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ARTS DEVO

by JASON CASSIDY • jasonc@newsreview.com



BRING BACK THE ARTS When the **COVID-19** pandemic forced the closure of the clubs, theaters, bars and galleries last year, **Arts DEVO's** world disappeared. For 17 years, my self-imposed job description was: own the local arts scene. I poured myself into the work of becoming ingrained, and in time, the relationship between the music/arts community and the **Chico News & Review**

became what defined me. As the scene slipped away, not only did my beat fade, in many ways, so did I.

It's been a rough year.

So, though my optimism remains guarded, I can see glimmers of hope on the horizon: California is tentatively set to allow businesses—including performance spaces—to reopen on June 15; previously canceled live concerts are beginning to be rescheduled for the fall (such as the nonpareil **Black Midi** at Bottom of the Hill in S.F.); and here in town, **Chico Theater Co.** is reopening to live audiences starting May 21 (see "The opening curtain," page 26).

As brutal as things have been for my delicate spirit, at least I have a job. Many in the

arts field haven't been so lucky. According to the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the impact of Covid on the labor force for occupations in the performing arts has been profound. Overall, the U.S. unemployment rate for the third quarter of 2020 (July–September) was about 8.5 percent. For the same period, that rate was 27.1 percent for musicians, sound people, etc.; 52.3 percent for actors; and 54.6 percent for dancers and choreographers. Spending on performing arts tickets was down roughly 75 percent during the quarter.

As we are now seeing arts makers and presenters cautiously pull back the curtains, the CN&R wants to do its part to help restore the vibrant art and live-performance scene that this town is known for—and the best way for us to help is by telling the stories and letting audiences that are hungry for arts and entertainment know what artists and venues are up to.

So, starting today and for the next few months, the CN&R will be putting the spotlight on the arts venues in Butte County with the **Bring Back the Arts** campaign. Yours truly will interview the leaders of local arts and music venues about their recovery efforts, and each week the CN&R will feature a Q&A online (chico.newsreview.com) and on the paper's radio show (Thursdays, 5–5:30 p.m., on KZFR, 90.1FM and kzfr.org), as well as at least one selection (for now) in the monthly print edition.

First up is **Marc Edson**, Executive Director of the Chico Theater Co. (again, see page 26). Welcome back!

PICTURE OF OUR FUTURE We are not meeting herd immunity for coronavirus in **Butte County** any time soon, if ever. Experts say—given the new, more contagious variants popping up—the world would need between 70 percent and 90 percent combined immunity from vaccines and/or infections to achieve herd immunity.

Butte County is at nearly 62,000 fully vaccinated folks and we've had 11,660 COVID-19 infections. That's roughly 33 percent combined immunity for the county. Combined immunity for the entire U.S. is at 53 percent, and projections have the country hitting 60 percent by late May and then hovering within a few points of that for the rest of the year. Since the vast majority of at-risk folks are now protected by the vaccine, the numbers will likely be enough for us to resume life as normal(ish).

Who wants to meet me at **Duffy's** for a pint and a shot? If it's OK, can we sit at the patios in the street? I feel safer there, for now.

