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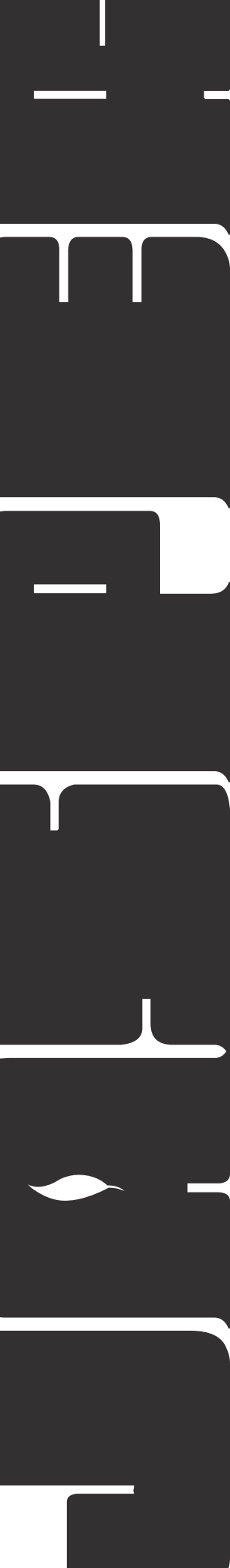
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Dear Friends,

Take care of each other.

Take care of yourselves.

Be strong.

Don't stop.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is highly stylized and cursive, appearing to read 'Jasper Johns'.

Jasper// as in Johns, the abstract expressionist, neo-Dadaist artist
as in Sergeant, the Revolutionary War hero
as in Mineral, the spotted or speckled stone
as in Magazine, the Word on Columbia Arts

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Seed for Thought

BY SARA SCHNECKLOTH

Sitting on the back deck in Columbia in the humidity of August, I am surrounded by dense greenery and insect drone, the loud, lush, signs and signals of abundant life. The contrast between South Carolina and Svalbard, a glaciated archipelago twelve degrees shy of the North Pole, could not be more extreme. In April, I traveled to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault with USC colleagues Mary Robinson and David Voros as part of BiodiverSEEDy, a project led by Norway-based ecologist Dr. Fern Wickson, in which visual artists were asked to ‘tell the stories of seeds’ through an aesthetic lens. The seed-related artworks were then physically deposited within the mountain that houses the Vault as a way to complement, and humanize, the millions of seeds from around the world frozen to safeguard global biodiversity. The exhibition raised awareness of the work of the Seed Vault and the importance of social, cultural, and ecological connections to seeds.

From the act of planting and nurturing my own bean seedlings, to drawing ‘portraits’ of the newly germinated embryonic plants, my appreciation for the delicacy and precariousness of nascent life deepened daily. The final act of interring, or planting, the artwork into the frozen mountain on Svalbard felt both somber and hopeful. Each of the artists read letters we had written to an unknown future

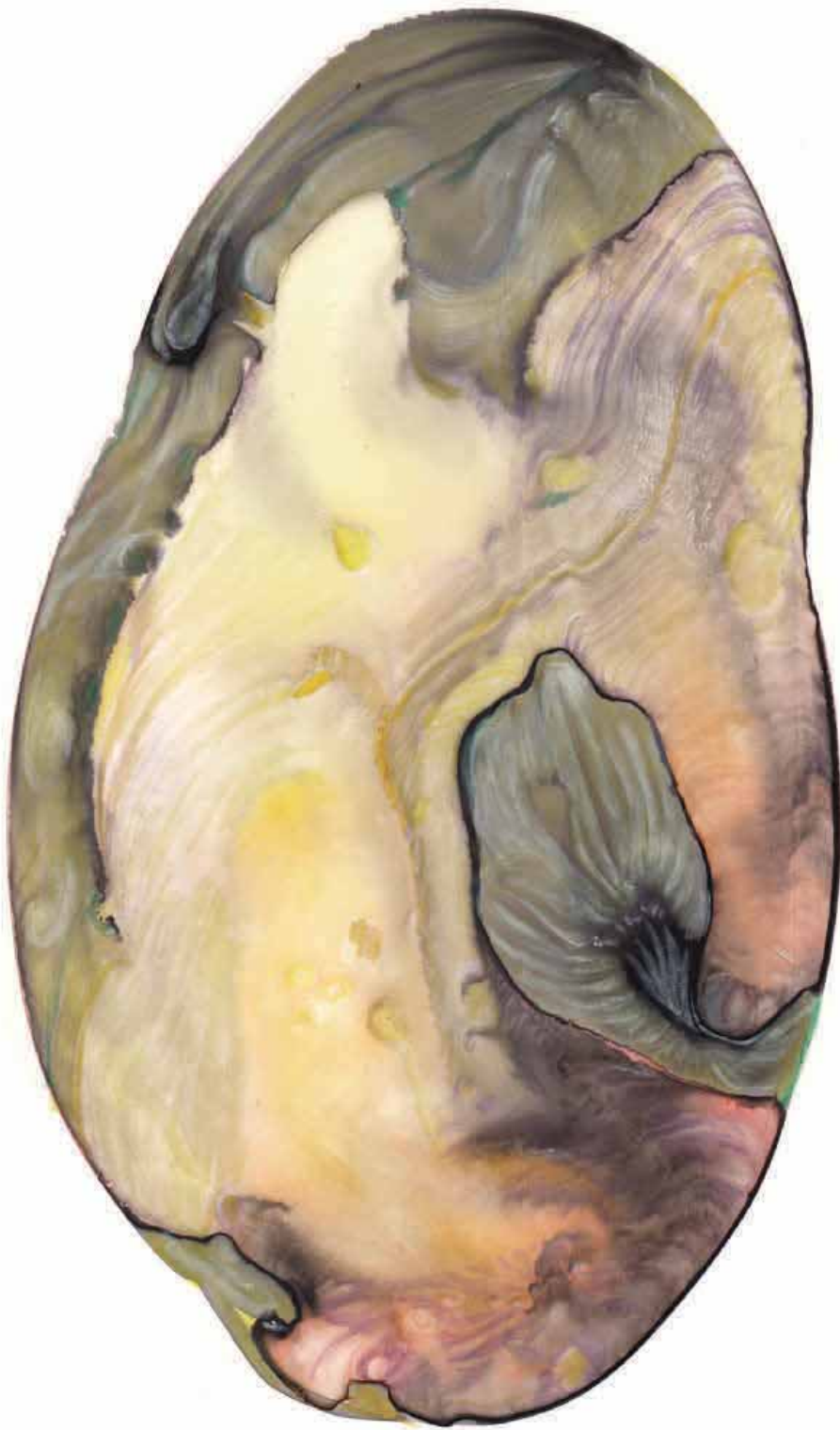
reader; each letter linked past, to present, to future, and spoke to the importance of cultural preservation, maintaining biodiversity, and the need for optimism in a challenging and changing world. We buried our artwork not knowing if it will be seen again, with a sense of gravity, solemnity, and hope, aesthetic seeds for an unknown future.

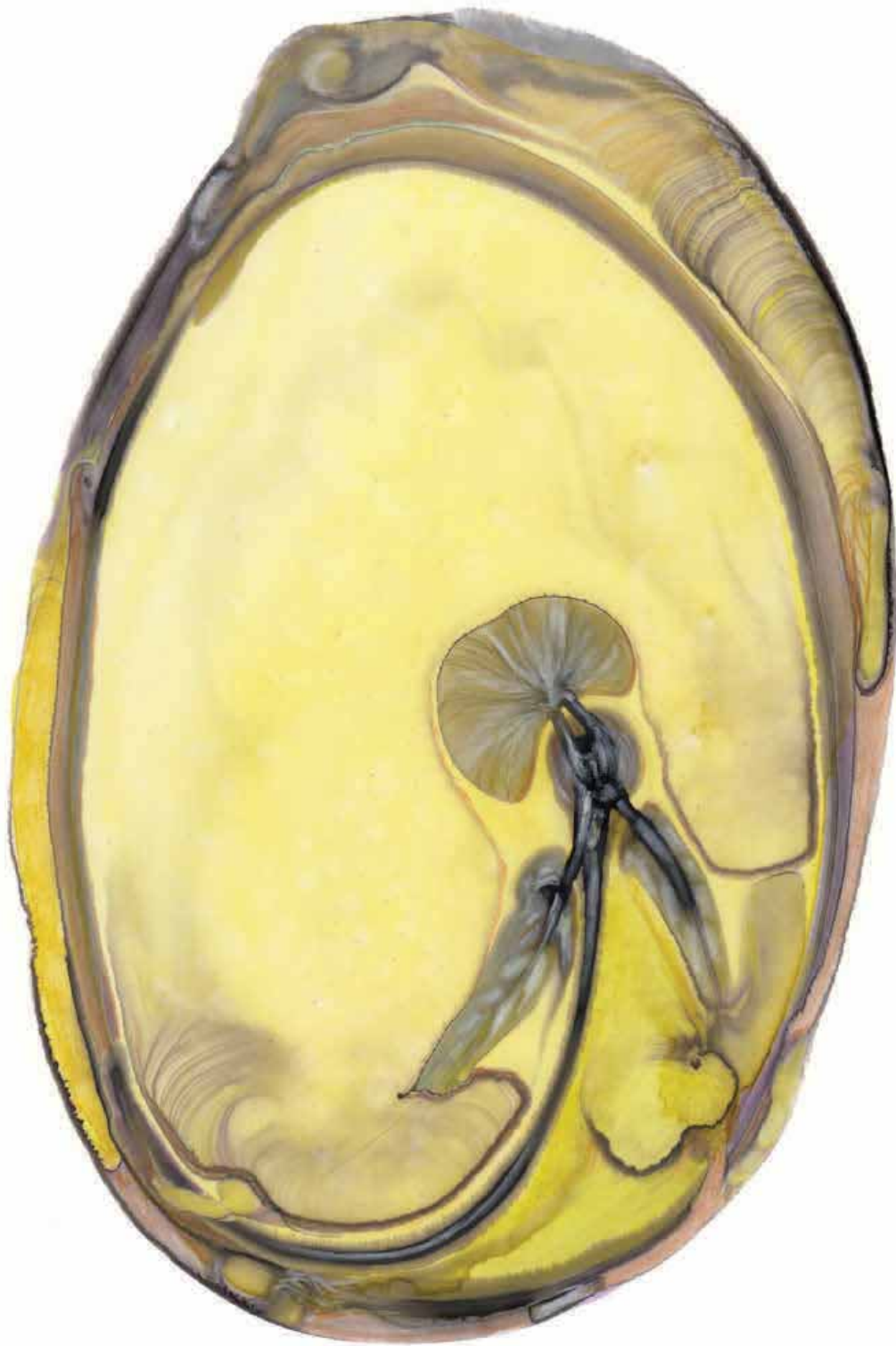
Seeds have a remarkable resilience, an ability to wait until conditions are optimal to come forth and flourish. They are sites of potential, growth, and expansion, fragile beginnings held in stasis. To be immersed in both the science and art of seeds is humbling and motivating, and I’m freshly committed to expanding biodiversity in practical ways, not just through the images I make, but how I plant and nurture the soil around me, caring for what can be brought forth.

Sara Schneckloth
August 2018
Columbia, SC

To see the complete series of *(in)Nascence* seed drawings interred in Svalbard, please visit www.saraschneckloth.com

Sara Schneckloth is an artist and Associate Professor in the School of Visual Art and Design at USC.





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CMA Curator Catherine Walworth and

Making the Old New Again

BY JENNA SCHIFERL

W *hat is striking* about Catherine Walworth and her work as a curator at the Columbia Museum of Art is the near-constant emphasis on bringing diverse shows to the museum. This global perspective is one of many visions Walworth has for CMA, one of the only international-caliber museums in the state.

Walworth grew up in a small Iowa town without a single art museum, but this didn't suppress her creative aspirations. She was raised in a house her parents built that overlooked the Mississippi River and was exposed to the arts at an early age, having taken classes from the time she was a child. "I think that my love of design and of Frank Lloyd Wright's balance between nature and design came from living in that house. The outside was unpainted; it was embedded in the hillside. It was meant to bring the outdoors in," Walworth says.

She attended a small liberal arts college and graduated with a fused degree in art and art history, with a focus in Renaissance art. "I got a really beautiful, deep, rich art and historical background; but when I graduated, I waitressed and worked in a coffeehouse and backpacked through Europe. Then, I just needed to get to a coast, so I ended up going to Seattle," she says.

Walworth stayed in Seattle for six years, where she earned her master's degree at the University of Washington and worked at the Seattle Art Museum. After making her way through every department at the museum, except curatorial, she put her things in storage and traveled to San Antonio for a 10-month endowed curatorial internship at the McNay Art Museum. This led to a subsequent internship that served as her "big break" into the curatorial field. She stayed in Texas for four years, where she thrived in the local art scene.



Walworth arrived at the CMA in April of

2016 after working at the Cleveland Museum of Art and Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. She works hard to create a distinctive experience for anyone who enters the museum and hopes to create an inclusive environment for under-represented communities. “What we need to do is make a really rich conversation for contemporary artists by bringing in different voices and cultures,” Walworth says. “As with all nonprofits, I can honestly say that behind closed doors we work hard every day in a very self-conscious way to be a better institution that welcomes everyone and has something for everyone.”

The “Design by Time” exhibition will visit the museum in 2020 and features many cutting-edge designers from Europe. Additionally, Walworth is actively working to bring an exhibition of Kwame Brathwaite photography, as well as a six-gallery exhibition of contemporary East Indian art to the museum.

This focus on broader representation has translated to the complete restructuring of the upstairs permanent collection. Pieces created by female artists and artists of color appear early and often in the renovated layout.

Reopened in August, the 20+ galleries in the permanent collection will also have entirely new labels for all the works, new arrangements, and freshly painted walls. Visitors might recognize some of the larger or more iconic pieces in the new permanent collection, like the grandiose glass Salviati chandelier — but odds are, even veteran museum-goers will feel as if they are in an entirely new space.

Previously, the permanent galleries were organized chronologically. With the restructuring, the collection is grouped thematical-

ly — each work of art is in some way related to its neighbors by an overarching theme, an undertaking spearheaded by Chief Curator Will South with Walworth’s assistance. Though some adjacent pieces were created centuries apart and in different regions of the world, the overall effect is a cohesive one. The works interact and converse with each other in a new way and dare visitors to think a little harder.

A new Focus Gallery with well-known international artists including Henry Moore, Joan Miró, and René Magritte and a selection of Latin American works from the collection is slated for spring. Thanks to Walworth, the permanent collection also features the museum’s first gallery dedicated to 20th-century design. Seagrass colored walls accentuate the bold pieces that occupy the space, including an Eames chair, Saarinen tables and chairs, 1960s Italian plastic Kartell furniture, and a Frank Lloyd Wright clerestory window panel — all items Walworth selected from the museum’s collection of over 7,000 pieces, the majority of which are not actively on display. “That’s one of my goals, to unearth some beautiful things from storage,” Walworth says.

Walworth notes that the quickly changing nature of the curatorial field often requires a delicate balance. “People are changing, and what they want is very different. What my parents might want in a museum, where they feel over-awed by the majesty of something, is not what a 25-year-old wants. They want to walk in and feel energized by the dynamism and the self-expression that they might bring to something,” she says.

The nuances of the museum’s renovation are only one aspect of the many undertakings Walworth is working on. She usually manag-

es six exhibition projects at a time, which are often planned up to three years in advance. Her days involve finalizing contracts, writing labels, laying out exhibitions, and conceptualizing themes for other shows.

In addition to her role as a curator, Walworth is also a published author. In 2017 she released *Soviet Salvage: Imperial Debris, Revolutionary Reuse, and Russian Constructivism*. It explores the Constructivist movement in post-revolutionary Russia during the early 20th century, and analyzes film, fashion, and propaganda porcelain through the lens of recycling and re-appropriation. “Publishing my book was something I was determined to do because, no matter how many times I read and edited it, I continued to be madly in love with the work and didn’t want it to just sit on a shelf somewhere as a dissertation,” Walworth says. “I learned something from that project that I now think about all the time. Namely, how art gets reinterpreted according to the politics of the moment.”

Walworth’s tenure at the CMA has been one full of changes, including new leadership, extensive renovations, and a major upheaval of the permanent collection. This new landscape has made it an exciting time to be a curator and Walworth has taken each challenge in stride, always with a focus on broader representation and inclusivity. “Everything that we do comes back to human experiences,” she says, “and I feel like that comes with beauty, magic, and deep responsibility.”

Jenna Schiferl is pursuing a degree in mass communications at the University of South Carolina. She is also the editor of Garnet & Black Magazine and a former Jasper intern.



DEMETRIUS (6IXX) SIMILIEN

AND THE ZOE OF COLUMBIA

BY NAVADA BOWER

N

ew filmmaker Demetrius (6ixx) Similien uses the word “zoe” to express community when he speaks about why he gives back to Columbia through his art. Similien learned the word, which means “bones,” from his homeland of Haiti. It is used to describe how people are strongest together, as in “...we are each other’s bones.” He has taken the term to heart and works diligently to bring the concept to the home he now claims as his own, Columbia, SC.

Similien grew up in Miami, Florida, but his story starts in Haiti with his mother. Pregnant with baby Demetrius at the age of 13, she



... because my community has embraced me and empowered me, I think it is my turn to show my community how beautiful it is."

Demetrius (6ixx) Similien

made sure she could make it to America so her son could be born here and have a chance at a better life. Growing up in a poor community, the young man knew sports or academics would be his only way out of his situation, so he played football and won a scholarship to play in college at Savannah State in Savannah, GA. A leg injury took him out of the game early, but according to Similien, the injury was life changing and not in a bad way. It helped him navigate towards becoming the artist he is today.

Realizing he had to figure out how to move forward, Similien began to explore different avenues and discovered that he enjoyed expressing himself through creative endeavors more than anything else. He arrived in Columbia in 2011 and finished a degree from Benedict College in 2013, then temporarily worked in government, but he knew something was missing. He always had the urge to make art, but was never sure he could, how he would, or who would want to see it. Finally, he just "went for it" and found Columbia to be a very accepting and encouraging place.

Similien had his first art exhibit at Tapp's Arts Center in November 2017. "The exhibit, called *The Ugly Truth Experience*, was meant to be a community building opportunity in which people engage in political or social issues without being demonized or ostracized," the artist says. "The whole purpose of the Ugly Truth was to force people outside of their comfort zones."

"Most importantly," he continues, "I wanted to highlight that the issue of police brutality, for example, is not just a Black issue. It's an American citizen issue, because whether we are white, Asian or Hispanic, we all deal with being either shot at or abused by the police [at some point]. My mission with the exhibit was to create understanding of community through suffering. We share heartache and loss, and we are all fearful. But together we can change the issues of today's world."

The installation was made up of collages as well as short videos, the latter of which piqued the 29-year-old's interest in filmmaking and led him to his current project, the film *Some Assembly Required*, which will premiere at Tapp's Arts Center this fall. According to Similien, "The film will feature a range of people who I consider to be great examples of why Columbia and the South is beautiful and unique." The piece is set to feature folks like Sean McCrossin of Drip, Porter Barron and Rhett Elliott of the Warmouth, and Emile DeFelice of Soda City farmers' market.

Similien wants this to be his "love letter" to Columbia, he says. He wants to create a film that shows the South as he knows it and to say thank you to the city of Columbia for supporting not only him, but all of its artists. Similien finds that people tend to view the South in a negative light and question how he can practice his art here. Similien exclaims, "...actually, my community has embraced my type of art; my community has embraced the task of being progressive ... because my community has embraced me and empowered me. I think it is my turn to show my community how beautiful it is." Similien feels Columbia is open to challenges and change, and his film will showcase those attributes and hopefully change other people's perspective of the South.

When asked what is next after this project, Similien talks about wanting to collaborate with the people around him in telling their stories. With the changing political and social climate, he believes more stories need to be told by transplants and first-generation individuals whose families struggled to get to America for a better life. He wants to show what America means to people who were not born here as much as he wants to show how good Columbia has been to him personally.

He wants to show what makes Columbia his artistic, and forever, home.

LOCAL

RECORD REVIEWS



ANAHAET PLANET

Anahaat Planet EP

Yoga studios are poised to be a new outlet for live music and rock 'n' rollers who are looking to pranayama as fuel rather than distorted guitars and sprinting tempos. Anahaat Planet brings their sound out of tree pose and onto a three song EP that's serene, psychedelic, and rooted in American music of the past.

The historical pinpoint of this song collection is the 60s folk movement. Acoustic strums of simple chords underlay songbird melodies from singer Nicki Anahaat Music, who exudes the influence of Judy Collins. The instrumentation and arrangements of Anahaat Planet reflects much of the soft psychedelic sounds of Collins' early work and her backing band, as well as others of the kaleidoscope-tinged mid-century music.

In "The Cage," echoing arpeggios of mandolin and other Eastern-sounding strings walk through a Silk Road set of influences,

creating mood-filled folk until the track treks into a foreign tongue of major key chords.

Despite being three tracks, the record has some length, with each song averaging seven minutes a piece as each composition is undergirded by easy percussion and the crisp strums of strings and bubbles with wavering instrumentation and accents that clear the thoughts and messages to the brain.

Replace the heroin of the Velvet Underground with breaths of clean air, kick out Lou Reed for Joan Baez, then drain the New York band's youthful destruction and fill the void with inner peace, you just might have a sound close, though not exactly, in the vein of Anahaat Planet's folkadelic. - *David Travis Bland*



H3RO

Tragic H3RO

What's stood out about H3RO since he came onto Columbia's scene is his ability to temper braggadocio with vulnerability and

strident optimism with knowing storytelling. He starts off his new record *Tragic H3RO* with a scenario of a young fellow challenged to take the stage after answering his phone during a play. H3RO sets off to prove himself.

The emcee still feels like a young and eager rapper, with his conscious flow drawing from early aughts influences like Talib Kweli in the title track that rides mellow guitar, a heavy kick, and reverberating drums and bass to draw out the central conflict of the record's narrative. "The elephant that's in the room is do I know I know my own future/ Or am I just the same n@#\$r that I started as...?" he ponders.

It's immediately evident in the production, lyrics, and aesthetic of the record that H3RO has matured since his last full-length effort, 2015's *Between the Panels*. Despite this, one of the primary tensions that drives H3RO's music is his insecurities and fears about himself. That theme is at the heart of what might be H3RO's loudest declaration yet.

"Can I Be Happy?" starts off with a synth voice melody and jazz lounge keys and grand piano. The bass kicks in with the percussion and the slick ascending vocal melody. On of this break through to the beat comes H3RO's words blazing, "Part of this madness / Caught up in all of this bad shit / All I got is this magic, are you laughing / Y'all can have this."

He explodes into the cathartic chorus, circling around the phrase, "Can I be happy?" The beat fills out with heavy percussion, booming bass, bouncing harmonies and some smooth guitar shredding. The real hook, though, is the struggle and desire that H3RO puts into the song.

He follows the chorus with, “Not going to say that I am the greatest / All that I’m going to say is that I could have made it a long time ago...” reaching what may be the young emcee’s peak thus far.

The record’s full of standout tracks for H3RO like “P.W.Y.O.M” with its solid bass line, rock ‘n’ roll production and a feature by local maestro FatRat da Czar. The 70s urban soundstage sound of “All Alone” featuring Charlotte rapper Supastition adds even more flavor to the record. The hometown ode of the final track provides a fitting conclusion to the collection.

With *Tragic H3RO*, the Columbia rapper continue fight to the top of the local hip-op scene and sets him up for success beyond.

- David Travis Bland



E.Z. SHAKES

The Wolf

The debut record from E.Z. Shakes debut record is a whirlwind born from the peculiar stage of late capitalism we find ourselves in. Maybe 20 or 30 years ago these songs would have been anthems, or at least optimistic takes on small town life. Now, circumstances are narrowed. Characters can’t depend on much else but their love for each other and the certainty of inevitable apocalypse. And it’s that scarcity of certainty that makes this record such a vital contribution.

Zach Seibert’s songs are ragged, worn, and woozy, heavy with the things it’s seen and a desperation to make sense of it all. While many of these songs were introduced to us last year on the spare, field recording-like self-titled EP, they’ve matured in the inter-

vening time. Too, the lineup has expanded, with John Furr (guitar, background vocals), Stan Gardner (percussion), and Jim Taylor (bass) joining singer/songwriter and guitarist Zach Seibert and Todd T. Hicks on pedal steel.

Recorded at the Fidelitorium in North Carolina by Missy Thangs, the album is a barebones collection of Petty-meets-Waits slow burners. There’s a lot to love here. Cuts like “Catch Hell” will be recognizable to fans of Seibert who will remember “Catch Hell” from back in his Hardtack days, a super group which featured Seibert along with members of Due East and The Mustache Brothers as well as Hicks on pedal steel.

Others, like “Vietnam” and “Green-Eyed Girl,” offer complex narratives about flawed characters who are making the best out of life. Be it the Green Eyed Girl’s acceptance or the Vietnam veteran’s, uh, ganja green.

Although these songs are close to the rustic style presented on that first EP, they’re overall smoother and more cosmopolitan. Take “Kerosene,” which was presented on the original EP as a straight ballad. Here, John Furr’s Rickenbacker providing a backbeat on the tonic minor, with the overall effect nudging tension into the song and amplifying Seibert’s pleas. “I could pour my heart over the coals,” he draws out, “if I thought it would save my soul.”

Here’s where my biggest pause with the record lies; at times it can be hard to distinguish songs from one another, as they often utilize similar structures and tones. Granted, it’s a record cut live, but that doesn’t mean there’s not room for more developed ear candy. Brief moments like the guitar accompaniment in “Kerosene,” the harmonica line in “Green-Eyed Girl,” or the sampled voiceover at the end of “Beach” illustrate how subtle nuances turn already-great songs into truly memorable ones.

That said, here’s to bigger things for E.Z. Shakes. During the chorus of “Vietnam,” Seibert defiantly cries amidst a tempo shifting soundscape of pedal steel. “Have a drink on me for the good times / have a drink on me for the bad / have a drink one more for the ugly things they taught us / on love and liberty.” Listening to E.Z., one thing’s for sure--I’ll be pouring rounds all night.

- Ethan Fogus



REAL WORK

Real Work EP

From the get-go, Real Work’s EP grabs your attention. Take the urgent opener “My Soul,” which features dissonant choruses and singer Kenny McWilliams’ confession that “my head is full / my hands are falling off the map / my heart is gone / my soul might be the last to go.” Vocally, McWilliams is somewhere between Something Corporate and Straylight Run. Like these bands, the lyrics rely on the emotional punch conveyed in the performance and not the literary value, which is fine. Real Work is more concerned with the overall value of the whole song, how melody compliments message and not the other way around.

But this is no mere pop record; rather, it’s a treasure trove of complex musical moments. The single “Wasted” is led by a percussive Rhodes piano and loaded with catchy turnarounds. “Wasted” ruminates on the EP’s dominant themes: the passage of time and our inevitable entropy. Death looms throughout these tracks and clearly drives McWilliams’ characters. Given that, it takes “real work” to be happy, and the band gives it all it has on songs like the Death Cab-ish “This is a Lie” and the ever-relatable subjects explored on “2016.”

The EP falls short only due to the similarity of each song’s dynamic footprint. Yes, Real Work songs are written to be radio-friendly pop and therefore by definition require some commitment to formula, there are times when the listener finds themselves less impressed with its tricks. For example, most of

the choruses shift dynamics from McWilliams' lower register to the very top of his vocal range. While on its own it's a good effect, overexposure makes it a bit predictable and it loses some magic. "There are Wars" is a good example of more complex dynamics while retaining the radio-friendly pop formula of the rest of the record without causing choral whiplash. Although by the second chorus the formula is the same, it's less predictable due to the restraint of the first refrain. It doesn't immediately go from 1st gear to 5th; it warms up by easing through the gears.

Every engineer I've ever known always said —usually mid-session after a couple of beers — something like "if I knew then what I know now." Well, Kenny McWilliams is applying his bonafides as lead engineer at Archer Avenue and doing the damn thing. This EP is a masterclass in audio production, it's catchy, and has a treasure trove of unique hooks. At the very least, this EP is a calling card for the kind of note perfect productions synonymous with Archer Avenue. But I have a feeling Real Work is just getting started.

- **Ethan Fogus**



RUSSO

Russo EP

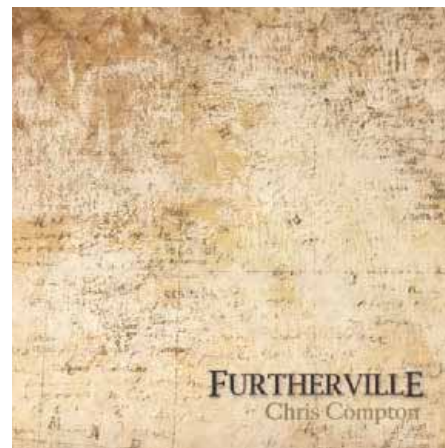
Russo is a collaborative project between husband and wife team Don Russo and Sara Ann Russo. The pairing was born when Don wanted to start writing original music and spend more time with Sara. Their debut EP is a stunning release with developed characters and thoughtful melodies with songs that feel youthful without coming off as pandering.

First song up "Empty Chairs" is a striking offering that's somewhere between The Lumineers and Steely Dan. The song opens with Don's mournful falsetto and from there examines existential themes with impressionistic vignettes; "their love's in two houses / the wooden benches / are lonely when I eat." Although it's told piecemeal, the narratives are connected with the reflection in the chorus: "A hope, a dream / The legacy, the fabric wears / our hearts all lie in empty chairs."

"Coward Kind" is perhaps the most stripped back offering on the record and even then it's an eccentric groover with a backbeat between Van Morrison and Madness. The song is seemingly a kiss off to busybodies who can't mind their own business, with Don proclaiming "you don't even know me / hey, you can't take what's mine / trip lines / full of lies / stay behind / you're the coward kind." The second verse builds with a variation on the first verse as the narrative departs for Don's closing remark "all this anger is building in me."

Finally the EP ends with "Chasing Her Down," which transitions seamlessly between its plucked chordal passages and open-hearted choruses. "Chasing Her Down" has a developed narrative that begins — like all romances — at an open mic and ends with a declaration of unrequited love. What's great here is how Russo gets the most out of repetition; you can have all the hooks in the world, but they need to come around more than one time to make music. The bridge borrows a line from the second verse and adds to the story before repeating this narrative twice. It's a great example of how economy of style can serve a song.

Russo is an excellent example of contemporary pop craft and quality songwriting. The blend of Don's impeccable guitar phrases and Sara's vocal melodies result in an EP that transcends the boundary between good local act and world-class talent. - **Ethan Fogus**



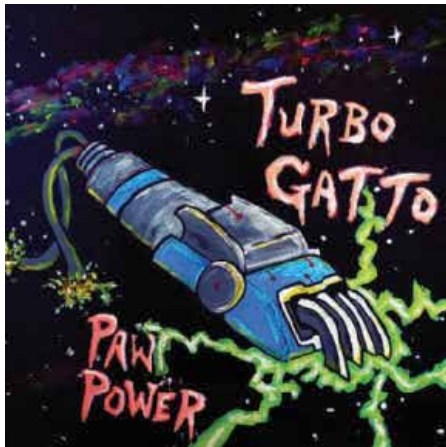
CHRIS COMPTON

Furtherville

After devoting much blood, tears, and whiskey sweat to fronting the Ruby Brunettes, Chris Compton as returns as a solo artist with his latest, *Furtherville*. As a document of what Compton is up to without the Brunettes watching his back, he hasn't strayed too far from what makes that band work best - his better-than-average songwriting. Without the gang bringing up the rear, whimsical dynamics are understandably in short supply, but that's to be expected. *Furtherville* isn't quite country, though not quite un-country (or urbane, whichever term you prefer) - whatever it is, it's decidedly southern.

The only weakness to the record in some sense is that there often feels like a disconnect between the earnestness of the tunes and the messenger. These are good Southern-tinged folk and roots tunes but they're being delivered by a voice that, despite an unaffected twang, just doesn't sound weary enough to make the stories he's telling believable or the pictures he painting pop with life. Mileage may vary for different listeners, but it often feels like Compton sings as a narrator who is acutely observant but not so deeply invested.

That doesn't mean that *Furtherville* isn't bad or unpleasant to listen to; On the contrary, it's quite good, save for that one hurdle. And listeners should find plenty to take joy in both the craft and eclectic range of the tunes Compton seems to so effortlessly create.



TURBO GATTO

Paw Power

For a moment, let's try to sideline the fact that Turbo Gatto's lyrics, to a line, extoll the triumphs, trials, and tribulations of the modern housecat. This is important, of course, as it's rare for any rock band to settle on one subject and (excuse a terrible pun) milk it for all it's worth. Still, the music itself is worth its own look, and the results are impressive. The record's title, *Paw Power*, at once evokes the rampant Stooges influence on the band and masterfully encapsulates what Turbo Gatto does best - slob-rock pussy tunes, inspired by Stooges-esque garage punk. And it's that garage punk that deserves a little more attention.

Lead vocalist Kevin Jennings takes to the mic like heroin-and-public-self-harm-era Iggy Pop and stiletto-and-Maybelline-era David Johansen mixed into one strange personage. These perfectly logical vocal antecedents for sleazy garage glam and punk which lets the pressure off the need for technical prowess and leaves room only for attitude (or, if you'll excuse another terrible pun...cattitude. Last one, I promise.) The title alone merits some sort of award, but "Space Cats from Outer Space," is pure Stooges, both relentless and wryly funny. The title track wears its influence right on the collar (Sorry, I can't stop.) Again, another telling title, "I Don't Wanna Go to the Vet," conjures images of the Ramones and the myriad things they didn't want to do (grow up, be learned, go down to the basement, walk around with you, etc.) but would eventually do anyway.

Simply put, this is some of the most adept garage rock going in Columbia right now, despite the fact that the garage is the Jam Room.

So, as an unrepentant Dog Person, I give thanks to Turbo Gatto for grabbing rock and roll by the tail and giving a hard yank. (I'm a terrible person.) - *Michael Spawn*



TODD MATHIS

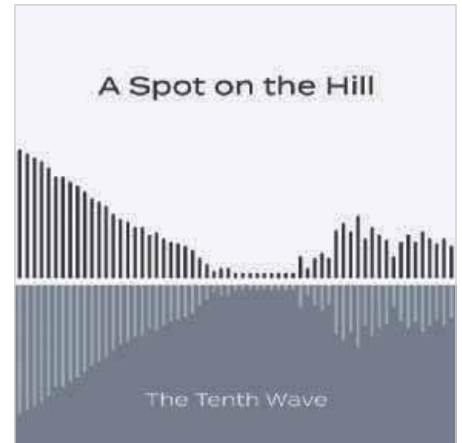
Hank, Tom, and Willie Walk into a Bar..

"Hank, Tom, and Willie Walk into a Bar..." could be the setup for a C-grade joke, but anyone familiar with Todd Mathis knows he doesn't do C-grade jokes, when he's joking at all.

The three-song EP begins with a cover of Hank Williams' "Honky Tonk Blues," a paragon of sad-bastard country that loses nothing of Hank's outlaw spirit as Mathis comes about as close to a Columbia outlaw as any devoted father and husband with no apparent drug issues can possibly get. Unlike many of his compatriots, Ol' Hank was always more of an outlaw when he was down in the dumps anyway, so Mathis has done right by him in spades. Mathis' version of Willie Nelson's "Too Sick to Pray" exceeds the Nelson original, imbuing a tenderness that Nelson himself didn't quite pull off with his take, which evinces a please-adopt-this-puppy mawkishness that retracts from the quality of the lyric. The EP closes with "The Year that Clayton Delaney Died," by Tom T. Hall, the most melancholy tune here. Mathis can go morose when the occasion calls, and as a result none of the inherent sadness of the original is lost.

Though these aren't his songs, they repre-

sent all that's great about Todd Mathis. He not only goes all in with sheer enthusiasm for the music he loves, but has the talent to do them justice. Here, he's in top barroom form. - *Michael Spawn*



A SPOT ON THE HILL

The Tenth Wave

This new project from Dan Cook, former Free Times executive editor and 90s scene member (Lay Quiet Awhile, The Verna Cannon), is a welcome bit of tranquility and poise in these uncertain times. A trained violinist and longtime bassist with an interest in the prog and post-rock territories of popular music as well as an avid fan of avant-contemporary classical, it's no real surprise that Cook intertwines those two worlds on this spare yet grandiose set of original compositions. Mostly using piano, violin, bass, and acoustic guitar, each track here begins with a core melody or arpeggio that feels like it could be the jumping off point for a Sigur Ros or Low tune, but tends to unfold more serenely into ambient or film score territory rather than into the rock space.

Even within that template, there's different modes. "Trust Fall 2.0" has a slow, mournful quality to it, with the violin part dragging slowly across the piano notes and a soft vocal harmony layered over top at various moments. Elsewhere you get relatively up-tempo numbers, like the almost ceremonial vibe of the title cut, where the violin plays a much different role and is joined by bass and drums at the 4:30 mark with an almost martial feel. For the most part, though, each song tends to

feature Cook methodically making his way through a melodic figure, deriving satisfaction from following the tune contemplatively towards their almost predetermined ends. Simple treasures like these are, sadly, not so simple to come by. -KP



FLOWER SHOPPING

Self-Titled

Ross Swinson, the single musician behind the entirety of *flower shopping*, is possibly one of the most underrated players in town. As the frontman for *Release the Dog*, Swinson proved adept at churning out slacker rock tunes with a degree of musicianship and songwriting skill that is uncommon for both the genre and his relative youth. Now, while applying his six string chops to the indie rock of *Barnwell*, he's also quietly honed these four solo tracks into showcases of his outsized talent.

Like in *Release the Dog*, Swinson leans towards angular riffs and fuzz that are still rife with melody, bringing to mind cult favorites like *Pavement* or *Built to Spill* in the way he assiduously interlocks multiple, inventive guitar parts. And that sensibility is on display here from top to bottom, as is taunt bass and drum parts that prove him a neat feat of home recording if nothing else.

Still, it's the songs and hooks that seem to shine more than anything. While he's always had a detached, laconic singing style that belies his natural knack for melody, here Swinson delivers what feel like his most confident set of performances yet. There are little moments of excellence throughout that

highlight this, from the Chaz Bundick-esque high parts on "Consequence" and the harmony overdubs on "Waste" to the swooning vocal whoops that follow the chorus on "Under Your Breath."

Lyricaly, Swinson is still working through a similar set of reflective themes, but the sharpness of the songs puts them in stronger relief. "I feel so useless as I'm growing older/getting more stressed out with nothing to do," he sings on "Good Reason," demonstrating an anxiety that this EP itself aims to disprove. -KP



MIDIMARC

Prolific, Vol. 2

Midimarc, the production moniker that Marcum Core makes beats under, is a name synonymous with a certain kind of classic-leaning hip-hop in Columbia, but that doesn't mean he's a producer that rests on his laurels. This is the second volume of a series that began in January of 2018 and will likely continue throughout the year (Vol. 3 drops shortly before publication date) where the beatmaker stretches his muscles while chopping up soul samples and twisting and tugging at boom bap possibilities.

Each track here takes on a signature sample in big ways or small, although the directions they move in are rarely the same. "Morenthal James Simpson," an early cut, goes about on a casually luxurious ramble, often feeling like a synthesis of 70s soul and house lounge in its low-key, danceable rhythmic approach. Often, as is the case on "End This Way" or "House upon the Hill," the sole

purpose will feel like a simple exercise in seeing how to prod at the sample to figure out what new moments and possibilities still exist for it.

As its best, as on the closing "Triple Whopper No Onions", the *Prolific* series makes clear what makes Core great--the ability to artfully craft Dilla-esque or G-funk beats that feel new and contemporary without resorting to shallow trap style tricks. -KP



BARNWELL

Lose Your Teeth

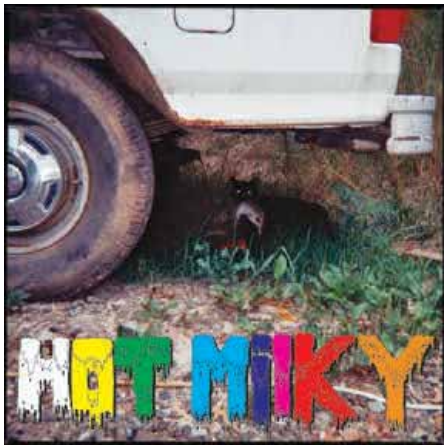
The new EP from one of Columbia's most reliable indie rockers begins with a plaintive guitar line that reverberates in the distance, echoing with the pretty loneliness common to a *Band of Horses* ballad or some mildly electric singer/songwriter. After about 15 seconds though, the melody bleeds into a screech of distortion, announcing the intentions of a group that, for all its heady emotionalism, is intent on finally flexing its muscles.

Over the course of the last couple years, *Barnwell* has evolved from a humble bedroom project of frontman Tyler Gordon into a fully-fledged rock band, one that swings and careens with assuredness through the wreckage of lost love, both romantic and otherwise. Gordon's singing is still full of resigned longing, and his reedy, pliable voice is only getting stronger as he plays with dynamics and falsetto on a number of tracks here. But it's how it fits with the rest of the band where the biggest gains have been made. Lead guitarist Ross Swinson brings a nervy post-punk ener-

gy and edge to the big melodies Gordon crafts, while the rhythm section of bassist Nick Fogle and drummer Nate Puza gives these arrangements a strong pull and heft.

Song-wise, these new tunes feel like an extension of the jangly compositions that Gordon started with, but with an emphasis on upgrading the guitar parts and excising some of the fluff. Tracks like “Either Way” and “Never Again” tend to launch themselves into the meat of the song and strike hard on the chorus, making them both ideal for a live show and a demonstration of how tight and charged the band is playing together. Even when there are moments of would-be excessive the ecstatic guitar solo on “Certainty,” the harmonica interludes on “Dos Ghosts,” or the drunken trumpet and guitar theatrics of “The Nice Boys,” there’s a new sense of thoughtfulness and lucidity there, with a band intent on crafting the most dynamic, engaging set of ideas that they can.

What this EP suggests more than anything else is that glimmer of possibility that Barnwell has the chance of going from a merely a good local band to being a great one if they continue forward on this trajectory. - **KP**



FRATMOUTH

Hot Milky

There are few Columbia bands as polarizing and unpredictable as Fratmouth. Their approach to noise punk is one that not only lacks clear reason, but in many cases seems to defy it. It’s the kind of tongue-in-cheek rock that straddles the line of absurdist performance-art and self-aware humor-punk.

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Their third full-length release, *HOT MILKY*, pushes the trio further into genre-elision, polishing their scattershot noise into chrome-plated chaos.

Opener “download yr meat judge” kicks the album off with an oscillating doomy riff as frontman Pedro Lopez De Victoria’s lilting screech morphs into a recording of a McDonald’s endorsement. “Don’t Grab the Wheel of My Car If You Want to Live (Grab the Wheel of My Car if You Want to)” brings metallic cacophony with syncopated guitar tones and raspy, phased vocals. The unsettling “V E R Y B R Y A N” is their longest track to date, ringing in at five and a half minutes of random industrial noises under drawn-out screaming and warped voices chanting “I’m sorry.”

While Fratmouth’s persona relies on confusion and non-sequitur, their dissonance is not without mastery. The blinding chaos of *HOT MILKY* is executed with paradoxical precision and technique. Connor Brunson’s hard-driving drums can be matched only by the intensity of Gabe Crawford’s hyper guitar riffage. The two move perfectly in sync, weaving around the shifting personas of Pedro, who can mutate from a blistering scream to disembodied whine in the span of a second. Still, their refusal to settle on a genre throughout the album only highlights their range of skill – “C(OMING OUT OT HE FRIDGE)” is a sludgy doom track that seamlessly mutates into satiric crooning and back, and “STUNT ****FETISH” features a finely executed Nine Inch Nails-esque industrial intro, showing off some production skills as well as instrumental.

One doesn’t have to go any further than the oddly-stylized track listing of *HOT MILKY* to understand that Fratmouth prioritizes absurdity and humor. The appeal of the group isn’t their lyrical content or any overarching theme, but rather the raw, visceral nature of the music itself.

Despite a lack of depth, Fratmouth’s precision, energy and gimmicky presence grants them a pass to limitless self-indulgence – not that they needed permission. - **Jordan Smith**



CYBERBAE

Cyberbae

Cyberbae’s debut self-titled album is hypnagogic pop for those who need refuge – whether it be from drugs, alcohol, other people or anything outside the four walls of their bedroom. Its cosmic etherealism plastered with neon lights, soulful aloneness bleeding into escapist pop. Like their admission “I’m tired of being alive when it’s dark outside” on track “26,” Columbia’s Ahomari retreats to a world of analgesic tranquility in the face of personal woes, and *CYBERBAE* gives us a glimpse inside.

Sonically, *CYBERBAE* finds itself somewhere in between the soft dream pop of Cigarettes after Sex and the melancholic blue of Moses Sumney. Across eight tracks, slowed-down synthetic pop crashes into meta-modern sincerity to bring introspective nostalgia and shimmering dance tunes alike. Purposeful electronic drums complement off-kilter synth layering and tender vocals to create an intimate space in which Ahomari can sing about others, sing about themselves and revel in coming-of-age tropes.

Album opener “Pastel Youth” reflects on childhood and comparative simplicity with “I miss the days when I was pastel youth / Everything was fine” over spacious synthesizer and breathy background vocals. The rest of

the album follows suit – the experience-based lyrics are universally familiar. “down town,” is full of longing, with the dreamy “We could crash into each other / We could smash into each other / Let’s go downtown,” while the more restrained “Ballad for Boys” confronts betrayal with “I thought you respected me / But you just neglected me.”

While they do exhibit strong compositional skills, it feels as though we haven’t heard Cyberbae with their sound fully realized yet. Where the vocal delivery shines at times it falls flat at others, and the instrumentation can feel repetitive by the time the closing track rolls around. Nonetheless, the gloomy left-field chillwave of Cyberbae’s debut shows incredible artistic promise and solidifies them as a force to be recognized within Columbia’s music scene. Already a stand out artist of the notoriously prolific Tri City Rec, this is just the beginning of Cyberbae.

- **Jordan Smith**

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JANUARY 18–FEBRUARY 9, 2019

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MONTGOMERY

AUGUST 23–31, 2019

Winner of the 2018 Trustus Playwrights' Festival, By Stephen Brown

2ND ACT FILM FESTIVAL 2018

FROM MAKING A FILM TO MAKING A COMMUNITY

The 2nd Act Film Festival in its 5th Year

BY WADE SELLERS

Making a film, no matter the length, is a process that can be equally collaborative as it can be born from a single creative mind. The Cinematographer, Screenwriter, Art Director, Gaffer, Audio Recordist, and other Key positions require their own unique creative input driven by the vision of the Director.

Stepping on a film set for the first time, no matter the size, can be disorienting and overwhelming. If you have never created a film just knowing where to start seems an impossible task. But after completing that film, whether it is one's first or fifth, there is an incredible feeling of creative accomplishment that is unmatched.

The 2nd Act Film Festival was created in 2013 with one primary purpose—to serve as a singular event to bring film artists together to grow the independent film community in Columbia.

Only ten teams are selected from an open call each year to participate throughout South Carolina. Filmmakers are selected based on their talent, past work, and points of

view. A larger part of the selection criteria is the desire to create. Submitting filmmakers are not required to have made a film. If necessary, filmmakers are connected with the other film artists and crew members they may need to help complete their projects.

Filmmakers are all given the same first and third acts of a short film script, their job is to write the second act and make the movie. The pages that are distributed have no scene descriptions, no character names or genders assigned. The teams start with the dialogue only and the rest is left up to the creativity of the group.

To date, forty short films have been produced for the 2nd Act Film Festival. This diverse group has screened films with distinct points of view to new audiences each year. The greatest upshot, however, has been the relationships formed between team members that have participated in the festival. As a group, the majority of the participants have not even met before the first filmmakers' meeting. By the night of the screening, teams

have collaborated not only on their own projects but they have provided input and support to other teams of artists working at the same goal.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the 2nd Act Film Festival. With the addition of ten films to the 2nd Act library the Jasper Project is excited to see what new stories lay ahead. More exciting are the prospects of beginning filmmakers meeting seasoned technicians, new screenwriters conversing with established screenwriters, artists working with artists to foster a creative community that will support them long past the screening of these films and into their next projects and, in the end, sitting back and watching new creative relationships grow.

Join us on November 7th at Trustus Theatre to be a part of the story. For more information go to www.seconactfilmfestival.com.

Wade Sellers is the executive director of Coal Powered Filmworks and Film Editor for Jasper magazine

HOMETOWN BALLERINAS



FOR THE PEOPLE
AND PLACES
THEY LOVE

BY SUSAN LENZ



GARY
ELM

mcc

T

he mention of a principal ballet dancer often conjures up images of a demanding diva, aloof and far removed from the common people as she dances above us all with her feet en pointe and her nose in the clouds.

But nothing could be further from reality when considering Columbia City Ballet's new pair of principal female dancers, Claire Richards Rapp, who was promoted in to the position in 2017, and Bonnie Boiter-Jolley, promoted earlier this year. These hometown girls are likely to be seen throwing back drinks with their friends at local watering holes like The War Mouth, Lula Drake, and the Whig, cheering on the Gamecocks when they can make it to a game, or curling up on the couch with their cats and husbands settling in for a night of *Cards Against Humanity*. And since they are the best of friends, they are also likely to be seen out on the town together enjoying each other's company.

Richards Rapp and Boiter-Jolley are native South Carolinians who started their training as children at Columbia City Ballet under former prima ballerina Mariclare Miranda and City Ballet executive director William Starrett. Richards, 25, studied during summers with Boston Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Ballet West, and American Ballet Theatre. Boiter-Jolley, 29, studied at the Kirov Academy, Alonzo King Lines Ballet, Boston Ballet, spent four summers in New York City studying with American Ballet Theatre, and another in the Czech Republic. *(Full disclosure – Boiter-Jolley is the daughter of Jasper Magazine editor Cindi Boiter.)* Richards Rapp joined Columbia City Ballet straight out of high school in 2011, was





CLAIRE RICHARDS RAPP (LEFT) BONNIE BOITER-JOLLEY (RIGHT)





promoted to soloist in 2014, and was named principal dancer in 2017. Boiter-Jolley studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts and graduated from the Honors College at the University of South Carolina. She danced at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, as well as in Italy with Ballet Adriatico and for a season with Donald Byrd's Spectrum Dance Theatre in Seattle before returning to Columbia. She joined the company in 2011 and was promoted to soloist in 2014. This is her first season as a principal dancer.

It is the first time since Miranda was the company's principal dancer that Columbia audiences will be treated to two hometown girls in the leading roles. Miranda is looking forward to working with the women she taught since they were young girls. "They are such different dancers," says Miranda. "They each bring something special to the stage."

Starrett agrees. "The manner in which the art of ballet evolves has traditionally been one dancer imparting knowledge to another," he says. "Particularly in the case of Bonnie and Claire, having received training since their youth from Mariclare, it is easy for me to 'see' her in each of them... Both dancers continue to enthusiastically receive instruction and training from her through company classes and coaching she provides for specific ballets."

Miranda says she "never really thought about a career in dance or becoming a principal dancer" when she was growing up. "It was just a series of challenges," she says. "I focused on the work, the next accomplishment, the next role." When asked why she stayed in Columbia instead of auditioning for larger companies in faraway cities, Miranda says, "An early mentor told me, 'No one is irreplaceable.' It was blunt but significant advice." Such frankness does indeed apply to company life, but not to a family one. "I stayed in Columbia because my family kept me grounded. I was replaceable as a ballerina, but I was never a ballerina at home." Family was Miranda's anchor.

Coming from close-knit families certainly shaped both Richards Rapp and Boiter-Jol-

ley's lives and career choices as well. "As long as I did the work and wanted to continue with dance, my family was supportive," says Boiter-Jolley. "I kept choosing dance over everything else," adds Richards Rapp who, as a child, studied piano and oboe and played soccer and swam. Although Boiter-Jolley was also involved with other activities, she always dreamed of becoming a principal dancer. The first time she watched Mariclare Miranda perform, her goal was firmly set. For Richards Rapp, attaining the rank of principal was a goal that only became clear after going to her first summer intensive program. Experiencing new teachers and different approaches shaped her outlook. "It made me hungry for more," the dancer says.

Family support was particularly crucial when each dancer experienced potentially debilitating injuries. At the end of the 2016 season, Richards Rapp sprained her ankle and seriously hurt her entire foot. She couldn't walk for three months and depended on her family to keep her focused on a positive, healing future. "They acted as a huge sounding board," Richards Rapp says. The next summer found Boiter-Jolley having surgery to remove bone spurs on her foot. It kept her down for just over a month, but this wasn't the only health issue she was facing. Compromised eyesight led to an MRI and a potential diagnoses of multiple sclerosis that took months to dismiss. "Facing the unknown was a life-changing experience," Boiter-Jolley says. "I was almost surprised by my promotion to principal dancer, because the season started with me struggling. I started to dance without expectations, [just] for the sheer joy in every step. I was dancing in the present, but I couldn't have gotten to that place without the support of family and friends."

Getting through tough times like these is undeniably difficult. Thankfully, both dancers have married men who understand creative partnerships, artistic passions, and the importance of their supportive roles. Earlier this year, Richards Rapp tied the knot with trumpeter and composer Mark Rapp. Despite

his busy performing schedule as ambassador of Jazz for the City of Columbia and the State of South Carolina, he is now a fixture in the dance audience just as Claire is a constant in the music scene. The two have even collaborated, mixing fancy tap dancing with sexy brass riffs. Boiter-Jolley and Chad Henderson, artistic director of Trustus Theatre, have been married for three years. Boiter-Jolley often attends dramatic rehearsals and musical auditions. She greets audience members as they arrive and is frequently referred to as "the first lady of Trustus Theatre." Henderson rarely misses a ballet, and the two are regularly spotted at a variety of arts events around town.

On a personal, day-to-day level Richards Rapp and Boiter-Jolley are not just dancers. They are hometown girls who enjoy shopping at Soda City Market, going to musical events (especially when their many talented friends are performing), listening to NPR, and taking care of their adored pet cats. Richards Rapp enjoys hanging out at Pearlz and Lula Drake. Boiter-Jolley considers The Restoration a must-see local musical group. Both women are also busy teaching dance to the next generation of dancers.

Like Miranda, Richards Rapp and Boiter-Jolley are both aware that a career as principal dancer is a short one. One day, they too will be replaced in the company, but they will never be replaced as strong arts patrons and advocates in their hometown. Starting this October with *Dracula: Ballet with a Bite*, they both hope to foster new audiences and cross pollination in all areas of cultural arts.

Susan Lenz is an internationally known fiber and installation artist who writes about dance for Jasper Magazine

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*“Just you wait, ‘enry ‘iggins, ‘til you’re sick,
And you screams to fetch a doctor double quick!
I’ll be off a second later, and go straight to the the-ate-er,
Oh ho ho, ‘enry ‘iggins, just you wait!”*

—Eliza Doolittle, MY FAIR LADY

While I certainly don’t condone abandoning a dying man to see a show, opening with a quote from my favorite musical, especially one that clearly holds theatre attendance in high regard, is a cheeky way to introduce myself as Jasper’s new Theatre Editor, and begin a “State of the Union”-style look at Columbia’s thriving theatre scene. What’s going on? Well, let me tell you...

Though it hosts a variety of events, The Koger Center is also the home of “Broadway to Columbia,” a series of professional national tours. Koger Center Director, Nate Terraccio, sees his mission as one of bringing in the highest quality of theatrical productions. To this end, he has expanded the average stay of each traveling production to one full week, and is offering newly-released titles in addition to beloved classics. “When you get a full week, the quality is so much better,” Terraccio says. This season’s Koger Center lineup includes engagements of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Something Rotten*, *Kinky Boots*, and *Jersey Boys*, in addition to shorter runs of *Chicago*. Terraccio also reports that season theatre subscriptions are growing at a steady pace, which mirrors what’s happening in many local houses.

While Terraccio is importing the best of Broadway, the ever-innovative Robert Richmond, Chair of USC’s Theatre Department is bringing something entirely new to Columbia and points yet unknown. Full Circle Productions, the professional theatre in residence at The University of SC, is, a creative

collective whose mission is to tell stories that deal with social justice while celebrating diversity in all its forms. “A repertory-style company, complete with internships and educational opportunities,” says Richmond, Full Circle was awarded the Incubator Project at Harbison Theatre, and will be creating and presenting *Aphra Behn* in the spring.

There are also plenty of new projects coming to life at Trustus Theatre, which has shown Artistic Director Chad Henderson’s commitment to growth and serving a wide variety of audience members and theatre artists. Since Trustus was founded in 1985, Henderson, along with the rest of the Trustus Company has maintained careful stewardship of what has become a nationally-recognized theatre, unafraid to tackle controversial subjects onstage. While the season opens with a musical parody of *The Silence of The Lambs*, directed by Jonathan Monk and featuring Hunter Boyle, Kayla Cahill, Patrick Dodds, Robin Gottlieb, Sam McWhite, and Abigail McNeely, (bring some fava beans and a nice Chianti,) Henderson says the season is less about politics and weighty issues, and more about telling the stories of individuals climbing over personal obstacles and meeting challenges. In addition to *Silence! The Musical*, the Mainstage season includes *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* directed by Patrick Kelly, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *The Great Gatsby*, both directed by Henderson, *Sweat* directed by Erin Wilson, *Heathers: The Musical*, directed

by Dewey Scott-Wiley, and *Montgomery*, the featured piece in this year’s Trustus Playwright’s Festival.

If a single word is needed to describe the activity at Columbia Children’s Theatre, it has to be “buzzing.” The theatre is humming with activity and an expansion boom has made the venerable company an even larger presence on the theatre scene. According to Artistic Director Jerry Stevenson and Managing Director Jim Litzinger, it’s hard to keep track of all the new adventures. Together with Development Director, Larry Hembree, the trio recently negotiated an arrangement with Still Hopes Retirement Community, in which CCT will build a permanent home in West Columbia, housing “the first intergenerational theatre company in the country,” Stevenson says. Young performers and Still Hopes residents will frequently share the stage, fostering a sense of inclusivity while allowing the kids to work with seasoned lifetime performers. For the moment, CCT is still housed at Richland Mall, but now resides in a larger, more comfortable space, downstairs. Upcoming productions include a new adaptation of *Stone Soup*, expanded programming and educational opportunities with the Richland 1 school district, the “Girls Out Loud” program, led by Christine Hellman, emphasizing female strength and empowerment through theatre, and a continued eye on touring productions. The mainstage season features four shows including *Schoolhouse Rock*, *the Best Christmas Pageant Ever*

Musical, Peter Pan and Wendy, A Musical, 3 Little Pigs, and Commedia Pinocchio.

Two long-established local community theatre companies, Workshop Theatre and Town Theatre, recently celebrated their 50th and 100th birthdays, respectively, and continue to provide entertainment and performance opportunities for the entire community. Workshop's season is still in development, but will be staged at the Cottingham Theatre on the campus of Columbia College. Executive Director Jeni McCaughn admits that things have sometimes been challenging since losing the theatre on Bull Street, but emphasizes that, "Workshop is alive, well, and producing quality shows." Workshop still maintains a rehearsal studio on Elmwood Avenue, where classes are held.

Town Theatre has announced their season to include *Buddy, Arsenic And Old Lace, Newsies, and Mamma Mia!*, as well as a one-off performance of *Joint Owners in Spain*, which was the first show ever produced by the theatre featuring Kathy Hartzog, Bill DeWitt, Gayle Stewart, and Leah McNeely Tudor, with Allison McNeely in the director's seat. Town will kick off their season with *West Side Story* directed by David Swicegood.

The hallowed halls of academia also have a great deal to excite the theatre-goer. Theatre USC opens its season with a stage adaptation of the Oscar-winning film, *Shakespeare in Love*, directed by Andrew Schwartz. Based on the Tom Stoppard screenplay, the stage adaptation retains approximately 90 percent of Stoppard's original, according to Kevin Bush, Director of Marketing and PR for USC's Department of Theatre and Dance. "I guess there wasn't much to improve on from the original," Bush says, adding that the play was a hit on the London stage in 2014. USC's season continues in The Lab Theatre, with a double feature of Christopher Durang one-acts, cheekily titled "*Double Durang*," followed by the Pulitzer Prize finalist, *The Wolves*, at Longstreet Theatre in February, and *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time* at Drayton Hall in April.

The State of the Theatre in the Columbia Midlands is solid and strong—another reason we're happy to call this fertile arts area our home. Curtain up!

Frank Thompson is the Theatre Editor for Jasper Magazine.

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THE
**BROTHERS
SEIBERT**

By Kyle Petersen

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS HAMMOND

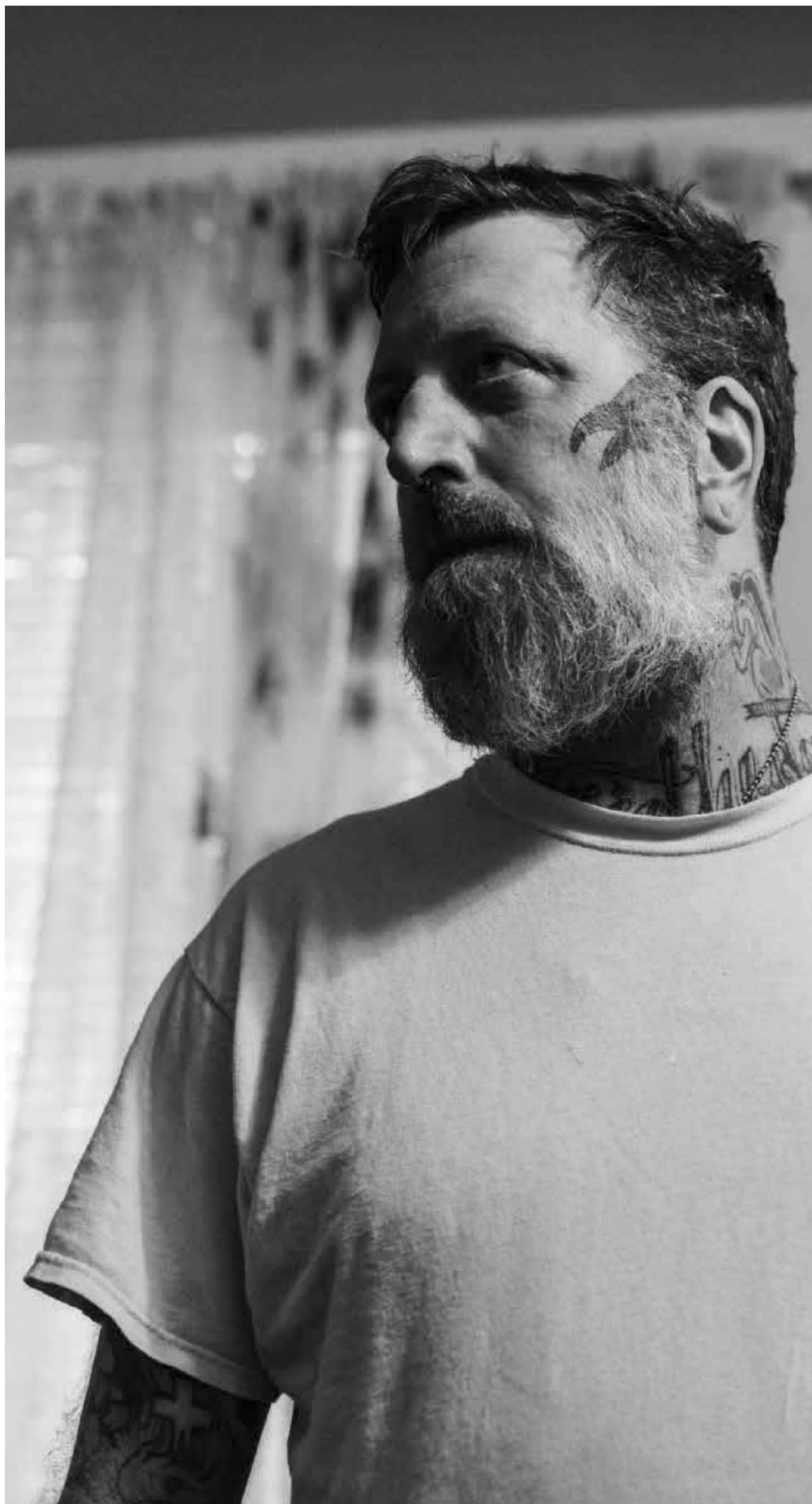
It's

still early afternoon on a mid-August Saturday, but Zach and Saul Seibert are getting a little loaded.

The two brothers—Zach is older by four years, although Saul is considerably taller—are hard-living musician types, and it shows, from everything from their tattoo-covered bodies to the casual way they pass a cheap bottle of whiskey and polish off forties of malt liquor over the course of the interview. They also happen to separately lead two of the best currently operating bands in Columbia in the darkly dramatic Americana narratives of EZ Shakes (Zach) and the spooky, possessed garage rock duo Boo Hag (Saul).

Both have been in and out of Columbia over the years, although Zach has long been more well-known in music circles for his stellar songwriting and gruffly sweet voice that found an outlet in Due East and the Red Wagon, groups which have been around for more than a decade. In recent years, though, it's been Boo Hag that's been headlining shows and building a cult following thanks to its stark, riff-heavy sound that ricochets with swampy guitars and old-school punk glee through gnarly slices of surf and psychedelic rock. And Saul is a consummate frontman, with a steely intensity that crackles with a voodoo-like mysticism punctuated by unfettered, anxious hollers that bring to mind the most wiry aspects of early post-punk.

But even though they both cherish living in Columbia and being part of its music scene, it's New Orleans that feels like their shared muse and psychic home, both in the way they talk about it and in the music they make. A city with a unique amalgam of sounds and cultures that balances a peculiar strain of religiosity with hedonic revelry, it's also tied inextricably to the story of the Seibert









family, which has its roots in the Crescent City as much as it does in the Midwest.

Each brother has spent considerable time in New Orleans, both in their formative years and as adults. Their parents, who met when their mother (who would go on to teach classical music later in life) was playing in a Christian rock band called Eastland, were huge in the New Jesus movement of the '70s, starting a street preaching ministry in the city. They also lived on a commune in Indiana, where Zach and Saul also spent considerable time as children.

But it was in New Orleans that Zach and Saul formed their first band together.

"We were living in this old carriage house, the kind where in the olden times you could have pulled [up a] carriage in the bottom, but they had cemented it over," Saul recalls. It was a massive single-floor house with room after room, something close to 3,500 square feet. A former monastery, there were crucifixes over every door.

"They basically wanted someone to stay in the house, so it wouldn't get squatted in," Zach admits. "I think we paid \$500 dollars a month or something."

It was the mid-'90s, and the two brothers, both in their twenties, found themselves living together along with Zach's first wife, after a childhood of shared musical interests, thanks to their dad's record collection, but little in the way of creative bonding. Zach had started out singing for hardcore and metal bands, while Saul was heavy into golden-era hip-hop and tentatively looking up to his older brother.

The music they made in that stately house—just the two of them on guitar—was in the alt-country spirit of the time period [think Jayhawks and Whiskeytown] and not too distant from the music Zach makes today. They called it The Anthology, and the songs were "mostly about our lives and [Zach's] marriage, which was in the throes of failure," according to Saul. They would later move to Florida and turn the songs into an avenue for a more electrified rock 'n' roll band before going in different directions.

The two would cross paths in Columbia and New Orleans over the years. Zach would make an ill-fated move back to the city in the early 2010s, while Saul would end up teaching theology there for a few years up until coming back to Columbia in 2014. The end result is plenty of stories and tall tales that



seem to mark and twist the stories of their lives, with tales of good drugs and dark times, along with seedy nightclubs and seedier tattoo parlors, making some of the details hazy.

And while the two can be somewhat reticent on both subjects, it's the poles of substance abuse and spirituality which seem to define both their lives and creative work. Zach is more open on both subjects, particularly the latter, while Saul becomes a bit tighter-lipped and uneasy. He talks about doing mission work after high school, traveling to places as diverse as Texas, Chicago, and Russia doing mostly "social service-type stuff."

"I wouldn't say I have any kind of mission [now]. However, and this is uncomfortable for him [Saul], I will say that I feel like God has had a hand on my life, and how selfish of me to keep that to myself?" Zach admits when I ask him about the role of religion and spirituality in his life and songs.

"That might not make sense to anybody else, but it doesn't matter—I believe it trans-

lates. When [EZ Shakes] play, I feel like it's a come-to-Jesus event. I pray for that. Not to convert anybody, but for people to walk away with an experience beyond themselves. Whether that's the music or the lyrics."

As for the songs themselves, "it's a different kind of Jesus than people are used to seeing," according to Zach. He sees himself casting the specifics of his life into a kind of universal struggle, one we all recognize based on our shared humanity.

"The things that make us human are connected to our struggles and failures as humans. You don't learn shit unless you fail. That's something everyone has in common, no matter who you are," he contends. "I sing a lot about not having money, or having problems with drugs, because they are or have been real struggles for me. The religion part of it--although I hate that fucking word, is that..." He pauses. "It can't all be for nothing, for me."

As for Saul, he declines to engage the question directly. Zach chimes in that "if you read

into his lyrics--although he won't talk about it, for whatever reason--his message is the same, just with a totally different [presentation]," but the Boo Hag frontman tends to be more cryptic when discussing his music.

"There's no formula to it, I don't think there's a unique nature to how you produce music or write a song," he offers after a bit. "For me, it's a microcosm of influences I'm not in control of. You sit down and you grab this piece of organic material, this piece of wood and steel, and whatever it is in your fucking body, your voice, and then you exercise (exorcize?) what comes out. Boo Hag was borne out of necessity for me, to explore and twist and maybe pervert what we came from."

Zach quickly interjects his own take: "If you listen to his lyrics, there is Scripture in almost every song, if you know it well enough," he insists. "He's a tortured soul, and so am I, but it comes out in totally different aspects."

Boo Hag may be tortured, but there's a certain amount of physical, primal force

that makes their music a joyous experience. Drummer Scott Tempo is the ideal foil for Saul's slash-and-burn guitar and charismatic vocal presence. And even when the band pivoted from the unhinged burn of their debut LP *Hocus Pocus* to the more measured, almost Whites Stripes-like romp of their follow-up, *The Further*, that infectiousness remains.

But as Zach has gathered players for his EZ Shakes project--first Todd Hicks on pedal steel, then John Furr on guitar and Stan Gardner on drums--the group turned into a band, with a live show that proved to be the most ideal setting for his songs that he's yet seen. Hicks and Furr are natural mood players, conjuring up space and ambience in the place of traditional solos, and Gardner's percussion accents give Zach's latest batch of songs the kind of pull and drift that they've long desired, as evidenced on the self-titled full-length that arrived earlier this summer.

Each brother is the other's editor and sounding board, and it's clear that there's some competition, although no animus, between the two.

"I was jealous, man. But in a good way," Zach says of Boo Hag's immediate success in Columbia. "Obviously, I want to see success for him, just like he wants to see success for me. But it was a real jumping off mark for me [with EZ Shakes]."

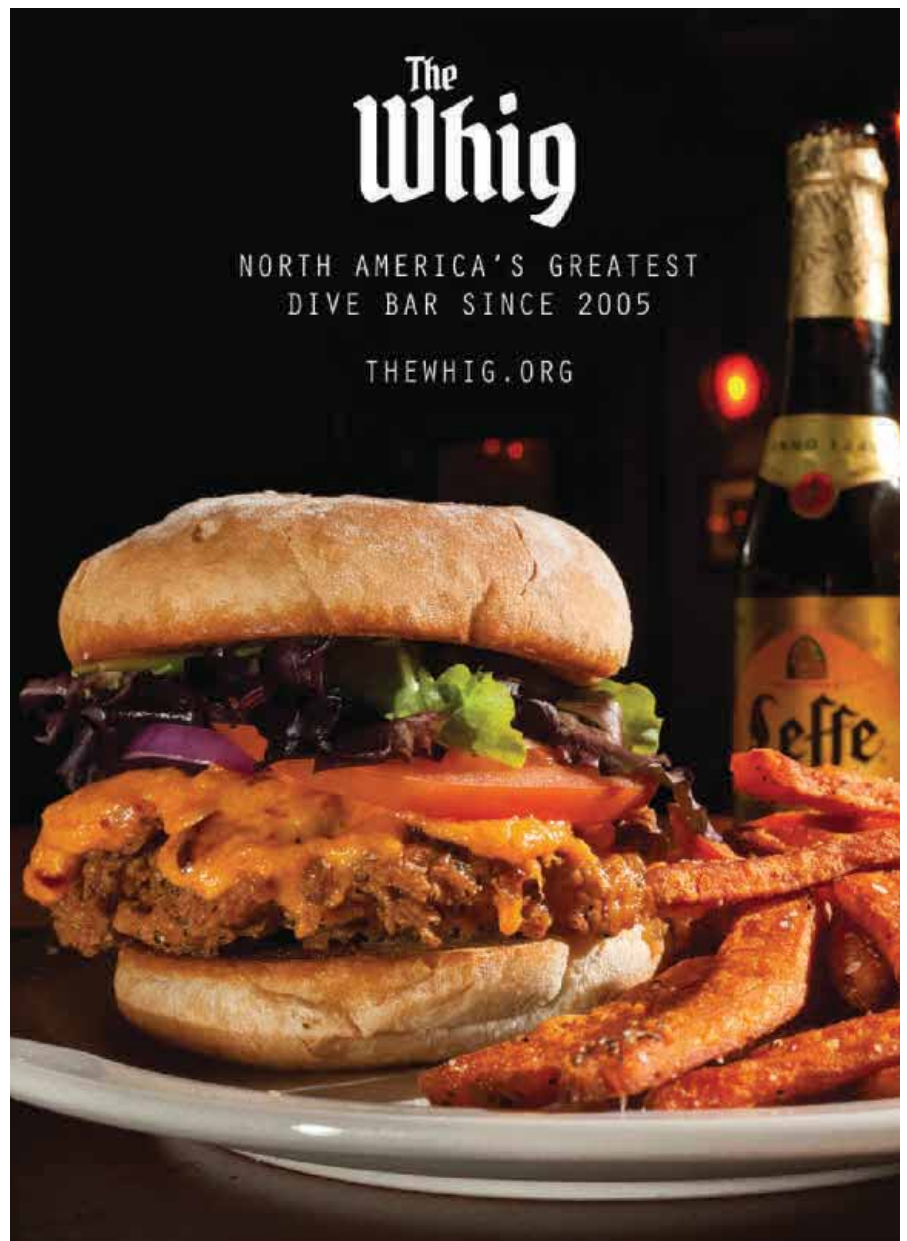
"It's not an Oasis relationship, or a Jesus & Mary Chain relationship," Saul agrees. "We don't ever come to blows. We have maybe once or twice. But there's a deeper connection and gravitas to our relationship that facilitates what we do. I want to protect and guard that."

"There's no jealousy. We mourn each other's losses, celebrates each other's successes."

"That's scripture, man," Zach interjects with a jibe..

"Fuck you, man!"

Arts writer Kyle Petersen is the Assistant Editor of Jasper Magazine



THE JAM ROOM **AT**

BY **ETHAN FOGUS**





Jay Matheson is a slim guy with big horned rimmed glasses and white plaid shirt sleeves with khaki shorts, and he has a laidback charisma. When we catch up, he's been filing emails and bookings, prepping ads for Midlands Audio Institute, and dealing with the onslaught of daily paperwork requisite with running a studio. And the Jam Room is no ordinary studio; it's a Columbia institution.

Matheson steps away from his makeshift office—a desk placed against a wall stacked with papers and to-do notices—and leads me into the backroom. It's like any other office backroom, really. There's a Keurig, a makeshift lounge, a microwave. Unlike most office backrooms, though, this one has a reel-to-reel archive. And it's where legends like heavy metal band Kylesa and punk-rock insurgents The Queers have recorded.

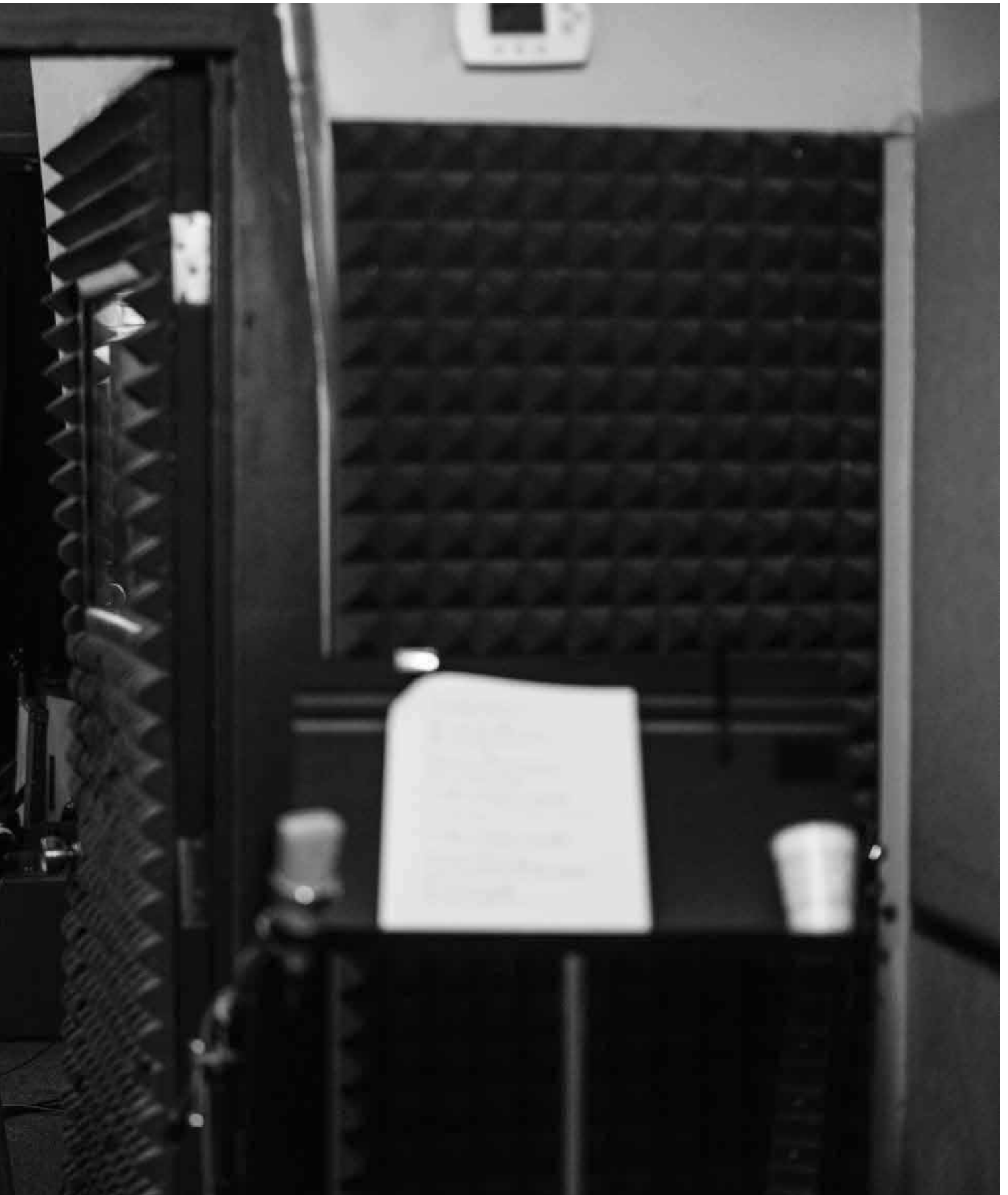
Matheson's autodidactic know-how leads to conversations that shift without warning; one second you're chatting about the audio quality of early Rolling Stones records, the next you're discussing a camera's depth of field.

It's no wonder, really. As owner-proprietor of the Jam Room for the past 30 years, he has to possess a little bit of knowledge and can-do spirit about everything. An independent studio costs money to run, and costs have to be cut in any way possible. If that means Matheson has to crawl into the air ducts above the space, or mend some drywall between sessions, then so be it. It's all in a day's work.

Since buying the building in Rosewood where the Jam Room is currently housed a few years ago, Matheson has improved the control room, added a focal piece rock wall, overhauled the mastering suite, and added a digital workstation—all in an effort to improve the aural experience. It's all been part of the long journey the Jam Room has taken from a homegrown, DIY recording operation into a professional, internationally known studio.

Given that, it's remarkable that they've kept it so affordable and community-minded, an accomplishment that is easily a testament to Matheson's larger desire to maintain the operation to better the music scene in the Midlands. Local artists can come to the Jam Room and record with experienced producers for a fraction of what other studios cost.









Matheson recently opened the doors to the community to show off the new renovations. The open house was a chance to present the latest additions to the space and create dialogue between artists.

There's still some leftover paintings contributed by local artists for the open house leaning against the control room walls. Matheson directs my attention to them before noting that "in the future we hope to have more events here, show some films, and maybe more art shows."

Matheson graduated from USC's Media Arts program in 1982. It's easy to see how the immersive program influenced his zest for learning. Of course, a lot about recording and maintaining a band's image has changed since the early days of the Jam Room. Matheson recalls having to work after hours at his friend's job as a video editor to make the Jam Room's first TV ads. Now you can make a similar product in minutes with iMovie on your phone.

The changing needs of musicians and technology were what inspired him to create the Midlands Audio Institute. MAI is a program that teaches basic audio skills to folks from all backgrounds. The institute's mission is to help everyone—from part-time live sound personnel to professional recording engineers—properly learn the skills necessary for their development. "As in any [endeavor], decisions made on poor information [are] not going to be a very wise." So he is doing what he's always done--dedicating time to making something better.

"When you have an opportunity to put something out there, you have to be clever and wait for the opportunity to present something," he explains about learning how to record properly. "You can't keep throwing it out there. That's the good thing about teaching. I can prepare and present information to them that they're going to be able to take and use later on."

Matheson also disagrees with the common notion that the ubiquity of portable recording software threatens the Jam Room's livelihood.

"Whose idea is DIY? It's an idea that's fed to us, like all of these home improvement shows—all they're there for is sell ads to Lowe's so you'll go there and be a design expert," he pauses before adding "Flip that over to recording. The whole DIY thing is driven

by advertisement to be DIY so they can sell you their stuff. So all you're doing is dancing to the man. Then they paint an established studio like this as a Walmart where nothing cool or good ever happens."

"Thirty years ago did bands worry about buying recording equipment? No. All they worried about was playing shows, writing songs, getting songs recorded and all that. You want to be more popular three days from now than you were today? Come in here, record something."

As the Jam Room enters its fourth decade, Matheson has begun looking toward the future for successors. The studio has already evolved to include engineers like Zac Thomas, rapper Fat Rat da Czar, and Kylea guitarist Philip Cope. According to Thomas, "Jay has always strived to better the music community and arts community as a whole. He's always been the kind of person who would bend over backwards if he could help you out."

Toward the end of our conversation Matheson pulls up some recent sessions from Jade Blocker—a singer/songwriter in town—and gushes over her songs. The songs "sound like '90s Oasis-meets-Foo Fighters" and he excitedly laments how he "never gets to do pop." The appreciation is mirrored by Blocker, who says, "The Jam Room is awesome. Jay really knows what he is doing. Amazing guy and sound engineer."

Then he pulls up another session; then another. His passion booms as he discusses tone, reverb, and the nuts and bolts of each session.

"He puts so much effort and, honestly, money into making sure the studio is a top notch facility. It's inspiring to work with someone who puts so much weight into building a better community," Thomas adds. Matheson, for his part, says he wants to start passing the torch to other newcomers. Presenting opportunities for others is one way to help steward his legacy.

For 30 years Matheson has been an innovator and believer in Columbia. Let's hope we get a lot more years with this engineer at the wheel.



Ethan Fogus teaches English at The University of South Carolina and plays in the band The Witness Marks



KRISTIN COBB



Kristin Cobb is the new executive director of the Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College and, already, she is putting her fingerprints on the growing institution. Jasper caught up with Cobb to learn more about her and her plans for the Irmo theatre.

Jasper: Kristin, tell us a little about your earliest years – where did you grow up and go to school?

Cobb: I was born in Florida and was a DuPont kid, so we moved around a good bit before landing in Camden, SC. I never planned on staying, but my involvement at the Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County with Larry Hembree as a high school kid solidified my appreciation and love for the town. I went to Camden High and after a not-so-pretty semester at College of Charleston, I switched gears and transferred to USC where I finished with a Bachelors in Journalism. I was supposed to just move to NYC and marry David Letterman, but that's another interview.

Jasper: When did you first get started in the arts and arts administration?

Cobb: I worked in radio and television right out of college and then was called when the marketing director position opened up at the Fine Arts Center. It was a lateral move for me, but a chance for me to give back to the

organization that had given me so much as a teenager. I took that position and worked in that capacity for two years and then the ED job came open. I was the internal candidate among a large pool of applicants, needless to say, I was thrilled when I was chosen to take the reins.

Jasper: Tell us about your previous position and responsibilities at the Kershaw County Fine Arts Center.

Cobb: The Fine Arts Center is such a gem. To have the rich history and the loyal community support makes the FAC super special. It was founded over 40 years ago with great visionary leadership. To have a multi-use facility in a small town like Camden is extraordinary. A 300 seat theatre, gallery, education wing, historic property and eventually a black box space is just amazing. The challenge of that position is to maintain all of those spaces with a limited staff and to remain relevant in a changing demographic. Continuing to think outside the box programmatically as well as even asking the community to trust you with pushing the envelope from time to time, and preserving the rich arts legacy.

Jasper: What experiences at your previous positions best prepared you for the unique challenges of serving as only the second executive director of Harbison theatre?

Cobb: I think the fact that there were so many other pieces of the puzzle to juggle, gave me an added advantage coming to Harbison where I can just focus on the Theatre, maintaining the high quality of performing arts, but also spread my wings a bit. Increase visibility for the Theatre with strong community engagement as well as further connecting with the MTC students and faculty. To have such a beautiful state-of-the-art theatre nestled on this beautiful campus is really something special. I want more people to have a chance to experience this venue.

Jasper: You've got an impressive 7th season lined up. What are some of the events you are most excited about?

Cobb: That's tough! All of it! Steep Canyon Rangers will be a real treat and are already sold out! The MLK celebration featuring Damien Sneed will be amazing and I am excited about the Tom Petty Tribute.

Jasper: There seems to be more locally sourced talent on your calendar, too. Is this intentional and, if so, why?

Cobb: Absolutely. Columbia is so fortunate to be brimming with so much talent. Musically, theatrically and beyond. I want those performers to have a place here too. I want Columbia to see Harbison Theatre as that

special intimate theatre where you can see local legends like Dick Goodwin, followed by mesmerizing modern dance from MOMIX. That's what will continue to set us apart. I think the diversity of the programming and also a sense of welcoming in the Columbia arts scene. This is a space that we all need to share.

Jasper: By the time folks read this many events will already be sold out at Harbison Theatre – what does that tell you about Midlands audiences?

Cobb: We love the arts! I think we really get the intrinsic value of what the arts add to our daily lives. I hope we do. And if you have a doubt, I hope you will come to Harbison Theatre and see what the fuss is all about...

Jasper: Where do you want to take Harbison Theatre under your leadership?

Cobb: We will continue to bring performances that you would never have a chance to see at a venue our size and with a ticket price that is affordable. I want us to be that special venue that takes care of its community artists by providing a home, but also a place of excitement and magic for audiences of all ages. The most colorful seats in town...

Jasper: What's your dream night of entertainment at Harbison Theatre?

Cobb: A lobby full of different faces. Laughing. Smiling. Loving.



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ALEXANDRA WHITE

ARTIST, ADVOCATE, ACTIVIST

BY KRISTINE HARTVIGSEN



To

see visual artist Alexandra White buzzing around town in her paint-covered artist's apron, all smiles and bubbles, one might perceive her as the typical artist, happily painting the days of her life away for all the world to enjoy. But, if you ask other artists who she has helped bring into the world of sharing and showing their art and advising them on what it means to be a professional artist, you'll find two other terms added to her description: advocate and activist. And she represents those words well.

A native of Hartford, Connecticut and resident of Lexington, SC, White moved along

both East and West coasts as a child and eventually settled in Gilbert, SC. The daughter of an artist, she began painting professionally when she was 19.

"For many summers, I did the art festivals circuit," she says. "I traveled all over the country. It was so fun. You got to know people. Many of the same artists travel along the same circuit."

But to truly understand White's street cred as an arts activist, it's important to travel back to about 1995, when she lived in small, shared apartment in New York's SoHo neighborhood. She painted and worked in the café

below her apartment to make ends meet. At the time, SoHo was a thriving district full of working artists and art galleries. The major galleries routinely snubbed women artists, and that didn't sit right with Alexandra, so she joined an extension of the activist group known as the Guerrilla Girls.

"We were such badasses," White says. "We protested at galleries that showed exclusively male-produced art, places that never featured women artists. We wore masks because we wanted to protest but not get blacklisted at the same time."

After returning to South Carolina around 1997, she began to identify with two emerging but distinct personas — "Abstract Alexandra" for her art and "Alexandra White" for her arts activism.

"I did portraits and pastel landscapes early in my career," she explains, "but I really love abstract art, the distraction, the momentary chaos. That you can create and find beauty in it is powerful to me."

As someone who has known domestic violence, White wanted to raise awareness and funding for Sistercare, a nonprofit that serves survivors of domestic violence. In 2001, she founded the first She Festival in Columbia to benefit Sistercare.

"It was inspiring to me to have my art and other artists' art be part of something that is important for women," says Gina Langston Brewer, an exhibitor in the first She Festival. Over the years, Brewer feels that progress has been slow and that the need for arts activism, especially for women, is still strong. "I feel like art in general is just more about who you know and who supports you and who likes you," she argues. "Alexandra is steady-going; I am so glad she is still at it."

White has also made a name for herself on the Rosewood side of town. In 2016, local literary arts promoter and poet Al Black temporarily assumed director duties for the annual Rosewood Art and Music Festival in Colum-

bia from event co-founder Arik Bjorn. New to the job, Black asked White to help him by heading up the visual arts side of the festival.

"My feeling is you can only do so much yourself, but if you get help from others who have the right experience, it makes it easier," Black says. "I know Alexandra as a dynamo. She has been wonderful for the Rosewood Arts Festival. She is one of the reasons why it has expanded and become more professional in its approach."

"Long ago, I loathed Columbia's clique-ish and limited arts community. It was unfriendly and unwelcoming," White says. "Thankfully, improvements made to Main Street downtown have created more forums where artists can show their work, which brings in more artists. Still, we need more women involved." Now, as visual arts coordinator for the Rosewood festival, White is determined to bring more women artists out of isolation so they can connect with others, blossom, and feel acceptance.

Acceptance and belonging is a common thread in White's work. In 2010, White founded the South Carolina Artists group with a goal of educating the public about the arts through curated exhibits in businesses and public spaces. For about two years, the group also had a semi-permanent gallery space in downtown Lexington, but the building was sold, and they are currently without a permanent, bricks-and-mortar home.

White's current project, an invitational endeavor called Whisper to a Shout, involves visual and literary artists feeding off one another's work and using their work for social commentary.

"I am the struggling working artist. I want to create a community of artists. I don't want people to feel alone," she explains.

White is keenly aware that artists need feedback. At gallery exhibits, she sometimes embeds herself in the crowd and watches. She has a philosophy about it.

"If you get people to stare at your work for at least 30 seconds, you can engage with them," she says. "As a society, we have limited art education or appreciation, especially in South Carolina. ...[but] I think I have a thick skin. My harshest critics are mostly white men, mostly engineers who say that they could do that. I think artists would have a thicker skin if they understood that people don't understand art, period. This is an opportunity for me to educate. If I can enlighten one person, I can turn a negative into a positive. It's my duty as an artist to engage them. Nobody gets it wrong. It's all about perspective. My goal is to get people to look and see something in a painting. I think apathy is the ultimate killer of art."

Like the beauty she finds in nature, Alexandra uses an apt metaphor to describe her ultimate goal.

"If we can build a creative artistic community, it can spread out like the roots of a tree," she says. "Let's work together getting a root system going."

For more information or to become involved visit SouthCarolinaArtists.com

Kristine Hartvigsen is a writer and editor who lives and works in Clinton, SC but will always call Columbia home.

Columbia Museum of Art Writer in Residence is a

Natural for the Post

BY MEL OLIVER

His story is a classic tale—a backwoods yarn with a positive twist. A self-proclaimed “punk,” Ray McManus grew up among the dirt roads outside Lexington, South Carolina, thinking he’d amount to nothing more than a motorcycle mechanic. That was the dream, and it’s a damn fine one, but destiny said there was more.

As it turns out, McManus would grow up to be a professor of creative writing at USC-Sumter and accomplished poet, with numerous published collections that include *Driving Through the Country Before You Were Born*, Merit Press poetry prize winner *Red Dirt Jesus*, and the Hub City-published *Punch*. Now, McManus is set to become the inaugural Writer-in-Residence at Columbia Museum of Art.

McManus is a natural fit for the post; not only does he excel at thoughtfully engaging literature, poetry, and art, but he believes in them, and he believes in the voice of regular folk when it comes to appreciating and grappling with art. His dedication and enthusiasm for this mission is infectious.

The father of two, McManus, 45, earned his MFA in poetry and his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of South Carolina. At USC-Sumter, he teaches creative writing, Irish literature, and Southern Literature, and serves as the director for the Center for Oral Narrative housed in the Division of Arts and Letters. He’s also a member of the editorial board for the Palmetto Poetry Series, the founder of Split P Soup, a creative writing outreach program that places writers in schools and communities

in South Carolina, and the director of the creative writing program at the Tri-District Arts Consortium. (*Full disclosure – McManus is somehow also a contributing editor for Jasper Magazine.*)

McManus credits his mentors in the MFA program at USC for much of his success. Those helpful figures included Columbia poet laureate and professor Ed Madden and Kwame Dawes, who was director of the USC Poetry Initiative at the time. These men were not just his mentors and friends, they were like his two dads, he says. Both men championed his efforts and encouraged McManus to push himself further than he thought possible. The encouragement kept him striving and, before he knew it, he had his MFA and was going for his Ph.D. Now a full-time professor, he, too, pushes people to give poetry a chance by “going to high schools all around Columbia and getting these kids to write poems. I started seeing these patterns where students became more confident, took ownership, and became more focused in other areas of their school.” For McManus, poetry opened the hearts and minds of students by building their self-esteem, helping them blossom in their environments and supporting their growth, individuality, and independence.

McManus found a kindred spirit in the Columbia Museum of Art. “It’s not just the people, but the building is an entity of itself. Everyone is so happy and passionate and full of energy, and you work at such an amazing place,” he says. “And how could you not be?” He remembers fondly attending

special events and creating poetry from experiencing pieces of art in the museum. One of his top priorities has been bringing many of his favorite events back, including hosting an artist’s Summit. There are a number of interactive literary and visual arts plans in the works, and McManus says he hopes everyone is as excited about them as he is.

When asked about her choice of McManus as the writer in Residence, Joelle Ryan Cook, who is Deputy Director of the CMA, can’t say enough good things about her choice. “Yep,” she says, “It’s all my fault! I have known Ray through our programs at the museum for years, and I have always been a fan. His talent and experience, his approach to art, and his ability to inspire students is what made him the perfect candidate for this new initiative in my mind. For years he has been using what we do at the museum as a resource for inspiration for his own work, engagement with the arts community, and as a creative touch point with his students.”

“I’m thrilled to be the Writer in Residence at the Columbia Museum of Art, and I really can’t thank Joelle Ryan Cook enough,” McManus says for his part. “CMA has always been a special place to me and to many other writers around Columbia. There has always been a vibrant energy there, and it is even more present today. You see it among the staff, and you feel it the moment you enter the galleries. So I’m honored to serve in this capacity, and consider it a privilege that they even let a guy like me in the door. I can’t wait for everyone to see the programs we’re developing at CMA, and watch them take hold. It is going to be a wild ride!”

Originally from Jefferson, South Carolina, Mel Oliver is a creative writer, poet, and chef; USC alumnus, and advocate for the arts, and she is extremely happy to be a contributor to Jasper Magazine.





BOVINOCHÉ

POEM BY DARIEN CAVANAUGH

There is no need here
to hold the gun after the killing,
but the powder-burnt barrel is
the true testament of *I can. I did.*

Let's drink kerosene and breathe
smoke to forget why we came,
what we dragged through ash.

The crucifixions were ceremonious
enough, but we saved nothing.

Now it's a long ride home, with plenty
of time to pick the dirt
from under our nails, remember
it's charred skin, hope
there is still something left,
lick our teeth
in search of remains.



LONESOME BLUES

POEM BY DARIEN CAVANAUGH

Last night someone played "The River" on
the jukebox and I thought of you, how
you swung the door open, burst in full blast,
expecting a world of laughable sin, found
a tired bartender counting the day down.

You bet me even a coward could learn
to dance with a woman in an empty room
and cued up Springsteen and Jennings
while I locked the door and promised you
the place was all ours for the night.

Darien Cavanaugh received his MFA in poetry from the University of South Carolina. His work has been published in *The Blue Collar Review*, *The Dos Passos Review*, *The James Dickey Newsletter*, *Juked*, *Kakalak Review*, *Pank*, *Sou'wester*, and the anthologies *Found Anew*, *A Sense of the Midlands*, and *Rivers of the Green Swamp*.



I HAVE AN ACCENT

POEM BY LOLI MOLINA MUÑOZ

I have an accent

When I go to the grocery store
and they ask me if I found everything I needed
I answer “yes”
they say: you have an accent!

This accent is my grandmother’s sewing for the rich
and waiting from my grandfather to return from Venezuela.

When I order a tall decaf coffee with almond milk
and I spell my name
they say: you have an accent!

This accent is my mother’s cleaning houses
so I could go to England and improve my English.

When I read a poem
and your faces change trying to understand
what I say and
you think: you have an accent!

This accent is their braided hands delivering the fruit
that I will place in your still empty basket.

Loli Molina Muñoz is a Spanish teacher of Elementary Education in Columbia, SC, who is pursuing a PhD in comparative literature. Her poetry has appeared in *Poemas al director* by Guillermo Spottorno (Bubok 2013) *Antología Whitestar* dedicated to David Bowie (Palabristas 2016), and *Vive San Valentín* (ViveLibro 2017). Her book *poemAnuario* was published in 2016, and her second book *Expatriados* was published in 2017.

A SONG FOR ADAM

BY KYLE PETERSEN

Adam Clayton Cullum, a singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and rare creature who walked among us, died by suicide in early September. It's an awful thing when anyone struggles to go on living, but it feels especially so for someone who felt so acutely alive to all who knew him or watched him perform.

I first met Adam at New Brookland Tavern in 2007 or so during the early years of falling off a building, his quasi-solo project which would cycle through different members and iterations depending on the show. Backed by (I believe) Mike Pope and Era Elizabeth, he cycled between guitar and keyboard that night as he played tunes from a new EP that he would later hand to audience members unsolicited. It was a thin crowd, but he was amazing even then, bursting at the seams with lyrics and melodies, joy and loneliness. He was warm yet awkward, with the combination of that intense stare punctuated by a big smile that would become so familiar over the years.

I loved this EP, entitled *it's time we acted like it*, deeply. I wore it out on several iPods over the next few years, to the point where the songs felt like a part of me and my experience. It was a record about struggling to grow up, to hold on to connections and meaning, about finding a way out of the morass. In many ways, all of the music he would go on to make after that, particularly the songs he wrote in *Magnetic Flowers* and *Can't Kids*, was too.

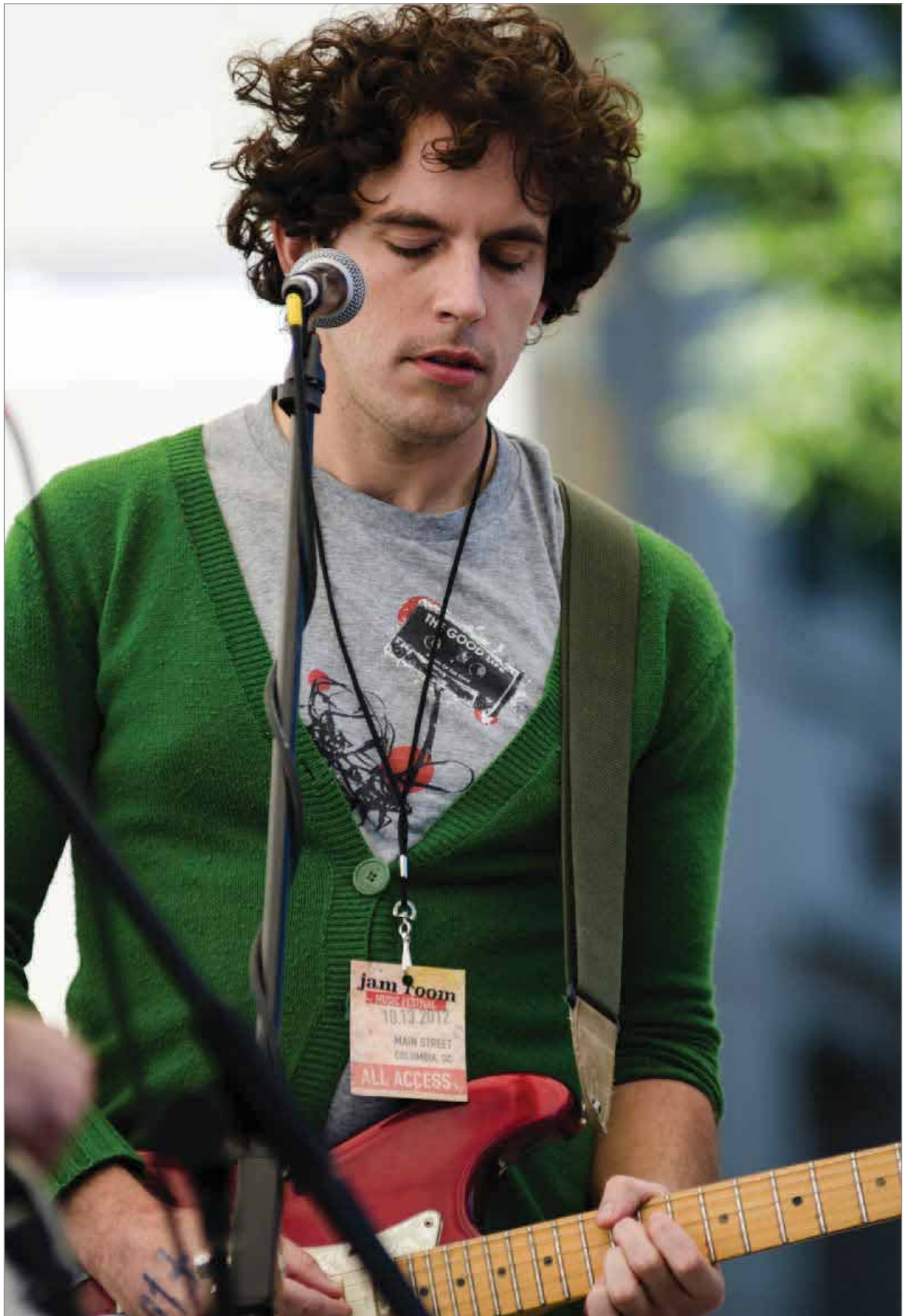
Adam found the stage in lots of other bands over the years, from the *Flowers* to *People Person* and *Gold Light* and so many others, not only because he was technically proficient but because he was a sympathetic

player and listener. In so many of the photos and stories that people have told about Adam since he passed, it's this sensitivity that shines through most clearly. Whether or not he totally understood you, his gaze was true. He paid attention, wanted to help, strived to play a role.

Somewhat paradoxically, this seems most true of *Can't Kids*, a band that he led through a beautiful combination of unyielding friendship and sheer force of emotion. The four members of the band—Adam on guitar, drummer Jessica Oliver, bassist Henry Thomas, and cellist Amy Cuthbertson—were one of those groups whose chemistry suggested a united front of humor, goodwill, and catharsis, and they became one of not only Columbia's best indie rock bands, but also one of my favorite live experiences, period.

I missed two of their most iconic shows—the late-night set at Hoehella when the power went out and Adam continued singing acapella for the darkened crowd, as well as their last performance at Shredquarters, the home and house show venue so closely tied to the group—yet I would argue each time they played it was magical. It was Adam at his loudest and most free, swiftly pairing pathos and playfulness in the way that only he could, as the band similarly pivoted from charging power chords to tender chamber folk-pop at the drop of a hat.

Despite all his artistic feats and accomplishments though, it's hard not to linger most on how Adam saw the world, the oscillation between quiet reverie and uninhibited conversation. He *felt* keenly, something that most of us all too often fail to do. That's what I want to remember about Adam, along with the songs. And the reminder to sing.





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