

## Independent musicians respond to Trump presidency with charity releases

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In the wake of a surprising presidential election victory by Donald Trump, a significant number of notable figures in the American professional music community expressed dismay at the state of their nation and the safety of causes they support. Independent labels and artists, whose core demographic is typically of college age (and who, like participants in many forms of art in this country, typically skew left on the political spectrum), almost immediately began preparing for inauguration in a way that came naturally: through song. Their efforts, both individual and organizational, have led to a flood of new protest music as Trump has assumed the presidency, the proceeds of which have largely been donated to charitable organizations whose agendas are seen as opposed to that of President Trump.

Even in the leadup to election, projects like "30 Days, 30 Songs" (which curated a playlist of tracks meant to resist the prospect of a Trump presidency and spur voter registration) were active signs of widespread worry among independent musicians. That particular project immediately expanded following the results of the election, rebranding as "1,000 Days, 1,000 Songs" to continue its progressive mission throughout the coming presidential term. The effort features some original music composed specifically for the playlist, interspersed with relevant tracks from indie music history (like R.E.M.'s "It's the End of the World As We Know It (and I Feel Fine)," for example). Headed up by author and "McSweeney's" founder Dave Eggers (best known for the memoir "A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius"), as well as Zeitgeist Artist Management owner Jordan Kurland, the project is backed by college radio promo

servicer The Syndicate.

Following the election, the number of similar projects expanded exponentially. The most notable immediate effort was the result of a partnership between the creators

but with two key differences: every song is an original composition created specifically for the release, and listeners are asked to pay a minimum of \$30 for access to all 100 songs in the comp. Proceeds will be distributed



Photo Courtesy of Our First 100 Days

of "30 Days, 30 Songs" and Secretly Group, which operates indie labels Secretly Canadian, Jagjaguwar, and Dead Oceans (home to Anohni, Bon Iver, Foxygen, Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Destroyer, Dirty Projectors, and many more). Dubbed "Our First 100 Days," it is a song-a-day project formatted similarly to the original "30 Days, 30 Songs" compilation,

between organizations covering a number of progressive causes, including The People's Climate Movement, All Above All, Cosecha, Southerners On New Ground, Hoosier Action, and Revolutions Per Minute. The artists contributing to the composition aren't limited to the Secretly Group roster, and the list includes notable names like Toro y Moi,

the Mountain Goats, and PWR BTTM.

Even on a smaller scale, though, other labels and artists are working to make a difference in the beginning stages of Trump's presidency. Barsuk Records announced a label compilation titled "Sad!," whose proceeds will benefit the ACLU. That same organization is also receiving the proceeds from "Don't stop now: a collection of covers," a 37-song comp that includes performances from Jeff Rosenstock, Laura Stevenson, and others mostly involved in music scenes near Philadelphia and New York City. The band Pinegrove, who made minor waves last year for their decision to spend a month sending all their online sales profits to a Standing Rock protest group, has spent the last two months foregoing those profits once again to donate to Planned Parenthood and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Dozens, maybe even hundreds, of notable independent artists are taking similar action, especially with online sales.

Aside from diverting their own income to political causes, many in music are taking more direct personal action, and urging others to do the same. The day after election results, alternative hip hop figure El-P (onetime head of the Definitive Jux record label and current member of the critically acclaimed duo Run the Jewels) made a donation to Planned Parenthood and took to Twitter to urge his fellow artists to follow suit in public view. Amanda Palmer, Wilco, tUnE-yArDs, and plenty others participated in Saturday, January 21's Women's March in various locations across the U.S., and Arcade Fire, Gorillaz, and more have independently put out new singles with messages of rebellion and resolve. It may be challenging for many to face these next four years, but a large body of musical artists in the U.S. and around the world are using their talents to work toward a progressive future.

## Newly opened P Berry Kafé fills the need for coffee, tea, more near campus

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Like any major city, Chicago has no shortage of offerings for those into café culture. The coffee shop as a meeting place, a workspace, and a neighborhood focal point is a time-honored tradition, and in the era of telecommuting it has become more important than ever. Even small towns are catching on: a recent visit to Fairhope, Alabama, a wellheeled bayside suburb of Mobile that's home to 15,000 people, revealed a count of no less than six cafés, up from three just two years ago. And yet, in areas of Chicago that have historically been underserved by mediumrange restaurants and similar amenities, coffee shops like those that are popular in more established neighborhoods are only beginning to pop up.

Here in Bronzeville, there existed a coffee shop named after the neighborhood at the corner of 43rd Street and South Forestville Avenue for a few years, but the surrounding area could not support it at the time and the location closed its doors long before any current student reading this lived in the community. The owners of that café went on to found Sip & Savor, a store in comparatively wealthy Hyde Park, home to the University of Chicago. With Bronzeville in their hearts, though, Sip & Savor opened a second location a couple years ago in the same space once occupied by their previous endeavor, and Sip & Savor Bronzeville is currently going strong as a comfortable, art-filled space that's popular with the area's rapidly expanding middle and upper middle class.

Though Sip & Savor exists on 43rd Street, it's far enough from campus that getting there from Illinois Tech is not significantly more convenient than heading west into Bridgeport to grab a drink at Bridgeport Coffee House or Jackalope Coffee & Tea. In a time when Bronzeville is still in early stages of

renewal, some students also feel uncomfortable venturing far south. There was a brief period of time during 2015 and early 2016 when a café called Sapa was operating near the corner of 35th & King Drive, but the business suffered from low visibility and eventually was forced to close facing mounting costs.

Out of the remains of Sapa's physical space, which takes up what was likely once a basement apartment just north of the Chicago Public Library's King branch, a brand new

P Berry Kafé's food offerings are somewhat limited at this point, but they encompass a number of local favorites for casual lunch. Bare-bones sandwiches, such as a jerk chicken option, are made in-house, as well as nachos and other unpretentious food. P Berry Kafé can reasonably cover a customer's need for a full meal, rising a step above the basic pastries offered by many cafés. They still seem to be settling into their menu and trying new things as they go, so their regular array of



Photo by Soren Spicknall

coffee option has risen to take its place. Called P Berry Kafé and open since December, it features a selection of typical coffee- and teabased drinks, accompanied by a small menu of food for breakfast and lunch. The staff of the shop are warm and welcoming, and eager to guide newcomers around their menu (which wasn't yet posted anywhere at the time of writing). While the drinks aren't of the same quality as those on offer at Currency Exchange Café or Intelligentsia, they are far above the fare available at Brü or at Global Grounds, for that matter. A variety of flavorings are available to cover the full range of essential lattes, and a few options for tea can be purchased as well.

eats may expand in the future.

For plenty of potential customers, though, what's important in a coffee shop isn't necessarily the food and drinks on the menu. For those seeking a place where they can get away from campus and get some work done while supporting a local business, P Berry Kafé has a large space suitable for gatherings and individual pursuits alike. The store is arranged into three basic sections, with couches and a television up front that can be used for flipping channels or playing video games. In the middle next to the counter, a row of two-seat tables has easy access to electrical outlets along the wall. In the rear, near the café's bathroom,

a small corner is carved out for friends or coworkers to gather.

While all the essential elements of a coffee shop are present, there are some drawbacks to P Berry Kafé's setup. The location in a sub-ground-level unit means that natural light is at a premium, and bookworms may desire a more sunny locale. On TechNews's visit to the café the heat was also quite high, which is relieving upon entry but can be fatiguing after significant time spent inside. And while some obvious work has gone into making the café an inviting and polished place to be, it lacks a distinct personality at this point, something that local competitors Sip & Savor and Jackalope Coffee & Tea both do very well. Perhaps the addition of some artwork to the walls, or the erection of personalized decorations as the staff settles into their business's home, could benefit its overall atmosphere.

On the subject of art, works of a different sort are on exhibit regularly at P Berry Kafé. As part of an effort to reach out to the community better than Sapa did while they were open, the shop hosts weekly performances from DJs, comedians, and other Chicago figures, each performer helping to promote the café in the process. For the first month of the café's existence these shows took place only on Thursday nights, but programming has now expanded to Sundays as well.

While it's not perfect, P Berry Kafé represents the most impressive stab yet at creating a great Bronzeville café within easy walking distance of Illinois Tech. Just down a few steps from the sidewalk in the 3400 block of King Drive (near a corner that's seeing heavy investment soon, with the coming opening of Chicago's first Culver's and redevelopment of the plaza which currently holds a Jewel-Osco in planning stages) is one of the neighborhood's newest small businesses, and it's worth a look.