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ARTS DEVO

by **JASON CASSIDY** • jasonc@newsreview.com



CHICO IS STILL THERE! With the lockdown-triggered closures of some of the cornerstones of the local cultural scene—e.g., **Blue Room Theatre**, **Blackbird**—Arts DEVO worries about what Chico will look like at the end of the pandemic tunnel.

I am heartened, however, by a couple of transformations that have taken place during COVID times and that two of my favorite local establishments—**Winchester Goose** and **The Naked Lounge**—are about to be reborn.

Rob Rasner—one of the owners of the Goose when it was my neighborhood watering hole at

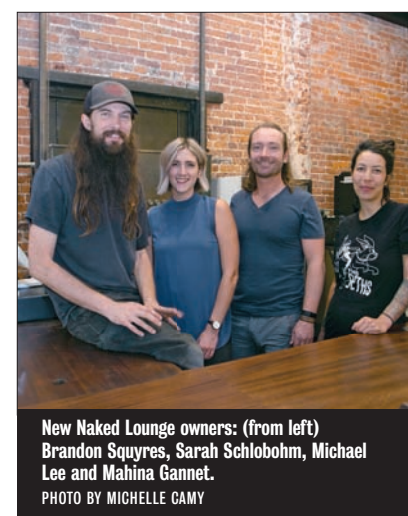
Broadway and Eighth streets—and his elves have been busy turning the old **Herreid Music** spot up the block into version No. 2 of the craft-beer bar. No opening date has been set, but according to one of the elves, the remodel is almost finished.

And the Naked Lounge? Dude. The game is about to be changed.

I got a sneak peek inside a couple weeks ago, and I am here to report that the coffee shop has been turned into a legit live music venue. False ceilings, false walls and an entire false room (for real) have been ripped out to open up the back third or so of the space, and a stage—a real, large, permanent stage—has been built and will be outfitted with a sound system. There's a full kitchen, a new bar and beautiful new floors in a room that looks to me like one of the coolest small venues I've seen in Chico in my 30-plus years here.

Oh, and the people who will be booking the music?

Mahina Gannett, who does the same for the **Sierra Nevada Big Room**, and man-of-many-hats **Brandon**



New Naked Lounge owners: (from left) Brandon Squyres, Sarah Schlobohm, Michael Lee and Mahina Gannett.
PHOTO BY MICHELLE CAMY

Squyres, frontman for doom-masters **Amarok** (and before that Cold Blue Mountain and The Makai). So, to repeat myself: "legit live music venue."

The makeover is a collaboration of four new owners—Gannett, **Sarah Schlobohm** and **Michael Lee** (the three owners of **Momona**) and Squyres—who will keep the name and continue to operate the Naked Lounge as a cafe/funky downtown hangout spot during the day and—as soon as conditions allow—add the live music at night.

With the remodel nearly complete, the new lounge opened for take-out drinks on Monday (Oct. 5) and will soon start offering limited seating—inside and in the just-approved parklet out front.

It's almost too depressing to think about how long it might be before the music plays, but right now I am going to take comfort in some of the first hopeful news I've heard in awhile. The future of Chico's soul is in good hands.

THE SEA MONSTER LIVES Chico, your spirit animal needs you. **Christine "Sea Monster" Fulton** and her dog, Python, escaped the flames of the North Complex Fire a few weeks ago, but their place in Feather Falls—and everything in and around it—did not.

Sea Monster is among Arts DEVO's all-time favorite humans and for the last 15 years has been one of the most adventurous and active artists in town. She is a friend and inspiration to multiple generations of Butte County freaks, fun-makers and other creative types.

While Sea Monster is laying low and plotting her next moves (and, rumor has it, "working on sexy sad motivational wiener postcards"), her friends and family are reaching out to the community "to help reestablish her life—from art supplies and clothes to a new home and reliable vehicle." If you got it to give, you can donate directly through Venmo (@semonstie) or PayPal (paypal.me/pools/c/8sKt00P1xv), and you can send her a message of encouragement at seamonstie2020@gmail.com.



Sea Monster and Python.