

Catman returns

Masked musician El Gato reemerges with a new album



"He's a performer of some type, right? I've never

heard of him," asks Amanda Chavez, vocalist of the garage rock band Gamma People.

Chavez and fellow bassist Dire Deparra sit in a private room at Star KTV Lounge on Freeport Boulevard, along with Sean Arrant, music producer for the Northern California indie label Mechanical Bull Records, and guitarist Evan Bailey of the indie rock band Oh, Lonesome Ana. They were all summoned to the Hong Kong-style restaurant and karaoke bar by El Gato, an elusive masked musician who hasn't been seen—or heard from-since his debut album release show at Press Club two years ago.

Now, he has resurfaced to release his fivesong followup, The Executive Party Box Volume 2: Going Underground with El Gato, at Sol Collective on Oct. 11 with performances by Pets, Gamma People and Oh, Lonesome Ana.

SN&R first interviewed El Gato in a dingy downtown parking garage in 2017, when a towering, slender man wearing a sleek, black cat-luchador mask refused to reveal his identity. Arrant, who produces El Gato's music and also acts as his mediator, described the musician's mission: to terrorize the eyes and ears of fans with sonically immersive experiences.

And he did. At the packed Press Club show, El Gato appeared on about a dozen old televisions stacked near the small stage in between live sets from Mondo Deco, Ex Rippers and Failure Machine. His silver eyes beamed menacingly as he bellowed ominous "meows" followed by humorous subtitles before fuzzy TV static engulfed his likeness. Although El Gato never appeared in the flesh, his upcoming show at Sol

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Collective may happen differently Arrant said.

As a multi-instrumentalist, El Gato spans genres such as pop and indie rock with folk-style storytelling. But his music also has a dusty, desert rock 'n' roll vibe. In the new song, "Oh My Darlin'," twangy guitar fades in and out to the clicks and taps of percussive instruments that keep a mellow tempo. Meanwhile, a low, cigarette-tinged voice sings a somber farewell to his lover:

"Oh my darlin' I believe this may be the last time / I can hold you in my arms and hold your face to mine

/ Step inside my love while we are here inside our home / 'Cause where I go from here I go alone."

Back at Star KTV Lounge, the summoned musicians chat and joke about the mysteriousness of the evening. Were they brought there to sing karaoke renditions of Stray Cats' songs? As the playful conversations continue, a flat-screen TV mounted to a far wall flickers on-and there's El Gato. Apparently, the cat man can Skype—from a secret location, of course.

He lets out a low and distorted, "Meow ... meow ... meow," peering down at the room full of astonished faces. The words "Translation in progress" blink across the blackand-white screen.

"What the heck?!" Chavez shouts over laughter.

"Is this thing working?" El Gato asks before thanking them for participating in the upcoming

"I want to deliver an experience to the people at Sol Collective that they will never forget," he says. "I'm trying to offer a stimulation overload that will leave the user with a feeling similar to a mental hangover and have them questioning their life decisions."

"Can you see us?" Chavez asks.

"I don't know," El Gato replies.

"Will we be able to see your face at the end of the show?" Chavez asks.

"You're looking at my face right now. I don't understand the question," he says before the conversation abruptly ends and the screen fades

Join El Gato for *The Executive Party Box Volume 2*'s album release show on Oct. 11 at Sol Collective, 2574 21st St., 8 p.m., \$10 suggested donation; Pets, Gamma People and Oh, Lonesome Ana will also perform. All proceeds benefit the Library of Musiclandria; facebook.com/whoiselgato





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