



OLD-SCHOOL, NEW EXPERIMENTS Few things have been as consistent in Chico over the past couple of decades as **West By Swan**. The long-running experimental rock band has been around for more than 17 years—probably longer than any local crew currently making original music—and **Arts DEVO** has been following the band that entire time, as my tenure as the CN&R's arts editor matches the timeline of West by Swan's run. [Full disclosure: I am also good friends, sometimes collaborator and drinking buddy with all four dudes and have known them personally for even longer.]

In a 2006 piece on the band in advance of its self-titled debut album, I wrote that the "music is noisy, complicated, chaotic and even dangerous sounding, but it's also precise, delicate, direct and packed with emotion." That description still stands—not because the band hasn't changed at all over the years, but because the four-piece is still exploring all paths.

West by Swan's recorded output has fallen into an every-four-years schedule, with full-lengths released in 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018. However, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, the band has had to forgo gathering to play and rehearse and has instead polished up recent recordings—so we get release No. 5 a year early! **Cancellation** came out last month on the band's Bandcamp page (westbyswan.bandcamp.com). It's West by Swan's first EP, and each of the three songs finds the band heading in a different direction.

Opener "Apocalyptic" is a charging garage-rock with squirrely guitars, and it's followed by the dark psychedelic stoner jam "Cancellation."

The final tune is the nine-and-a-half minute epic "Bent," which starts off with an extended intro featuring a twangy looping guitar riff strolling languidly down a dusty road before a wash of guitar noise and several layers of voices turns the trail to mud and the walk to a trudge. There's a clear break before the second half of the song brings a new circular riff that quickens the pace before turning up the volume and taking the listener on a bumpy ride across a subtly shifting sonic landscape.

The closing song's title is a reference to the knee of Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis police officer on trial for the murder of **George Floyd** after kneeling on his neck for nearly nine minutes. The only lyrics are a brief multi-voice harmony, repeated twice:

I believe knees were meant to be bent down in peace and humility / Not for this disease of hate and hostility / I believe.

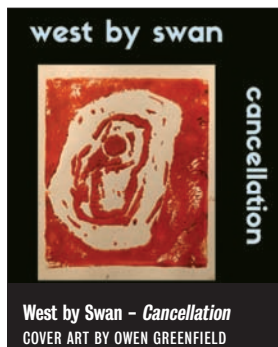
NEW SCHOOL, NEW EXPERIMENTS During his time in Chico, **Rami Rodriguez** has been behind some of the most fresh and challenging music being made around these parts—from his solo experimental work as **DMT** to his wild and often chaotic performances as an MC for the genre-bending rock/rap/punk/noise crew **PERVERT**. His latest project is **Lagrima** ("tear" in Spanish), a sound collage endeavor that's composed on Rodriguez's trusty **Akai MPC 2000XL** sequencer/sampler and draws on wide array of available sounds, including sound bites from dollar-bin records and repurposed warped cassettes that have been recorded over. The end result is the 13-song **Moss**, a moody, sometimes noisy, broken-beat soundtrack

for quarantine times that's available on Spotify.

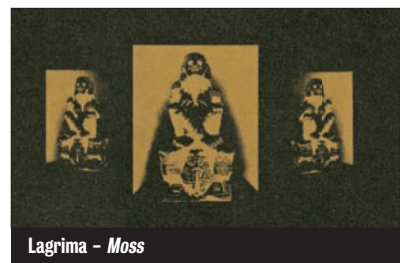
PLACES, PEOPLE! I have actual goosebumps while typing this: **Chico Theater Company** just announced ... it's 2021 season! This is not to say that Butte County's number of positive **COVID-19** cases has gotten low enough that performance spaces can return to shows as normal. In fact, none of the four tiers in the **Blueprint for a Safer Economy** allows for indoor shows, so until new guidance is released, whatever CTC produces will be outside (for drive-in style theater in the parking lot behind the theater). Still, it's a glimmer of hope. Making plans for live performances, no matter how tentative, brings a little light into the arts darkness of Covid.

There are five shows on the schedule, taking CTC through the end of the year. The season opener will be **The Ladies Foursome**, a heartwarming comedy about four women sharing a round of golf in honor of their recently departed mutual friend.

Visit chicotheatercompany.com for details.



West by Swan - Cancellation
COVER ART BY OWEN GREENFIELD



Lagrima - Moss

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