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## ARTS DEVO

by JASON CASSIDY • jasonc@newsreview.com



**CHANGE** Under the shade of a plum tree sits a long wooden table with laptops and paper notebooks strewn about its weathered cedar planks. This is the bird's-eye view of the **Chico News & Review's** pandemic-era conference room, and as the last pair of shoes comes around the corner and crunches across the gravel patio over to a plastic chair, a scene of the editorial team making plans to tell the stories of Butte County comes into focus.

Physical-distancing protocols sent us into our homes to write, edit and design, and into my backyard when we've needed to meet up. Amid the strain and uncertainty surrounding putting out a newspaper during a pandemic, the relaxed outdoor setting and actual human interaction has provided a measure of respite.

What has most eased the minds of the editorial crew—as well as the designers, salespersons, distribution drivers, tech team and owners of the CN&R—has been your overwhelming contributions to the paper's cause. We may have had a lean staff since the beginning of pandemic shutdowns, but the generosity of our readers and the support of our advertisers has inspired us to continue living up to the legacy of this newspaper that, since 1977, has endeavored to empower the full range voices in our community.

In addition to expressing gratitude, I say all this now to offer reassurance—to all of you and to us at the paper—as we say goodbye this month to the building that's been the CN&R's home for 36 of its 44 years.

This print issue is the last one that will ever come out of the West Second Street location. Our building is in the process of being sold, and we are greatly downsizing physical operations. Just as we have during COVID, we'll continue to do most of our work remotely. We will have a new home base though—a couple of small offices inside the **Idea Fabrication Labs** building where we can print pages for editing, conduct interviews, and gather for meetings and just hang out when the elements keep us from the back yard. We've also rented a separate warehouse in the IFL compound for storage and to receive pallets of newspapers. Hopefully, once the coronavirus dissipates and businesses/advertisers fully recover, the number of those pallets will increase because we'll printing more often (bi-weekly at first?). If you want to get in touch, send an email or drop a line (to P.O. Box 56, Chico, CA, 95927).

It's a bummer we won't be downtown anymore, but thanks to you, we're still here and will continue publishing online and once a month in print until we can afford to do more. So, from the backyard, we raise a cup of coffee (or a pale ale, depending on which side of deadline we're on) in appreciation.

**SONIC TRUTH** I must have promised y'all I'd stop talking about **Track Star** in this space, but ... I lied. Just as I started writing the column this morning, a package arrived. Inside was the long-awaited reissue of *Sometimes, What's the Difference?*, the one-time S.F. crew's 1995 10-inch released on **Silver Girl Records**. The dudes at the label went big for the update, adding 19 odds and ends to the original nine songs for a double-LP of noisy nostalgia. Included on the tracklist is "Silver Suit," originally released on the *Superwinners Summer Rock Academy* compilation (which yours truly had a hand in) that features a couple fistfuls of Chico bands as well.

At one point, I was asked to do a writeup on Track Star that didn't end up being used. So, since I'm not one to let some good words about something I love go to waste, here's an excerpt:

My favorite dynamic in music is volume, and while I love the loudness that punk, metal, rap and hard rock bring to the world, for me, noise is most satisfying when it's in contrast to quiet. I want to see the spotless pane of glass, then the brick flying through it. Then I want to return to stillness and anticipate the next rogue projectile.

That's what Track Star did, in a primitively perfect way. They punctuated three-chord break-up songs and jangly indie-pop with glorious jumps in volume via Who-sized amps. It was fun, and funny, and "fuck it, let's get loud right ... NOW!"

When I first saw the dudes live, running up and launching themselves off the walls of **Juanita's** (the cramped Mexican restaurant that was home to Chico's music scene for so many years) and landing on their stomp boxes to window-rattling effect, I was floored. That experience, in addition to the many subsequent killer shows they played in Chico, honestly changed the way I looked at music, ruining me for anything less daring and wild. Track Star was pure, and pretense free, and an inspiring source of powerful energy. And so fun.

