

The Pitch
AUGUST 2025 | FREE | THEPITCHKC.COM

THE MAN BEHIND THE MARBLE

BY SHEA MCGRAW

COMEDIAN DELL'ARTE
BY ABBY OLCESE

EMANCIPATING PATTY PREWITT
BY JAKE LOURAINÉ

MEMBERS IN GOOD COMPANY
BY ALEXANDER OMORODION

CHECK IT OUT ONLINE thepitchkc.com

Photo Courtesy of Lauren Lovelle



Bootlegging to bootlegs with Lauren Lovelle & The Midnight Spliffs

For Lauren Lovelle, being involved in darkly joyous music was inevitable. At the age of four, she was singing Hank Williams' "Your Cheatin' Heart" with her dad's band in Wichita. It's no surprise that kid would grow up to create the new genre-blending EP *Other Dreams*, with the backing of her band The Midnight Spliffs. "I have a few songs that I've written... that I have to be in a really good place to play them live," Lovelle admits. Her songwriting bounces between lighthearted joking and dark slashes at the psyche, allowing occasionally bleak subject matter to blend seamlessly into infectious sing-alongs. For more about her musical (and criminal) family tree, along with a breakdown of the new EP, check out our feature written by Nick Spacek.



Photo by Sarah Sipple



A sneak peek of the upcoming Mahomes/Kelce KC steakhouse '1587 Prime'

Local sports superstars Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce have set off on yet another business venture. With endorsement deals in almost every business category imaginable, the two are now dabbling in the food scene. Partnered with Noble 33, 1587 Prime—the quarterback and tight end duo's new steakhouse—is set to open sometime this summer, before the start of the 2025 NFL Season. The restaurant is located adjacent to the Loews Kansas City Hotel, with its entrance situated at Baltimore Avenue and Truman Road. Construction is currently underway at the chophouse, where intricate details and a hyper-specific fine-dining vibe are being crafted. Our Food Editor Sarah Sipple had the opportunity to take a look at the progress being made.



Photo Courtesy of Ashley Ream



Ashley Ream's new novel *The Peculiar Gift of July* proves we need more magical realism

Ashley Ream's newest book *The Peculiar Gift of July* needs to be on your summer reading list. Ream's passion for storytelling stems back to her experiences during her youth. After the author worked as a 16-year-old intern for *The Pitch* and continued writing for the publication as a book reviewer, she has gone on to publish three novels—the other two being her 2012 debut, *Losing Clementine*, and 2016's *The 100 Year Miracle*. Yes, at 16 years of age, Ream was galvanizing readers' decision-making within libraries. Our Music Editor Nick Spacek had the chance to chop it up with Ream about her journey as a storyteller from her early days working with *The Pitch* to publishing her most recent summer read.



4 LETTER

Letter from the Editor

True optimism's co-conspirators walk into a bar
BY BROCK WILBUR

6 CULTURE

Innocence is the Worst Defense

Patty Prewitz's release and the fight for prison reform
BY JAKE LOURAINÉ

8

Finding Your Marbles

Bruce Breslow's transition from crazed curiosity to consistent career
BY SHEA MCGRAW

10 FOOD & DRINK

Savoring Sound

Westside bar XO HiFi pairs music to cocktails for a first-class listening experience
BY JORDAN BARANOWSKI

Going For Gold

Le Champion brings knockout flavors, morning and night, to Westport
BY JORDAN BARANOWSKI

11

Eat This Now

Gyro & Baklava at Flame Grill & Mediterranean Bakery
BY TIFFANY WATTS

Drink This Now

Frozen Flight from Frost
BY SARAH SIPPLE

12

Mise en Place

Cedric Ransburg fosters a connection-first cocktail lounge at In Good Company
BY ALEXANDER OMORODION

14

MUSIC

Mockumentary Musicology

Local love looms large in *American Comic*
BY ABBY OLCESE

16 ADVICE

Keep Them Coming

Porn with a conscience
BY KRISTEN THOMAS

17

SMOKE SHOW

Wrangling Waste

How Monarch Waste Co. is sustainably managing MO's cannabis waste
BY JOE ELLETT

18

KC CARES

Connecting Through Care

Rachel Hiles paves a path for imperative support through Sandwiched KC
BY BETH LIPOFF



Cover Photo by Shea McGraw
Design by Teddy Rosen

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9



THURSDAY, AUGUST 21



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29



For show and
venue information, visit
azuraamp.com

Purchase tickets online at
ticketmaster.com

The Pitch

Editor-in-Chief

Brock Wilbur

President & Chief Operating Officer

Andrew Miller

Director of Marketing & Promotions

Jason Dockery

Community Manager & Food Editor

Sarah Sipple

Music Editor

Nick Spacek

Film Editor

Abby Olcese

Little Village Creative Services

Jordan Sellergren

Contributing Editor

Joe Ellett

Editorial Designer

Teddy Rosen

Staff Reporter

Jake Louraine

Staff Photographer

Shea McGraw

Contributing Writers

Tiffany Watts, Beth Lipoff, Kristen Thomas, Travis Meier, Jordan Baranowski, Michael Mackie, Kaylynn Mullins, Barb Shelly, Adrian Torres, Zoe Strohm, Emily Wheeler, Nancy Le, Sophia Lail, Alexander Omorodion

Contributing Photographers

Tarik Sykes, Isabella Galvan, Allison Scavo, Jordan Hirsekorn, Haley Mullenix, Stephen Fuller, Kylee Gregg

VOICE MEDIA GROUP

National Advertising
1-888-273-9866 vmgadvertising.com

DISTRIBUTION

The Pitch distributes 20,000 copies a month and is available free throughout Greater Kansas City, limited to one copy per reader. Additional copies may be purchased for \$5 each, payable at The Pitch's office in advance. The Pitch may be distributed only by The Pitch's authorized independent contractors or authorized distributors. No person may, without prior written permission of The Pitch, take more than one copy of each week's issue. Mail subscriptions: \$22.50 for six months or \$45 per year, payable in advance. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Kansas City, MO 64108.

COPYRIGHT

The contents of The Pitch are Copyright 2025 by The Pitch LLC. No portion may be reproduced in whole or in part by any means without the express written permission of the publisher.

The Pitch

420 Nichols Rd

2nd Floor

Kansas City, MO 64112

For information or to share a story tip, email:

tips@thepitchkc.com

For advertising:

andrew@thepitchkc.com

or 816-218-6792



Art by Teddy Rosen



KC expat Kari Wahlgren wins Emmy for voice-over acting in career spanning Disney, Rick & Morty

Kari Wahlgren is a former small-town Kansan who studied at KU and worked in the KC film scene, before pursuing a career in professional voice-over work out in LA. A career that began in doing dubs for anime has sprawled into a nearly 1,000 role acting resume, featuring work in games and movies like *Mortal Kombat*, *Injustice 2*, *The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy*, *Kung Fu Panda: Legends of Awesomeness*, and *FLCL*. Among a huge fandom, she's known for voicing the spaceship on *Rick & Morty*, as well as Morty's occasional girlfriend, Jessica. So yes, she does have official Funko Pops based on her work. Recently, she won an Emmy for her work on Disney Junior's *SuperKitties*, where she voiced multiple characters, and we spoke to her at length about the joys of working constantly, all of the time, forever—albeit in a field she love. We also probed about when she'll be back to take center-stage in a KC theater production again.



Letter from the Editor

TRUE OPTIMISM'S CO-CONSPIRATORS WALK INTO A BAR
By Brock Wilbur

Welcome, dearest readers, to the August 2025 print edition of *The Pitch* magazine—locally grown right here in KC, and featuring all the news that's fit to print. And often... more. More than that. You know what you're here for, yeah?

Here at *The Pitch*, our prime directive is always “Shine a light on good people doing good, bad people doing bad, and weird people doing weird.” Spreading that spotlight around has always been central to what we do, and as a guiding principle, it helps guide us into finding and celebrating the sort of folks whose stories rarely get told elsewhere in the metro.

In turn, we hope this means that caring about their lives (and choices) becomes a part of who you are, by nature of being a *Pitch Person*. We like to think that we aren't a publication you read, but rather a kind of second-hand friend, embarking on an adventure—one that provides an unending set of trips, problems, and mysteries we're going to tackle together.

Recently, I lost one of my favorite *Pitch People* from out in the wild.

David Kinerk was a regular at Lew's. I've sat next to him in the afternoons for (at least) two days a week, probably since just after pandemic restrictions lifted, onward until the middle of May this year. I don't think we ever really even introduced ourselves. I was just Brock, and he was Dave, and we were always involved in whatever the group conversation was floating toward—inevitably drifting until it was just him and me drilling down into specifics that got too tightly kept for larger public discussion. It was that 'hard to define but you know it' energy of a person you were friends

with in high school, hadn't seen in 15 years, and one day you just slot back into the dynamic you always had—without ever needing to acknowledge the intervening radio silence. He was... a co-conspirator? We'd both start to get quieter and lean in closer as we shared opinions and secrets; sometimes our own, sometimes those of another. It was the rare trust you place in a stranger only when you sense in your blood that they're a fellow traveller.

David was *Pitch People* because I'm not sure there is anyone in this city who was as tuned in on what we publish day in and day out as he was. At one point, I thought he must be sneaking looks at his phone when he saw me coming. Even I rarely feel I'm on top of *everything* we run in a day. But David was. And he had *opinions*.

What we shared, if you saw it from the end of the bar, probably looked like two guys getting increasingly angry as they got quieter—like they had an unpopular opinion about a local sports team and didn't want to invite the bar proper to engage in our private disparagement. When I reflect on it now, in totality, I would call it True Optimism. We were both given the inclination to care so much, so deeply, about so many people in this city... and oh my god, were we incredulous about the road blocks preventing Good and Change from being performed. Often, people who just needed to do their jobs in a way that we were positive we could do better. More often, from our professions, we knew things from behind the scenes that we exchanged because... I don't know? More than once, we knew the guy who knew the guy who could maybe blow up the debris blocking the road?

We both could see joy, possibility, and a better world just out of reach, shimmering on the horizon. And we had the optimism that a single person, here and there, given the right support, could make it a reality. We were engaged in the True Optimism that required acknowledging just how much work it could take, but equally, how a better Kansas City was ready and waiting. He wanted to light that fire, and on more occasions



than I can count, he gave me the kindling I needed to do my part.

He always saw the work that we as a publication were doing, and he was proud of us for it. There were days I needed that, and I'm not sure I ever told him how much it mattered that he pitched in to help us make it through.

So this month, this issue is full of folks from across the region who are *Pitch People*—good people doing good, and weird people whose joy or strength is infectious, and the 'weird' moniker only applies because the path they walk is staggeringly singular. There is a party in these pages for the power of people who are sitting right next to you, wherever you may be sitting right now. I'm always looking for more of them, and if I haven't shared their story with the town yet, we'll get to them next week, next month, or next year.

Pitch People never give up on us, and we'll never give up on them. So thank you to each and every one of you reading this, living this, and getting on board for yet another deep dive this issue into a population that does the improbable in the face of the impossible.

Pitch in and we'll make it through,

Brock Wilbur

P

Help support The Pitch's local journalism with a contribution today! the-pitch-kc-llc.fundjournalism.org/membership



Just Add Chews



Curio Chews add a little extra to whatever you're doing.

Award-winning. Great-tasting. Gelatin-free. All-natural flavors & colors. Packed with premium-quality ingredients and science that only Curio brings—so you can turn ordinary into awesome, anytime.



Where to Buy

Ask for Curio by name.



Earn points on **all** Curio Wellness™ products **anywhere** you buy them. Redeem them for swag you'll actually love.

For use only by qualifying patients or consumers at least 21 years old.

INNOCENCE IS THE WORST DEFENSE

PATTY PREWITT'S RELEASE AND THE FIGHT FOR PRISON REFORM

By Jake Lorraine

On June 2, 2025, a month before her 76th birthday, Patty Prewitt had her head in the clouds—in an airplane ten thousand feet above ground, strapped with a parachute and a video camera, and eagerly waiting to plummet toward the ground at 120 miles per hour.

Before stepping out into a total freefall, Patty told the skydiving instructor, "If we die, I want you to play the video of my fall at my funeral because funerals are dull, and this'll liven up the place."

Patty walks through life with a keen sense of humor and infectious kindness. But six months prior to her triumphant act of hurling herself from a plane, she sat within the walls of the Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Vandalia, Missouri, serving out a life sentence for a crime she maintains did not commit.

In prison, her life was restricted—her movement, her choices, her body, her identity; none of it was hers. But as Patty soared

through the clouds after decades of caged existence, she had finally chosen a voluntary risk—a very literal liberation.

For nearly four decades, Patty paid the price for someone else's mistake. In a trial characterized by sexism and misogyny, she was taken from her five children, but as the decades passed, Patty never let go of the hope of seeing them again as a free woman.

"Every day for all those years, I woke up and thought, *This may be the day that I get the phone call. This may be the day that I go home*," Patty says. "That's pretty stupid, but that kept me going."

Her hopes were finally answered on Dec. 20 of last year. Patty's oldest daughter, Jane Prewitt Watkins, was visiting her mother like she had done so countless times over the years, only interacting with her through supervised conversations and limited physical touch. Only this time, Patty was going home with her. Her imprison-



Photo by Shea McGraw

ment had stretched across the administrations of six different Missouri governors. Finally, former governor Mike Parson made the long-overdue decision to commute her sentence.

Frantically, Watkins called everybody she could think of, lighting The Bat Signal to call the Prewitts home. Siblings, cousins, grandchildren, and all left behind jobs, clients, and responsibilities to welcome Patty home, many of whom had never met her outside of prison walls.

"She has lots of grandkids, but they had never had their grandma home," Watkins says. "They had seen how hard everybody had worked—they worked. All of our kids have marched around with signs and asked all of their friends to sign petitions and write letters to the governor, and do all of these events their entire lives."

At Watkins' home in Greenwood, a guestroom had laid empty for years, always intended for the day Patty would be released.

"No one could understand the relief and happiness that this Christmas had," Watkins says.

Once Missouri's longest-serving female prisoner, Patty spent 38 years behind bars for the murder of her husband, Bill, in 1984. Bill was fatally shot in the couple's Holden home on the night of Feb. 18, 1984. Patty has always said that the attack was carried out by an intruder who raped her and shot Bill. Since her conviction, a chorus grew calling for her release and supporting her claims of innocence.

In 2019, the former director of the Missouri Department of Corrections, George Lombardi, endorsed her release. In his 41 years of employment, he had never done so for any other prisoner.

Naive to the legal system before her incarceration, Patty had denied a plea deal that would have made her eligible for parole after seven years. Thinking justice would prevail, Patty wrongfully placed her trust in

THE MUSEUM OF KANSAS CITY
EXHIBITS, PROGRAMS, AND EXPERIENCES ABOUT KANSAS CITY'S PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

MUSEO DE KANSAS CITY
EXHIBICIONES, PROGRAMAS Y EXPERIENCIAS SOBRE EL PASADO, PRESENTE Y FUTURO DE KANSAS CITY.

THE MUSEUM OF KANSAS CITY
MUSEUMOFKANSASCITY.ORG f i



a legal system that did not work for her, especially as a woman.

From the very start of the investigation, police immediately focused on Patty as the main suspect. They consistently ignored credible leads pointing to an intruder and failed to collect key evidence that could have identified the individual who assaulted Patty and murdered her husband, including the omission of a mysterious car parked outside of their home on the night of the murder.

"It's astounding what people won't let you do to even try and prove your innocence," Watkins says.

To secure a conviction, the state banked on the testimony of a discredited pathologist who mischaracterized forensic evidence to paint the picture of Patty's guilt. The prosecution portrayed Patty as a bad mother, mocked her sexual history, and instructed the jurors that the "dignity of the institution of marriage" demanded a conviction.

Despite the injustice of her imprisonment, Patty refused to let her incarceration define her.

"I had children and grandchildren, and I wanted to show them that no matter where you are, you make the best of it," Patty says.


Patty began writing letters to her friends and family, as it had become a habit that helped to keep her grounded. She would never share with her parents or her kids the cruel experiences that she endured in prison, sparing the harsh details, but she would spin them into teaching moments.

"Nobody needs to know bad, bad, bad stuff," Patty says. "Nobody needs that negativity. For the kids, sometimes it was like a life lesson."

For 38 years, Patty wrote letters every day, keeping her tethered to the world outside. But she was also giving a voice to the countless other women locked up beside her.

Her life story and collected letters coalesced into a two-part memoir, *Trying to Catch Lightning in a Jar*, published by Some People Press—a nonprofit that publishes memoirs and teaches writing classes for incarcerated people. The first volume covers the first 20 years of her sentence, while the second part, which has yet to be released, will include the final 18 years, as well as her "Exit Story".

The name of her memoir was inspired by her lawyer in 1984, Robert Beaird, who even after the trial, would advocate for Patty for years, arguing against the unjust ruling.

"My lawyer said, 'Being innocent is the worst defense ever,'" Patty says. "'To get out of prison when you're innocent is like trying to catch lightning in a jar.' That's what we've been trying to do for 40 years." 


To read the full story on *The Pitch's* website, scan this QR code


- 
- 8/17 We Came As Romans
 - 8/21 Gary Allan
 - 9/4 Turnpike Troubadours
 - 9/5 Pure Prairie League
 - 9/6 Yacht Rock Revue
 - 9/10 Noel Miller
 - 9/12 Shoreline Mafia
 - 9/13 Here Come the Mummies
 - 9/14 Jerry Cantrell
 - 9/16 UB40
 - 9/20 RuPaul's Drag Race
 - 9/23 Poppy
 - 9/26 Noah Cyrus
 - 9/29 AJ Croce
 - 10/4 Niko Moon
 - 10/5 Young the Giant
 - 10/12 X & Los Lobos
 - 10/13 Quinn XCII
 - 10/14 Kublai Khan TX
 - 10/18 Evil Dead in Concert
 - 10/23 Russell Dickerson
 - 10/30 An Evening with Patty Griffin and Rickie Lee Jones
 - 11/2 Dylan Gossett
 - 11/11 Fit for A King
 - 11/12 Brian Culbertson
 - 11/22 Kathleen Madigan
 - 11/28 Say Anything and Motion City Soundtrack
 - 12/2 Mammoth
 - 12/10 Trivium
 - 12/11 The Jinx and DeLa Holiday Show
 - 12/19 Ancient Aliens Live

- 
- 8/8 Joe Fenti
 - 8/9 The Aquabats
 - 9/12 Paul Cauthen
 - 9/23 Colony House
 - 10/13 Circle Jerks
 - 11/3 Mon Rovia

- 
- 8/22 Lettuce
 - 9/8 Japanese Breakfast
 - 9/12 Geordie Greep
 - 9/20 Skeptics' Guide to the Universe
 - 10/4 Noah Reid
 - 10/7 Choir!Choir!Choir!
 - 10/8 Lucius
 - 10/11 Molly Tuttle
 - 10/14 Marcus King
 - 10/16 Murder By Death
 - 10/25 Welcome to Night Vale
 - 11/8 Jeff Tweedy Band

- 
- 8/9 Cyndi Lauper
 - 8/21 Avett Brothers
 - 9/25 Three Dog Night/Little River Band
 - 9/26 Kansas & 38 Special
 - 9/29 Halestorm & Lindsey Stirling

- 
- 8/13 WesGhost
 - 8/14 Psychostick
 - 9/4 John Mark McMillan + Citizens
 - 9/5 Bit Brigade
 - 9/14 Slow Pulp
 - 9/16 Mehro
 - 9/17 Mystery Skulls
 - 9/18 Aidan Bisset
 - 9/19 Sunday (1994)
 - 9/20 Glare
 - 9/22 Model / Actriz
 - 9/24 The Brian Jonestown Massacre
 - 9/29 Slow Crush

- 
- 8/2 Toad The Wet Sprocket
 - 8/4 Dropkick Murphys & Bad Religion
 - 8/27 David Lee Roth
 - 9/27 Charles Wesley Godwin
 - 10/1 That Mexican OT
 - 10/3 Royel Otis
 - 10/4 Ziggy Marley & Burning Spear
 - 10/7 Djo

- 
- 10/13 Dream Theater
 - 11/26 Gabby's Dollhouse Live!

- 
- 8/19 Briscoe
 - 9/11 Wade Forster

at Uptown Theater

scan for tickets



mammothlive.com/events

FINDING YOUR MARBLES

BRUCE BRESLOW'S TRANSITION FROM CRAZED CURIOSITY TO CONSISTENT CAREER
By Shea McGraw

For many, marbles are just small, vibrant, glass balls that hold no true significance. But for Bruce Breslow, they aren't just items for a game or a pretty sight on the eyes. They're his full-time job. From a small store in Bonner Springs, Breslow handcrafts marbles, turning sticks of glass into colorful sphere-shaped art that fits in the palm of your hand.

Breslow's fascination with marbles started around his mid to late twenties. He and his wife, Sharron, were in Iowa one weekend when he found some old marbles at an antique store. Once he got back to their accommodations and got a better look, he couldn't get enough of them.

"I bought a jar of marbles," Breslow says. "We went back to the bed and breakfast and were getting ready for bed. I'd washed all the marbles, laid the towel down, and was sorting them all by color. I'm looking at them and an hour went by, [then] two hours." His wife tried to pull him away after he had spent so much time sorting them, but he was immersed in the spheres' illumination. "I couldn't stop talking about the marbles."

While Sharron admits the Iowa getaway played a hefty role in his newly found hobby, she explains how his interest in marbles could have started elsewhere. Breslow had over-ordered his marble purchase for his handmade game boards and had received a truckload of them. In turn, he decided to sell the excess at the Charles Dickens holiday fair in downtown KC. The unexpected result was that people started showing up at his store, Bruce's Woodworks, to purchase the products. Unsatisfied with selling one kind of marble, he started to make his own.

Sharron saw his newfound passion and was no stranger to helping him. She listened to his marble mumbles and found books on

glass blowing to help accelerate his expertise. With fresh marble making knowledge and time to learn, he gathered his torch, sheet metal, c-clamp, and handmade molds and got to work. Through Sharron's help, Breslow learned that marble makers would sometimes carve their own molds from cherry or apple wood.

Formerly serving the community as a woodworker, he transitioned his brick-and-mortar from Bruce's Woodworks to Moon Marble Company. And with a dead cherry tree in his yard to work with, it was an easy choice for him to start crafting his own casts.

Breslow started offering the public glimpses of what his work truly looks like, hosting free demonstrations on the process. Unfortunately, the process of crafting the molten hot marbles in a wood mold became a hazard for attendees.

"It caused trouble for the audience because it put out so much smoke," says Breslow. "So I stopped using them." He called up an acquaintance of his who also worked with glass and found that he used graphite for his molds, so Breslow decided to follow suit. "I went down to the junkyard, bought a bunch of blocks of graphite, sharpened one of my drill bits half round, I drilled some holes, and that's what I made all my marbles with."

When it comes to creating the marbles, Breslow has a few different techniques. If he has a specific model in mind, he will draw it while he watches TV with his wife. In other cases, he will toy around with the designs as he crafts the piece. He is never quite sure how his sketches will turn out until after he opens the kiln and sees the art.

"I call those happy mistakes," Breslow says. "It's like, 'Wow, those two colors together look awesome' or 'They made a new color,'



Photos by Shea McGraw

or 'They reacted and made a whole pattern.' Then, you just take that note: 'If I'm using this glass and this glass, this is what happens.'"

With his creative gears constantly turning, Breslow doesn't take many specific requests. He says that it can also be a bit frustrating when he makes something for a customer and they *lose their marbles*, saying something along the lines of, 'Well, I thought it would be bluer.'

While the process of marble making is intriguing for outside spectators, Breslow's business partner Lynda Sproules says that it is his personality that keeps the front door swinging.


"It's his personality that's kind of molded the [company]," Sproules says. "We have other demonstrators that do a wonderful job, but Bruce is kind of [the one that is] welcoming people, doing the demonstrations, and just kind of making everybody feel good."

With an unforgettable look and a world of knowledge, it's pretty hard for a customer or demonstration attendee to forget the man. Sharron thinks fondly of the times she and Breslow would get stopped because people remember him from field trips they took as children. When chatting with someone and revealing his occupation, it can begin a burst of conversation.

"We were sitting at the airport in Salt Lake City," Sharron says. "You chat with people, and they ask, 'What do you do?' He said that he owned the Moon Marble Company, and someone from five chairs down heard it and said, 'Oh, I love that place! That was my favorite field trip and I still have the marbles.'"

Breslow and Moon Marble has something for everyone. Interested in marble history? He can tell you about Ruth Loche and her incredible win as a girl at the Tulsa marble shooting competition or the Veterans of Foreign Wars marble competition held in the mid-1900s to help rehabilitate veterans and help kids who had lost their fathers in war. In any case, there is so much the artist has to offer for people willing to listen.

Breslow is a living testament of how a spark of curiosity can quickly roll into becoming a lifelong passion and career. With an indelible personality and an unparalleled amount of information on his craft, he continues to be a bright torch of joy for anyone who opens the doors to Moon Marble Company.

Breslow officially transitioned Bruce's Woodworks to Moon Marble Company in 1997. The brick-and-mortar is located at 600 East Front Street in Bonner Springs. 





THE OFFICIAL RADIO HOME OF
THE KANSAS CITY CURRENT



Racing Louisville

Friday, Aug. 1, at 6:45 p.m.

Utah Royals

Friday, Aug. 8, at 8:45 p.m.

Orlando Pride

Saturday, Aug. 16, at 2:45 p.m.

Portland Thorns

Saturday, Aug. 23, at 8:45 p.m.

NC Courage

Saturday, Aug. 30, at 6:15 p.m.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ACTION

All Season

ON 90.9 THE BRIDGE

bridge909.org/kansascitycurrent

great grooms
greater prices
greatest cause



Pawsperity
PET CARE THAT UNLEASHES HUMAN POTENTIAL™



Call 816.214.5376 or visit Pawsperity.org

First Time
Patient **Deals!**

Stop by a NatureMed location Today!



40%
off

40% off any regular priced item.

\$20⁰⁰
off

\$20 off when you buy \$50 or more.



Get a Pre-Roll for a Penny.



BOGO any edible (250 mg or less).

Independence • Gladstone • Kansas City

Only one offer can be redeemed per visit. This is not a coupon. Some restrictions may apply.
Only while supplies last. See budtender for details.

Savoring Sound

WESTSIDE BAR XO HIFI PAIRS MUSIC TO COCKTAILS FOR A FIRST-CLASS LISTENING EXPERIENCE

By Jordan Baranowski

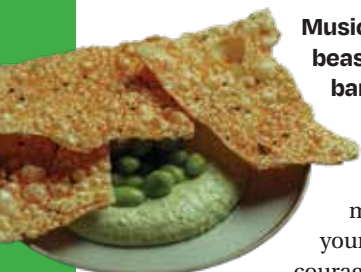


Photo Courtesy of IVY WILD VISUALS

Music can be a tough beast to tame in the bar and restaurant space. Plenty of places serve up background music or loud, in-your-face jams to encourage you out on the floor. For XO HiFi in the Westside neighborhood,


the music is the central focus. It's a true listening bar, prioritizing vibes, immaculate sound, and positive energy, but don't worry—they've got some damn good food and drinks, too.

XO HiFi Co-Owner and Director of Operations Jordan Hubner explains the space's atmosphere in a way that's music to any audiophile's ears: "The vibe here is thick. We're an all-seated bar—no standing room inside—and the sweet spot is definitely when people's voices are just below the music." XO lights the interior space with candles that complement the natural light coming in from the windows. There's also a patio space for some outdoor listening if that's more your jam.

For XO's other co-owner, music director Will Minter, the goal of a spot like this was to provide a space dedicated to music lovers of all stripes in Kansas City. He calls XO "a refuge and community spot that aims to be an escape from the day-to-day noise."

To achieve those goals, the team at XO had to bring in some heavy-duty equipment. Their system uses low-wattage, class AA amplifiers to power high-efficiency, horn-driven speakers for a truly one-of-a-kind sound. The records that spin here are sourced from personal collections, as well as from several friends in the community.

The equipment at XO HiFi, along with the overall concept of the space, draws most of its inspiration from Japan's listening lounges. For the kitchen and bar teams, that was the perfect jumping-off point to develop the kitchen and cocktail menus.

Executive Chef Johnny Leach, who is also the brains in the kitchen at The Town Company, created a food menu at XO that draws inspiration from a number of Japanese snacks—think tofu, mushrooms, nori, miso, and sesame. 

To read the full story on The Pitch's website, scan this QR code

Going For Gold

LE CHAMPION BRINGS KNOCKOUT FLAVORS, MORNING AND NIGHT, TO WESTPORT

By Jordan Baranowski


Owning, operating, and acting as the head chef at a single restaurant is a big ask for anyone.

The pressure is turned up even higher when stepping into the space of a much-beloved former occupant. Lucky for us, Westport's newly-opened Le Champion—located at 4149 Pennsylvania Avenue, in the former home of Ça Va—is being guided by a steady hand: Amante Domingo.

For Domingo, chef and owner of The Russell, Noka, and Le Champion, operating multiple restaurants is like keeping track of children. "They're all capable of operating on their own," he says. "But if someone is bleeding or crying, that's the one I make my top priority." Noka and The Russell have both proven resilient—and delicious—over the years, so opening and getting Le Champion up to his demanding standards is Domingo's newest challenge.

Le Champion opened its doors in June of this year, and it offers a unique, hybrid style of restaurant. In the morning and throughout the day, it's a coffee shop with a selection of baked goods, breakfast burritos, and coffee options featuring a unique bean blend created just down the way at Broadway Roasting Company.

As the sign above the bar indicates, "Club rules: 5 o'clock laptops down and music up!" Although there isn't technically a true changeover, that's when Le Champion transforms from a coffee shop to a wine bar. At that time, you can expect to see more snacks and shareables, along with an intriguing wine and cocktail menu on the scene.

Domingo, who loved Ça Va and wanted to keep much of its spirit alive with Le Champion, says the combination of coffee and wine was both a natural and practical fit. "Pastries go great with coffee or wine alike. People like a good cocktail during the day. For me, offering both options was a way to appeal to the people who live and work in Westport during the day, or who come out for dates, happy hour, or dinner in the evening," he says. 

To read the full story on The Pitch's website, scan this QR code

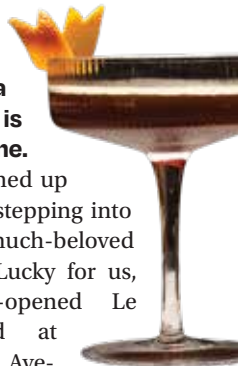


Photo Courtesy of Le Champion

MOTHER NATURE'S RIVERFRONT RETREAT AT LAKE OF THE OZARKS MACKS CREEK, MO

300 ACRE CAMPGROUND CONCERT VENUE AND FLOATING OPERATION ON THE BIG NIANGUA RIVER

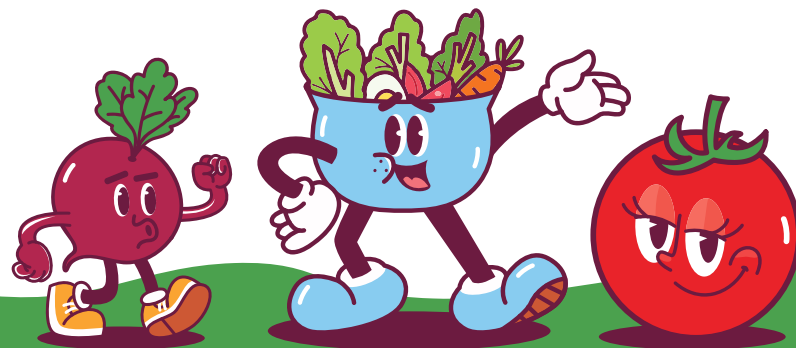


573-363-5408

WWW.RIVERLANDMO.COM

HALF-PRICE SALADS ALL WEEK LONG!

The Pitch



SALAD WEEK

OCTOBER 20-26

CONTACT JASON@THEPITCHKC.COM TO INVOLVE YOUR RESTAURANT



The Pitch
Dessert Week

SEPTEMBER 15-21

HALF PRICE DESSERTS ALL WEEK

SAVE THE DATE

TO PARTICIPATE CONTACT [JASON@THEPITCHKC.COM](mailto:jason@thepitchkc.com)

EAT THIS NOW:

GYRO & BAKLAVA AT FLAME GRILL & MEDITERRANEAN BAKERY

By Tiffany Watts

Flame Grill & Mediterranean Bakery
 154 NW Prairie View Rd.
 Kansas City, MO 64151

The Northland just got a little tastier and a whole lot sweeter. Flame Grill & Mediterranean Bakery quietly opened its doors in a strip mall I know a little too well (karaoke nights at the bar next door, anyone?). But despite the familiar setting, this new bakery instantly grabs your attention with the scent of warm spices, fresh-baked pita, and desserts you'll regret skipping if you don't pace yourself.

My daughter and I popped up here in an attempt to dodge another round of fries and sandwiches (it's been a busy week) when we stumbled on this gem.

I had every intention of ordering the butter chicken clay pot and a comforting round of hummus and pita, but my daughter, who's equal parts persuasive and playful, convinced me to get the chicken gyro instead. She was right.

The gyro was stacked with grilled white



Photo by
 Tiffany Watts

meat chicken, tucked in warm pita with garlic aioli, onions, and lettuce. It came with seasoned fries, and we didn't leave a crumb behind. The hummus and pita? So smooth and perfect for scooping straight into your mouth with zero shame.

But here's where it gets serious: the baklava. We almost skipped it. You know the drill: full bellies, polite "maybe next time" glances. But we pushed through. And thank the dessert gods we did—flaky, buttery, honey-drenched bliss.

So take it from me: Swing by Flame Grill, say yes to the gyro, double yes to dessert, and if it's too much to eat in one sitting, take it to go! 📸

DRINK THIS NOW:

FROZEN FLIGHT FROM FROST

By Sarah Sipple

Frost Frozen Bar
 4141 Pennsylvania Ave, Ste 104
 Kansas City, MO 64111

Many things about Frost Frozen Bar are unexpected. Though a specialty cocktail bar is on-brand for Westport, this playful spot specializes in slushy-style cocktails year-round.

This is not a pop-up, though this writer hopes they bring back the "Bye, Buddy" holiday theme. Just as I am a supporter of hot soup in the summer (I ordered tom kha gai last night), I am also one to order a slush in the winter. I am not alone.

A standout menu feature at Frost, as if the fun of slushy cocktails wasn't enough, is the flights. Customize your quad of flavors, mixing spirits with n/a options, presenting you with a colorful paddle of small frozen drinks. *FYI, flights are BOGO half-off each Wednesday.*

My combo pictured here features the classic non-alcoholic lemonade, non-alcoholic cherry limeade, a RoyalsRita made with tequila, blue curaçao, lime juice, and agave, and the watermelon mojito with Red Bull, rum, lime juice, and mint.



Photo by Sarah Sipple

Each flavor was a treat—fun and better than I expected. In fact, if my pancreas could handle it, I'd suck down a jug of that n/a frozen lemonade every day. Frequently, slushy cocktails are made from packaged mixes that rely purely on sweetness to drown out the added alcohol. Here, each flavor is created and made in-house, and they use real fruit, sugar, and agave rather than high-fructose corn syrup.

They can't do everything in-house, but the Frost team doesn't go far for the rest. Spirits and bar snacks are sourced locally from J. Rieger & Co., Union Horse Distilling Co., Tom's Town Distilling Co., James Lemonade, Polly's Pop, PopCulture, Guy's, and more.

Another unexpected element? "We are kid-friendly until 9 p.m., as long as children are accompanied by an adult over the age of 21. We offer an extensive mocktail menu, including two frozen mocktail options," says owner Ali Crownover. Kids or no kids in tow, the collection of board games, monthly activities, and a welcoming patio aid in making this the type of place where you may just lose track of time, sipping whimsical cocktails and slipping into Miami mode. 📸

Mise en Place

CEDRIC RANSBURG FOSTERS A CONNECTION-FIRST COCKTAIL LOUNGE AT IN GOOD COMPANY

By Alexander Omorodion

In a world where a loneliness epidemic runs rampant in the West, Cedric Ransburg tailors a space centered on human connection.

As co-owner of In Good Company alongside Daniel Edwards, Ransburg has taken elements of his wide range of industry and personal experience between Kansas City and California as inspiration.

The Pitch: Tell us about yourself.

Cedric Ransburg: I was born and raised in Kansas City. Went to college in Rolla, Missouri, and that's where I met my business partner; We were roommates down there. Then I ventured away for a little while. For about 13 years, I was in Southern California.

I worked the ins and outs of the industry there, from bartending to barback to management to working in hotels and restaurants. I saw all different facets of the industry, including working as a brand ambassador before I came back here.

Hospitality is super easy. Just be nice to people—that's like the easiest thing. So it's like, they're gonna pay you to be nice people. Why not?

Were you always a people person? No. Even now, I'm an introvert, but I find it super easy to please people. If you can know what someone wants to drink or know their name, it can make them feel happy and comfortable. People's days are really hard outside these doors, so if they can come to a place where it's like, "That's home," and it's not home, that's a good feeling for me.

What's the inspiration behind In Good Company? It is an amalgam of all the good places that I worked at or ever visited, even down to the membership aspect. I borrowed that model from a place in L.A. The aesthetics of this place that are leaned into, like, the industrial look—I've been in a bunch of industrial places where there are pipes and stuff like that hanging out. It's about the feel of the place. It adds to that ambiance.

Leaning into the living room aspect as well, I've been to a place called Library Bar, where it felt like a quiet library with the decor, but it was still a bar. So, just taking all the good things that I've experienced and bringing it together for people.

We are exclusively inclusive. It's not that we don't want people, it's that we want people who want to be here. If you want to be in good company, you are welcome. It's a mindset because the cost of the membership washes out with the cocktail credits. It's about whether you want to be in this space.



Mise En Place is a series of questions, answers, recommendations, and culinary wisdom from the food and drink masters that push KC flavor further. The following answers have been edited for length and clarity.



IN GOOD COMPANY

1518 McGee Street
Kansas City, MO 64108
Photo by Shea McGraw

As you are a membership-based establishment, what are some ways that our readers can try out In Good Company without having to commit to a membership? A big part will be having more curated nights. We will have two in August, and we'll probably end up having four a month just to have people get a chance to come out once a week.

As of right now, it's not super policed member-wise because we understand that we are a new company, and we've expressed to the members we do have that it is not membership only or membership exclusive. So when we do have people who aren't members, it gives them the chance to experience without it being an open house night. **P**

blue bird bistro

MidAmerican Artisan Cuisine



open 7 days a week; breakfast, lunch, dinner & Sunday brunch



farm to table dining for over 21 years

vegan, gluten-free, & local meat options

1700
summit
kcmo

816-221-7559

www.bluebirdbistro.com

XBRIAR FEST X

Endless Summer
MUSIC-FOOD-FUN & BREWS

A 2 DAY MUSIC FESTIVAL FOR CHARITY

AUGUST
15-16, 2025

EH YOUNG
RIVERFRONT PARK
RIVERSIDE, MO



Enjoy these activities all weekend:

18 Bands • 2 stages • Food Trucks
Beer & Wine sampling • Free Parking
Limited VIP Experiences available
Kids Activities Saturday Morning
First 300 guests each day receive free summer swag, sponsored by



Friday 8/15-Gates open at 4pm

HEADLINERS:

OUTLAW JIM & THE WHISKEY BENDERS
TYRON BENOIT BAND, PLUS MANY MORE!

MAKERS MARKET & VENDORS ON DISPLAY
SPONSORED BY ART GARDEN KC

Saturday 8/16-Gates open at 12pm

HEADLINERS:

KC/DC & STRANDED IN THE CITY
PLUS 13 MORE ACTS

KIDS KINGDOM 12-4 PM • 13 & UNDER FREE
MR. STINKY FEET @12:30 PM, HOT AIR BALLOON
RIDES, VIP BEER & WINE SAMPLING 3-6 PM

FULL LINEUP AND TICKET INFO AT
WWW.BRIARFESTKC.COM



Produced and sponsored by:



SEPTEMBER 27TH

DIZZY WRIGHT

DEVIN THE DUDE

JETSKIS

BARGE SMOKE SESH

GAMES

LAKE OF THE OZARKS

TIMELESS SMOKE ON THE WATER 2025

SCAN HERE FOR MORE INFO



NEW DROP

Pre-roll Multi-Packs

6 PRE-ROLLS. 3 SIZES. 1 PACK.

Premium flower courtesy of an expert team led by head cultivator, Ian Peak. Crafted for a full flower experience.

SMALL-BATCH FLOWER

AWARD-WINNING STRAINS

ADVENTURE-READY

3.5G Tins: 1G Cone [2] | 0.5G Cone [2] | 0.25G Cone [2]

MOCKUMENTARY MUSICOLOGY

LOCAL LOVE LOOMS LARGE IN *AMERICAN COMIC*

By Abby Olcese

Fate works in bizarre ways. Long before either of them ended up in L.A., comedian Joe Kwaczala and musician Alex Ward—then of The Noise FM, along with his brother Austin—first crossed paths when they were both living and working in Chicago.

"When The Noise FM was in Chicago, Joe hosted this late-night talk show, and they'd bring on heavy-hitter guests. The episode we were on was with Rick Bayless, a celebrity chef," Ward says. "I just remember thinking it was so cool that Joe, who would've been in his mid-20s at the time, was running this show complete with sketches and celebrity guests."

The Ward brothers and their band made an impression on Kwaczala at the time, too.

"They stood out to me, they were really nice guys," he says.

A few years later and half a country away, Ward re-encountered Kwaczala in a new context after he and his brother, now members of beloved Kansas City-area band Hembree, moved out to Los Angeles along with their bandmates.

"I didn't expect to see anyone from those days again, but Alex came up to me after a comedy show," Kwaczala says. "We became friends, I met [Hembree bandmate] Isaac Flynn through Alex, and they became a part of my friend group. For comedians, the coolest thing in the world is to be friends with a cool rock band. And they love that they're friends with comedians."

It's also handy to be friends with a rock

band if, say, you're making a movie on a budget and need music that you won't have to pay exorbitant licensing fees for.

That's exactly what Kwaczala and his directing partner, Daniel J. Clark, did for their mockumentary *American Comic*, which premiered last month at L.A.'s historic TCL Chinese Theater as part of the Dances with Films festival. The movie features a few Hembree songs (one being a collab with fellow area musician Marty Hillard), including a new track Flynn and Ward composed specifically for Kwaczala and Clark's film.

"We've had our songs in film and TV, but the end credits might have been one of the first direct Hembree compositions asked to be featured," he says. "It was such a blast to be part of because they are good friends. It's an avenue I'd love to continue working in."

American Comic follows two stand-up comedians (both played by Kwaczala) working in different comedy scenes. Bleach-blond, hyper-online Jovan is out in L.A., where he takes schmoozing and self-promoting to a new, obnoxious level as he jockeys for a spot in a prestigious comedy festival. Bearded, beanie-wearing Jay Christopher is a crusty, crass road comic in the "truth-teller" mold. He makes his way through the Midwest stand-up circuit alongside his long-suffering sidekick/opener Dan (Sam Wiles), desperate for attention from an edgelord comic he reveres (Jon Gabrus).

Kwaczala created both characters to represent opposite toxic ends of the stand-



Photo Courtesy of American Comic

up spectrum.

"The movie is based on a short sketch that Daniel and I made seven years ago, which came out of my frustrations with stand-up comedy," Kwaczala says. "I've been doing stand-up for over a decade, and you start to notice patterns, start to recognize archetypes and clichés."

To help Clark capture footage of Jovan and Jay Christopher in front of audiences, Kwaczala performed in character for shows locally and on the road—avoiding telling his audiences that what they were seeing was an act.

"On an existential level, it was troubling. I had to find something within me that could reflect these two guys, and I find them to be pretty despicable," Kwaczala says. "There's something to the idea of knowing someone's stand-up voice so well because you have distance from it. If you ask me what these guys are like, I can explain it very well."

Eventually, an even stranger dynamic started revealing itself: Jay, the offensive comic, was *connecting* with audiences on the road.

"Joe texted us while he was filming the movie and said 'Jay is *crushing*,'" Flynn says, laughing.

"The response freaked me out a little," Kwaczala says. "There's an appetite for a certain kind of comedian and persona that I was worried would be outdated, probably because I've been in L.A. so long. We saw a lot of guys that looked and sounded like [Jay] in a way that seemed almost comical."

In one of the film's scenes, Jay tries to weasel his way onto an open mic night that's already stopped taking signups, which results in a bizarre moment of life imitating art.

"We shot it before an actual show, because everything, in my insane mind, had to be real," Kwaczala says. "But then we witnessed someone *actually* doing what Jay was doing. Someone talked to the booker and tried to weasel their way onto an actual show. We tapped into stuff that's still really happening."

The experiences Kwaczala and Clark depict ring true across the touring artist spectrum, according to Ward.

"Jay's journey on the road is not too

dissimilar from a band staying on the road," Ward says. "The pit stops he made, stuff like pushing the vehicle at two in the morning—When you're touring you constantly justify it. This is what you do, it's life on the road."

In another scene, Jay wakes up on a couch still wearing his clothes from the night before, and makes a disgusting mash-up of "tuna salad" in a ziploc bag, which he dumps in his mouth as he drives to the next show. It's another move with uncomfortable resonance.

"When we were playing with Archie Powell & The Exports, those guys were really operating on a budget," Ward remembers. "The go-to sandwich was white Wonder Bread, Jiffy peanut butter, and Sriracha."

It's one of several relatable moments in the film that Kwaczala says he gets repeated feedback about.

"People always find a different moment, and they think they know exactly who that's about, and they name someone I never considered," he says.

While Flynn is excited that he and Ward got to contribute to *American Comic*, he says the overall feeling during the premiere of the movie was one of pride for his friends' success.

"The experience was truly incredible. I felt so much joy watching my friends do something at such a high level, and it was exciting for us to be a part of it," Flynn says. "The theater was absolutely packed, and the movie got a standing ovation. When the movie went to the credits and it flashed 'Directed by Daniel J. Clark' and our song started playing, the theater just erupted. To have those guys get the roar of applause they deserved was great."

A number of people in the cast—real-life L.A. comedians themselves—are friends who've done shows in Ward's backyard, where Kwaczala and other friends, including *American Comic* castmate Sam Wiles and *Saturday Night Live* cast member James Austin Johnson, have done sets.

"Watching the movie is like playing a who's who of L.A. East side alt comedians," Ward jokes. "They're all comedians we've grown to love over the last decade and become close friends with out in L.A., so it was an honor to be included in something as cool and creative as their feature film." **P**



Photo by Nick Spacek

The
Pitch

MARGARITA EXPERIENCE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15

THE GUILD - 1621 LOCUST, KC, MO

tickets at pitch.boldtypetickets.com

contact jason@thepitchkc.com for sponsorship opportunities



**a Portion of
Proceeds Benefiting**



Presented by



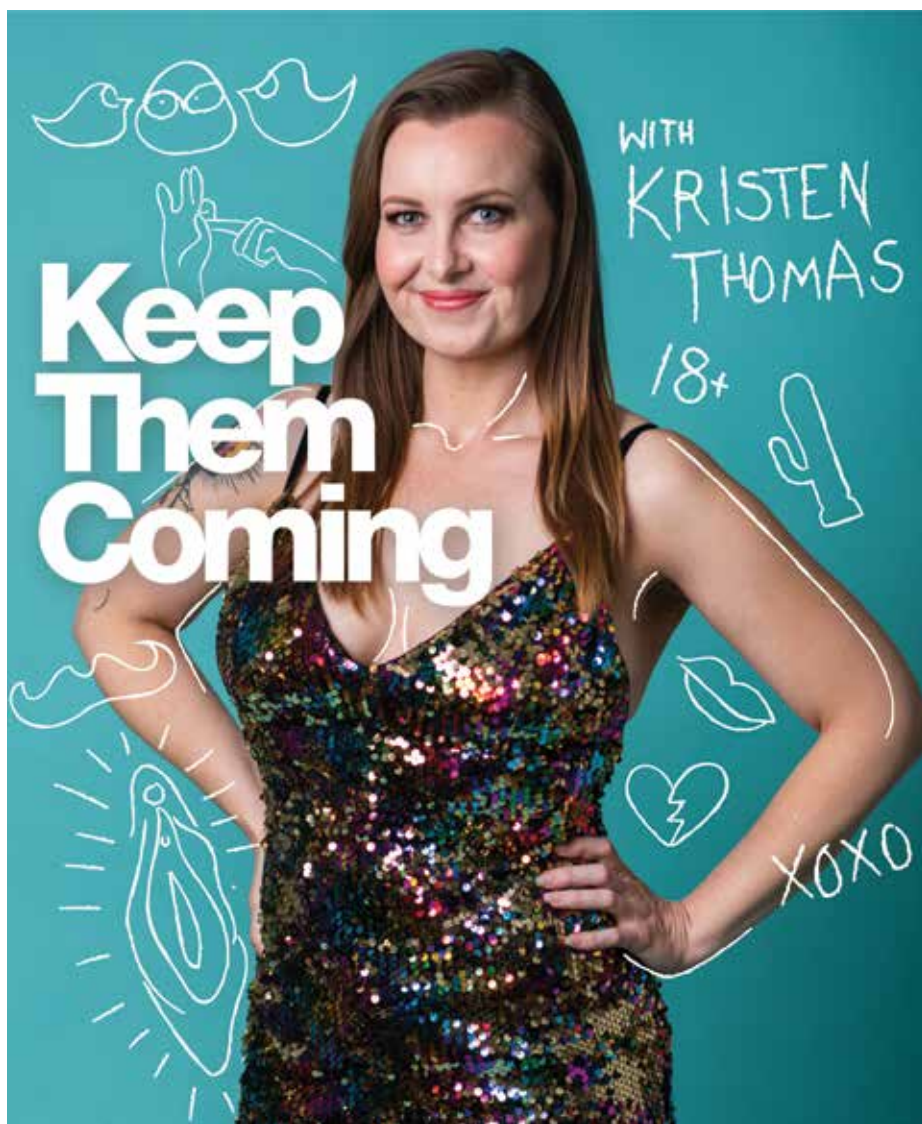


Photo by Nicole Bissey. Illustrations by Shelby Phelps

Porn With a Conscience

Everyone has an opinion about porn. Some love it, some want to ban it. Politicians like Josh Hawley think incels exist because of porn and video games, and there may be some truth to his words. Many of the negatives ascribed to porn consumption, such as social withdrawal, the creation of unreasonable expectations about sex, or early exposure to simulated sexual violence, have some validity.

Free platforms often include a multitude of problematic content. Scenes may lack enthusiastic consent. Videos can be pirated from studios or stolen outright (revenge porn should really be referred to as “image-based sexual abuse”) and monetized by a total stranger or an ex. Bodies are edited in post-production to erase labia, enhance veins in penises, and remove every stretch mark or back pimple, creating a false sense of what’s real or normal for consumers.

There’s little depiction of reality in much of the porn industry, because realistic sex isn’t sexy every single second. Furthermore, the vast majority of the intended audience (straight men) have not been given the opportunity to view variety. They have been spoon-fed a narrow view of what is sexy for far too long. Thankfully, several platforms have emerged that aim

to change how and what we view for erotic visual entertainment.

Ethical porn, sometimes referred to as feminist porn, has emerged as a multi-million dollar subsector of the adult entertainment industry. To be considered ethical, it must include a few elements: everyone is consenting to everything in their scene; the performers are of age, substance free, and of sound mind during filming; every performer is treated with respect and receives equitable pay for their work.

Degradation and humiliation can be a kink or fetish for some, and, therefore, it has its time and place in the genre. What sets ethical porn apart is that humiliation of a performer is not a focal point—It’s not the tool used to build eroticism in a scene for the viewer, but rather as a mechanism of pleasure for the performer. Pleasure, consent, and respect are always at the forefront, even if you’re being degraded by your top.

Ethical porn sites often describe themselves as being “shot for the female gaze.” The directors, performers, and production studios are purposeful in being the antithesis of what’s been churned out ever since Deep Throat brought the genre out of the peep shows and art houses and into theaters and VHS players. Far too many

films and videos involve objectification of the female performer for the sole purpose of a man’s pleasure, whether that be the performer or the viewer.

Ethics around pornography must not only consider the way consumers engage with it, but it has to begin from the bottom up with how the performers are treated—both on screen and behind the scenes.

Lilly Sparks, founder of Afterglow, a platform for ethical porn, says in a PR video on their site, “My biggest misconception about the porn industry when I joined was that the women performers are frequently victims of exploitation and trafficking. But in order for something to actually be considered porn, it is between two consenting adults.”

Himeros.tv has a performers’ bill of rights that includes points about consent, fair compensation, free mental health services for performers, and they have an on-site sex coach during filming to support a consensual and sex-positive experience for everyone on set.


Ethical porn often features a wider variety of bodies, ages, gender expressions, and sex acts. Founder of Make Love Not Porn Cindy Gallop has long been advocating for depictions of real sex between real people to replace the overproduced, unrealistic content available on most platforms. Since her 2009 TEDtalk, in which she called out society, saying, “We live in a puritanical double standards culture where people believe that a teen abstinence campaign will actually work, where parents are too embarrassed to have conversations about sex with their children, and where educational institutions are terrified of being politically incorrect if they pick up those conversations. So it’s not surprising hard-core pornography has become de facto sex education.”

Make Love Not Porn is not anti-porn—it is opposed to the constructs that most people have around porn. “Because the porn industry is driven by men, funded by men, managed by men, directed by men, and targeted at men, porn tends to present one worldview. Porn says, ‘This is the way it is,’ and what I want to say is, ‘Not necessarily,’” says Gallop. Her site was

unveiled at that time as an educational resource, and has evolved into a platform for porn content creators and offers a revenue sharing model, circumventing the industry dominated by men who created the issues.

Everyone can benefit from watching ethical porn, not just women, feminists, or queer people, but especially men. While this genre centers diverse bodies and queer storylines, it’s ultimately most beneficial because of its authentic depictions of erotic acts. Even if you are a straight white man, you’re gonna find something you enjoy. Just like with any freebie site you’ve perused before, some videos turn you on, some don’t, but just keep scrolling until something... pops up.

Finding ethical porn is pretty easy these days with an online search using that phrase, but you will have to pay for it. Plus, age verification requirements are spreading like wildfire in red states, forcing most sites to require payment for access. Site subscriptions range in price and benefits; Most have a trial period, and after looking at their sites, you’re likely to find one that offers the style or categories you’re into. If the idea of paying for porn turns you off, remember that it can’t be ethical if the performers aren’t being paid. Your consumption has value to you, or you wouldn’t be watching, so it’s time to pony up.

When you purchase subscriptions to sites like Erika Lust Films, Bellesa, Afterglow, and more, you’re participating in harm reduction, as well. “If you’ve ever felt an uncomfortable feeling on a free porn site, because you weren’t sure if the performers are being treated fairly, then it’s imperative to consider buying your porn,” says Kinkaid McMinn, a certified sex coach. “By buying your porn, you are directly contributing to circumstances that can prevent possible abuse you feel icky about on a free site.” 

You can find Kristen @coach_kristen_ on Instagram or open the doors coaching.com. Check out her podcast Keep Them Coming.

UNION PRESS
QUALITY SCREEN PRINTING

T-Shirts . Sweatshirts . Embroidery . Sportswear .
Cut Vinyl . Signs . Stickers . Banners . Cards & More!
We are your One Stop Shop for printing & promotional materials.

WINNER OF PITCH'S BEST OF KC SCREEN PRINTING

913-233-0710
626 Kansas Ave, KCKS 66105

For a quick quote email: sales@unionpresskc.com
www.UNIONPRESSKC.com

*We are proud to be a Union Shop



Wrangling Waste

HOW MONARCH WASTE CO. IS SUSTAINABLY MANAGING MO'S CANNABIS WASTE

When we purchase products, we typically don't think about the end result: the waste. As awareness has risen over time, individuals have become more cautious about how they dispose of the remains of the respective product. And while recycling and composting have trended upward, there are still plenty of ways to continue to drive the movement and push for a greener planet.

When it comes to cannabis waste management, Zach McCullough and Annie Macheca saw a gap in Missouri's industry and decided to take action. After being added to the large group of individuals who have been denied licenses to operate cannabis facilities, the two still managed to find their niche in the market when they founded their company, Monarch Waste Co., in 2021, during the medicinal years of cannabis in MO.

Monarch Waste Co. is Missouri's first and only mobile cannabis waste management company, spearheading sustainable practices to dispose of materials across the entire state's market.

"When we realized that medical cannabis was going to be on the docket here in Missouri, and also having been a cannabis user for a long time prior to that, it just felt super exciting," McCullough says.

The husband and wife duo met while they were both attending Prescott College in Arizona—McCullough studied adventure education while Macheca studied food journalism and agroecology. Eventually, the two found themselves in St. Louis, Macheca's hometown, operating their own urban farm. The two would sell their produce at local farmers markets and restaurants, which were some of their earliest days working as entrepreneurs.

Since her parents were entrepreneurs, Macheca learned a thing or two about how to run a business with your significant other. While McCullough's daily role keeps his boots on the ground, Macheca handles much of the long-term, big-picture priorities.

"As far as being a couple in business together, I think that maybe that isn't a good partnership for all people, but Zach and I are actually—I think we're opposite," Macheca says. "So where he has strengths, I have weaknesses, and vice versa, and that really works out and balances us very well."

Not only did the business-centered mindset transition from their family farm to Monarch, but some of the skills that the two obtained from their experiences at Prescott and working in the weeds of their own land have transitioned into how they operate their business.

"I think that there are definitely similarities between our farm business and Monarch, in the sense that there are lots of logistics and hustle," McCullough says. "Farming, you're constantly problem-solving, dealing with the weather, equipment, the timing of getting seeds in the ground, just these general things. I think that translates very directly into the day-to-day challenges of running a statewide cannabis waste business."

"Nature wants to do its own thing, and by urban farming, you have to fight all these different things at once," Macheca says. "I think that there's a parallel between that and the emerging industry of cannabis in not only Missouri, but our country. We're constantly having to evolve and change to fit into the regulations of our state and even what the federal government says about cannabis."

When it comes to managing cannabis waste, like anything in the weed biz, McCullough and Macheca are quick to inform that it is no easy task. Compliance remains a clear-cut priority in order to remain within the state's regulations.

"There are lots of check boxes when it comes to waste. So, staying compliant as far as what we offer, it's not just about checking these regulatory boxes; It's about building systems and specifically waste SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) that are practical for license holders to follow and for Monarch to execute on a recurring basis," McCullough says.

Not only is hitting all the compliance requirements a strenuous process in its own right, but the actual work of composting this material gets pretty messy, Macheca says. The team finds themselves deeply entrenched in compost "sludge" that can "seep into your skin" and carries a potent stench. These unattractive features of the tasks make Monarch's services even more desirable for facilities, since they can avoid getting their hands dirty and rather keep them sticky.

"Our hands are dirty, but our mission at



Art by Keegan Hudspeth, Photo Courtesy of Monarch Waste Co.

Monarch is clean," Macheca says.

McCullough says that Monarch Waste Co. typically services multiple cannabis facilities in a day's span, from cultivations, manufacturers, testing sites, and dispensaries, working in 30 cities throughout the entire state. As the only company in Missouri tackling sustainable waste solutions among the cannabis industry, and cannabis facilities spread out among the eight congressional districts in the state, the team takes on some serious travel to service different locations. With that in mind, the company recently expanded to the Kansas City area, having just serviced Nuthera's manufacturing and cultivation site.

"It's been very exciting," McCullough says. "I would say it's still a smaller part of our business. We tend to do a little bit more business closer to home, but as we continue to build infrastructure at Monarch, we are trying to make it easier and quicker to service our Kansas City clients."

With no primary location in the metro, the team has to travel from St. Louis in order to provide its services. Larger operations can take a few days to handle, so the team is hopeful to get a facility within Kansas City soon to reduce the time wasted from the four-hour drive across the state.

Along with the regular services that Monarch provides, the team found another way to make an impact on maintaining a safe and cleaner Earth here in the Show-Me State. The company has recently partnered with local dispensaries for its Disposable Vape Recycling Program.

All-in-one vapes have grown in popularity during the last several years, which, in turn, has created an issue as far as sustaining environmentally-friendly practices goes. These vapes are made with lithium-ion batteries, which are large fire hazards in landfills and can release toxic materials into the Earth.

"We call them disposable vape pens, but they're not really disposable. You're not supposed to throw a lithium-ion battery in the trash. But at the same time, how is a consumer supposed to separate the battery on their own and take it somewhere for recycling?" McCullough asks.

To better manage the disposal of these products, Monarch's newly launched initiative incentivizes consumers to bring their used vapes back to the participating dispensaries in order to receive a small discount on their next purchase. The dispensary then hands the used product off to Monarch, where they effectively separate the batteries from the rest of the vape pen and responsibly recycle the material,

reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving resources, and preserving minerals.

"When we talk to people on the ground about this, I haven't met anybody who doesn't feel like this is an important matter," McCullough says. "The world has increased the amount of lithium batteries it uses, it would seem. I think there's still a little catching up to do. Once that product is considered waste, a whole set of different rules are applied to it, and we haven't quite caught up with, 'How are we properly disposing of this?'"

More information on Monarch's services and its Disposable Vape Recycling Program can be found on the company's website at <https://www.monarch-waste.co>. To read the full story on The Pitch's website, scan this QR code



SUPPORT LOCAL JOURNALISM



THE-PITCH-KC-LLC.FUNDJOURNALISM.ORG/MEMBERSHIP

KC CARES

CONNECTING THROUGH CARE

RACHEL HILES PAVES A PATH
FOR IMPERATIVE SUPPORT
THROUGH SANDWICHED KC
By Beth Lipoff

When you're caring for a loved one in addition to all your other life responsibilities, it can feel like no one understands the pressures and demands of your life. Sandwiched KC is here to say that there's someone in your corner.

"My life changed when I realized I wasn't alone as a family caregiver, that there were people out there doing the same thing," Sandwiched KC Founder Rachel Hiles says.

While Hiles looked for local support groups when working full-time and caring for her grandma, who had Alzheimer's, she was left feeling burnt out. She discovered that most support groups were in-person only and were disease-specific, even if the problems caregivers deal with are pretty universal.

"I'm a millennial, and my preference is to connect online. I know it's hard to believe nowadays, but back in [2018], there certainly wasn't anybody connecting online," she says.

What was a once-a-month virtual group has now increased to twice a week, with morning and evening times.

"So much can change in a month, even in one week. We found that caregivers really need continuity of support," Hiles says.

Although it's more common now to find virtual support groups, Hiles says having one that is local to Kansas City is important.

"We know what's here, what works, what's available, and we can share that with each other," she says.

Groups often discuss solutions with each other, and talking about their experiences also helps them see where some gaps in the system are.

People who attend might be caring for a spouse, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, friends, or even neighbors.

"We have all kinds of people come through our door. They love connecting with us because, at the heart of it, we all struggle. We all have challenges. There's something to be said about connecting with other people who understand what you're going through," Hiles says.

There are also monthly talks from experts about topics such as fall prevention, navigating Medicare, and estate planning.

Until this year, their only in-person meet-up has been their annual conference, where they showcase resources that can help caregivers with the work they need to do.

"One of our favorite things to do is show-
er family caregivers with love and affection. They are doing such important work. Honest-

ly, most of the time, they're doing it without any pay, often at great sacrifice," Hiles says.

This year's conference will be held on Nov. 1 at St. Joseph Medical Center, and it's completely free for caregivers to attend. Hiles hopes that the conference and other resources reduce the amount of time caretakers have to spend searching for the programs they need.

Due to popular demand, they are starting up some new in-person support groups in September. Virtual or in-person, the connection is important.

"Caregiving, although it seems like everyone will do it or has done it at some point, is so lonely. It's just so isolating. We make so many sacrifices, often at the expense of our own health and wellbeing," Hiles says. "It's something to be able to create this space where caregivers can pause, have some time to themselves, and listen to each other share, troubleshoot, problem-solve, and commiserate. We also celebrate. We have our victories as well."

Jerry Peters cares for his wife, who has Parkinson's disease. Although he's part of a men's group at his church, he says the support he's gotten in the last year and a half from Sandwiched KC is different.

For one, he found out about various resources, from accessing physical therapy to getting a home health aide paid for through Medicare. Beyond that, having people he feels comfortable talking with about the tough things is vital.

In other social groups, he can enjoy himself, but "I don't feel like there's a place I can be

genuinely, completely, and totally honest about what's going on with someone that's not in the same situation. There's things I would never discuss with my family. There's things that are too private that Sandwiched offers an opportunity [to share]. I can be completely open, and they will totally understand and just be a helpful ear and a great sounding board," Peters says.

Although his family is very supportive, he doesn't want to burden them with some of the more difficult details of his wife's experiences.


"I couldn't tell them what their sister is going through. It would be devastating," he says.

He finds the support group a valuable resource for working through his heavy feelings.

"If I didn't have that space, it would be nothing that I would ever voice to another person. It would be something that I would always hold inside of myself and couldn't get any feedback over how I'm feeling, why I'm feeling the way I'm feeling, or who else went through the same thing and how they were able to journey through," Peters says.

Hiles says they can always use volunteers for their conference and for fundraising, but she's also looking for people who have caregiving experience who can help coach new caretakers on how to handle specific circumstances.

In the future, she'd love to be able to offer a volunteer respite program to give people a break. Right now, she has some donations that support a one-time 25-hour respite care voucher for a caregiver.

For more information about Sandwiched KC, visit sandwichedkc.com. 

Take the SoKC Survey, be entered to win prizes!

POWER 105.1 KC'S HIP HOP AND R&B



TAKE THE SURVEY



THE SHAY MOORE
MORNING SHOW

The Pitch

LOCAL

1000

REAL ESTATE/RENTALS

KS-KCKS |
\$900-1,050
913-299-9748

HEAT AND WATER
PAID...
NO GAS BILL! KCK

25 acre setting. 63rd
& Ann

5 minutes west of
I-635 & I-70.
One bedroom \$900
Two bedroom \$1,050
No pets please.
You CAN NOT BEAT
this value!
Don't miss out
on this limited time
offer!

CALL NOW!
MUCH NICER THAN
THE PRICE!

The Pitch

MARGARITA EXPERIENCE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15
THE GUILD • 1621 LOCUST, KC, MO

Presented by
Don Julio

tickets at pitch.boldtypetickets.com
contact jason@thepitchkc.com
for sponsorship opportunities

29 Years & Going Strong!

KC SMOKE & VAPE
1605 Westport Road KCMO 64111
www.KCSmokeAndVape.com 816-931-4434

3ml Vape Disposables Starting at \$30!

Flower Starting at:
1g = \$5.00*
3.5g = \$15.00*
7g = \$25.00*
1oz = \$75.00*
Pre-roll = \$8.00*
Up to 30% Total THC!

* This coupon is required for discounted pricing. Select strains only. Expires 8/31/25

Fortified strains: BLUE DREAM, CHERRY PIE, GREEN CRACK, NORTHERN LIGHTS, OG KUSH, ORANGE COOKIES, SUPER SOUR DIESEL, WEDDING CAKE

BEST OF KC 2025
COUNTING DOWN KC'S HOTTEST HITS

Pitch BEST OF KC 2025

The Pitch
EST. 1980 45 YEARS

Voting Round starts September 4
vote.thepitchkc.com

For promotional opportunities, contact jason@thepitchkc.com

OVER 60 GIRLS

SHADY LADY

- Voted KC's Best Gentleman's Club •
- Oldest Adult Club in Missouri •
- Great Place to Watch Sporting Events •
- VIP Lounge •
- Full Service Kitchen •
- Premium Bottle Service •

30 seconds east of the Power & Light District
2800 E 12th St., Kansas City, MO 64127 | 816-231-9696 | kcshadylady.com



ReLeaf

Resources Dispensary

OUR LIGHTS ARE
ALWAYS
GREEN

KC'S ONLY DISPENSARY OPEN

24/7/365

HOURS A DAY

DAYS A WEEK

DAYS A YEAR



Order Now

MISSOURI'S **BEST** SELECTION IS ALSO MISSOURI'S **MOST** CONVENIENT!

- Missouri's biggest selection, with new products arriving daily!
- Bundle discounts are available across the menu.
- Best pricing and the biggest selection of concentrate and hash.
- \$25 8ths on select flower, with bundle options available too.
- We carry the finest selection of glass from world-renowned artists.
- Certified Masters of Marijuana on staff.

Open **24/7/365**

ReLeafMo.com | 13836 South U.S. 71 Highway Grandview, MO | (816) 597-4768

