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Cover by Liam Jäger

# Letter from the editor



At first, I was hesitant to write this letter from the editor for a magazine issue with music as its central theme. I'm by no means a musician and felt like the mic should be given to someone with musical talent. However, I realized that there's a lot of value that comes from the listener of a song and the way one resonates with the lyrics, rhythms and sounds.

Many of us can relate to a time when we came across a song that almost perfectly described the emotions and feelings we struggled to articulate. It's moments like these that remind us of the power of music. After all, music is a universal language that can be appreciated in the many genres it presents itself.

For myself, hip-hop always delivered a sense of comfort and empowerment. Artists like Kendrick Lamar and Public Enemy first got me hooked on music that had a message deeper than the braggadocio of mainstream rap. I then discovered Filipino rappers, like Ruby Ibarra and Bambu, who integrated their experiences of growing up as Filipino Americans into their music. Hearing their stories was rhythmic validation for the culture I struggled to embrace in the past.

The emotional connections I developed with my favorite songs inspired me to start writing and performing spoken-word poetry back in 2019. Although I don't perform as much anymore, the interest I built in writing is what helped me decide to become a journalist, even if it doesn't show in the robotic nature of journalistic writing.

In Issue 9, I hope that you find interest in our stories showing the different ways that music has played a significant role across our campus community. Hopefully, they inspire you to some degree, or at least strengthen your love for the art of music.

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# M

Music brings people together, especially when it is connected to culture. In mariachi music, the sound of instruments harmonizing with vocalists singing a song has a way of telling a story like nothing else can.

CSUN offers a class where students can learn about mariachi, which has historically been an important part of Mexican culture, and where those from the genre's country of origin can connect with their heritage.

The class, taught by mariachi musician Carlos Samaniego, began during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were just starting to return to campus. It was initially held outside, which was a challenge in the heat of August. Only seven students were registered at the time, but that number has since grown to 22.

Samaniego said that a rewarding part of teaching the class is seeing the growth of students who take the challenge of learning to play a new instrument they've never played before, like the guitarron, a six-string acoustic bass.

"At first, I thought that would be a difficult obstacle to overcome, and it does have its difficulties, don't get me wrong, but it's also rewarding to see these students take on the challenge and take it seriously and want to be at the level of the other musicians," Samaniego said.



Guillermo Keymolent plays the vihuela and sings a rendition of "A Mi Manera" on March 27, 2023, in Northridge, Calif.

# MARIACHI TEACHES 'SABOR'

CSUN professor teaches the cultural importance of mariachi

WRITTEN BY EDWARD SEGAL PHOTOS BY LIAM JÄGER



Professor Carlos Samaniego instructs his students during mariachi practice on March 27, 2023, in Northridge, Calif.



Esteban Andrade, left, Alizah Chao, middle, and Samantha Carabay practice the violin during class on March 27, 2023, in Northridge, Calif.

Esteban Andrade, a violinist who joined the class when it first started in the fall of 2021, said that by joining, he learned a lot about his culture through the stories the music told. He also learned about the importance of what Samaniego calls "interpretation," or following the lead of the vocalists depending on the notes they sing and how long they hold them.

"It's not just about music," Andrade said. "We call it 'sabor.' You need this flavor. You need this judgment to be able to follow not just your 'armonías' but your singer. Your singer is more important because that's the person who gives it more flavor."

Samaniego makes a point to remind people to listen to each other as they are singing or playing an instrument, talking to specific individuals if they miss a beat. One of the main goals Samaniego has for the ensemble is to convey the cultural importance of mariachi to a city with as large a Latino population as Los Angeles. He does this by teaching the students about the cultural significance of each song they perform, so they can convey it to the audience.

"I want to give the impression that this music is our heritage here in greater Los Angeles, and it is something that we want to keep alive," Samaniego said. "We don't want it to die out." In addition to teaching, Samaniego also founded and directs Mariachi Arcoiris de Los Angeles, the world's first ever LGBTQ+ mariachi ensemble. His purpose for creating the band was to create a safe space for LGBTQ+ mariachi players away from the "machismo" of other bands.

"My main goal was to create a group for the musicians," Samaniego said.
"Even though I say that I created the group to create a safe space for the musicians, I've been told, specifically by one doctoral student, that I created a safe space for our audiences as well. So that's really cool. That's amazing. I love that."



Slater Aiello, left, Robin Thompson, middle, and Jason Matson photographed together on the CSUN campus, on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, in Northridge, Calif.

# A record label run entirely by CSUN students? That would be VOVE

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY RENEE ROTHE

ive of Five Music Entertainment, also known as VOVE, is a class offered under the music industry studies major at CSUN. The goal of the class is to produce a complete album by the end of the spring semester, with the fall semester dedicated to finding their artists.

In previous years, VOVE has selected a featured artist and spent the school year creating an album for them. This year, the class has decided to completely shake things up by creating a collaborative album featuring nine artists and multiple genres of music. The album is set to be released on May 12.

Robin Thompson, one of the co-executives for VOVE, said that he hopes this year's album creates a lasting impact for future classes. Something that they can look at and say, "That was awesome, now let's do even better."

There are two members of the VOVE team that have been pivotal in the creation of this year's album: co-producers Slater Aiello and Jason Matson.

"Jason and Slater have definitely epitomized what it means to take something to another level," Thompson said. "You can either be a student and be in the class and just go through the motions or you can do what Jason and Slater are doing and just go above and beyond. They've just done a great job."

Aiello and Matson are also featured in some of the instrumentals – Aiello playing bass and Matson on percussion.

"As co-producers, we just want to get every song to the best place it can be by infusing both of our personal styles into it. It has been yielding some really cool results so far," Aiello said.

Aiello also spoke very passionately about VOVE and their upcoming album. He mentioned that he wishes that every CSUN student who has an interest in music production knew about VOVE.

"As a producer, it is a dream to be supported at this level," Aiello said.

Matson also had positive things to say about the record label. "VOVE is super special for us as producers just coming out of college because we don't have a ton of financial support yet, to do something like a string session at a studio or a choir session," Matson said. "With VOVE we can do those things and we're so grateful for that."

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# Anight at the

The CSUN theater department brings a familiar opera to a new audience

#### WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY SOLOMON O. SMITH

The CSUN production of the opera "La Boheme" was a months-long odyssey of training, teamwork and love of theater for the staff and students working on the show. The opera ran from March 9-12 at the CSUN Campus Theatre. A cast of students from a wide spectrum of majors, and walks of life, made up the production, but holding it together were two individuals – director Sara E. Widzer and music conductor Mercedes Juan Musotto.

"La Boheme" is one of the largest productions put on at CSUN in recent years, according to Amanda Cleveland, the costume shop supervisor. The opera is an old, familiar favorite. Written by Giacomo Puccini and first performed in 1896, the Italian opera was supposedly the inspiration for the musical "Rent," written by Jonathan Larson and premiered in 1996. Both follow the lives of young adults living under the shadow of a pandemic, consumption in "La Boheme," and AIDS in "Rent."



Sara E. Widzer stands on stage in front of her cast welcoming them to day one of rehearsals for "La Boheme," on Feb. 2, 2023, at the CSUN Campus Theater in Northridge, Calif. Widzer has directed operas across the country, including the Los Angeles Opera last year.



Students rejoice after the first rehearsal of CSUN's "La Boheme". Students often watched as part of their training or as a way to show support for their fellow castmates.



(Top) Jeannine Allen and Guillermo Keymolent as Mimi and Rodolfo, respectively. The roles are key parts in the opera and a second cast performed the same roles on some nights.

(Right) A dress rehearsal with full orchestra conducted by Mercedes Juan Musotto, an award winning conductor and musician who also instructs at CSUN.

# opera







Parpignol, played by Egan Carrol, sells toys and entertains children in the second act of the opera. Brightly colored lighting and stage props are a part of the production that students participate in through different programs in the CSUN theater department.



Fantasia Guerra-Rivera plays Musetta, a flamboyant character. The extravagant costume was created by a team of students who produce costumes for many of the school's productions.

# What's your favorite song at the moment?

We asked the CSUN community for their favorite songs



WRITTEN BY BRANDON SARMIENTO AND ARIEL GIL ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MESQUITA

### Hollywood Baby by 100 gecs

- Juan Silvestre-Cardona

Major: Art

### Strangers by Maddie & Tae

- Jazzie Hoare Major: English

### Let it Happen by Tame Impala

- Jamy Garcia

Major: Child and adolescent development

### Out My Way by LUCKI

- Pelumi Odumosu Major: Art

### Satellite by Harry Styles

- Emily Vallejo

Major: Child development

### Best I Ever Had by Drake

- Michelle Orea Major: Marketing

### ego death by foxtails

- Micah Forteza Majors: Asian American studies and anthropology

### Ashton Martin Music by Rick Ross. Drake. Chrisette Michele

- Gabriel Duarte Major: Journalism

### 505 by Arctic Monkeys

- Evelun Maldonado Major: Child and adolescent development

### Woods by Mac Miller

- Daniela Yargas Major: Marketing

### Hasta Cuando by Kali Uchis

- Ashley Lopez Major: Journalism

### Joker by Jesse®

- Dez Entezami Major: Public health

### You Can Call Me Al by Paul Simon

- Shayan Moshtael Majors: Political science and history

#### Moonlight by Kali Uchis

- Deli Zaragoza Major: Kinesiology

### Animal Spirits by Yulfpeck, Yulf

- Hannah Supanhkat **CSUN** alumni

### All Too Well by Taylor Swift

 Duaa Mohammed Major: Public health

### I Want More by Suicidal Tendencies Die Hard by Kendrick Lamar

- Gabriela Gurrola Major: Environmental science

- Ryan Romero Major: Journalism



Alex Andre plays with his band at Sunset Sessions on April 18, 2022, in Northridge, Calif. Photo by Shannon Carter.

# Doing the musician thing

A spotlight on a local indie rock artist and CSUN alum

#### WRITTEN BY PAMELA GARCIA

While trying to spotlight more artists in the San Fernando Valley, Alex Andre doesn't shy away from building a name for himself and his peers. Andre, whose real name is Cesar Alas, is an indie rock artist and CSUN alum. Formerly in the band The Unending Thread, Andre felt as though the project didn't quite fit the new songs he was writing. He released his first solo single "Conditional" in 2019, under the moniker Alex Andre.

Writing songs in his bedroom, Andre explores themes of love, longing and distant memories on his tracks. Guitar solos and jazz-like instrumentals bleed into Andre's songs, inspired by sounds of the 1980s and the 2000s. Currently, much of his discography features tracks with his friends, sharing a unique set of harmonies in every song.

"I've mainly just been co-writing with friends, and I mainly have done that as a way to see what is it that they do and what can I learn from them," Andre said.

To Andre, the most important thing in the writing process is having a solid creative flow.

Andre was featured on Sunset Sessions in May 2022, performing his 2020 singles alongside his band and fellow artist

VI6NNA. He described the session as a full-circle moment of sorts, as he was able to come back to CSUN as a musician rather than a student.

"My younger self would be like, 'Yeah! He's doing the musician thing! People are talking and people are noticing," Andre said.

Andre founded the Redacted Collective, which is used as a presenting name for concerts that he hosts around the greater LA area. Andre's goal was not only to build a connection with a wider audience, but to also bring smaller and mid-sized bands to the San Fernando Valley.

"Right now, there's a pretty good amount of DIY venues and stuff like that popping up out here. Just not a lot of these bands know about it, and I think they need to know," Andre said.

Andre also hopes to begin lining up day-long festivals under the Redacted Collective name in the future.

With a packed schedule of concerts and song releases ahead, it's certain that the future is bright for Andre. There's a world of local musicians that has yet to be discovered, and Andre wants to watch himself and his peers succeed.

### From newsroom to makeshift studio:

### Sunset Sessions

Transforming the Daily Sundial newsroom into a makeshift studio setup, the Sundial's audio editor PJ Shahamat brings local artists to CSUN for an interview and performance of their favorite original songs. The result is the online segment Sunset Sessions.

Shahamat decided to create the segment in 2019 after being inspired by the NPR Tiny Desk concerts. At the time, he was coming off the heels of an internship working on KCRW's "Morning Becomes Eclectic" program.

"I thought getting the raw footage or raw experience of listening to a band in their element was a really great idea, and I thought it was fun," Shahamat said.

Working alongside the audio editor is assistant producer Conor Richards, who makes sure each session goes smoothly. Shahamat says that they now have the process of hosting a session down to a science.

Sunset Sessions aims to give local musicians a platform to reach a wider audience and capture the essence of what their typical performance looks like, as well as gaining insight on what inspires these musicians.

"If I ever get a band, I have to like them because I'm spending two or three weeks putting it all together," Shahamat said.

After graduating from CSUN with his master's degree in mass communication this May, Shahamat plans to continue hosting Sunset Sessions on his own terms. He hopes to keep the unconventional location aspect of the sessions alive to channel the raw feel that the segment brings.



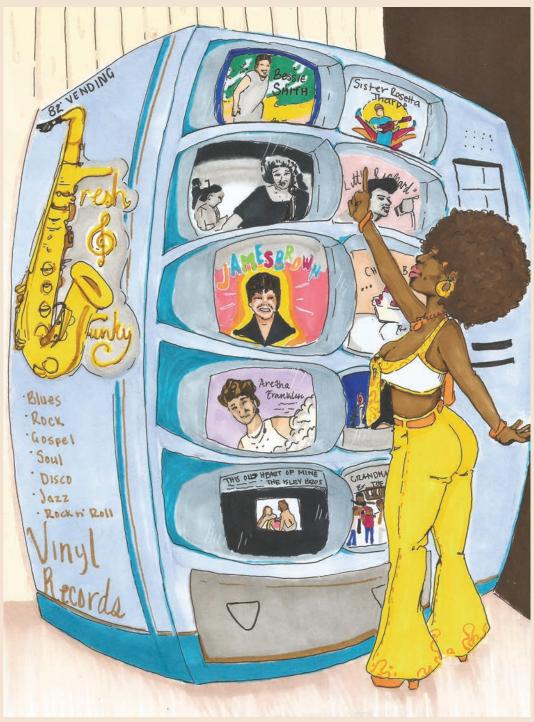
PJ Shahamat tests the audio during sound check at Sunset Sessions on April 18, 2022, in Northridge, Calif. Photo by Carolyn Burt.



# BLACK PIONEERS IN MUSIC

A curated playlist that explores the trailblazers of genres like rock 'n' roll, jazz, R&B and disco

WRITTEN BY WARREN LOPEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY ZASHA HAYES



#### "Poor Man's Blues" - Bessie Smith

The list begins with one of the first recorded Black artists, one whom Maureen Mahon of NPR declared the first African American superstar. Smith was a widely renowned artist in the Jazz Age and earned the title "Empress of the Blues." Much of her work dealt with social issues such as the struggles of the Black working class, and this song is an example of that.

### "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" – Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington

Duke Ellington was an important figure in big-band jazz, and Ella Fitzgerald was an early pioneer of scat singing. Two of the most prolific artists in the Jazz Age combined their talents to collaborate in this swing song.

### "Strange Things Happening Every Day" – Sister Rosetta Tharpe

It is difficult to determine who exactly invented rock 'n' roll, but many of its elements began with a Black female artist and her guitar. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, known as the godmother of rock 'n' roll, had a distinct voice and electric guitar style that paved the way for artists like Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, according to NPR's Jessica Diaz-Hurtado. This song is not only a culmination of blues, gospel and spiritual music, but also was a precursor to rock 'n' roll.

### "The Girl Can't Help It" - Little Richard

Richard Wayne Penniman, also known as Little Richard or the "Architect of Rock 'n' Roll," used his backbeats and raspy vocals to lay the foundation for popular music genres, according to Last.fm. Not only does the song display the genre's roots, but it also left a mark in pop culture. It has been covered by The Animals and Led Zeppelin, and has appeared in films such as the 1972 shock comedy "Pink Flamingos." The chorus may sound familiar to some listeners, as Fergie sampled the song for her single "Clumsy."

### "I Got You (I Feel Good)" – James Brown & The Famous Flames

James Brown is a central figure in funk and 20th century music. Named the "Godfather of Soul," Brown was one of the first 10 artists to enter the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, according to the Kennedy Center. The song "I Got You (I Feel Good)" is his highest charting song on the Billboard charts, and made numerous film and television appearances, including in the series finale of "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."

### "Johnny B. Goode" - Chuck Berry

We covered the godmother and architect of rock 'n' roll; now let's talk about the father of the genre. Chuck Berry's work used elements from R&B to contribute to rock 'n' roll's distinctive sound. "Johnny B. Goode" received credit for being one of the most recognized songs in pop music history, as Rolling Stone featured the song on their "500 Greatest Songs of All Time" list. The 1985 cult classic "Back to the Future" featured a cover of this song from lead actor Michael J. Fox.

### "This Old Heart Of Mine (Is Weak For You)" – The Isley Brothers

This family of vocalists had a career spanning over six decades. Their longevity in the industry meant that they didn't belong to a single genre. "This Old Heart of Mine (Is Weak for You)" is an R&B and soul song, known as one of their biggest hits on the Billboard charts and currently sitting as their most streamed song on Spotify.

### "I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)" – Aretha Franklin

We can't talk about soul without talking about the queen of soul. Next to Aretha Franklin's signature rendition of "Respect," "I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)" became a career-defining song for this soul singer and was her first number one hit on the R&B chart, according to Rolling Stone.

#### "I Feel Love" - Donna Summer

This playlist is not complete without a disco song. The R&B genre would not exist without the influence from marginalized communities, including Black Americans like Donna Summer, the queen of disco. Summer's song was popular during the '70s within disco culture and gave influence to artists such as Blondie, The Human League and David Bowie, according to Pitchfork.

### "The Message" - Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five

Turntables, breakbeats, DJing and lyrical consciousness are notable elements of hip-hop music – and that is all thanks to Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five. While not the first song to offer social commentary on topics such as inner-city poverty, "The Message" is one of the most powerful records to do so. In 2017, Rolling Stone called it the best hip-hop track of all time, and NME named it the number one track of 1982. In 2002, the U.S. Library of Congress archived the song under their National Recording Registry because of "its focus on urban social issues," according to Genius. Artists like Public Enemy and KRS-One took inspiration from the song and the rhythm track is sampled in songs such as "Check Yo Self" by Ice Cube.

# sweet nothing to my ears

A CSUN student shares songs sacred to him after going deaf

#### WRITTEN BY DARYL TYLER

realized I was soon going to be completely deaf in both ears during the summer of 2017. I was 24 years old. Instead of a bottle of whiskey, I drowned myself in what I considered to be "grown folks" music. For the rest of the year, I strictly listened to R&B music until the sounds faded into the air and my world went quiet. It didn't feel like I was driving on the car ride to work, just floating above the waves of the ocean. This playlist includes some of the last songs I heard and my connection to each song.

"They Don't Know" - Jon B.

"You should know, baby, you're my angel, nothing's going to make you fall from heaven."

In my opinion, this is one of the greatest R&B songs of all time. When I was 5 years old, my older sister Quawana played this masterpiece on repeat every Sunday while we did our chores. Although I hated cleaning, I looked forward to Sunday mornings just for this song.

"More & More" - Joe

"I'll be willing to do anything, even if you want me to kiss places, I'll be willing to make you scream."

Joe is my favorite singer of all time. He has one of those voices that just makes you smile; you just know he is dedicated to his craft and his voice is pure. I was around 8 years old when this track came out in 2003. I wasn't allowed to touch the radio at that age; it was reserved for adults and my teen brother and sisters. To access music without my family, I had to watch BET's Top 10 countdown every day at 3 p.m.

"You Don't Know My Name" - Alicia Keys

"I see us on our first date, you're doin' everything that makes me smile."

In my 8-year-old mind, Alicia Keys was the finest of God's creations. She is soulful, classical and has a commanding voice with a soft touch. It's magnetic. I knew every word of her songs, but "You Don't Know My Name" was special because Alicia didn't know I was her future husband. I was waiting on Swizz Beatz to slip up so I could slide through. In all seriousness, this is the first song where I could hear the piano instruments on the track, and it fit well with her voice.

"Did You Wrong" - Pleasure P

"I ain't tryna waste my time, there ain't no need to waste no time, 'cause we done put in too much time."

Pleasure P has one of the best voices of his generation. I stood on the lunch tables and sang this song in 7th grade, and all the girls laughed and enjoyed my performance. If I remember correctly, two girls shared their AOL Instant Messenger accounts with me that day.



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### The universe's heartstrings

I strung out a tune from my guitar While you hummed a tune by the hazy window For a while, we have been apart But music united us, our mutual hero The world is in need of love and music It heals us all We drift into worlds that don't exist And with every lyric, we drift into free-fall The melodies children sing Can solve all problems in our universe Music can fix anything Even in worlds we might transverse Your favorite song can fix your day It can fix your broken heart It'll make your heart bloom like the flowers in May And out of pain, it will create art As you dwell about your nights by the moonlight Remember your favorite song on your phone Press play and engulf yourself in delight And you'll never feel alone

- THERESA ANGUIANO

# *Music* deconstructed

Sound and serenity offers an amenity To understanding and contempt Through an art endlessly contemporary That promotes soulful empowerment. The culture and influence Is produced in the midst Of rhythm and melody. Through sound it paints a scene Though all lines stray oblique Guided by passion and melancholy. A canvas in sound Reverberated around Applause and resound Brings us back up when we're down. Heart felt with cadence; A poetic arrangement Blended with a statement Without a way to frame it Love, despair, hope and tragedy Forlorn, sanguine, anguish and treachery Song and chorus with a passion so fiery Encapsulated within a beautiful serenity.

- SAM CARD

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Wednesday, April 12: 10 a.m. - Noon

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Feel the Pulse: Heart of Campus Student **Engagement Focus Groups** 

Thursday, April 13: 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Pub Study Space** 

**Billiards Tournament** 

Thursday, April 13: 5 – 9 p.m.

**Q** Games Room

APR.

**Computer Lab: Tech Tips** 

Friday, April 14: 3 – 4 p.m.

**Q** USU Computer Lab and Via Zoom



**Night Market** APR. 28

Thursday, April 28: 5 – 9 p.m. Plaza del Sol



















