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STAGING A COMEBACK Over the three-plus decades **Arts DEVO** has been watching and playing live music in Chico, local venues have come and gone, and the lulls always make me feel grateful for any scrap of real estate with electricity and amenable owners.

With COVID taking away live shows and even forcing the closure of a couple key venues for original music—**The Maltese**, **Blackbird**—I had been feeling pretty depressed at the prospect of a bleak chapter for the live music scene. But as the pandemic recedes and we slowly start to return to our regular public shenanigans, it's looking like Chico might be entering a renaissance rather than a new dark age. By my count, there are at least 10 new stages in town! Some of them with actual stages!

GNARLY DELI (243 W. Second St.) The blow of **The Maltese's** demise has been softened by the opening of the brick-and-mortar version of Chico's favorite sammich truck. Those who remember the Bassmint EDM parties know that the lounge—with badass sunken bar—from the old Peking restaurant has character for days, and the Gnarly crew has been packing the room with an eclectic schedule of live music, comedy, burlesque and drag events.



On stage: *Mexico City's Suika T and Chico's Thunder Lump* (April 9); *comedy with Eddie Pepitone* (April 15); *Tatas & Hahas: Burlesque+Comedy Showcase* (April 23); *Brittany & The Blisstones* (April 29).

NAKED LOUNGE (118 W. Second St.) The downtown cafe was sold early in the pandemic, and its new owners completely revamped the space, including installing a kick-ass stage covered in show posters from a few decades' worth of Chico's musical timeline.

On stage: *Madde, Scout, AP Tobler* (April 9); *Nudity (noisy weird rock from Olympia)*, plus *locals Shadow Limb and Tite Nauts* (April 16).

OM ON THE RANGE (301 Main St.) The former Om Foods has changed its location and its name, and the new bigger space in on a high-profile downtown corner has added a steady diet of dance-friendly bands to its organic menu.

On stage: *Groovy Brazil-via-Portland singer/songwriter Johnny Franco* (April 7); *local funksters Black Fong* (April 9).

BARN AT MERIAM PARK (1930 Market Place) The century-plus-old Meridian Barn was dismantled and reassembled as a gathering place within the **Meriam Park** community, and it provides a cinematic backdrop for live music. The bulk of the calendar is made up of free "Live at the Barn" shows with local acts on Friday and Saturday evenings.

On stage: *Webster Moore* (April 8); *Emma & Will* (April 9); *ticketed event with touring Americana/roots crew The Dales* (April 22).

THE SMALL BREWERIES: **Secret Trail Brewing Co.** (132 Meyers St., Ste. 120); **Nor Cal Brewing Co.** (800 Broadway); **The Allies Pub** (426 Broadway, Ste. 130); **Mulberry Station Brewing Co.** (175 E. 20th St.). Both Secret Trail and Allies featured live music pre-COVID, but the latter had only been open a few months before shutdown. As for Secret Trail, during the pandemic, the owners greatly expanded their outdoor area for a busy schedule of local and touring musicians and its popular open mic, and they recently opened a new larger taproom for indoor shows. Nor Cal is featuring local acts every weekend, while Mulberry Station is offering up its big space to a variety of live performances, including comedy, burlesque and music.

On stage at **Secret Trail**: *Open Mic Night* (every Wednesday); *Chuck Epperson Band* (April 9); *Keith Andrew* (April 10); *Peter Wilson & Bob Littell* (April 17); *Four on the Floor* (April 24). At **Nor Cal**: *Live music Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays*. At **Allies**: *Robert Karch* (April 9); *The McBrides* (April 16); *Reece Thompson* (April 23); *Samaria & Paul* (April 30). At **Mulberry Station**: *Blu Egyptian* (April 9).

FLUME STREET FAIR (corner of Flume & Eighth streets) The parking lot of **Chico Art Studio** has been the salvation of local artists and crafters during the pandemic, and every Saturday, the outdoor pop-up provides a stage for live local music.

On stage: *Every Saturday—open mic 11 a.m.–2 p.m.; featured performers 2–4 p.m.*

WINCHESTER GOOSE (824 Oroville Ave.) OK, the remodel of new Goose spot (where **Herreid Music/Blue Max/Cabo's** used to be) is not yet finished, but I've had a sneak peek and it is going to be a glorious spot for live music. The stage is huge, and those awkward columns in the middle of it have disappeared. Stay tuned.

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