

# Reach for the sky

## ‘Skyscraper Gothic’ shows a new side of our country’s most ambitious buildings

By Sarah Sargent  
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**S**kyscrapers, in our modern imagination, are glitzy glass needles. It wasn’t always that way. The nation’s first towers were ornate and detailed. Intrinsicly American, the designs embodied the qualities we like to associate with our national image: We’re can-do, bold, strong, technologically advanced, and audacious.

The Fralin Museum’s new show, “Skyscraper Gothic,” explores the history of these early skyscrapers. The curators, Lisa Reilly from UVA and Kevin Murphy from Vanderbilt, have brought together a wonderfully comprehensive assortment of prints, drawings, photographs, paintings, sculptures, furniture, textiles, toys, models, illustrations and decorative arts to showcase the prevalence of both the Gothic style and the skyscraper motif in contemporaneous culture.

In the early 20th century, Gothic style was seen as enduring, with the authority of time and religion backing it up. The architects most certainly saw a connection between the lofty towers of the office buildings they were designing and the soaring quality of medieval cathedrals. They also must have felt a strong connection to the medieval builders who, like them, were engaged in engineering innovations, building their structures as high as possible, minimizing load on walls with flying buttresses and, in the case of the late Gothic, reducing masonry to the barest minimum to allow for large expanses of stained glass.

At the same time, early skyscrapers were shaped by less idealistic forces, like municipal regulations: One of the signature features of the original skyscrapers is the step-like setback profile. Those setbacks were incorporated to conform to a 1916 New York City zoning ordinance requiring light and air to reach the sidewalks. This distinctive design element was absorbed into skyscraper iconography and widely replicated.

Several works in the show highlight the vital role of the construction workers who put the buildings together. The structures on which they toiled captured the public’s imagination, and so did the workers themselves. The metalworkers’ feats of strength and derring-do—balanced on girders hundreds of feet up—were the stuff of legend, embodying the distinct male energy and bravado of the skyscrapers themselves.

Louis Lozowick’s “Above the City” and Harry Sternberg’s “Riveter” both position their subjects on girders at dizzying heights. In the latter, a red girder juts dramatically out toward the viewer, enhancing the tension and force within the composition. You can feel the effort the figure is expending with his machine. It’s a theatrical image, rendered in highly-keyed yellow, scarlet, and blue. The man’s face is obscured by the riveter, and he is positioned in a monumentalized fashion against the city—an everyman worker and symbol of masculine power.

Charles Turzak’s “The Driller” captures the subject’s strength and determination. Jangled buildings in the background and a cartoonish halo of wobbly lines surrounding



“Riveter” by Harry Sternberg



IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE FRALIN MUSEUM OF ART

The Fralin Museum’s visual history of skyscrapers includes Joseph Pennell’s etching “The Woolworth through the Arch.”

the figure convey the teeth-jarring vibration of the drill with droll humor.

The selection of prints, drawings, paintings, and photographs provide just the right backdrop, orienting us in the environment of these early 20th century cities. In several, artists use steam to convey the furious activity of the industry that built and sustained these great metropolises. Examples include Thomas Hart Benton’s “Construction,” Henry Reuter Dahl’s “Commerce and Seapower,” Sears Gallagher’s “Manhattan Skyline,” and Samuel L. Margolies’ “Babylon.”

The first modern art movement in America, Precisionism, which celebrated man-made objects and technologies, is well represented in the exhibition as well. You can see the cool hard-edged detachment characteristic of the Precisionist School in Clare Leighton’s “Breadline, New York,” Louis Lozowick’s “Above the City,” Zama Vanessa Helder’s “34th Street Skyline,” Jon Whitcomb’s “Urban Landscape” Howard Norton Cook’s “Chrysler

Building,” and Leo Rabkin’s “Untitled (Spirit of Progress, Skyscrapers and liners).”

With their velvety blacks and subtle light effects, Samuel Gottscho’s “Radiator Tower (at Night)” and Russ Marshall’s “Penobscot Noir” are gorgeous, lush photographic images that evoke a moody, brooding city. Don Walker’s “Downtown Detroit Enveloped in Fog” uses atmosphere conditions for dramatic effect, too.

Other photographs provide more visual information about the buildings and their settings. Samuel Kravitt’s “Aerial View of the Empire State Building” and Ilse Bing’s “View of Lower Manhattan” give us a sense of what New York looked like and the scale of the skyscrapers in relation to their surroundings.

The everyday objects on display reveal how skyscrapers functioned as icons. The buildings’ influence seeped into nearly every corner of American culture. Among the treasures on display are a flapper’s beaded purse with skyscraper motif, a number of children’s toys, from board games to building blocks, and a dazzling chrome weight and height scale and maple bookshelf that both ape the skyscraper form.

A great deal of thought has been put into the exhibition design. Handsome banners of the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, and the Woolworth Building hang above the stairs in the foyer to greet visitors. The banners work with the steel gray color used on the walls to set the tone for the rooms. The pedestal for “Chrysler Building Souvenir Building” is cut to resemble the building’s shape, and vintage postcards of famous skyscrapers are positioned on an outline of the United States, helping visitors visualize where the buildings are located. Even the elevator doors and interior are sheathed in an intricate Art Deco motif, which also makes an appearance on one gallery wall. All this produces an ambience that replicates, with great élan, the cool elegance of the iconic structures themselves. ☺



Left to right: Ellen Doyle, Senior Registered Client Associate; Brad Armstrong, Vice President, Financial Advisor; Sandy Von Thelen, Vice President, Financial Advisor.

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**CULTURE THE WORKS**

# Fresh eyes

## The Bridge offers a new perspective on traditional Haitian art

By Sarah Sargent  
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**W**hen Haitian American art collector and curator Jeanremi Verella first encountered the Sen Soley art collective during a residency in Port-Au-Prince, he knew he had to bring the artists to America. But he quickly learned that strict visa quotas made this nearly impossible. So he brought their artwork instead.

Sen Soley is a Haitian art collective that includes artists Mackenley Darius, Anthony Martial, Richard Nesly, and Erivaux Prospere. It takes its name from the patois spelling of Saint Soleil, a Haitian art movement founded in 1973, and revives the stylized human and animal forms and Haitian Vodou symbolism that was the focus of the earlier group. Haitian Vodou is a religion that fuses the West African Vodun religion with Roman Catholicism. For Saint Soleil and Sen Soley alike, visual art represents a synthesis of mind, body, and nature. These artists look to their rural roots and the Haitian traditions of storytelling, music, writing, and religion, as well as dreams and visions for their inspiration.

Verella, who attended UVA, spent time learning about the artists in Haiti, and has now helped organize an exhibition at The Bridge Progressive Arts Initiative. “Eyes on Sen Soley” is open until September 30.

Haiti is in the midst of a tumultuous period. “There’ve been natural disasters, and political tension, again and again,” says Verella. Earlier this year, the country’s president was assassinated, and this week an earthquake killed more than 1,200 people.

“With everything that’s happening in Haiti right now, it feels really valuable to offer something beyond the headlines,” says Alan Goffinski, executive director of the BPAI.

Verella still hopes to find a city or organization willing to sponsor the artists. This would enable them to get their visas, interact with other artists, and expose their work to a wider audience. “It’s been such a humbling journey of living with the artwork and getting to unfold it at a different location and look at it with people,” says Verella.

The work is characterized by bold color and design with a surface that is kept flat with no illusion of depth. This jibes with the paintings’ role as symbolic entities depicting spiritual matters, rather than realistic vignettes of the physical world.

**“It’s been such a humbling journey of living with the artwork and getting to unfold it at a different location and look at it with people.”** JEANREMI VERELLA



SUPPLIED PHOTO

“Eyes on Sen Soley,” featuring work by Mackenley Darius, Anthony Martial, Richard Nesly, and Erivaux Prospere, is on view by appointment at The Bridge through September 30.

The exception to this is the work by Mackenley Darius, which has three-dimensional volume. “His style kind of branches out of the Sen Soley movement,” says Verella. “He does ethnography of Haiti and I think this gives him additional perspective, enabling him to blend the ideas of Sen Soley into his artwork.”

The stunning portrait of Haitian American art superstar Jean-Michel Basquiat (“Honor to My King”), who gazes soulfully from the canvas, is his. Basquiat incorporated Vodou images in his work. Here, Darius not only captures Basquiat, but he does so while emulating his subject’s distinctive style.

Richard Nesly’s paintings have the all-over rhythm of a frieze or piece of fabric. He reduces the palette to one or two colors to showcase the pattern that undulates across the work. Human, animal, and plant forms ooze out to form other entities, or flow into one another to suggest the interconnectedness of all things. In some pieces, these take on the appearance of a serpent, an important Vodou symbol.

Smack dab in the middle of Nesly’s “Nids Dé Zwazo,” you can see a Vodou symbol called a vèvè. An important part of Vodou ceremonies, vèvès are “drawn” on the ground using corn meal, flour, or some other powdery material. The vèvès are ritually destroyed during the ceremony when congregants dance across them, scattering the powder. Vèvès also appear in other works in the show.

Looking around the room, and perhaps with the exhibition’s title in mind, one is struck by the number of eyes that stare back at you. Prosperé’s “Untitled 1” and “Untitled 2” feature densely packed ribbons of richly hued paint, that at first appear to be completely abstract, before you notice the eyes and mouths emerging from the ornate bands of color, and the suggestion of a figure. Are these intended as representations of otherworldly presences observing us from another dimension?

The eyes are also remarkable in Nesly’s “Lé Ancien,” adding a punch of energy to this striking work. Nesly creates enormous visual excitement through the interplay of pattern, figures, and color. Though Nesly’s work is highly stylized, the figures are individualized with characteristics and features that give us the impression of real people.

Anthony Martial’s work seems the most serious, perhaps because it is rendered in black and white. His figures of humans and birds are simple, but his works have a complexity and power, thanks to his compositional arrangements and sophisticated surface patterns.

When dealing with Haiti, it’s natural to focus on the suffering endured by the Haitian people, whether at the hands of Mother Nature or corrupt politicians. But “Eyes on Sen Soley” shows another side of Haiti, and in Goffinski’s words, “presents some humanizing culture so we can appreciate the Haitian people as people, and these artists as individuals.”

The paintings in the exhibition are all for sale as are prints of them. All proceeds directly support the artists. ☺



JOHN ROBINSON

Alicia Walsh-Noel went from bussing tables to creating a buzz for local restaurants with her marketing agency Do Me A Flavor.

# Now serving

## Go-gender foodie launches her own culinary marketing business

By Caire Hamilton  
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**A**licia Walsh-Noel is no stranger to a career pivot. Seven years ago, she left her cubicle job to start as a busser at Zocalo. And in 2019, while working at Brasserie Saison, she approached Will Richey with an offer to run the marketing for his restaurant group.

“My background is a mix of photography, communications, and food and beverage,” she says. “But more importantly, I have a background in being scrappy and hustling.”

Richey said yes, and in June 2019, after the birth of her son and increasing requests to take more clients, Walsh-Noel launched Do Me A Flavor, a local food-focused marketing agency she asked her to tell us more about her restaurant cred and what local menus she’s pouring over—in and out of the office.

**C-VILLE: You’ve been on the local restaurant scene for a while, yeah?**

**Alicia Walsh-Noel:** Seven years ago, I decided to quit my cubicle job and started as a busser at Zocalo. I mean, technically my first restaurant job was at my dad’s café where I worked the toast station as a 7-year-old. I have had the privilege of being a part of several notable projects including helping to open Kardinal Hall and serving as their marketing director, cooking with my husband, Jon Bray, for his Filipino pop-ups, and opening Bras-

serie Saison (from a construction site to a 14-services-per-week restaurant) as operations manager.

**What types of services does Do Me A Flavor provide?**

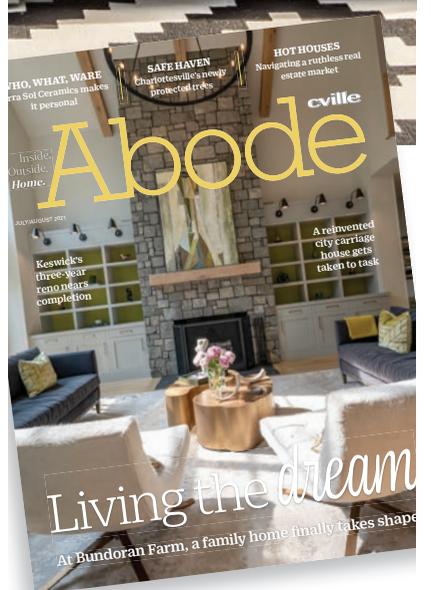
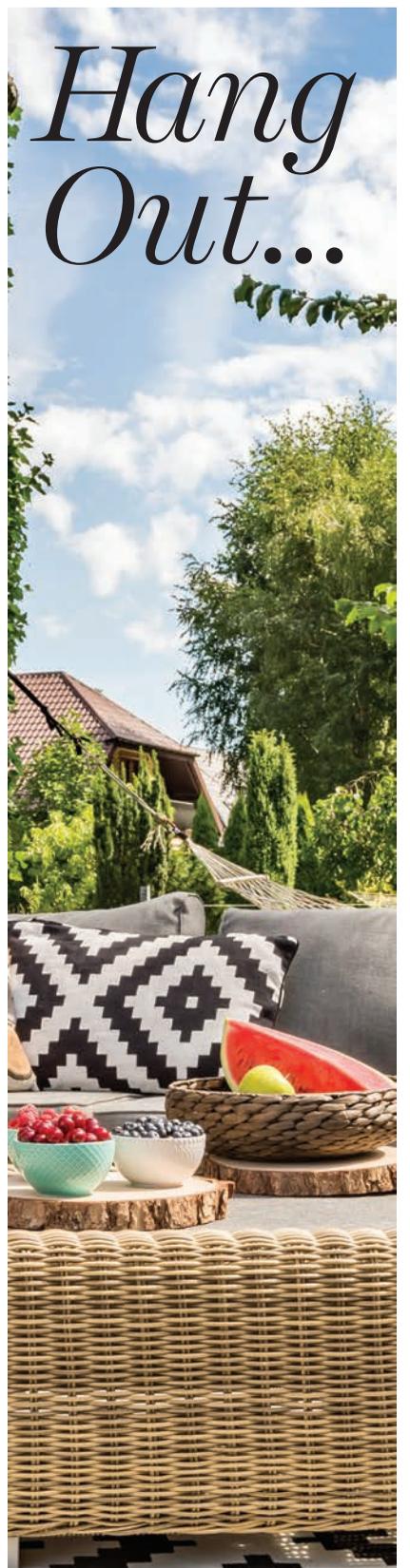
Web design, photography, videography, copywriting, PR, graphic design, print production, social media marketing, email marketing, high-fives.

**Who are some clients you’ve worked with so far?**

Wilson Richey was my first client. When I pitched the idea of running marketing for his group, Ten Courses Hospitality, he said yes before I could finish my first sentence. I also worked with F&B Restaurant Management, whose family members are Ivy Provision, Shadwell’s, and Fry’s Spring Station. This year, we collaborated with both Sweet Pizzas and the Dairy Market on special projects. We’ve been experimenting with retail lately as well, throwing around ideas for independently owned grocery stores and specialty food shops.

**What do you like to eat in Charlottesville?**

Kimchi pancakes from Mamabird Farm, all of the food at Basan (especially whatever wild specials they are slinging for the weekend), plate lunch from Mochiko, C&O. I just told my husband that I wished there could be a gypsy jazz and late-night menu there, but earlier for parents who used to party. And Jon Bray’s mom’s house. ☺



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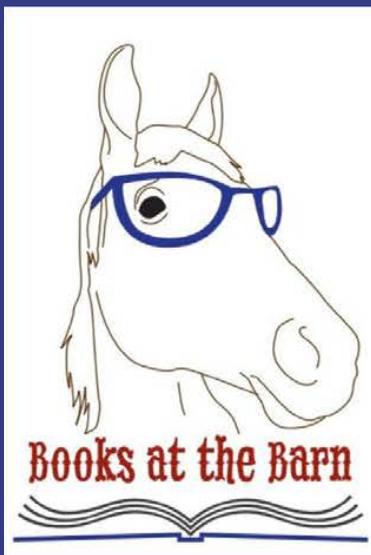
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## CULTURE THE WORKS

# Both sides of joy

## Russ Warren draws on humor and intensity in 'The Disciple'

By Sarah Sargent  
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A sense of joy permeates Russ Warren's "The Disciple" at Les Yeux du Monde. The feeling comes from the jazzy Tex-Mex inflected palette—fiery reds and oranges, slicker yellow and bright turquoise—Warren favors. But it's also conveyed by the sense of humor, surrealist flourishes, and simple, almost child-like forms that inhabit Warren's particular brand of figurative abstraction.

Nearly all the work in the exhibition was created over the past two years, and much of it touches on COVID-19. There's an amusing portrait of an appalled looking Dr. Fauci, mouth agape and surrounded by floating viruses. The subject is serious, but Warren puts his own wry spin on it.

"Deep into August" is another matter. A rare departure in its grim intensity, the triptych was painted when the pandemic was settling in and the future looked pretty bleak. "I was getting really tired of COVID," Warren says. "I'd thought it would be gone by then, but it was in full force. I was working on each panel individually, sitting outside on a terrace where wrought iron furniture was casting these weird, threatening shadows. It was spooky and intense. The first panel is the pandemic going on, the center one, it's letting up, and then boom, back to the pandemic."

By contrast, "Pineapple Ascending" offers hope with its rising symbol of hospitality and welcome, the promise of future interactions with other people.

A Houston native, Warren grew up surrounded by a combination of Mexican influences and cowboy culture. Visiting his father's office in the Southwest Bank towers as a boy, Warren was dazzled by an enormous mural in the lobby by Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo. "It was the first real art I'd ever seen and it became my idea of what art should be," he says.

Like any good Texas boy, Warren helped out at his family's cattle ranch. That legacy is commemorated in a series of works on paper that he has been producing for many years. They feature line drawings of bulls and horses placed against a field of sump-tuous color, and Warren titles them by number using Roman numerals, which he places on the animals' rumps like brands. For the background, he uses liquid acrylic and livestock markers, applied and then scraped away, creating a rich, subtly mottled effect.

"My family used to be a cattle family, in a real small way," says Warren. "And they



IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

"Things kind of went south during the painting process and the figure switched to become more androgynous. It came together so fast, I never thought it would become one of my favorite paintings."

used to brand everything. So from the time I was a little boy I was involved and, whoo—the branding was horrific! The Roman numeral brands and the livestock marker are pictorial devices that also reference Texas and this personal history."

Other artists figure prominently in Warren's work. He's co-opted the dots of Picasso and Braque Synthetic Cubism to mute down or heighten a field of color, provide surface variations, or represent things like stars. Warren is also drawn to pattern and texture, working stripes and scumbles into his picture planes. In "Oh Tamayo," he mixes crushed glass beads into acrylic medium and black pigment to create a lustrous tarry background. The painting includes a collaged newspaper thought bubble in the body of the animal, meant to convey its frustration at not being able to communicate.

"Queen Anne's Revenge" features a mound of skulls, bones, and other body

parts, rendered in bulbous Dubuffet fashion with red and green outlines against a field of black. “Queen Anne’s Revenge” sounds Dylanesque, which being a huge Bob Dylan fan, I like,” says Warren. “It’s an homage to the South Carolina Coast where we go often. Edward Teach, a.k.a Blackbeard, hid out there; Queen Anne’s Revenge was his ship.”

The commanding visage of “The Disciple” is fractured into two distinct expressions. The left side appears alert and interested, while the right is affectless and blank. The two sides meet in the lower part of the face



“Oh, Tamayo!”

Russ Warren painted his way through the last 14 months of pandemic quarantine, resulting in his new show “The Disciple” at Les Yeux du Monde through May 16.

with the slightly pursed lipstick-red mouth. The bold palette pairs a rose and moss green background with black, white, and yellow ochre defining the head. “The disciple is me,” says Warren. “And the mentor was painter Earl Staley.” The two had a friendly yet competitive relationship that Warren feels was important to his development as an artist. “Things kind of went south during the painting process, and the figure switched to become more androgynous. It came together so fast, I never thought it would become one of my favorite paintings.”

A series of small sketches reveal a bit about Warren’s working process and also showcase his line—something you don’t notice in his paintings. “I have different sketch books,” Warren says. “Some are for pen and ink, others for watercolor. I work in one or the other every day. It’s like a third cup of coffee. I’ll go into my studio, do one, let it dry, turn the page and do another. It limbers me up and affects my line and my mark and everything.”

But the joy in the sketches, and that of the paintings, is tempered with the weight of reality—of being human. We get glimpses of this in the memento mori skulls, the specter of COVID, the branding references, the expanses of black that pervade certain works. These things bring an elegiac quality that gives depth and resonance to work that at first seems so simple and so sunny. ©

# A Festy for the resty

## What makes a music festival a music festival?

By Shea Gibbs  
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**F**esty founder Michael Allenby wants to rock the concert production business. And he has no second thoughts about whether he will succeed.

“It doesn’t make me nervous at all. It makes me enthusiastic,” Allenby says. “There is no better time to innovate in the live music business than right now. This is way more tremendous than the internet hitting the record business. ...This was immediate and swift.”

The catalyst Allenby’s talking about is of course COVID-19. So, what’s Festy’s innovation?

Allenby and the Festy team canceled their regularly scheduled outdoor festival last fall. The multi-day music, camping, and lifestyle mash-up had cast itself as somewhat unique ever since its 2010 inaugural. Founded with a jamgrass band with local ties, The Infamous Stringdusters, and initially held on the grounds adjacent to Devils Backbone Brewing Company, Festy set out to be a smaller, boutique event, crowd surfing over the monstrous music blowouts proliferating around the nation.

But even a small-scale outdoor festival seemed ludicrous during a global pandemic. You just couldn’t bring crowds of people into a space while a highly transmissible virus ran through the community.

The result was a series of 14 live music events from September to November at Chisholm Vineyards in Earlyville. Concertgoers bought tickets in pods of two to six and watched the shows from private boxes, roped off and six feet apart, from which they could make contactless food and drink orders. Restroom trailers in place of cramped porta-johns completed the high-end outdoor COVID concert experience.

“We thought, what if you just took the VIP section from one festival set and made that the whole event?” Allenby says. The rest of the fest—general admission ticket holders more interested in socializing than scrutinizing their favorite band’s every move—could casually watch the shows streamed on the internet. And hey, their running commentary, typed silently into the ether, would even bother the superfans.

Allenby says Festy’s new strategy is a success. Sales met projections, with more than 2,000 attending the series, and anecdotal evidence suggests folks enjoyed the format.

“First live, in-person concert since January,” local artist Elizabeth Rodriguez said on Instagram during the October 17 Carbon Leaf Festy show. “It was outdoors, masked and socially distant, and it was awesome.”

The whole scheme made sense in 2020, a year during which the live music events industry lost more than \$30 billion, according to concert trade pub Pollstar, and any fund recovery was considered a miracle.

What about in 2021? While many early season festivals like SXSW and Coachella have been streaming-only or postponed, other live outdoor concerts—Chicago’s Riot Fest, Life Is Beautiful in Las Vegas, and California’s Aftershock, among others—are on the schedule to return by this summer or fall.

Allenby has doubt on his design. Instead of gearing back up for a Festy in the Blue Ridge foothills for this year, he’s expanded his concert series concept to two more markets. In Charlottesville, Charleston, South Carolina, and Asheville, North Carolina, Festy will host 150 shows from April to November.

C’ville residents will get Carbon Leaf April 17, followed by Saturday night shows (on a newly weekly basis) featuring the likes of Knoll Street Company, Mipsy, David Wax Museum, Molly Tuttle, Everything, Martin Sexton, and Eddie Fromero. Some artists will do two shows, at 6 and 9pm, others only one. Tickets range from \$40 to \$60, depending on pod size.

**“There is no better time to innovate in the live music business than right now.”**

MICHAEL ALLENBY



G. MILO FARINEAU

Festy founder Michael Allenby says the time is right for a new festival business model. He’s taking the Festy to three different locations for 150 shows between April and November.

Allenby thinks demand will be just as high as it was in 2020. One thing he figures Festy has going for it: His team crowdfunds the festival’s artists, letting fans vote for who they want to see before the organizers reach out to book the bands. Not all the artists people want to hear will play intimate shows at wineries, Allenby admits, but he expects Festy’s stable of acts to grow in the months to come.

Festy will also revamp the online production of its concert series this year, offering livestream tickets at \$10 per. Allenby and his team drove market online sales in 2020, he says, in part by taking time to streamline and elevate the quality. He says he feels like Festy now has a product worth pushing out.

While the new Festy format feels like a long-term solution to a short-term problem, Allenby disagrees.

“Festy is a sustainability brand, and live events—festivals as we know them—are inherently unsustainable,” he says. “Environmentally? There is no environmentally sustainable festival. And it’s not economically sustainable.”

Speaking to the economics, Allenby says it’s just a matter of time before another pandemic shuts live music down again. Why continue following a business model completely at the mercy of infectious viruses? Others will certainly go back to their old ways. But Festy won’t be a part of it.

“COVID’s set up a unique set of conditions so we could have started looking at the live music experience,” Allenby says. “There is a lot of weird history about how the live music business has been created. I have always fantasized about starting from scratch.” ©

