smaller venues; the intimate locations make it fun to get to know his audience. fezmaster is currently on a journey to learn about the Indian flute, as "the trombone is not an easy instrument to travel with," he jokes. Give fezmaster a listen and indulge your senses by visiting his Instagram @fezmasterson. -Vashti Hansen

PERFORMERS

Towering above the crowd and bringing smiles to the people below, Heidi Butterfly and her sidekick/significant other, Chad Rockstar, dance around the Salt Lake art scene every chance they get. From stilt-walking to dancing with fire and hula hooping, Heidi and Chad spend hours putting together their performances to present to the community.

"It can take a few years or a few weeks to put together costumes," says Chad, who creates all the costumes himself. All of their designs are unique and match the theme they are trying to curate. They have dressed up as park rangers, Jack and Sally from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and so much more.

Heidi and Chad love what they do and do their best to make their performances enjoyable for people

of all ages. "I love watching the grandmas and grandpas smile. I can see their inner child come out and that's what our performances are about. We want to spread the message that creativity at any age is so important," Heidi says.

Grabbing inspiration from the festivals they attend, they are very excited to participate in the *DIY Festival* and see what other artists are bringing to the table. Heidi and Chad say they "love seeing all of the creators and seeing their beautiful things and hearing people's stories. There is so much talent in the room. *DIY Fest* has a lot of creativity and talented people, inspiration is everywhere."

Follow @heidibutterfly on Instagram to see where these two are performing next and don't forget to catch them at *DIY Fest*! -Vashti Hansen



Photo: Ashley Christenson

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Talking About

Bugs and Gardens

with Kacy Hill

By wphughes • william@slugmag.com

The *DIY Festival* is right around the corner! To get everyone familiar with the event, *SLUG* sat down with a few of the performers, including—lucky for us—national headlining musician Kacy Hill. The nearly genreless artist experiments in pop, country, folk, electronic and many other sounds throughout her catalog. Here, she chats about her relationship to hip-hop, her unique view on creative success and her latest album *Bug*.

SLUG: While your solo work fits more into the singer-songwriter category, you've worked with some pretty big-name hip-hop and rap artists—being signed to Kanye West's label, landing a feature with Travis Scott on his track "90210" and being produced by DJ Mustard, Terrace Martin and others. Do you feel a closeness to hip-hop/rap and if so, how does that impact your music?

Hill: I don't think there's many direct influences in the music that I make, but I think that there's something really cool about working in that world and kind of experimenting. Something that I really admire about hip-hop and rap is they're very experimental with song structure and production over the last, I don't know, 20 years, especially. I think that hip-hop and rap have dictated and influenced pop music so much. And I do think that it's cool, being in the room ... I've learned so much from those rooms and from those artists in there, risk-taking and questioning how songs are structured and how songs are made. I really admired that. There really aren't rules in the way that there are with other [types of] songwriting, you know?

SLUG: In a 2024 *NYLON* article, you noted that starting a small garden changed your whole perception of creation and success. Could you tell me more about that? How do you go about "planting seeds"?

Hill: I mean, I've been doing music for a while now. I think when I got into it, I just got

thrown into the deep end, where my impression of making music and of the music industry was just like, "Okay, everyone makes a lot of money." I had so many influential people around me that when that didn't pan out the way that I thought it would, or [the way] everyone was telling me it would, I felt like I had really failed. It took me a number of years to sort of reshape my mindset, and I think the garden was really crucial in this—just [realizing] I am not really owed anything, you know? I'm not owed success or any amount of money, regardless of how hard I work or whether I'm a good person.

I think, in growing a garden—I don't know, it sounds a little kooky, cheesy, whatever—but there [are] so many things that can go wrong between planting a seed and having something that you can eat that actually tastes good. It was sort of a reminder that in this journey of any creative endeavor, there are so many things that can go wrong that are not in my control. When something does happen, I have to take the time to enjoy it and appreciate it.

SLUG: Your childhood nickname was "Bug," inspiring the name of your recent album. If you were a bug, what bug would you be?

Hill: Mmm, interesting question. Depends on the day. I would love to be a monarch butterfly or something. You know what? Maybe I'd be a swallowtail butterfly, because when they're caterpillars, they eat lots of fennel and dill. I love fennel and dill. Once they're butterflies, they're beautiful and [they] get to fly around.

Read the full interview on SLUGMag.com.

Kacy Hill will be performing on Friday, August 9 at 9:10 p.m. at the KRCL 90.9 FM stage for the *16th Annual Craft Lake City DIY Festival Presented By Harmonics*. You can buy single-day tickets or three-day packages at craftlakecity.com. To learn more about Kacy Hill, follow her on Instagram @kacyhill and listen to her newest album *Bug* on all streaming platforms.



Photo courtesy of Chuck Grant

Kacy Hill is the national headlining act for Craft Lake City's 2024 DIY Festival.

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SLUG MAG

Talia Keys:

“THIS IS WHAT I WAS PUT ON EARTH TO DO”

Born and raised in Salt Lake City, powerhouse performer

Talia Keys has been playing music since she was nine years old. In anticipation of her performance at this month's *DIY Festival* with her band **Talia Keys & the Love**, I sat down with Keys to chat about activism, her recent U.S. tour with **Willie Nelson's** son, self-love and more.

SLUG: You're often referred to as an "activist-musician." Does that ring true for you?

Keys: I think I get tired of being pigeonholed as that. Sometimes I want to say, "Hey, do you actually listen to my music? Or are you just offended because I'm a loud woman?" With that said, I was the music director at Rock Camp SLC for seven years—a music camp for girls, transgender, non-binary and gender-expansive youth—and that's a cause that's still near and dear to my heart. These kids are the future. Actually, these kids are now, and they have big voices. We were also pretty active during COVID-19 in raising funds to help our unsheltered population in Salt Lake City. Then, with the queer community, one of my main focuses is trans liberation. What our state is doing to trans children is abusive; what they're doing to trans adults is atrocious. To me, the most urgent need in my community is to protect my trans folks. Then, climate change. None of these other things matter if we don't have a planet. And then, of course, the genocide. "Thou shalt not commit murder" unless your tax dollars are doing it, right?

SLUG: Why is creating music about self-love important to you?

Keys: Because I need to hear it. My music comes from my heart, and I can't write about things that I don't care about deeply. Last summer, I was on tour with **Lukas Nelson**. We played 21 shows across the United States, and the last part of the tour was in the South. People came up to me and whispered, "Thank you for being here. I'm queer, but nobody knows it."

People were whispering their sexuality to me while I was on stage yelling it. Representation matters.

SLUG: You also sing about politics. Do you believe music has the power to bring about change?

Keys: Absolutely. I think we've seen that since the beginning of time. Music, to me, is a universal language; every human being has music in them. I've had people say, "I can't stand what you talk about, but I love your music; can I get a hug?" My first reaction is to be offended, but when people ask for connection, I look at it as a start for them to maybe question some of their hateful beliefs.

SLUG: You recently released a series of cover songs: "I Put a Spell On You," "Sweet Dreams" and "Seven Nation Army." Why did you choose those three?

Keys: These are three of my long-time "cover standards." I've performed them for years, and they all matter to me for different reasons. We chose "Sweet Dreams" by **Eurythmics** because **Annie Lennox** has always been such a powerhouse, and the message is political without being overt. "I Put a Spell On You" is a song I've loved to sing since I got my start going to blues jams around the city. Then, "Seven Nation Army" by **The White Stripes**—**Jack White** is an incredible guitar player and an inspiration. That song was massive when I was in my 20s, and I wanted to do an homage to it.

Sing along to these crowd favorites (and many more original songs) at the *DIY Festival* on Friday, August 9 at 8:00 p.m., where Keys will be playing with her bandmates **Josh Olsen** (bass), **Dave Brogan** (drums) and **Ryan Conger** (piano). Follow along with other announcements, including the full-length record she'll be releasing this winter, at taliakeys.com or on her Instagram [@taliakeys](https://www.instagram.com/taliakeys).

By Mekenna Malan
mekenna.malan@gmail.com
Photo courtesy of Jesse Justice



Talia Keys is tired of being pigeonholed as an "activist-musician," but she does believe in the power of music to bring about change.

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SEAN BAKER'S SLUG LOCALIZED



(From L-R) Danny Washing (electric guitar), Jeremiah Jeffers (drums), Sean Baker (acoustic guitar, vocals), Arron Jacques (violin) and Saul Zelaya (bass) make up Sean Baker's Recycled Stardust, an "existential folk-punk" act that takes influence from classic rock.

On Thursday, August 15 at *Kilby Court*, folk-punk group Sean Baker's Recycled Stardust and alternative band IMAGINARY FRIENDZ will play *SLUG Localized*, opened by singer-songwriter Petr Chubak! As always, the show opens doors at 7:00 p.m., costs just \$5 for entry and is sponsored by *Riso-Geist*.

Sean Baker's Recycled Stardust was created by the "band leader by default," as Sean Baker describes himself. Before becoming the songwriter of the group, he wrote the EP *Purple House*, a collection of songs about shared human experiences and emotion.

Through the open mic nights hosted at *Alliance Theater*, the band found each other through their different talents and skills that they bring to the table. "Open mics are the reason we exist as a band," Baker says, who has been an open mic performer and advocate since he was 15 years old.

The eclectic band is composed of five friends: Sean Baker on vocals and acoustic guitars, Jeremiah Jeffers on drums, Saul Zelaya (aka "Sleeves") on bass, Danny Washing on lead guitar and backing vocals and Arron Jacques on violin.

Naming artists like A.J.J., Tom Petty, The Beatles and Frank Zappa, Sean Baker's Recycled Stardust takes light inspiration from various artists from the '80s and '90s. "All genres are made up, so it doesn't really matter," Baker notes, and other members explain how they combine their inspirations in music to create their own made-up genre of "existential folk-punk."

"A lot of it is feeling and energy and feeding off the other members of the band," Jacques says.

"We vibe as musicians really well and as friends even better, so ... we take all of our influences and what we've learned throughout our musicianship and apply it when we play songs," explains Zelaya.

When it comes to the creative process, the band follows a philosophy that was born from the song "Recycled Stardust." "It encapsulates it all ... we are all stardust," Baker says. He describes the idea that humans are all made of the same materials but reorganized into different versions that exist in different timelines. The band illustrates the beauty of the human experience through community and makes music to express that.

Baker calls the songs from the *Purple House* his "children" because of the evolution of his music from then to now. As a band, the members perform differently each time to reflect the essence of their sound. "The music can live and breathe that way, it's not so constricted with what it needs to sound like," Baker says. He talks about how his songs are not forced into one style—it's more about what is expressed through them. To Baker, the songs are something to lean on in times of darkness.

With songs mentioning death and loss, the band's existentialism is more about revealing universal truths. "Yeah, we are talking about death, but the songs aren't

about death. They are about living your life because you're going to die," Washing explains. The band contrasts themes of the good and the bad in order to exemplify the reality of living, as well as to help themselves cope with the world.

While touring together, the band went to the *Building Wo-Man Festival* this year in Green River, Utah. Seeing the growth of audience members from fans they knew to new listeners allowed the band to acknowledge the power of music. They reminisce about seeing the pouring rain starting at the end of their set and describe how perfect that all came to be. That concert was their first performance out in the desert, which also made it memorable.

When it comes to other local bands, Sean Baker's Recycled Stardust has a long list of favorite musicians. DoomCupcake, Doli, Fur Foxen and HOOCH are just a few of many that they mention, encompassing various genres of music like indie folk, garage rock, prog rock and pop.

Sean Baker's Recycled Stardust is always in the works with new music. Make sure to find the band on their Instagram at [@seanbakermusic](https://www.instagram.com/seanbakermusic) and see them live at *Localized* at *Kilby Court* on Thursday, August 15.

IMAGINARY FRIENDZ

SLUG LOCALIZED

By India Bown · skyebown@icloud.com



Photo: Diego Andino

IMAGINARY FRIENDZ, comprised of (from L-R) Felipe Moya (guitar and vocals), Ethan Kearns (drums) and Carter Lang (bass), fuse a wide range of inspirations together to create their signature alternative sound.

IMAGINARY FRIENDZ is an alternative band that describes themselves as “all around the musical spectrum.” Taking inspiration from genres like hip-hop, rap and rock, as well as artists like Mac Miller, Twenty One Pilots, Tyler, the Creator and The Beatles, the trio melds their influences together to create their own original sound. Within their lyrics and instrumentation, their music ranges from harder alternative rock to softer love songs—and sometimes a combination of the two.

With Felipe Moya on guitar and vocals, Carter Lang on bass and Ethan Kearns on drums, the three act more like siblings than they do bandmates. This is expressed through their love for making music. “Sometimes we get at each other’s throats or we get super emotional about something because we care about each other a lot, so that means a lot, you know,” says Kearns.

Just like its members, the band name is funny, different and all-around cool. The name stems from the television show *Foster’s Home for Imaginary Friends*, which Lang and his sister would watch growing up, trying to come up with silly band names. As for the exclamation point and usage of “z” in “FRIENDZ,” Lang jokes, “it’s just to be edgy and cool.” “Username taken,” Moya adds with a laugh.

In describing their writing process, Moya explains, “I think it all starts with an

idea, it flows so naturally like that.” The band enjoys riffing off of each other and jamming out constantly until they are content with what they’ve created. For IMAGINARY FRIENDZ, the music comes before the lyrics, where a lot of them are freestyled throughout the process. “It’s never the same, it’s just as it happens,” says Lang.

Over the years, the trio has broadened their horizons with lyrics, shifting away from romance to more randomized topics. “[Lyrics] can have no meaning or can have your own kind of meaning,” Moya explains, discussing that his bandmates helped him realize that.

In the local music scene, Lonely Heights, Sweet Tangerine, future.exboyfriend and Sammy Brue are among the trio’s favorite bands to perform with. Lang calls Lonely Heights his “bread and butter,” revealing his soft spot for pop-punk. The band mentions Brue’s musical experimentation. Kearns recounts their first show with them, as well as future.exboyfriend, at *The Monarch* in Ogden, expressing how cool it was.

Having played shows all over Utah, the band talks about their experience at the Utah Arts Festival and their love for the local arts scene, not just music. “Everyone was super accepting and very nice, just the way that we all support each other in Utah in general between music, art and

all other sorts of mediums ... Utah can be one of the biggest hives for artists,” Kearns says. They all speak on the growth of their perspectives from the music communities in downtown Salt Lake, Provo and Ogden.

The bandmates each have a favorite show that they’ve performed together. For Moya, it was their EP release at *Kilby Court*, which was six tickets away from selling out. For Kearns, it was the Halloween show at *The DLC* because of the costume contest. For Lang, it was his family’s reunion where they got to see him perform, which he described as “a good time.”

For their single “Signal,” the band was inspired by a show they played in Rexburg, Idaho with Sweet Tangerine. The guys loved the style of pauses they had within their music. On the drive back from the show, Lang’s turn signal acted as the metronome while Moya pulled out his guitar to write a song.

IMAGINARY FRIENDZ is “here to make music that people enjoy and dance to and sing along to,” Lang says. They’re always making new music, recording voice memos and trying incorporating new ideas into their work. See them live at *Localized* on Thursday, August 15 at *Kilby Court* and follow them on Instagram at [@imaginary.friendz](https://www.instagram.com/imaginary.friendz).

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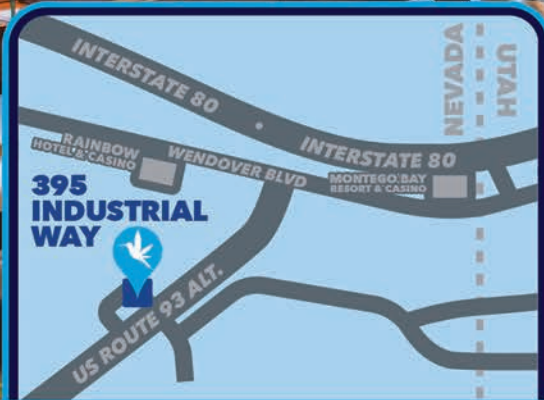
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