CU INDEPENDENT INSIDE: Magazine SPRING 2021

COVID-19 poses difficulties for student-run political organizations

Best albums of 2020

CU and COVID: Students reflect on CU's COVID-19 response

CUI needs to refund students for mandatory fees CU football team is doing its best to stay healthy



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INSIDE...

THE RECAP: NEWS BRIEFS

- 3 Reflections on Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 4 COVID-19 poses difficulties for CU's student-run political organizations
- 5 What happens "behind the flames and the smoke" according to "Megafire" author

PHOTOS

7 Through the lens: CUI photos

NEWS

11 Students reflect on CU's COVID response

OPINION

- 19 CU needs to refund students for mandatory fees
- 21 Sustainability amidst a pandemic is no easy task
- 23 Women must vote in 2020

24 CU Bluffs: Sorority wins award for "Most Feminist"

SPORTS

- 25 CU women's basketball drops heartbreaker to No. 6 Arizona
- 27 CU football team is doing its best to stay healthy
- 29 An unprecedented preseason underway for Boyle, Buffaloes
- 31 Tad Boyle's "Fantastic Four" ready to contribute

ARTS

- 32 Declan McKenna reflects on "Zeros"
- 34 CU alum Andy Hackbarth takes on his biggest project yet
- 37 Soviet Fourth Grader combines Cold War aesthetic, political satire on new punk project
- 39 CUI Playlist: Best of 2020

CU Independent Magazine is produced by students for the CU and Boulder community. All of the content in this magazine was created in January 2021, after the University of Colorado Boulder's Fall 2020 semester. This masthead reflects the Spring 2021 positions of those involved with the creation of this publication.

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SPRING 2021 NEWS BRIEFS

"The name alteration does not change the horrors of the past": Reflections on Indigenous Peoples' Day

by Chloe Wasserstrom

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue, and from that day forward the European occupation of support their ceremonies." stolen land has been celebrated. That is until the city of Boulder changed the name from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day three years ago, with this past Monday being the third annual Indigenous Peoples' Day in the city.

Andrew Cowell, Director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies, said that the name alteration does not change the horrors of the past.

"Indigenous Peoples' Day is part of a broader reckoning with the problematic history in the United States — the way native people and minority people have been treated," Cowell added.

Natasha Myhal, co-founder of the Native Graduate Student Group, said the day is still nationally framed to celebrate Columbus, and the American education system is at fault for this.

"Columbus Day is not something that should be celebrated," Myhal said. "Columbus Day represents the memorialization and celebration of genocide of Indigenous people, Indigenous girls (in) sex slavery and transatlantic slave trade."

To combat the past murders, rapes and thievery, along with current oppression, Cowell explained a land acknowledgment is crucial.

"It actually says there is a history with Indigenous people," he said. "Everything is still not good because Native people are still suffering, stuck on reservations, in economically marginal areas, still do not have adequate legal status and freedom of religion."

Indigenous people were kicked off their land when the Europeans arrived to colonize. Thus, Myhal stresses the importance for land back.

"Colorado, specifically the city of Boulder, should find ways to materially support Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho peoples," she said. "It means

returning physical land to Indigenous people to

Cowell also believes there should be compensation for Indigenous people living on land stolen from their ancestors.

"We believe there is a moral obligation for the system in fact to allow any student who is enrolled in any tribe that is historically associated with Colorado to have in-state tuition," Cowell stated.

Although physical reparation is necessary, Myhal addresses the need for listening and education.

"As a guest on Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho lands, it's really important for non-Natives to follow the Indigenous communities lead for celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day," Myhal explained. "Ute, Cheyenne and Arapaho voices need to be centered and engage with these communities on topics they want to talk or speak about."

Cowell notes the mindset white people should have in relation to being privileged in America, as opposed to Native people.

"You are not personally guilty, but you personally have been a beneficiary of a system that has been slanted in your favor and other white people's favor," he adds.

Additionally, Myhal emphasized the importance of the day itself.

"It's a celebration of Indigenous cultures, languages, and lifeways and most importantly we are still here," she said.

Nevertheless, Indigenous Peoples' Day can be stressful for those with indigenous heritage, as it entails extra work to explain the importance and history.

"I fully support Indigenous Peoples' Day; however, we are Indigenous all other 364 days of the year," Myhal said. "This should not be the one day to learn about and engage with Indigenous communities."

COVID-19 poses difficulties for CU's student-run political organizations

by Erica McNamee and Maddie Mueller

The 2020 U.S presidential election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden is shaping up to be different from prevous elections due to the pandemic. On the University of Colorado Boulder campus, student organizations on both sides of the aisle are struggling to organize their approach to the upcoming election, in the face of new challenges onset by the pandemic.

"We were so used to being on the ground and in-person, like yelling at people about healthcare in the UMC," Head Campus Corps Leader of CU's Buffs for Progress Shay Mannik said. "COVID is making things so much harder."

Joey Fratino, president of the CU College Republicans, has also felt the impact that the pandemic has taken on their discussion based organization.

"It's hard to operate a discussion on Zoom," Fratino said, mentioning how he was previously used to reacting and responding to the body language of the groups members to advance the conversation during meetings.

CU College Republicans is primarily a discussion-based organization that focuses less on involvement in campaigns and more on talking about issues and policies from libertarian and conservative perspectives. That being said, the group does usually see more student involvement prior to big elections. Fratino said that the organization had 30 students come to the first meeting this year, yet they have 106 that are on their email list.

"They (members) will only be attending meetings until the election and then after the election, they're not going to be engaged that much," Fratino said, stating how the election year typically changes membership turnout.

In contrast, Buffs for Progress began as a campaign-based organization, supporting democratic primary candidate Bernie Sanders as 'Buffs for Bernie.' Following Sanders' loss in the primaries, the group changed its name, although maintaining its focus on student involvement. "It was never really about Bernie," Mannik explained.

The group was very successful in promoting voter registration during the presidential primary elections and plans to continue its work in partnership with organizations such as the Student Action Network. A recent email from the group called on its members to sign up for phone and text banks to talk to student voters in Iowa about the upcoming election. Mannik anticipates that virtual Buffs for Progress meetings will start up soon via Zoom.

Buffs for Bernie had about 800 people on its emailing list and Mannik hopes they can get as many people as possible to attend meetings and join its new list for Buffs for Progress.

"Even with 50 really dedicated people, we can do a lot of stuff," said Mannik. This includes registering student voters; something that is relatively easy in Colorado due to its same-day and online registration options.

While members of Buffs for Progress find that mail-in voting is also a strong way to increase voter turnout, Fratino mentions how mail-in ballots might lead citizens to complete their voting prior to forming complete opinions on candidates.

While both student-leaders acknowledge that this is a critical election year, they have differing views on what the results will mean for the country.

"I think the importance of this election is primarily about the economy, how fast the pace of our economic recovery is going to be," Fratino said.

Mannik, in contrast, was more focused on how issues such as climate change, immigration and Medicare For All would be addressed by both Biden and the Trump administration.

Despite the challenges presented due to the pandemic, both organizations are striving to advance a dialogue this election year.

"Our work doesn't end on Election Day," Mannik said. "It pretty much only begins then."

SPRING 2021 NEWS BRIEFS

What happens "behind the flames and the smoke," according to "Megafire" author Michael Kodas

by Noelle Videon

The CU Independent caught up with Michael Kodas, author of the critically acclaimed book "Megafire" and former professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, to learn about his entry into the world of wildfire reporting and to gain insight into the ever-changing nature of wildfire across the country.

With two of the largest wildfires in Colorado's history currently raging across the state, Kodas continues to report on the driving forces behind the wildfire crisis as well as its impacts.

Kodas' career reporting on wildfire began unwittingly to him. He tells the story of his first interaction with a wildfire as a young, eager reporter at his first job in a newsroom. With news from a police scanner of a nearby fire in his home town of Hartford, Connecticut, he rushed to the scene, camera in hand. When he arrived, only a few fences separated him from the fire as well as those attempting to subdue it, prompting him to stumble over the barricades to get a closer look.

As Kodas was aiming his lens to snap a photograph, he saw a man in uniform and badge running towards him, eventually forcing him to the ground. As he was picked up from the ground, the guard informed him that he had strayed onto the grounds of one of Connecticut's prisons. All of the firefighters were prison inmates.

In the midst of being dragged out of the prison by the guard, the wind shifted directions, causing the fire to grow, almost swallowing one of the inmates. Kodas once again pointed his camera.

Somers, CT–A prisoner Osborn Correctional Institution in Somers, CT, runs to escape a blowup of a grassfire that he was fighting on the prison's grounds. (Photo by Michael Kodas)

"The prison guard who I figured would just take my camera away from me or stick his hand in the lense, instead picked me up by my armpits and aimed me towards the action," Kodas said. "And I was able to make this sequence of photos of this



Somers, CT-A prisoner Osborn Correctional Institution in Somers, CT, runs to escape a blowup of a grassfire that he was fighting on the prison's grounds. (Photo by Michael Kodas)

prison inmate running for his life."

The following day, one of his photos were distributed nationally and was plastered across the front page of a number of newspapers.

After stumbling onto the prison's grounds and discovering that thousands of inmates across the United States fight wildfires, largely outside the grounds of their prisons, Kodas was compelled to know more. Years later, he trained with the forest service and joined a fire fighting crew, to which he explained, "I learned that most of the really interesting things about wildfire happen behind the flames and the smoke. That it's very political and the economics of it is really fascinating."

After years of reporting on wildfire, Kodas

categorizes the driving forces behind wildfire in "four umbrella topics": climate, forest management, development and economics/politics.

Climate

According to Kodas, there have been strong climate signals for the fires that we're experiencing now, with continual heat records broken as well as drought; both being strong indicators of climate change.

"What we're seeing now in Colorado is very unusual," he said. "It's not that unusual to have some wildfires burn into October, but to have fires that have blown up this fast and multiple of these fires starting in October is very, very rare."

Last year's snowpack in Colorado was over 100% which is above average, but due to a much hotter and drier spring than usual, Colorado only had about 50% of its normal run-off; whereas the rest of the water was evaporated or absorbed into the ground.

"The forests dried out much earlier than they normally do, and we ended up seeing some really impressive fires fairly earlier in the season and at times of year that we don't see fires in Colorado," Kodas explained.

Forest management

The second driving force behind wildfire according to Kodas is Forest Management and its "zero tolerance" approach. Upon initial response, 98-99% of wildfires in the United States have been successfully quelled, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"In some forests — particularly, say, the Ponderosa Pines forests that we have here on the Front Range and Colorado, that are very common throughout the southwest — a lot of those forests burned really frequently with low intensity ground fires," he explained, adding that these forests have historically burned every two to ten years, in turn, killing a lot of competing vegetation.

"If you put out every fire for a century, in a landscape that burned every five years, it's not hard math to figure out that you'd have way more fuel in that forest... So, when a fire does get in there, it burns entirely differently than it did historically," Kodas said, emphasizing the importance of prescribed burns.

He also added that this is not universal and that some forests only burn every 300 years.

Development

The United States' approach to the development of landscapes is also a large contributor to the wildfire crisis. With more than a third of houses in the United States in the wildland urban interface, meaning close to flammable landscapes, humans become primary firestarters.

"We have lots of houses that are a new fuel load in these flammable landscapes," he explained. "Powerlines start a ton of fires, vehicles start a ton of fires and we end up igniting all kinds of fires; everything from poorly kept campfires, cigarettes and firearms."

"We move into a landscape and we change how fire is in that landscape," he summarized.

Economics/politics

The economics and politics behind the decisions made in regards to how to manage flammable landscapes and fires are also greatly contributing to the crisis.

According to Kodas, these decisions are largely based on what is economically beneficial to one group or another, particularly those involved in fighting fires as well as developers, with these decisions often have devastating consequences.

Kodas believes that there needs to be a shift in how we think about wildfire.

"It's hubris to think that we're going to stop these hundred-thousand-acre fires — these megafires," he said. "Sometimes we can manage them, sometimes we can herd them so that they burn into a forest and do some good, rather than towards our homes, but we're not going to stop them."

"We're going to have to completely rethink how we relate to our landscape in the West with an eye towards living with wildfire rather than fighting it, because it's not a fight we can win," he concluded.

Kodas' book "Megafire: The Race to Extinguish a Deadly Epidemic of Flame" is available for purchase on Amazon.

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SPRING 2021 VISUALS

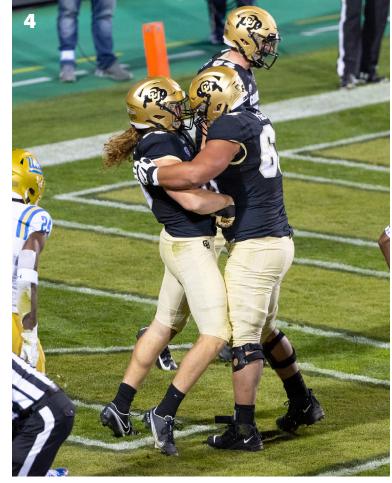
THROUGH THE LENS

FALL 2020 IN PHOTOS

While many in-person events were canceled last fall due to COVID-19, CU sports is still going strong, as are CU Independent's photographers.











 Scenes of the CalWood fire as seen from Vinelife Church.
 By Jivan West

2. By Nigel Amstock

- 3. Sophomore tailback Jarek Broussard runs the ball down the field as he watches for his opponent during the first half of play. By Casey Paul
- 4. Junior tight end Brady
 Russel and junior offensive
 lineman Colby Pursell
 celebrate a touchdown made
 in the first quarter of the
 game. By Casey Paul
 5. The Cal-Wood wildfire as
 seen from the CU Events
 Center. By Kevin Wu
- 6. By Nigel Amstock



SPRING 2021 VISUALS







7. Sophomore tailback Jarek Broussard gets tackled by his opponent, the UCLA Bruins, during the first half of play. **By Casey Paul**

8. By Nigel Amstock

- **9.** Texas RB Roschon Johnson runs into the endzone during the fourth quarter of the Longhorns 55-23 victory over the Colorado Buffaloes at the Alamo Bowl. **By Nigel Amstock**
- **10.** Senior forward Jeriah Horne reacts following a made three pointer during the second half of play a the CU Events Center. **By Nigel Amstock**













- **11.** Freshman guard Frida Forman passes the ball during the second quarter of play at the CU Events Center. **By Nigel Amstock**
- **12.** Freshman forward Jabari Walker elevates the ball toward the basket during the first half of play at the CU Events Center. **By Nigel Amstock**

13. By Nigel Amstock

- **14.** Senior forward Dallas Walton dunks the ball during the second half of play at the CU Events Center. **By Nigel Amstock**
- **15.** Wildcat guard Aari McDonald drives the ball around Buff forward Mya Hollingshed during the second quarter of play at the CU Events Center. **By Nigel Amstock**

SPRING 2021 CU AND COVID



The University of Colorado Boulder began the fall 2020 semester Aug. 24 under a hybrid model, bringing students back to campus for in-person learning. Since then, over 1200 students and staff have contracted COVID-19, making the university the source of the largest outbreak in Colorado.

After a 2-week quarantine recommendation, a public health order prohibiting all 18-22 year olds in Boulder from gathering,

stay-at-home orders on Greek houses and a switch to fully remote instruction, the CU Independent handling of COVID-19 this semester.

Editor's note: Responses have been edited for grammar, punctuation and spelling. All identifying information has been removed.

"I don't see the logic behind bringing everyone to school, charging full tuition, and then threatening students with massive fines and jail time for leaving their house, even if it's to see a small number of friends that you know have been following all the guidelines. The

administrators are idiots if they thought there wouldn't be any blowback from students about this. I have to give them some credit for trying to pull school off safely, but these last two weeks have been less than promising."

"Very poor communication with graduate workers on whether they would be expected (required to get funding...) to teach in person. I didn't receive my assignment until mid-August. Fortunately I got an online teaching position but it was

very stressful and others in my department have been forced to teach in person against their wishes. Flexibility of 'hybrid' options doesn't apply to instructional staff. Administration has basically said we're too paranoid for being worried."

VILE FORM

OF VICTIM-BLAMING"

"All of these issues were foreseen (and are happening all over the country at schools of comparable sizes to CU); the fact that CU is blaming students (and undergraduate students in particular) for problems that they, the university administration, chose to ignore is a particularly vile form of victim-blaming."

"CU is telling us they care about our mental health and that we are a community, yet I'm legally not allowed to leave my house. I can't even explain how horrible isolation is for my mental health. I also shouldn't feel terrified that I'm going to be expelled from school for seeing one other person. I shouldn't be afraid that my fellow students are going to report

me for getting groceries or working out. And I should not feel afraid when police are around that I'm going to be arrested because I left my house. That is NOT a sense of community. Not to mention CU is making students move out of their dorms with no help when that should

> have been thought about at the very beginning. You are asking for our thoughts, but in my opinion all CU cares about is that our tuition hit and now, we are getting screwed over. Also, the best thing is for all of the healthy students to get COVID so that we aren't at risk for spreading it later on. I get going remote, but why is the entire world losing their mind over a virus with a fatality rate lower than the flu? ... I know that the world's reaction is not CU's fault, but I am so frustrated. I haven't been partying or in large groups and I am being punished like a toddler told not to leave my room. I hope CU can do better

going forward and I am still hopeful that by next semester we can be in person and CU can make us feel more like a community again. I agree with "protecting our herd" (granted herd immunity is still the best option in my opinion), but threatening students with jail time and expulsion? I feel like I don't live in a free country and I cannot believe this is actually happening in America."

"I'm tired of the protocols changing every week. I understand that we are in unprecedented times and that requires adaptive efforts, but I'm tired of the university dragging us along. The announcement of a 2-week hiatus of inperson classes after CU sent an email out the week prior stating classes are completely safe is honestly insulting."

"CU claimed they would provide support to all students, and provide support to Greek houses. I am in a Greek house, and CU has completely failed to do so. We have been BEGGING them

asked over 200 CU Boulder students for their responses to the university's This is what they said.

SPRING 2021 CU AND COVID

for guidance on what protocol to have for quarantine and isolation within the house, and they have still failed to give us a concrete plan. They are directly responsible for all COVID cases, because they gave students the feeling of security if they came back, waited for them to pay their tuition, and THEN cracked down and used Greek life as a scapegoat."

"You have made no consideration to the mental health of your students, especially the incoming freshman. We are in a new place with people

we don't know and we have been completely isolated. I understand the COVID is a serious issue but completely isolating your student body isn't a good reaction. And before you even attempt to make the argument, online social events are not a good substitute for actual human interaction. Fall Welcome was a complete and utter disaster, and I feel more isolated now than I ever have. I'm genuinely convinced that no one cares about the freshman class. We were pretty much thrown into a space we have no knowledge of and prevented

from finding anyone to help us get through the change."

"(They are) blaming everything on students when I know people who did not leave their houses and contracted it from a grocery store. Don't invite students back and then blame them when you made no efforts to slow the spread. I called the non-emergency line to report large gatherings multiple times and they would hang up on me."

"Anyone that has scholarships that require continuous enrollment should be given exceptions to take a semester or more off due to the objectively inferior education this year."

"It is known that part of the 'college experience' revolves around a discriminate disregard for authority, and the university knows this and has, in the past, made decisions with this in account, however on this occasion the university has decided to, with conscious efforts, not act with this understanding in mind and push off its responsibility to protect the campus population from this virus onto the students who, like it or not, will act in ways subversive to authority, regardless of the associated punishments,

> because that's part of the culture of being a young adult."

"Lack of communication is the largest issue. Not only via the dashboard, which they had to fix, but communication with affected students, how they are getting their data about cases, and the interactions between the BoCo health orders and CU policy. There is an incredible amount of ambiguity right now about what is required of us and what the punishments are if we do not follow rules that are not clearly laid out (and are frankly ridiculous and punitive). Furthermore, I have heard of

multiple cases of students living in the dorms that needed information (ex. their roommate had COVID and needed to isolate) and they were not contacted by the university in any way. Finally, CU is not reporting cases completely accurately, especially when it comes from transmissions from in-person classes. While I understand that dealing with COVID is a massive undertaking for the university right now, the lack of communication and transparency with students about things that directly impact our

campus right after the drop out period to ensure that students have to pay full price for less than half of the experience than we are paying for. I knew I should have taken the semester off to wait and see how things work but as a senior, I felt pressure to finish school on time. Now I very much regret not taking the semester off as CU's administration's response is extremely lackluster and poor."

"Where is the virus spreading? Parties. How long does accountability take? Weeks. Who holds the money on a college campus? Athletics. What just happened to athletics? Reinstated. If I were to write

a book on this event in human history I would call it 'COVID-19: The Exposé'."

"I think the university is handling it very well, but not all students are being the safest which can be seen in the high numbers of off campus cases recently. I think trying to educate the students more about keeping everyone safe might be a good idea." "Instead of punishing the whole student body, they should actually crack down on

the parties on the Hill instead of making the rest of students follow their policies while the parties on the Hill continue to rage on without any interference."

"SAD AND

EMBARRASSED"

"There needs to be a level of responsibility taken by the school, it's very unfortunate that they continue to blame the students while they were the ones who made the decision to bring everyone back. I spent the whole summer here and while we had a small and minor breakout best friends who they have been missing for

months."

"Using age discrimination and house arrest for anyone 18-22, full price for mostly online classes, and the blatant disregard for CU students has made me question if I want to return to CU. I'm sad and embarrassed at how CU's leadership has handled the coronavirus and how they have handled us as students."

"Even though it was not a good idea to bring a bunch of new students to this community, that was what was decided—and with that decision it was known that cases were going to

> rise. However, I know for a fact that our school is taking more measures and precautions than a bunch of schools around America and doing a lot better, so while the new public mandate can seem extreme I feel like at least we're doing something. CU at least had a plan—but college students just seem to misprioritize what is important."

"I don't think the remote classes are very good. Professors have not really made many adjustments for Zoom learning, they assign a TON of homework,

expect students to learn all the subject matter on their own and sink or swim. I have found that most teachers don't even return email questions in a timely manner, even though they have TAs. The department people don't return emails either, even though they work from home. The Zoom class sizes are HUGE! CU, I think, is lacking direction and common sense leadership. The COVID-19 testing seems to be there, but their COVID flash site seemed to be purposefully confusing, so nobody knew the real numbers of cases to react. That makes me not trust the University and not want to come back." of tuition/room and board money, students be damned. The college is going to do everything



daily functioning and health feels like a blind in June-July, we were able to be responsible spot at best and malicious at worst." citizens who stayed inside. It's ignorant to assume bringing 30,000 young adults, who "It feels like it all comes down to the bottom line have been living with their parents for six-"They should have never opened campus fully to begin with. I find it sickening that they closed plus months to not go out, to not see their

SPRING 2021 CU AND COVID

they can to keep us on campus so that they don't have to give any money back, even if that takes putting kids on house arrest and telling them that they can't even meet up with their friends under penalty of a 4-figure fine and a misdemeanor charge. Did I mention that's on top of the already sky-high tuition prices?"

"We are now stuck in a particularly horrible Morton's fork: since there has been a large outbreak at CU,

closing campus and sending students home would only further spread the virus. Again, this problem was foreseen and the university chose to ignore it, pretending that an outbreak wouldn't or couldn't happen instead of actually making a plan for what to do when it did."

"I doubt the school is going to take accountability for the fact that there's going to be an immense rise in suicide rates of CU students. They say that they offer mental health counseling but I called

to schedule a virtual appointment and I can't even get an appointment within three months. BOULDER WOULD CRUMBLE WITHOUT STUDENTS. We keep the county, city and economy alive."

"INCOMPETENT AND

SELF-INTERESTED"

"I think that, all logistics aside, the school is doing very little to offer equivalent alternatives to partying, which adds to the number of students who feel like they need to go out or they can't make friends. The only way to get the true 'college experience' in the social sense is to go out and spend time with people in person because there simply isn't anything that offers the same level of connection. I think that instead of telling students that the college experience is still possible as long as they follow health guidelines, which everyone knows is not true, the school should make it absolutely clear that everyone has to follow

the guidelines because anything else is the same as recklessly endangering their friends and classmates. A normal experience shouldn't have even been a part of the discussion this semester."

"There should've been an option to choose your roommate based on the precautions for COVID you planned to take."

"The university leadership is incompetent and self-interested and is largely illegitimate in the eyes of the students and community. I don't think they should change their behavior—it's too late for that—they should resign unconditionally and reject the benefits and pay that they have stolen from our massive tuition fees."

"It is a misstep for administration to act as if this is outside of their hands (wait weeks to take responsibility).

We live in a time where widespread, well-developed online access to university education would be groundbreaking. CU could blaze a trail towards the future of online learning and inexpensive, scalable education palatable to students of all walks of life. This unfortunately is not the case."

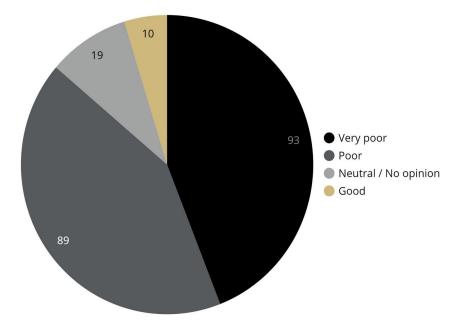
"PLEASE listen to what the students have to say and understand the situation that CU has put us in. These are our lives and education, and right now we have no say in either."



The CU Independent polled 211 University of Colorado students on their opinions about the university's COVID-19 response.

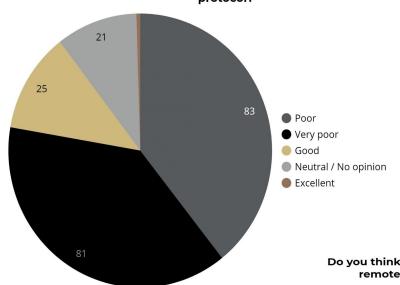
86% of students rated CU's overall COVID-19 response as "poor" or "very poor".

How would you rate CU Boulder's overall response to COVID-19 this semester?



SPRING 2021

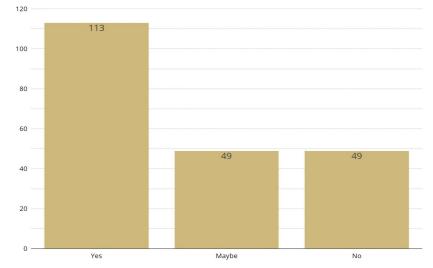
How would you rank the CU administration's transparency about COVID-19 cases and university protocol?



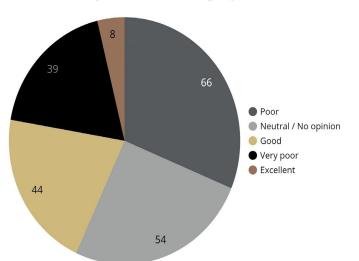
78% of students rated CU's transparency as "poor" or "very poor."

Do you think CU Boulder SHOULD switch to fully remote instruction before Fall Break?

CU is currently planning to switch to fully remote learning after Fall Break. 54% of students think CU should make the switch earlier.

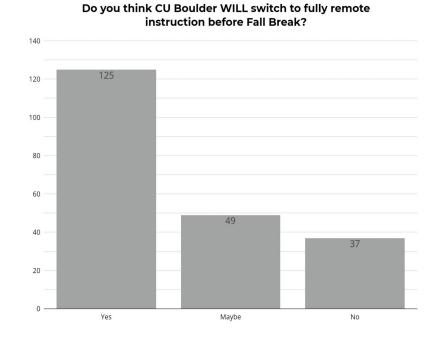


How has your online learning experience been so far?

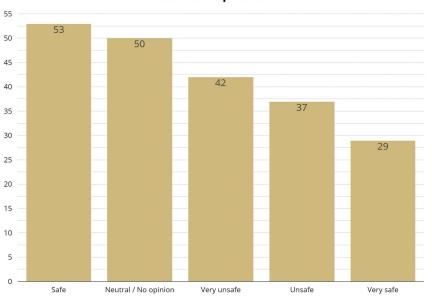


Half of students rated their online learning experience "poor" or "very poor," while the other half rated it "neutral," "good" or "excellent."

59% of students think CU will switch to fully remote learning before Fall Break.



How safe do you currently feel attending classes in person?



Students are almost evenly split between feeling safe or unsafe in class, with 39% feeling "safe" or "very safe" and 37% feeling "unsafe" or "very unsafe."

You can see all of the data collected by the CU Independent here.

SPRING 2021 COMMENTARY

Opinion: CU needs to refund students for mandatory fees during the pandemic

by Emily Ladd

Every semester, fees upwards of \$800 are tacked onto the bills of University of Colorado Boulder students. An extra \$232 is added to this cost for new students. The majority of these fees go towards services that are offered by the university, many of which are on campus. Due to a mostly remote campus, the quality of these services are reduced and the number of services that can be accessed are reduced. Student fees should be reduced for all students this semester.

Currently, the Registrar's office reports that roughly one-fourth of the student population is attending on-campus classes. This means the majority of the student body is not using campus facilities. Students are still being charged for many of the campus facilities and services.

Students pay a fee of \$106.96 for the Recreation Center Expansion. Exactly \$85.27 of this fee goes towards repaying a bond debt for the expansion of the Recreation Center. The remaining \$21.69 goes toward supporting the operations of this facility. The Recreation Center is currently at only 20-30% capacity compared to normal and the hours and facilities available are reduced. Students are charged \$276.31 per semester for a Student Activity Fees. Over 11 million dollars a year, or 46.9% of this fee, goes towards the Recreation Center.

Many students are not using the Recreation Center this semester due to COVID-19 restrictions or because they are not living on or near campus. Anna Wilson, a senior at CU Boulder studying business marketing, has chosen to not use the Recreation Center this semester. Wilson does not like working out with a mask on and finds there are too many COVID restrictions to easily access the facilities provided. In the past, Wilson was a frequent user of the Recreation Center and its many facilities.

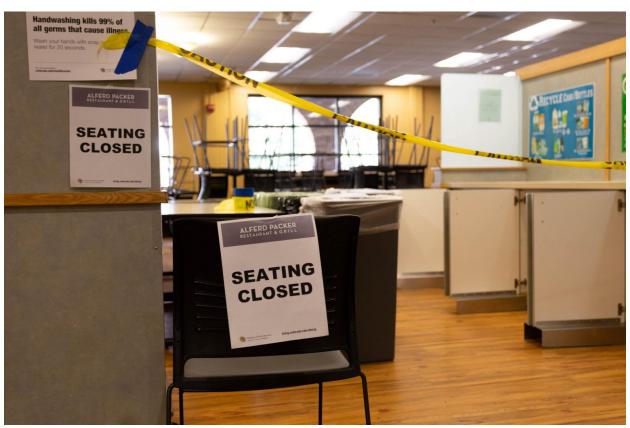
"It's really unfortunate to me," Wilson said of paying unused fees, "I know I could put that money

to use somewhere else such as paying for an extended Wi-Fi bill since everything is online."

Over \$8 million a year, or 32.8% of the Student Activity Fee, goes towards funding the University Memorial Center. The UMC currently has a reduced capacity, reduced hours and numerous closed services such as The Connection, CU Event Planning & Catering, CU NightRide, Dennis Small Cultural Center, Radio 1190 and the Alferd Packer Grill (with the exception of those with a meal plan).

New students at CU Boulder are charged a mandatory fee of \$232. A large chunk of this fee goes towards the New Student Welcome Program. In the past, this may have seemed like a good deal, as students received a packed-full week of activities, culminating in a concert with headliners such as Zeds Dead, Snakehips, and D.R.A.M. This year, the majority of the events were virtual and instead of ending with a concert, ended with an online event featuring Trevor Noah via Zoom. It's hard to imagine that hosting virtual events could cost as much as a week's worth of in-person activities and surely the quality of these events is not the same when students are sitting in their closet-sized dorm rooms attending them virtually.

Students are charged \$10 a semester for the Arts and Cultural Enrichment Fee. This fee allows students to attend performances for a reduced rate and use certain facilities, such as the Natural History Museum and Art Museum, both of which are currently closed. Students are charged \$28.50 a semester for a Student Athletic Fee which helps to fund certain athletic programs and reduces the cost of tickets for students. However, all Pac -12 sports have been canceled this fall. Students are charged \$15 for the Bike Program and \$78.42 for the Transit Fee. Services such as the Buff Bus have significantly reduced capacity rendering it less accessible. The remainder of the student body who are hybrid/remote have no need to access campus and many have no need for these services.



Tables and chairs located around the UMC dining area are closed off as a precautionary measure to the novel coronavirus. March 17, 2020 (Kevin Wu/CU Independent)

Colette Czarnecki, a first-year master's student of journalism, has a mixture of in-person/hybrid classes and remote classes. Czarnecki said she goes to campus about once a week and has not used the transit services yet. One of her classes is held off of CU's campus at Chautauqua Park. For her program, she would normally use the Armory building a lot but has only used it once.

"I was reading about these fees and thinking it was unfair because they are not going to be available to us," Czarnecki said.

A small rebate of up to \$143.61 is being offered for those students who are fully remote. However, many students, such as Wilson and Czarnecki, are not using these services even if they have an on-campus class, as they do not feel safe or they visit campus so infrequently that it is not necessary.

The list of fees goes on and varies depending on the area of study. For example, all students pay a Student Health Fee of \$97.09 and a Mental Health Resources Fee of \$67.86 regardless of whether they use the health center. All students pay a Capital Construction Fee of \$100, the majority of which goes towards five

capital construction projects on-campus. All students pay a Student Computing Fee of \$67.24 which goes towards maintaining buildings on-campus, providing computing access and computing labs. Law students pay an extra \$150 for a student service fee which goes towards student organizations and activities. New International Students pay a \$500 student fee, \$268 of which goes to an international student support program. Business students are charged an extra \$23 fee to pay for the Business Career Center.

What is clear is that students are being charged high fees for services they are not using due to a mostly remote campus. Students should not be charged the same fees as in previous semesters when the quality and access to these services and facilities are drastically reduced. All students deserve a refund for fees that they are not directly using this semester.

Opinion: Sustainability amidst a pandemic is no easy task

by Savannah Mather

If the thought of using plastic utensils and paper serveware in every restaurant you have been to since COVID-19 worries you, then you're not alone. The pandemic may have provided environmental benefits such as less air and noise pollution during the first months that the U.S. was on lockdown, but now, with the recent increase in single-use materials, sustainable consumption is under threat across the country. Practicing sustainability and sanitization is not easy. In fact, it would be foolish to expect a student living on campus to be able to reduce their waste entirely this semester.

At the onset of COVID-19, mass panic buying of perishable food generated metric tons of waste. Additionally, the use of plastic materials, such as plastic bags, also increased.

According to the University of Colorado Boulder's Zero Waste Program Manager Daniel Baril, the university did not know what to expect in terms of managing on-campus waste. The Environmental Center on campus developed a "Zero Waste While We Shelter in Place" webpage with tips for students to reduce single-use materials. It also offers strategies on how to throw out waste properly. However, there are still concerns about whether or not students take the time to dispose of waste correctly.

"I do not think students always throw out their trash correctly. I know many of my friends don't even recycle at home and I think that's the biggest problem," CU Boulder sophomore Emma Curtis said, "But it does seem that on campus and in stores, where there are specific containers for recyclables, compostables and landfill, people really do throw... their trash out correctly."

CU Boulder's plan for waste management

during COVID-19 was loose from the start.

"I was definitely concerned," Baril said. "The dining waste was a bit of a wild-card. We didn't really know what was going to happen."

Baril and the rest of the Environmental Center provided more composting stations near residence halls and urged students to read the labels on trash bins to know where specific items can be disposed of to work with their uncertainty.

"The best thing they (students) could do at least around food is eating at home or making that lunch and taking it with them. The more they eat out the more waste they're producing. If you can avoid creating that waste in the first place, then that's the best," Baril said.

Efforts to be more environmentally friendly as well as cost-effective provide a great challenge for dining services, especially during a time when COVID-19 is already hurting businesses everywhere.

There are limitations brought on by COVID-19 that increase the disposal of landfill items. For example, medical waste from disposable face masks, test kits, rubber gloves and gowns makes waste management on campus more difficult. Wardenburg Health Center administers hundreds of COVID-19 PCR tests per day, adding a significant amount of plastic waste to the campus total, that of which is not included in the campus's reported total waste accumulation, according to CU spokesperson Joshua Lindenstein.

Here at CU, dining halls serve as a grab-andgo for over 6,200 students living on campus, according to Lindenstein. Meals are placed in single-use packaging along with utensils. These containers are either compostable or



Discarded face masks line the paths at CU Boulder. October 30, 2020 (Marion Walmer/CU Independent)

recyclable, which is commendable for CU, but unfortunately not every single college campus has made the switch. Students at Yale University, for example, reported that campus trash bins are filled with food waste and plastic containers from grab-and-go options.

"We do see a lot of food packaging. That's definitely increased," Baril said. 90% of what is served in the dining hall is compostable, according to Baril. "The landfill items do cause problems. These things need to be separated so they do not contaminate compost," he said.

Trash bins across the CU campus are labeled with what is compostable and recyclable, as well as what goes into the landfill. Despite heavy signage, students still need to improve their disposal habits. According to Lindenstein, CU reached a campus waste diversion rate — the amount of

waste diverted from a landfill — of 50% two years ago. Compared to universities like the University of California Irvine, which has a diversion rate of 82%, CU still has a long way to go before it reaches its zero-waste initiative.

"We need to get students in the dining halls to pay attention. We would love to see the compostables separate from the landfills and the recyclables," Baril said, "I think the challenge is there is a lot of material. There's a lot of confusion of what goes where."

Safety during a pandemic is a top priority for CU as well as among universities all across the country. However, the safety of the environment is also at stake and should still be considered in our actions going forward.

Opinion: Women must vote in 2020

by Zoe Schact

Read the full version of this article on the CU Independent website here.

Election Day is fast-approaching and with only two days left until Nov. 3, ballots have been mailed and debates have been watched. Citizens around the country are anxiously awaiting the outcome of what President Donald Trump has titled "the most important election in U.S. history."

Women's rights are all over the ballot this election. directly with creating protections for women In Colorado, two propositions could directly affect women. Proposition 115 could roll back abortion rights and Proposition 118 promotes paid medical and family leave. Meanwhile, the two presidential candidates hold different goals for women and their rights at a national level.

Since 1980, women have voted at a higher rate than men. In the 2016 election, women made up nearly 60% of voters. Statistically, women have had a large influence on the turnout of elections because of their high voting rates. If 2020 reflects any recent previous years, this will remain true.

When it comes to electing the next President of the United States, the candidate that supports women more should be clear.

At least 26 women have accused Trump of sexual misconduct since the 1970s. Eight women have spoken out against former vice president Joe Biden making him no exemplar for respecting women. However, Biden has a plan to end violence against women and Trump has remained silent on the subject.

The Violence Against Women Act, which was originally sponsored by Biden 25 years ago, is meant to preserve women's civil rights and their safety. The Act includes plans to end the rape kit backlog, expand safety nets for survivors, protect immigrant women and more.

The Trump administration rolled back Title IX protections by only considering attacks to be real assault if they are severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive; putting students at greater risk for sexual assault. Biden created a written plan to reinstate Title IX protections from the Obama administration by increasing enforcement protocols that oversee assault reporting across college campuses.

Biden's plan should be near and dear to the hearts of female University of Colorado Boulder students' seeing that 28% of undergraduate women at CU Boulder have experienced sexual assault of some kind.

Colorado state senator Faith Winter works within Colorado and helps women run for office. Winter believes Colorado has been under attack from the current administration and is hoping for a change.

"You have one president that believes in doing anything to get his way to the top including disrespecting and hurting women, and you have another president that has empathy and beliefs in equality," Winter said.

Trump's stance on women's rights is very clear. With a slew of allegations and infamy for attacking women, Trump himself is what women need to be protected from.

Based on his track record, Trump being in office for another four years is a recipe for more oppression of women. Within his first 100 days in office Trump's administration removed funding for the United Nations Population Fund. UNFPA provides family planning to more than 150 countries and in 2016 alone averted nearly 100,000 unsafe abortions. Currently, Trump's administration is working to repeal an executive order that promotes equal pay. His nomination of Justice Amy Coney Barrett for a chair in the Supreme Court only emphasized his plan to dismantle reproductive services for women.

Winter believes it essential for young women to vote this year. "Your entire future is impacted by the outcome of this election," Winter said.

Women are finally a part of the conversation when it comes to their own rights and liberties. Exercising that freedom by voting is necessary to prevent losing hundreds of years of wins that were not easy to gain.

This election, women must vote like their rights depend on it, because they do.

CU Bluffs: CU sorority Alpha Alpha Alpha wins award for "Most Feminist"

by Vayle Lafehr

Sorority rush recently concluded at the University is tear-rendering. They raise thousands of of Colorado Boulder which means no more halfstarved young women, sporting fake tans and bleach blonde hair, teetering in high heels to their Zoom meetings. I know, we'll miss it dearly.

For some, tears streamed over foundationcaked cheekbones into face masks. These rivulets of shame congealed with week-old mascara into something you may never want to think about again. By the time their mother was on the line, their iPhone XIV was smeared with mascara manure. And at that point, there was only one thing left to do: report a soul-dismantling rejection from Alpha Alpha Alpha. Put yourself in that woman's high heels and you should probably drop out of college.

However, if you received the golden ticket into Alpha Alpha, count yourself pointless (I mean lucky). Alpha Alpha came in on top, yet again, to ensure that everyone of a certain socioin the annual Sorority Award Competition. Coming in first for "Most Makeup," "Most Blondes," "Highest join. Clearly, this sorority has a handle (or two) Rejection Rate," and, for the first time ever, "Most Feminist." Turns out, this alpha dog churns out feminists like it does positive COVID-19 cases.

From prejudiced recruitment rituals to worship of the hyper-feminine, some say sororities like Alpha Alpha have stoked the fires of misogyny and hazardous gender norms for far too long. But with slogans like "the best girls wear pearls" and "we inspire the highest 'type' of womanhood," Alpha Alpha Alpha takes the feminist cake.

Founded by a group of feminist, female scholars, they pride themselves on excluding women who don't "fit the feminist mold." When asked what their secret for female liberation and gender equality was, President Mary Mee said, "We give the patriarchy the silent treatment. If you look right over it, it ain't there. That simple."

Alpha Alpha's commitment to service

dollars every year for multiple non-profits. Although, they struggle with keeping girls from partying during the pandemic despite living in a particularly vulnerable community. But they ask us to remember: developing socially conscious young women only goes so far. Mating rituals and keggers with Omicron Upsilon Upsilon must

COMMENTARY

Despite being one of the highest contributors to COVID-19 cases in Boulder, Alpha Alpha Alpha reports that "cases should go down soon," adding that they've "sent everyone on a relaxing sojourn in Florida." Upon return, all members are predicted to be "corona free."

Fees to join are quite reasonable as well. As Alpha Alpha will tell you, the first year only costs upwards of \$1300. They work economic background has the opportunity to on equality.

Everyone is expecting Alpha Alpha Alpha to win awards across the board at the next semi-annual Sorority Award Competition. As for the "Most Feminist" trophy, its a tough one to call with so many patriarchy-bypassing competitors. The young women of Alpha Alpha Alpha dedicate themselves to their communities (most of the time), roll out of the same socioeconomic background with ease, and make time for ceremonies that extol the hyper-feminine heterosexual. With feminists like these in the race, I cannot see any other outcome than victory.

Can you?

CU Bluffs is CU Independent's satire section. Read more CU Bluffs here.

SPRING 2021 SPORTS

CU women's basketball drops heartbreaker to No. 6 Arizona

by Jack Carlough



Sophomore guard Jaylyn Sherrod elevates the ball toward the basket during the final moments of the fourth quarter of play at the CU Events Center. Dec. 18, 2020 (Nigel Amstock/CU Independent)

The No. 6 Arizona Wildcats delivered a lethal dose of revenge to the Colorado Buffaloes Friday evening at the CU Events Center. Ten months after upsetting then-No. 11 Arizona, the Buffs faltered down the stretch and fell to the Wildcats, 62-59.

Head coach JR Payne's Buffs have played in just one game this season decided by 10 points or less and their inexperience showed late. With the importance of free throws amplified in the fourth quarter, CU was just 3-of-12 at the stripe in the final 10 minutes.

"We had our chances and we didn't go out and win that ballgame," Payne said. "We competed and we battled but it was right there for the taking and we didn't take it. Again, we're young and I'm glad we were in this game but I'm not one for moral victories really when I think we should have won the ballgame."

Early on, the Buffs were hitting nearly everything. Sophomore guard Jaylyn Sherrod had four points from the line in the first quarter and two other Buffs had four points as well. CU led 18-15 and shot 50% from the field heading into the second quarter. Now up 25-17, a brutal shooting slump derailed the Buffs' hot start. Colorado was held scoreless for over six minutes and missed eight shots before Sherrod hit a buzzer-beater jump shot to end the half

To match its offensive effort, CU's defense was just as strong to begin the game. Wildcats' senior guard Aari McDonald entered the game as the NCAA's active leader in career points (1,846) and the Buffs held her to just 1-of-7 shooting in the first half. CU held Arizona to 13% from the field in the second quarter amidst its own scoring drought. Payne said that CU switched well throughout the game and was able to guard penetration with the



Junior guard Lesila Finau elevates the ball toward the basket during the third quarter of play at the CU Events Center. Dec. 18, 2020 (Nigel Amstock/CU Independent)

exception of Shaina Pellington who had seven points.

With the help of sophomore guard Zuzanna Kulinska's six third quarter points, the Buffs burst out to a 51-42 lead.

"Zuzanna had a great game," Payne said. "I was really proud of her aggressiveness and she just is one that just comes to work every day and puts in the work and keeps it pretty simple."

Arizona's full-court press caused fits for the Buffs en route to a 12-1 run early in the fourth quarter. CU shot 0-for-10 to open the final quarter but kept the game close entering the final minute. Although McDonald was 0-for-4 from the field in the fourth quarter, she was 8-for-8

shooting free throws in the clutch.

"She's one of the best players in America," Payne said. "She's been around a very long time played a lot of basketball and she's really really good for a reason... She stepped up and knocked them (free throws) down when she needed to."

Sherrod was responsible for guarding the All-American guard who scored 24 points on the night.

"I love Jaylyn because she is not one to shy away from any sort of challenge," Payne said. "If you asked her who wants to guard McDonald, she would be the first one to raise her hand."

Near the end of the fourth quarter, Sherrod hit the floor hard on a layup attempt. After a few moments on the ground, she rose but was visibly shaken up on the play. Sherrod and senior forward Mya Hollingshed missed a combined nine free throws in the final quarter, ultimately ending in a 62-59 loss.

Freshman guard Frida Formann, Hollingshed and Sherrod all scored 11 points on the night and Kulinska finished with eight. Formann tallied her fifth double-digit scoring game at CU but the loss hurt all the same.

"I woke up with the feeling we should beat this team," Formann said. "I had no doubt. It's details and of course, it stings a lot for me, but I think even more for our older players who have had these kinds of games before where they didn't pull off the win. I know that we will get better from this."

Well after the game was over, Sherrod returned to the court and began practicing free throws. Her emotions were high following the loss but she hit nearly every shot on the empty court. Payne soon joined her for an embrace.

"There are certain games that stick with you forever," Payne said. "I don't know if this is one of them but I can remember games from 10 to 15 years ago that still hurt to this day."

Colorado fell to 3-4 on the season and 1-3 in Pac-12 play. Fortunately for CU, they won't have much time to think about this one. They'll host the Arizona State Sun Devils on Sunday at 2 p.m. MST.*

*This article was published Dec. 18, 2020.

SPRING 2021 SPORTS

CU football team is doing its best to stay healthy

by Jack Carlough

Whether it's due to COVID-19 or a more common playing injury, football players in the NCAA and NFL have been sidelined at a disturbing rate in 2020.

Knock on wood now before you continue reading, but it was a relief for University of Colorado head football coach Karl Dorrell to say the Buffs have had zero positive COVID-19 cases and have been generally healthy after one week of fall camp.

"We got a few nicks and bumps and bruises from practice, but no one of real significance as of yet," said Dorrell, who promptly knocked on wood.

While the immune system has been most people's primary concern in 2020, the Buffs are also paying extra attention to soft tissue injuries. No spring football and a two-month delay for fall camp are unprecedented in today's age and Dorrell has tried to mitigate the system shock.

"They've done a great job of buying into the post and pre-practice stuff that we're doing in the mornings, (with) drinking and hydrating," Dorrell said. "I think all of those things are really helping with the injuries. We've had a few guys with some soft tissue injuries like some mild hamstring pulls and groins, but that's going to be a given when you're in camp."

Six-foot-2, 290 lbs senior defensive end Mustafa Johnson said that the potential for soft-tissue injury is a "big concern" and he is putting in extra work to keep his body loose. It takes about two hours for the entire team to complete COVID-19 testing prior to practice and Johnson said he has used the stagnant time to prepare his body.

Colorado BuffaloesColorado
FootballFootballMen's Division ISports
CU football team is doing its best to stay healthy
by Jack Carlough October 17, 2020

CU's defense stretches out before practice at Franklin Field on Oct. 10. (Courtesy of CU Athletics) Whether it's due to COVID-19 or a more common playing injury, football players in the NCAA and NFL



Buffs' defensive end Mustafa Johnson stretching out prior to practice at Franklin Field on Oct. 10. (Courtesy CU Athletics)

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CU's defense stretches out before practice at Franklin Field on Oct. 10. (Courtesy of CU Athletics)

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Six-foot-2, 290 lbs senior defensive end Mustafa Johnson said that the potential for soft-tissue injury is a "big concern" and he is putting in extra work to keep his body loose. It takes about two hours for the entire team to complete COVID-19 testing prior to practice and Johnson said he has used the stagnant time to prepare his body.

Buffs' defensive end Mustafa Johnson stretching out prior to practice at Franklin Field on Oct. 10. (Courtesy CU Athletics)

"There's a whole big, open field where people are stretching, foam rolling, doing anything that they need to take care of their body, make sure they're safe," Johnson said. "And then all in all after that, they're making sure that we're hydrated all times and making sure that we have food, all those important things."

Senior wide receiver K.D. Nixon doesn't quite have the same dimensions as Johnson, Nixon standing 5-foot-8 and 190 lbs, but it's the same kind of preparation for Nixon.

"(I'm) taking care of my body, trusting all the guys, trusting our strength coaches, trusting our training staff, and just being the best version of me," Nixon said.

Colorado has now had three practices in full pads and will bump up the intensity with an intrasquad scrimmage on Oct. 17.*

*This article was published Oct. 17, 2020.

SPRING 2021 SPORTS

An unprecedented preseason underway for Boyle, Buffaloes

by Adam Bender

The first two official days of preseason practice are in the books for University of Colorado men's basketball head coach Tad Boyle's squad. Unprecedented summer and fall workout sessions, due to a multitude of restrictions put in place to try and mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, have created a unique feeling for both coaches and players heading into the Buffaloes' 2020-21 campaign.

Boyle likened the premature ending to the 2019-20 season because of COVID-19 to the rollercoaster many players go through when suffering an injury. The 11th-year Colorado head coach said it's taught both the coaches and players to never take a day together on the court for granted. It was especially agonizing because last year's Buffs (21-11, 10-8 Pac-12) were positioned for an NCAA tournament berth even after suffering five straight losses to finish the season.

"We talk about cherishing the moment and appreciating every day," said Boyle following Wednesday's first official practice. "Every day you step on the floor, it could be your last for the season or certainly for the week or whatever the case may be. I think when the whole NCAA Tournament got taken away from our guys, it was an eye-opener. It was painful because they'd worked so hard to get there. And then the offseason, there was so much uncertainty that I think all of our guys all had that perspective now, whereas in the past maybe just some of the guys that have been injured had that perspective. Now everybody has it. It's incumbent among us as coaches and certainly out players to step out on the floor with that in mind and compete and appreciate every single day."

Boyle emphasized the importance of guys making good decisions off the court because of the risk and consequences of positive COVID-19

tests. As Colorado's season opener on Nov. 25 against South Dakota State in Manhattan, Kansas approaches, the repercussions of a mandatory two-week quarantine become more and more detrimental.

"The risk for our players is not when they're in our facilities, I mean we've proven that since June 7," Boyle said. "The risk to our players is when they leave our facilities and they're going out in the community or staying safe in their apartments, in their dorm rooms, whatever the case may be and making good decisions and acting respectfully and responsibly. I knock on wood when I say this, but they've done an unbelievable job of that, but we're going to have to continue to because if we get close to the season, we've been able to absorb two 14-day quarantines for partial pieces of our team and the 14-day non-gathering order from Boulder County. We've been able to overcome that. But going forward, it would be really, really difficult for us to overcome a situation where we had multiple guys quarantined for 14 days because every practice now is critical for our development of putting a team on the floor that can represent the University of Colorado the way we want to do that."

Pandemic risks aside, Boyle said this year's team can put itself in position for a postseason tournament berth come Selection Sunday in late March. Despite the departures of Tyler Bey, Shane Gating and Lucas Siewert, the potential exists for the Buffaloes to reload and prepare for another run.

Boyle said he believes this is a NCAA

Tournament team. Now, they have to prove it.

We've got veterans that have been here, done that and we've got a group of freshman who've not. But, the freshmen are really talented," Boyle said. "They're very competitive and the one thing that I've noticed in our first four or five workouts



Senior guard McKinley Wright IV drives around redshirt freshman guard Keeshawn Barthelemy and senior forward Dallas Walton in Colorado's first official practice. Oct. 14. (Courtesy CU Sports Info)

here as a team together that I love about our freshman is that they're not scared."

Colorado will be led by a handful of seniors in guard's Maddox Daniels and D'Shawn Schwartz, forward Alex Strating, center Dallas Walton, graduate transfer forward Jeriah Horne and guard McKinley Wright IV. Wright IV said the 2020-21 season will be his "last ride" despite the NCAA's recent decision to not count the upcoming season toward eligibility. The blend of youth and veteran leadership is something Boyle has had experience in the past, most notably four years ago when Wright IV, Schwartz, Bey and redshirt junior forward Evan Battey were freshmen. Schwartz said the 2020 class feels similar from a talent standpoint to his class.

"It's kind of reminding me of 2017," said Schwartz when asked about the freshmen. "The guys just came in, they're (a) really tightknit group. They have high expectations for not only each other but this team and are really competing against us older guys and that's something that's been really good for us."

Wright IV echoed similar sentiments regarding the freshman. He said they'll play a critical role in putting CU in a similar position to where they were last March. The senior guard went a step further, promising an NCAA Tournament berth assuming COVID-19 doesn't force a premature ending again.

"We're fired up," said Wright IV. "We have a lot of young guys that are going to help contribute to this team and get us back to where we want to be. Obviously, the end we had in Vegas (in the Pac-12 tournament) wasn't what we wanted, but we were excited to start our new season which was the NCAA tournament and that got cut short. I haven't played there yet, but I can guarantee, I can make a promise that we'll be back there this year and we'll be dancing, so we got another shot at it."

SPRING 2021 SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT

Tad Boyle's "Fantastic Four" ready to contribute

by Thomas Gahan

Marvel Comics might not agree, but the young freshmen of Tad Boyle's Colorado men's basketball team has come up with a name for themselves that sums up their talent and confidence as a group.

"We call ourselves the Fantastic Four," said guard Nique Clifford. "We're pretty close." Clifford, along with fellow guard Luke O'Brien and forwards Tristan da Silva and Jabari Walker, represent the hope that the Buffs have in their 2020 recruiting class that could carry the Buffs in the years to come.

The four, with O'Brien and Clifford being in-state recruits, Walker coming out of Inglewood, California and da Silva from Munich, Germany, have had an interesting transition period because of the pandemic. They started talking to each other over social media and then continued to bond while playing Call of Duty together online, according to Walker.

"We hang out all the time," Clifford said. "We already have chemistry off the court, so I think that will translate on the court".

Clifford may be the most decorated of the super group. He averaged 26.3 points and 13.7 rebounds per game at The Vanguard School in Colorado Springs, winning the 2020 Gatorade High School Player of the Year right here in the Centennial State. Coming out of high school a four-star recruit according to 247Sports, "Nique" Clifford (his full first name is Dominique) chose to stay close to home and come to Boulder.

Da Silva has one of the more interesting backgrounds of the bunch. Born in Munich, his father was once a pro boxer in his homeland of Brazil and his brother, Oscar, is a senior forward at Stanford who earned all-conference honors last season. Some may remember Oscar da Silva from his unfortunate injury and the emotional moment that ensued at the CU Events Center last season.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to make international travel difficult, da Silva was unable to have a normal in-person recruiting process and everything had to be done online for his visits before and Resurrection Catholic's (Loveland) guard Isaac he committed to CU. He also had a tough road to physically getting to Boulder for this season, as the COVID-19 pandemic has made the already difficult

task of bringing in international recruits that much harder with travel restrictions in place.

O'Brien, like Clifford, is also a highly-touted homegrown talent. Coming out of Columbine High School, O'Brien was named the 2020 Colorado 5A Player of the Year after averaging 26 points and 12 rebounds during his senior season. Despite his father Steve having walked-on for the Colorado State basketball team, and his sister currently attending CSU, O'Brien chose to cross battle lines and come over to CU Boulder.

Finally, Walker may come from the highest basketball pedigree of anyone on the entire team, let alone just the freshmen. His father Samaki played in the NBA for five teams in ten seasons and won a ring with the 2002 Los Angeles Lakers. His brother and sister, Dibaji and Sakima, are also both playing Division I basketball. Dibaji plays at the University of Massachusetts and Sakima is going into her freshman season at Rutgers University. Although he wasn't recruited by the big boys of college hoops at first, Walker burst onto the scene with sparkling AAU seasons in spring and summer 2019, followed by a good senior season at Arizona Compass Prep in the Phoenix suburb of Chandler.

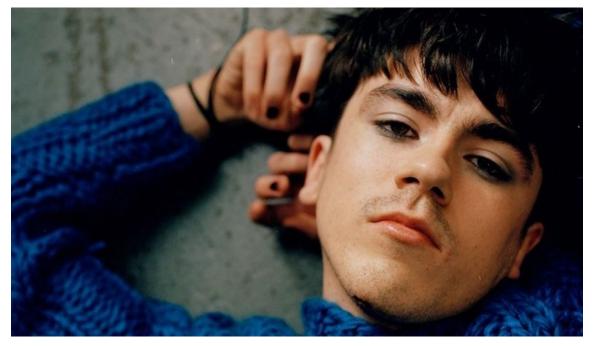
As the new basketball season approaches, Colorado's veteran players are also nearing the end of their college days. Tyler Bey, Shane Gatling and Lucas Siewart are already gone, while guard McKinley Wright IV and guard/forward D'Shawn Schwartz are entering their senior years. This means that the Buffs will have to rely on their youth movement to sustain the high expectations while using their current upperclassmen to help develop the next generation of Buffs basketball.

Clifford has appreciated CU's leaders during his short time in Boulder, "It's really cool having those veterans (and) being able to learn a lot from them," Clifford said.

CU also has a pair of local freshman walk-ons in Centaurus High School graduate Owen Koonce Jessup. Freshman guard Keeshawn Barthelemy, who redshirted last season, expects to make his Colorado debut in 2020 as well.

Declan McKenna reflects on "Zeros," authenticity and self-expression

by Marion Walmer



Declan McKenna (Courtesy of Sony Music)

Declan McKenna made a name for himself in 2017 with socially and politically charged songs on his debut album "What Do You Think About the Car?" On his second album "Zeros," released in early September, McKenna has shifted away from his folk influences, yet he continues to unapologetically tackle sociopolitical issues. This album is more forceful in its approach with a raw and emotional live-band feel. Blissful and complex instrumental arrangements go hand-in-hand with emotive vocal performances.

Growing up in suburban London, McKenna was heavily influenced by the artists of his teenage

"I think it's a very simplistic demand for music, but as you're growing up, being able to express yourself fully is so important," McKenna said. "There were artists that really carried through with that. David Bowie is one, and as time has gone on, (others include) T. Rex and Kate Bush."

David Bowie and T. Rex's influences motivated McKenna to sing about issues that were important to him. Bowie's albums—particularly "Tin Machine," which took a strong anti-fascist stance—showed that big-name artists could write about complex political topics. At the same time, T. Rex was paving the way for the rise of glam rock, a genre that McKenna pays homage to with his emotive playing style and norm-defying makeup.

On his debut album, McKenna certainly found a knack for channeling that songwriting motivation. While the album was successful financially, it was even more of a revelation culturally. The record captured the sentiments of young people in the UK and around the world with its scathing social remarks, about topics ranging from disgraced FIFA president Sepp Blatter to the perception of transgender youth in society. It took the music world by storm and led to the Englishman's being hailed as the "voice of a generation" in the music

industry.

That label (and subsequent criticism from some) laid heaps of pressure upon McKenna. However, he took that criticism and used it to his advantage.

"I think criticism does affect your writing in a way," McKenna said. "I definitely think sometimes you can read a critical article that's not really saying anything. It's like, 'Well, I can't really take

anything away from this.' But I think now and then you hear something and you're like, 'Yeah, maybe that's fair enough.""

"It's a big combination of things that makes you want to change and makes you want to grow through art," McKenna continued. "Really at any point, it's just about trying to find your voice and to find the things that you really feel need to come out."

Lyrically, "Zeros" is jam-packed with abstract symbolism about our world. On "Beautiful Faces," walls of sound made

up of pianos, synthesizers and screaming guitar solos drive home skepticisms of social media and internet culture. Its lyrics explain the desire to be seen on platforms like Instagram or Snapchat, singing, "Tonight I wanna be on Broadway and in cabaret / Tonight I must go out and celebrate St. Patrick's Day / Tonight I must demand a raise so I can grab, let's say / Some part replacements with strawberry laces, no spaces." On "You Better Believe!!!" McKenna wails about the danger and destructiveness of society in the modern age. "We're gonna get ourselves killed / What do you think about the rocket I built? / Is it so fast, so high speed? / It's just what you need." The record barely leaves time to breathe, let alone unpack and comprehend the lyrical messaging.

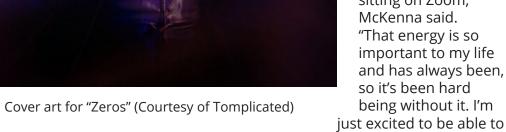
"I find that sometimes there's an element of

music that's pulling in and there's an element that's pulling out," McKenna said about the album's writing process. "You're sort of taking in all this energy from the world. That's what is coming out of you, whether it's the music you're listening to, or the articles you're reading or any of that sort of stuff."

"Zeros" has been a commercial success so

far, peaking at no. 2 on the UK album charts and receiving numerous positive ratings from the likes of NME and The Guardian. However, the lack of ability to tour due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a disappointment.

"That energy that you get from performing is very different from the energy you get from sitting on Zoom," important to my life and has always been, being without it. I'm



go out and tour the record when we can because it's been a long wait."

After the recent release of his second album, McKenna plans to take time off. The release of "Zeros" has proven to be a busy time, and the artist is looking forward to retaking control of his life.

"I'm just trying to control the things I can control here," McKenna commented. "Just write some music and chill out, and we'll all be home by Christmas."

Stream "Zeros" on Spotify here.

CU alum Andy Hackbarth, classical guitarist turned entrepreneur, takes on his biggest project yet

by Izzy Fincher



Artist rendering of the Saguache hotel after renovations (Courtesy of Matt Kelly, Michael J. Media Group)

Imagine driving through the lush San Luis Valley, rugged peaks, towering sand dunes, prairie lands, hot springs and waterfalls speeding by, as the open road stretches into the horizon. A dot appears, morphing into a small town. A wooden sign reads, "Saguache," the "gateway to the San Luis Vallev."

The town's compact main street, filled with historic buildings, is teeming with tourists. The crisp mountain air is filled with live music and the aroma of fresh food. On the west side sits the two-story, brick Saguache hotel, which is over 100 years old. In the adjacent open space, a band plays on the outdoor stage as the audience sips craft beers, their faces illuminated by the glow of overhanging lights.

By the summer of 2022, this imagined street

scene in Saguache could be a reality.

University of Colorado Boulder alum Andy Hackbarth, a classical guitarist/singer-songwriter, is currently renovating the historic Saguache Hotel, slowly turning a dilapidated seasonal antique shop into a functioning hotel and mixed-use creative venue. He hopes the renovated hotel will be a tourist draw for Saguache (pronounced "Suh-watch"), a small town of roughly 500 people, located in the San Luis Valley at the intersection of U.S. Route 285 and Highway 114, roughly 3.5 hours south of Boulder.

"People just drive through Saguache on their way to somewhere else," Hackbarth said. "They don't stop in and see what it's about. I think (the hotel) will give them a reason to pull off, to spend a day or two and see what a cool town it is."

34

Despite being a "tiny rural town," Saguache already has a "really strong artist community," according to Hackbarth. The town has several art galleries and hosts an annual arts festival to showcase local artists and crafters. The Historic Ute Theater is a mixed-use venue, which offers cinema, theater, storytelling, live music, children's programs, workshops and cultural events. Once the Saguache hotel is renovated, "this town has the potential to be even more of an arts and music town," Hackbarth said.

Hackbarth stands in front of the current Saguache Hotel (Courtesy of Matt Kelly, Michael J. Media Group)

Hackbarth, who grew up in Carbondale, graduated from CU Boulder with a degree in classical guitar performance. He soon began splitting his time between Denver and Nashville.

In Nashville, Hackbarth worked odd jobs, including as a night-shift security officer at the Nashville Symphony and the Country Music Hall of Fame, while he pursued his passion of becoming a singer-songwriter.

rooms and reopening the restaurant, to create a welcoming place for the community and tourists to gather. This so-called golden age for the hotel lasted only a few years before the Means moved to Pueblo in 1938.

During the winters, he began working as a cruise ship musician, performing a mix of classical guitar, cover tunes and original music. He soon would be spending nine months out of the year working on cruise ships, sailing around the world and visiting 50 countries.

When not on the open sea, Hackbarth found comfort in his side-passion: renovation.

"I really enjoy renovating," Hackbarth said. "It was sort of like therapy for me. When you get into a house and start working, your mind wanders, and you forget about the stresses of life. It is a very satisfying type of work."

As a self-taught renovator, Hackbarth worked on a number of real estate projects in Nashville, most notably a major renovation of Loretta Lynn's first home, which he later operated as an Airbnb.

In the summer of 2019, Hackbarth returned to Colorado for a road trip with a friend from South Africa. While driving through Saguache, on the way to look at an antique cabin for sale, the Saguache hotel on Main Street "called out" to him. Hackbarth reminisced that the historic hotel was "such a cool building" and felt immediately drawn to it, despite the current state of neglect and disrepair.

In November of that same year, while on a

cruise ship, he bought the hotel on a whim, selling all of his renovated Nashville properties to finance the purchase upfront. To cover the renovation costs, he is working in partnership with the non-profit Colorado Preservation Inc. to secure grants from History Colorado and the State Historical Fund and has also launched a GoFundMe campaign.

"I never planned on buying a hotel or taking on a project this big," Hackbarth admitted. "It's a ridiculously huge project."

Hackbarth is not the first to attempt this daunting renovation project.

The current Saguache Hotel, which replaced an earlier historic hotel, was built in 1910 by local investors to bring in tourism. In 1935, Florence Means took over the hotel's operation and became the first renovator, fixing up the rooms and reopening the restaurant, to create a welcoming place for the community and tourists to gather. This so-called golden age for the hotel lasted only a few years before the Means moved to Pueblo in 1938.

From then, the ownership records are vague, but apparently, it shifted hands many times, falling once again into disrepair. In 1992, the hotel closed, and it remained vacant for over two decades.

In recent years, owner Tony Hawthorne performed some renovations in 2013-2014. The next owners, Cathy Kent and Steve Stewart continued this work, ripping out all of the old carpets and setting up a seasonal antique shop in the lobby. Their plans to build a piano bar never came to fruition due to a lack of funding.

Hackbarth is the latest of many renovators, though he has far more experience and funding than his predecessors. He also has more time because COVID-19 restrictions have temporarily put his performance career on hold. While land-locked in Colorado, he has been making significant progress with the help of his father, Charlie Hackbarth.

Artist rendering of the coffee shop after renovations (Courtesy of Matt Kelly, Michael J. Media Group)

The father and son will be living in the hotel as they work, despite the lack of heating, electricity and plumbing. Hackbarth describes his lackluster living conditions as "glamping," though he feels



Hackbarth stands in front of the current Saguache Hotel (Courtesy of Matt Kelly, Michael J. Media Group)

fortunate to finally have two extension cords, Wi-Fi and a hose hooked up to a water heater for a makeshift shower and toilet.

At times, Hackbart feels overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work to be done; however, his clear, ambitious vision keeps him motivated.

"The hotel is going to be a place where people are surrounded by beauty and creativity and history," Hackbarth said. "(I want to) honor the tradition of the hotel, the original architecture and the vintage theme."

Besides staying true to the 1920s theme, the renovation process will be sustainable. Hackbarth plans to reuse salvageable materials from the demolition process and to use non-toxic insulation, as well as "active and passive solar elements and masonry heaters, which will be fueled by locally sourced wood rendered from forest fires and pest damage," according to the PR release.

For Hackbarth, the possibilities as a mixed-use creative venue are nearly endless. He envisions the hotel being used for music, theater, dance,

festivals, comedy, open mics, guest speakers, yoga and meditation retreats, weddings, art galleries and more — all events that will draw tourists and promote the arts of all forms. Beyond promoting local creatives, hiring young talent from around Colorado will be a focus for Hackbarth, perhaps including music students from CU Boulder's jazz and classical programs.

"People from the Front Range, especially Boulder, that appreciate art and music will relate to this space," Hackbarth said. "It is going to be a nice escape for people to come down, spend a long weekend, go to the Sand Dunes, hike a mountain and go to the hot springs. People from the city are really going to need places like this to get away."

Hackbarth's GoFundMe campaign can be accessed here. To follow the renovation process, follow Hackbarth on lnstagram, Facebook and the Saguache hotel website.

Soviet Fourth Grader combines Cold War aesthetic, political satire on new punk project

by Ben Berman

Soviet Fourth Grader is the punk-rock project of AnSatoli and Konstantinos Stanislav, two cousins hailing from Missoula, MT. Despite their small-town background, the duo rejects their Rocky Mountain roots in favor of aesthetics from 4,000 miles away. Preferring relative anonymity through pseudonyms, they instead work to curate over-the-top, Soviet-themed personas reminiscent of the bygone Cold War era.

In their fictitious narrative, Soviet Fourth Grader supposedly emigrated from the fictional Stanislavia, a nonsensical amalgamation of socialist Eastern Bloc stereotypes. As far as their music goes, they never let up on this caricature — their website hosts a farcical press release from Stanislavia's "Technical Institute of Recordings," a state-owned school, and their music videos feature them performing in thick snow, donning Soviet Army-like ushanka caps. They even conduct full interviews in thick, faux-Russian accents, convincingly creating near-Borat levels of parody.

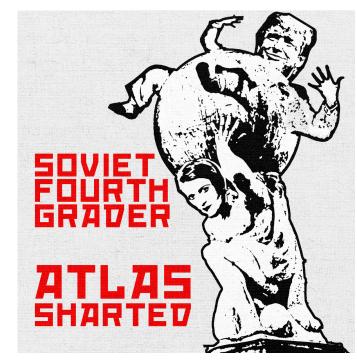
Due to their half-joking nature, it's initially hard to glean the true inspiration behind Soviet Fourth Grader's blitz into the musical landscape — "We sing George Michael while working on the beet farm!" boasted Anatoli before breaking into an unintelligible rant — but it's clear they hold a well-studied appreciation of their American punk forbears, both musically and politically.

"We think big ideas, but we are like fourthgrade children," Anatoli said, alluding to the band's name.

"Maybe you are fourth-grader," Konstantinos added.

Anatoli laughed, "That is why I become a musician, cousin!"

Despite their off-kilter presentation, which could easily be written off as a post-modern gag,



Soviet Fourth Grader's "Atlas Sharted." (Courtesy of Soviet Fourth Grader)

the band uses their Soviet motif to construe the image of a horrified outsider looking in at the fire and brimstone of the United States in 2020. This perspective is cohesively presented on their debut album, "Atlas Sharted," which was self-released on Bandcamp shortly before Election Day, on Nov. 1.

"We come to America and are very disappoint by many things, but we make a CD of it," Anatoli said.

A reactionary project, "Atlas Sharted" was written by the band after the inauguration of President Trump. Soviet Fourth Grader wields the austere, outdated aesthetics of oppressive S.S.R. regimes to draw comparisons to modern American governance, or as the band blatantly puts it, "Trump's four-year campaign of spiritual

sodomy" on democratic institutions. In that sense, Soviet Fourth Grader largely sticks to doing what the punk genre does best: calling out the systems that deserve to be called out.

The 12-track project is filled with driving guitar riffs that take inspiration not only from Ramones-era punk but also nu-metal, surf rock, and at times, droning art-pop. Alongside the flavors of genres they curate, most tracks contain layers of social study and crude satire on American culture, delivered both in screaming hooks and frantic spoken-word segments — an obvious nod to the group's love of the Dead Kennedys. The performance art-like commitment to their act, combined with scathing critiques of American political institutions, also draws thematic comparisons to the Moscow protest-rock group Pussy Riot, known for their controversial commentary on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

One of the album's highlights, "Everybody Hates Greg," features a spoken-word ramble over a jittery guitar loop reminiscent of the Talking Heads. "I've answered enough questions, you know? / I didn't have to answer questions when I ran my businesses and made millions / The only questions I answered were the ones I wanted and things worked out really well," whines Anatoli in a neurotic impression of a certain commander-in-chief, before the song's thrashing outro rightfully likens American politics to a brutish cage fight ("I get elected too many times and see those term limits? Bodyslam!"). Through moments like those, which may very well encapsulate the jumpy, strung-out attitudes many Americans hold after four years of chaotic politics, it's hard not to appreciate the album's infectious absurdity.

But is it just for shock comedy? Certainly not. Beyond the virulent narrative, Anatoli and Konstantinos insist that "Atlas Sharted" is an idealistic protest against the systems they describe. In a sense, it's their own method of moving the needle a little further towards justice.

"Maybe we cn do something better if we are not all dead because of global warming," Anatoli said. To break up the doom and gloom, Soviet Fourth Grader injects random bursts of humor, like a minute-long acapella about beef stroganoff. Apparently, these are remnants of a revolutionary rock opera about "the moral failing of all modern society," but instead, the band settled for a concise punk record. Regardless of the scale and scope, these moments of non-sequitur give the album a shining sense of personality rarely seen in protest music.

"You must struggle against inequality, but you can lose the humor doing that," Konstantinos explained. "That is why we hold the rubber chicken (in our fists) and not the machine gun."

Going forward, Soviet Fourth Grader has plenty of fight left in them. For the moment, they alluded to a forthcoming sophomore album, "Comrade Dolphin," which is apparently set to be a blistering review of modern environmentalism, COVID-19 government policy and even the exploitation of Amazon employees. Disappointed with humanity in 2020, they chose instead to name the album after an animal.

"Animal is more ideal and sincere than the human," Anatoli explained, before giving his best impression of a dolphin's cackle.

And beyond that, the band doesn't show any sign of losing steam. In a world fighting an ongoing pandemic and an escalating climate crisis, while bigotry continues, Soviet Fourth Grader has plenty of material left to make music about.

"It is good that we have flushed Donald Trump's head down the toilet, but it is still not much of an upward movement. More lateral," said Konstantinos, explaining his lingering dissatisfaction with President-elect Joe Biden and other centrist politicians. "So do not be complacent! Sitting back on laurels is how the rich win."

Soviet Fourth Grader's music and information can be found here.

CUI Playlist: Best of 2020

by CU Independent



BEST OF 2020 A PLAYLIST BY THE CUI ARTS STAFF

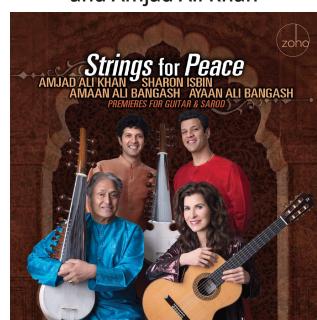
Graphic by Ben Berman

In these tumultuous times, the world needed music more than ever to capture the chaos of the news cycle and fill the silence of lonely quarantined weeks. What was initially a slew of delayed spring releases when the world shut down, turned into a landslide of fall projects from artists whose work reflected newfound creativity through themes of isolation, anger and hope.

This year, the artists that once filled clubs, arenas and festival grounds instead found new ways to connect with us through our phones and computer screens at home. Each day, thousands of artists across the internet provided us with new music, and more importantly, a brief yet impactful respite from a year that kept us physically distanced and challenged like no other.

The CU Independent arts section curated a selection of seven exceptional musical works that spoke to us in 2020.

"Strings for Peace" — Sharon Isbin, Amaan Ali Bangash, Ayaan Ali Khan and Amjad Ali Khan



(Lush/Matador Records 2018)

"Strings for Peace" is a contemplative crosscultural experiment, over a decade in the making. Sarod virtuoso Bangash composed four ragas for Isbin, a Grammy Award-winning classical guitarist, which premiered on a tour of India in 2019. They later recorded the ragas in two days, during a whirlwind session in New York City. The result is an enthralling convergence of musical languages and cultures.

The precision of the classical guitar, a fretted instrument, is slightly at odds with the fluidity of the sarod, a stringed, fretless instrument, which uses continuous slides known as meendi (glissandi). Yet, Isbin skillfully blends her sound with the sarod's wandering improvisations, providing accompaniment and incorporating relaxed bends and glissandos into her solos.

The first raga, "By the Moon" ("Raga Behag"), meditatively unfolds for five minutes, before building to a zestful, sarod-shredding end. "Love Avalanche" ("Raga Mishra Bhairava") is beautiful in its simplicity and conviction, jumping right into a snappy, Gypsy-flavored melody. "Romancing Earth" ("Raga Pilu") features clear, cantabile guitar melodies, interwoven with vigorous meendi and slides on the sarod. "Sacred Evening" ("Raga Yaman") is full of playful give-and-takes between Bangash and Isbin, as the album builds to an animated end.

Izzy Fincher — Arts Editor

"Pixel Bath" — Jean Dawson



Jean Dawson's "Pixel Bath" (Courtesy of P+)

In an era increasingly defined by the convergence of our online interactions, the back-and-forth sharing of millions of music tastes may lead to blenderized sounds that can't be pinned down to one specific category anymore.

Jean Dawson is one artist reaping the benefits of this genre-less future.

His sophomore effort, "Pixel Bath," is crafted like a fervid survey of the 24-year old artist's old LimeWire playlists put on shuffle. It's complete with everything from wailing hooks and distorted guitars, reminiscent of Blink-182's"Clear Bones," to glistering rap verses on "06 Burst" that take a page out of Kanye's "Yeezus" era.

Rather than an album that feels stifled by studio control or generic pop tropes, "Pixel Bath" reads like a love letter written by a Gen-X music fan. As Dawson jumps between sounds, we get a sense of the music that's made him who he is. Ethereal tracks like "Devillish" feature jangly guitar riffs and echoey vocals that toe the line between Tame Impala and Paramore. Through these Frankenstein'd moments, Dawson finds a unique identity with his dissonant storytelling, tied together with vivid lyricism on love, childhood memories and politics.

The experimental result is a reflection of our time: the categorized limitations we've placed on music consumption are now gone due to the sheer volume of music we consume online. The internet chews up and spits out a garbled, cacophonic mess from millions of independent creators. This future of music may be seen as bleak and directionless by an older generation, who is more invested in tightly defining and segmenting corners of the music realm. But an effortless display on "Pixel Bath" proves that a younger crowd is embracing a format that doesn't quite set out to say or sound like anything in particular. Instead, the internet's sonic nihilism is something worthy of joyous dancing.

Ben Berman — Arts Editor

"What Could Possibly Go Wrong" -Dominic Fike



Dominic Fike's "What Could Possibly Go Wrong?" (Courtesy of Columbia Records)

Hype can be a death sentence for the careers of up-and-comers. With the pressure of growing social media followings and the Spotify play counter, some fold under the immense pressure.

But Dominic Fike isn't just another one-hitwonder up-and-comer, known only for his breakout singles "3 Nights" and "Phone Numbers." Instead, he's revealed himself as one of the most promising artists of 2020, and his July album "What Could Possibly Go Wrong?" is one of the most impressive debuts of the year.

The record is a brilliant melting pot of rock, hiphop and pop influences paired with emotional memoirs about the highs and lows of life in the spotlight. On one side, melancholic tracks like "Wurli" detail quarrels with significant others and the helplessness brought on by fame. On the other side, playful songs like "Chicken Tenders" explain the rush associated with the experience of finding a new lover.

The album's relatable lyrical themes about love, breakups and personal issues make it so each listener can find something to resonate with. Head-bobbing and euphoric tracks like "Why" serve as perfect songs to dance to, while

heart-wrenching and melancholic responses like "Superstar Sh*t" provide a song to cry to after a breakup.

Dominic Fike may only have one album under his belt, but he certainly has more beautiful work to come.

Marion Walmer — Staff Writer

"DOG" - Kahlil Blu



Kahlil Blu's "DOG" (Courtesy of blusounds)

Unless you are one of Kahlil Blu's 12,284 monthly listeners on Spotify, the chances of you listening to this out-of-sight album are next to none. Among a vast sea of underground hiphop projects, "DOG" is a jam-packed venture, an overlooked 33-minute gem of an album.

Through a mixture of trap and rap infused bouncy beats, Blu presents an energetic, lighthearted listen that is as chaotic as it is soothing. In the brief runtime, Blu manages to rattle off 20 short, versatile tracks that flow with ease.

The Harlem-based artist encompasses the persona of a SoundCloud rapper who has perfected his craft. Through his introspective mindset, Blu's flow is everlasting. His experimentation is profound, and his production is dexterous.

Songs such as "Land," "Brand New" and "lol play this when ur sad" unveil catchy rap hooks that dissipate as quickly as they were established. His flip of Earl Sweatshirt's "The Mint" transforms the pulsating eerie piano into a head-bobbing mosh worthy track in "Oh Well."

"DOG' is about my experience on earth,"
Blue wrote on Bandcamp. "I can't speak for
anyone else. All I can do is be myself and hope
that someone out there relates."

Benny Titelbaum — Staff Writer

"Lockdown" - Anderson .Paak



LOCKDOWN



Anderson .Paak's "Lockdown" (Courtesy of Aftermath Entertainment)

2020 has been a whirlwind of civil unrest with COVID-19 quarantines and Black Lives Matter protests. Anderson .Paak attempts to capture this crazy year in his soulful single "Lockdown."

.Paak released the song on Juneteenth, June 19, seemingly to make a statement about the current nature of race relations in the United States. For those who don't know, Juneteenth is a holiday celebrating the liberation of slaves. It is both a celebration of liberation, but it is also a reflection of the pain and suffering of Blacks who endured slavery for centuries.

.Paak captures the bittersweet nature of the Juneteenth holiday in the music, using a funky, bass-heavy instrumental sound that is uplifting and powerful, yet at times distressing. The lyrics of the song match this tone by uplifting those fighting for what is right, while simultaneously capturing the way peaceful protests have been met by police violence.

"Lockdown" and its accompanying music video capture the turmoil that has engulfed the United States in 2020, while also encouraging the persistent fight for what is right.

Liam Benjamin — Staff Writer

"All Thoughts Fly" – Anna von Hausswolff



Anna von Hausswolff's "All Thoughts Fly" (Courtesy of Anna von Hausswolff)

Singer-songwriter extraordinaire Anna von Hausswolff followed up her breakout 2018 album "Dead Magic" with "All Thoughts Fly" this September. Abandoning the dark, gothic, ambient synth formula of her last album, Von Hausswolff goes back to her roots with her latest album. Across the diverse catalog of Von Hausswolff, pipe organ has been the common element on an experimental musical journey. In "All Thoughts Fly," she puts this loyal companion front and center.

This album does not only put her skills as an organist on display, but more so, her

ENTERTAINMENT

songwriting. Von Hausswolff uses minimalistic yet expressive dark organ phrases and the perfect drone timbre, pushing the envelope of ambient and drone music of today.

The seven tracks that make up this album blend into each other very fluently, making it feel like a single piece in seven movements. The pacing of the album is surprisingly dynamic, creating an immersive experience. Although some parts of the longer tracks get repetitive, the wide spectrum of musical ideas she is expressing on a single instrument is very impressive.

Altug Karakurt — Staff Writer

"Sketches of China" - Xuefei Yang



Xuefei Yang's "Sketches of China" (Courtesy of Decca Records)

Xuefei Yang explores vignettes of Chinese music across two millennia, from the Han Dynasty to the present day. On "Sketches of China," we hear traditional folk songs, playful contemporary concertos, Chinese-flamenco crossovers and even an iconic pop song.

This album is a long-overdue homage to the music of Yang's homeland, 37 years after the child prodigy's career in classical guitar began. For Yang, "Sketches of China" is a "dream come true," a chance to share a fresh perspective of Chinese music. For traditional repertoire, she transforms the classical guitar into a pipa (Chinese lute), using distinctive tremolos and sharp strummed chords. The bright, silky tone mixes with the airy Xiao (Chinese flute) on "Hujia" and the metallic, harp-like Guzheng on "Fisherman's song by Moonlight."

Fast-forwarding to the album's 21st-century repertoire, Yang explores an eclectic sound palette. Renchang Fu's "A Lovely Rose" is reminiscent of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Guitar Concerto No. 1, though gently infused with Chinese melodies. On Tan Dun's "Seven Desires," dedicated to Sharon Isbin, Yang switches between Spanish flamenco and pipa aesthetics, allowing for an impressive crosscultural dialogue on one instrument.

"Sword dance," by Xu Changjun, is filled with dramatic, intense strummed chords, evoking the image of the sword dance, an acrobatic dance from Chinese opera. On the final track, "The Moon Represents My Heart," Yang creates a touching, heartfelt rendition of one of China's most beloved pop songs.

Izzy Fincher — Arts Editor

The full playlist, "Best of 2020," can be accessed here.

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