



# Happy New Year!



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## ARTS DEVO

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**2019 DEVO AWARDS:** The envelope, please ...

**BEST CAUSE FOR HOPE:** The artists of *Paradise*. Three months after the start of the Camp Fire, Theatre on the Ridge lit up its roadside sign with the words “Return to Paradise,” and opened the first play at the Ridge theater since the flames had destroyed nearly everything else on its road. The *Radioland* musical variety show was a tribute to the theater’s community and one of the early sparks of hope. And with the subsequent musical/community-building efforts of the Paradise Guilds/Norton Buffalo Hall, the return of performances to the Paradise Performing Arts Center, and the reopening of classes and the gallery at the Paradise Art Center, the artists of the Ridge continue to create hope.

**MOST COMFORTING ART:** Jess Mercer’s “Key Phoenix” and Chikoko’s *Tend*. Mercer’s gift of a Phoenix sculpture fashioned with thousands of keys from Camp Fire survivors who lost their homes is a powerful symbol of loss and rebirth. And for their *Tend* exhibit at the Museum of Northern California Art, the Chikoko team repurposed found, broken and burnt items into sculptural explorations of the meaning of home—most often in the form of nests, including a giant, soft and inviting one that people could climb into and let themselves be held.

**MOST INSPIRED DESIGN:** Zac Acker’s *Butte Strong* logo. The local tattoo artist and owner of 12 Volt Tattoo created an elegantly simple illustration—a pine tree over the state of California with a heart where Butte County is—a couple of days after the Camp Fire and it has become nearly ubiquitous since. It’s on car windows, canteens and T-shirts everywhere and is an instantly recognizable symbol of love and support. (Buy the gear at [etsy.com/shop/ButteStrong](http://etsy.com/shop/ButteStrong).)

**BEST ART SHOW (TIE):** *Broken Open*, with Cameron Crawford, Elise Ficarra and Eveylyn Ficarra (Jan. 17–Feb. 20), at **1078 Gallery**; *Dennis Leon: I am Here* (Feb. 14–March 24), at **Museum of Northern California Art**.

**BEST ARTISTS:** Zak Elstein and Amber Miller. Elstein has been killing it. He hasn’t literally killed anything, but he’s been there after the

fact, to harvest the skeletal remains of the little furry things and display them in beautiful and sometimes haunting light-box scenes for three stunning exhibits (at Winchester Goose, Blackbird and Naked Lounge) this year. And Miller, the managing director at the Blue Room Theatre, has gone above and beyond the role of your average community-theater designer with a run of several “beautifully painted,” “gorgeously realized” and “richly detailed” sets (as CN&R reviewers have described them) that were works of art in their own right.

**BEST LIVE THEATER:** *Hand to God* and *The Madam and the Mayor’s Wife* at the Blue Room; Slow Theatre’s *Vincent* at Chico Women’s Club and the *Butcher Shop* festival; California Regional Theatre’s *Matilda* and *Sweeney Todd* at CUSD Center for the Arts; and most impressive of all, Legacy Stage’s exhilarating outdoor production of *Macbeth* in Bidwell Park.

**BEST LIVE MUSIC:** Just a handful of the most memorable shows for me (and a few others whom I trust): Kelly Houston singing “Like a Virgin” with the *Uncle Dad’s Orchestra* during the Madonna tribute show at Laxson Auditorium (Jan. 26); *North State Symphony’s Soloistic Sensations* (featuring Sergei Prokofiev’s *Piano Concerto No. 1*) at Laxson (Feb. 23); Terry Riley’s “In C” by Chico State student/faculty ensemble at Rowland-Taylor Hall (Feb. 28) and Terry Riley and Gloria Cheng in Zingg Recital Hall (March 1); *Rebirth Brass Band* at Lost on Main (March 10); Mdou Moctar and Marisa Anderson at Argus Bar + Patio (April 17); *Antibalas* at Sierra Nevada Big Room (June 19); *OC Hurricanes, WRVNG, Beehive* at Argus Bar (July 26); *The Beths* and *Girl Friday* at Sierra Nevada Hop Yard (July 27); *Death Star, Uncle Rosco, West by Swan* at The Maltese (Aug. 2); *Sex Hogs II* and *Beehive* at Duffy’s Tavern (Sept. 19); *The Shivas* at The Maltese (Nov. 7); *Lee Fields* at the Big Room (Dec. 9); plus, a smattering of beautiful house shows—Eric Bachmann (Jan. 27); Eleanor Murray and Donald Beaman (July 11); Richard Buckner (Sept. 25).

**BEST LOCAL ALBUMS:** *Open Field*, Donald Beaman; *Sera*, Pat Hull.

**BEST LOCAL SONGS:** “Refugee,” John-Michael Sun; “Across an Open Field,” Donald Beaman; “Want,” Astronaut Ice Cream.

### 2019 MILESTONES

**Birthdays:** KCHO/North State Public Radio turns 50, and the Blue Room Theatre turns 25.

**New on the scene:** Provisions Gallery, Strega Studios, Maker Radio at Idea Fabrication Labs, G-Town Hot Shop and Legacy Stage.

#### Rest in peace:

- Mikkell McDow, longtime local musician (Beltain) and soundperson.
- Sal Casa, prolific painter, art teacher and Chico arts icon.