QUEEN CITY

Backstage

MUSIC / FASHION / THEATER / CULTURE

ISSUE 02
NOVEMBER 1, 2026



The live issue

TEDDY SWIMS

A voice built for the arena

The runway

COMES TO VAPA

Bikini Babes Swim Week

MIDNITER

Making room for the strange

SUNS OF STARS

Live at the Visulite

HALEY REINHART

One voice. One room.

SOULFUL NOEL

A season with soul

A closer VIEW

Charlotte's stories. Backstage and beyond.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

Teddy Swims arrived at Spectrum Center in October with MarcLo and St. Paul & The Broken Bones. Four days later, Haley Reinhart brought her Promise Tour to Middle C Jazz. By the end of the month, Suns of Stars were at the Visulite. This issue follows those artists into Charlotte, alongside Bikini Babes Swim Week's first runway here.

Two conversations take us further into the work. Nic Pugh tells us how an unfinished piano song found a new life on Midniter's debut album, Xeno. Quentin Talley remembers needing persuasion to make a Christmas show. Now in its 14th year, Soulful Noel has become an OnQ tradition, though the production has changed considerably since its first script.

Those are the stories I want QCB to make room for: the artists arriving in town, and the people making work here. Thank you for reading and for supporting Charlotte's music, fashion and theater. I hope something in these pages gives you a reason to go out again.

Scott Jelleyman

EDITOR / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

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Before the HEADLINER

ST. PAUL & THE BROKEN BONES

SPECTRUM CENTER / OCTOBER 18, 2026

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN



Before the HEADLINER

MarcLo and St. Paul & The Broken Bones brought two different histories to the bill.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

Marcus “MarcLo” Lomax may have reached listeners long before they knew his name. The singer, songwriter and producer is associated with The Monsters & Strangerz, with credits on songs including “The Middle” and “Prisoner.” As a solo artist, he puts his own voice in front of the songwriting that has helped other performers reach an audience.

MarcLo began writing his album 11 Days during the Los Angeles fires in January 2025. He told GOYO that he wanted the collection to give people something uplifting during a difficult time.

St. Paul & The Broken Bones arrived from Birmingham, Alabama, with a sound built around Paul Janeway’s gospel-rooted singing and a horn section.

Janeway once expected to become a preacher. His path led instead through Birmingham open-mic nights and a writing partnership with bassist Jesse Phillips. The pair wrote songs that appeared on the band’s debut, Half the City.

I photographed both openers before returning for Swims.

MARCLO / ON THE ROAD

He continues with Teddy Swims in November. Selected dates appear on page 10.

ST. PAUL / SELECTED DATE

NOV 9, 2026 / NÎMES, FRANCE

Paloma / Grande Salle

Official date & details



THE UGLY TOUR / SPECTRUM CENTER / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN



On STAGE

THE UGLY TOUR

Spectrum Center

CHARLOTTE

OCTOBER 18, 2026



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / A&J CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



TEDDY *Swims*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / A&J CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

A VOICE *for the arena*

From online covers to The UGLY Tour, Teddy Swims reaches a larger stage.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

Before Teddy Swims was headlining arenas, he was building an audience with cover videos. His own recordings gave those listeners new songs to follow. On October 18, The UGLY Tour brought the Georgia singer to Charlotte's Spectrum Center.

Born Jaten Dimsdale, Swims found a much wider public with "Lose Control." The song helped turn an online following into an audience for his own records.

That catalog has grown well beyond one breakthrough. The 2025 complete edition of I've Tried Everything But Therapy gathered 32 tracks, including "The Door," "Bad Dreams" and "Are You Even Real," his collaboration with GIVĒON. "Small Hands," written about his newborn son, brought another part of his life into the collection.

The 2026 single "Mr. Know It All" returned to the difficulties of a relationship, pairing its account of self-sabotage with a vintage-styled groove. It continued a familiar thread in Swims' music: the person who can describe a problem clearly and still find himself caught in it.

My Charlotte evening began with MarcLo and St. Paul & The Broken Bones before Swims' headlining set.

The Charlotte stop

Charlotte fell between Nashville and Atlanta on The UGLY Tour’s fall route. The run began in Kansas City on September 22 and was scheduled to finish in Los Angeles on November 18, placing the Spectrum Center date inside nearly two months of North American arena shows.

Spectrum Center opened on October 21, 2005, with the Rolling Stones. The Uptown arena reopened in October 2025 after a two-part renovation.



SELECTED DATES / NOVEMBER 2026

03 / SALT LAKE CITY

Delta Center

05 / SEATTLE

Climate Pledge Arena

Both shows: Allen Stone and MarcLo supporting.

Official venue listings / confirm before travelling.

OCT

18

SPECTRUM CENTER

THE UGLY *Tour*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN

A&J CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY


MOTOR HOTEL
STOP
ATLANTA
CITY LIMIT
ROXY
RYDER
A&J
CREATIVE
PHOTOGRAPHY



TEDDY SWIMS

TEDDY SWIMS

A voice for the arena



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / A&J CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

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Event photography *in Charlotte.*

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BLUEGRASS / CHARLOTTE

SUNS *of Stars*

Bluegrass, still moving

VISULITE THEATRE / OCTOBER 30, 2026



Suns of Stars formed in Western North Carolina in 2023, combining traditional bluegrass with improvisation. They have shared stages with Sam Bush and Yonder Mountain String Band. On October 30, they opened for Denver’s Magoo at the Visulite Theatre on Elizabeth Avenue.

NOV 21, 2026 / 185 King Street, Brevard / 8 p.m.

DEC 11, 2026 / Flat Iron, Greensboro / with Yellergrass String Band / 8:30 p.m.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / A&J CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



Upright bass

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN



Banjo

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN



Violin

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN

HALEY REINHART



THE PROMISE TOUR / MIDDLE C JAZZ

Haley *Reinhart*

Haley Reinhart’s Promise Tour reached Middle C Jazz on October 22, 2026.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

Haley Reinhart learned music in a family that made it. Her parents performed together in the Midnight Band, and her early listening ranged from the Beatles and Janis Joplin to Ella Fitzgerald and Sly & The Family Stone. In 2009, she sang with her high school jazz band at the Montreux and Umbria festivals. The television audience came later.

Her third-place finish on American Idol in 2011 introduced her to millions. The records that followed traced several musical interests: Listen Up!, Better, the late-1960s songs of What’s That Sound? and the independent Lo-Fi Soul, released on Reinhart Records.

Reinhart’s interpretations have sometimes traveled as far as her own material. Her version of “Can’t Help Falling in Love” began with an Extra Gum commercial and became a radio hit. Work with Postmodern Jukebox and Jeff Goldblum’s Mildred Snitzer Orchestra gave her further opportunities to revisit songs with different collaborators.

Writing remained part of the work. All seven original songs on her 2022 EP Off the Ground were written or co-written by Reinhart. The Promise Tour brought that continuing independent career to Middle C Jazz on October 22, with the newer single “Promise” part of the tour’s identity.

Middle C Jazz has a family history of its own. Larry Farber and his sons Adam and Reid developed the South Brevard Street club, which opened on November 1, 2019. This issue arrives on its seventh anniversary.

SELECTED APPEARANCES / 2026

NOV 6–13 / SOMMA CRUISE

Europe

DEC 8 / NEWPORT NEWS, VA

Ferguson Center for the Arts

Special guest: Dave Koz & Friends Christmas Tour

Full schedule & official details



HALEY REINHART / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN

HALEY REINHART

Middle C
Jazz

OCTOBER 22



HALEY REINHART / MIDDLE C JAZZ

NOVEMBER

Eight nights out.

LIVE GUIDE / 01

01
SUNDAY

almost monday
with feel trip.

The Underground

8 p.m.

02
MONDAY

The Arcadian Wild
Make It Out Alive Tour / with Addison Agen

Neighborhood Theatre

Doors 7 p.m. / Show 8 p.m.

05
THURSDAY

Switchfoot
Forever Now Tour / special guest Anberlin

The Fillmore Charlotte

7:30 p.m.

06
FRIDAY

Caiola
with Bre Kennedy + Thomas LaVine

Visulite Theatre

Doors 7 p.m. / Show 8 p.m.

Tap a listing for official details. Times are local; confirm before booking.

Selected public listings, not a promise of QCB attendance.

NOVEMBER

More nights out.

LIVE GUIDE / 02

11
WEDNESDAY

Spafford

An Evening with Spafford

Visulite Theatre

Doors 7 p.m. / Show 8 p.m.

14
SATURDAY

Jeremy’s Ten

The Pearl Jam Tribute

Visulite Theatre

Doors 7 p.m. / Show 8 p.m.

17
TUESDAY

Joy Oladokun

The Heavy Things Tour

Neighborhood Theatre

Doors 7 p.m. / Show 8 p.m.

19
THURSDAY

DJ Raphi

HYPE TOUR USA 2.0

The Underground

6 p.m.

Tap a listing for official details. Times are local; confirm before booking.

Selected public listings, not a promise of QCB attendance.

Bikini Babes

SWIM WEEK

The Charlotte debut



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN

Charlotte debut



Bikini Babes Swim Week made its Charlotte debut at an artist-founded venue.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN

Bikini Babes Swim Week made its Charlotte debut on October 9 at the VAPA Center on North Tryon Street. The event introduced its swimwear showcase to the city with a program promoted around local and national designers, models, entertainment and vendors.

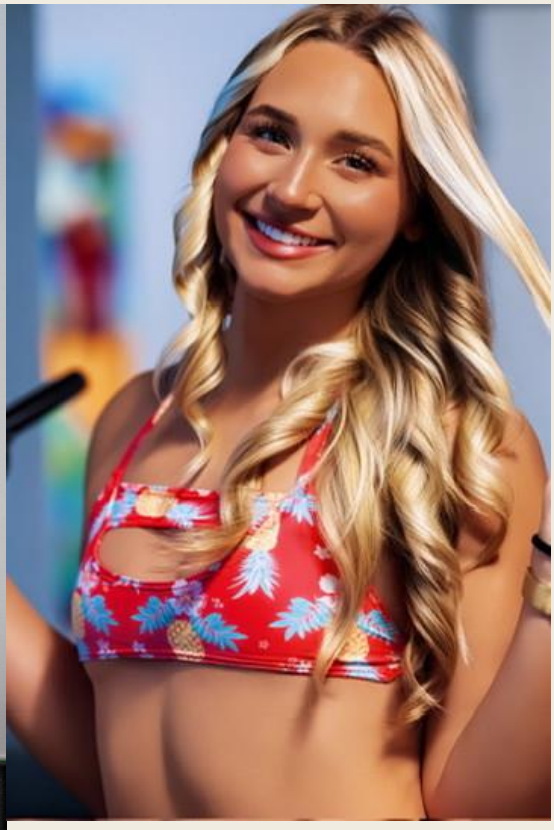
VAPA was created in 2021 by 12 arts organizations as pandemic disruption and the closure of Spirit Square left artists needing places to rehearse, teach and perform. The founding group worked with Mecklenburg County to turn underused space into an arts center.

CHARLOTTE / OCTOBER 9, 2026



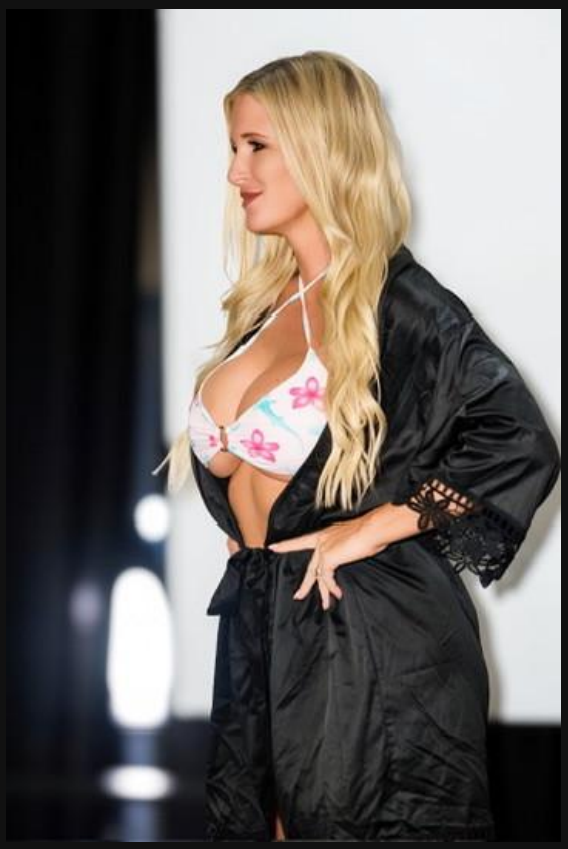
Swim Week





Charlotte,
October 9.



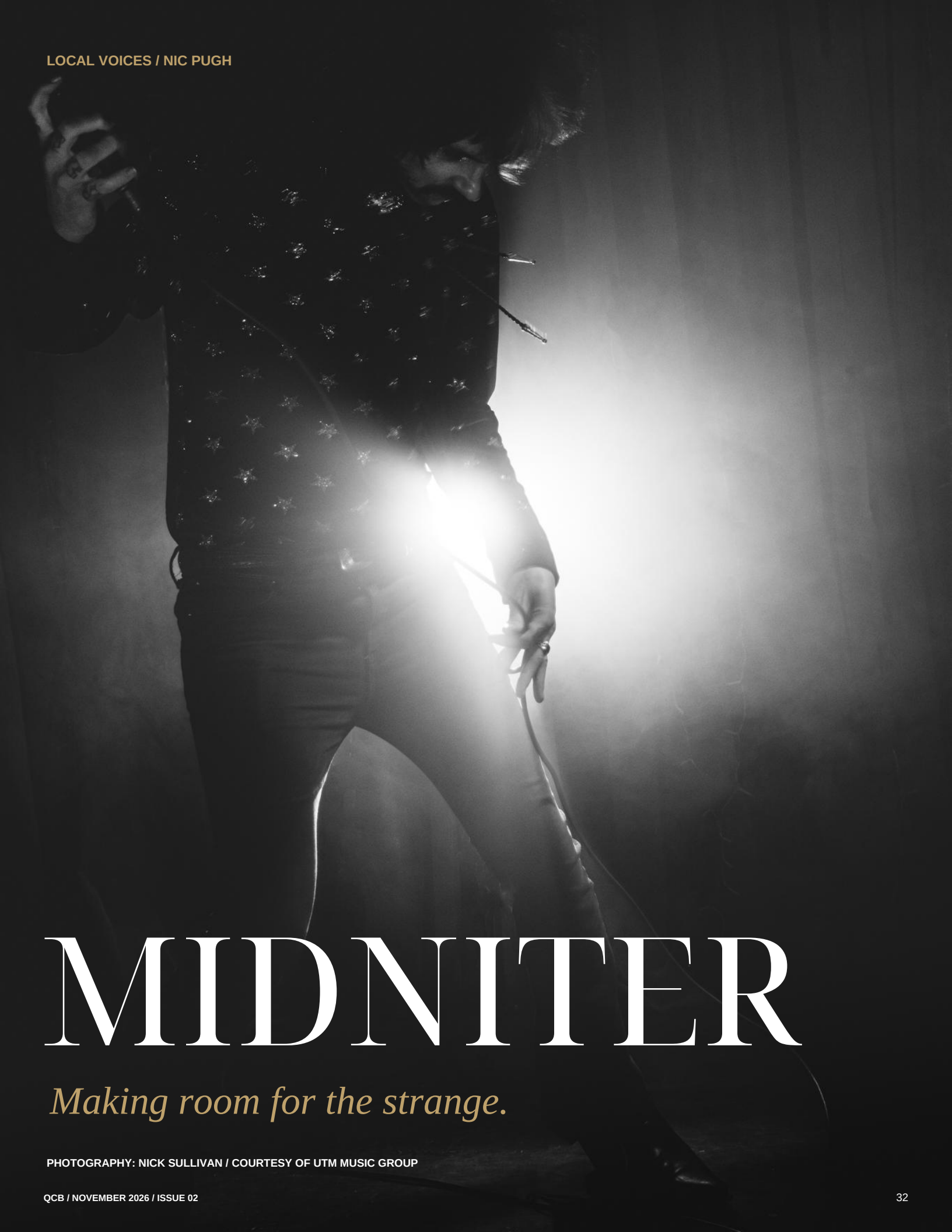



SIGNS
PIXT



Bikini Babes

SWIM WEEK / CHARLOTTE



MIDNITER

Making room for the strange.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK SULLIVAN / COURTESY OF UTM MUSIC GROUP

Making room for the STRANGE

An unfinished piano song helped Nic Pugh find Midniter's direction.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

An old piano song Nic Pugh had never finished became the starting point for "I Could Love You." He returned to it while developing Midniter, the electronic project he was building at home between tours as a bassist.

"During the early days of this project I didn't really have a particular plan on what I wanted anything to sound or look like," Pugh told QCB by email. He knew he wanted to work more electronically than he had before. Some completed songs still did not make the album.

Xeno, Midniter's debut, was released October 27, 2026, through SugarTank! Records. Pugh's background includes the punk and rock bands Paint Fumes and Jaggermouth, but Midniter gave him a different way to work. Bedroom demos became the basis for a record made with producer and mix engineer Justin Aswell, whom Pugh calls "essentially the offstage other half of the project."

Aswell's sound-design and production work helped finish what began at home. Another important part of Pugh's working life remained firmly in Charlotte: Petra's, which he describes as a home for almost a decade. His time there helps fund his creative work and keeps him around the bands and artists passing through.

The songs Pugh most wants people to notice on Xeno are not necessarily the singles. He favors album tracks with an odd character, even when they offer less of an immediate hook. He hopes listeners will stay with them long enough to find what he hears.

Asked what an early listener had heard in the album that surprised him, Pugh offered a shorter answer: "Having early listeners surprises me."

From record to stage

“Figuring out how to bring it to life on stage is an experiment in itself,” Pugh said. At the time of the interview, Midniter was a four-piece: a musical director and synth player, a bassist, a drummer, and Pugh singing and sampling.

He wants as much live playing as the band can manage without equipment costs or an overcomplicated setup getting in the way. A custom lighting rig and other visual elements were being developed, too. The arrangements have to leave the musicians enough freedom to experiment and enjoy playing them.

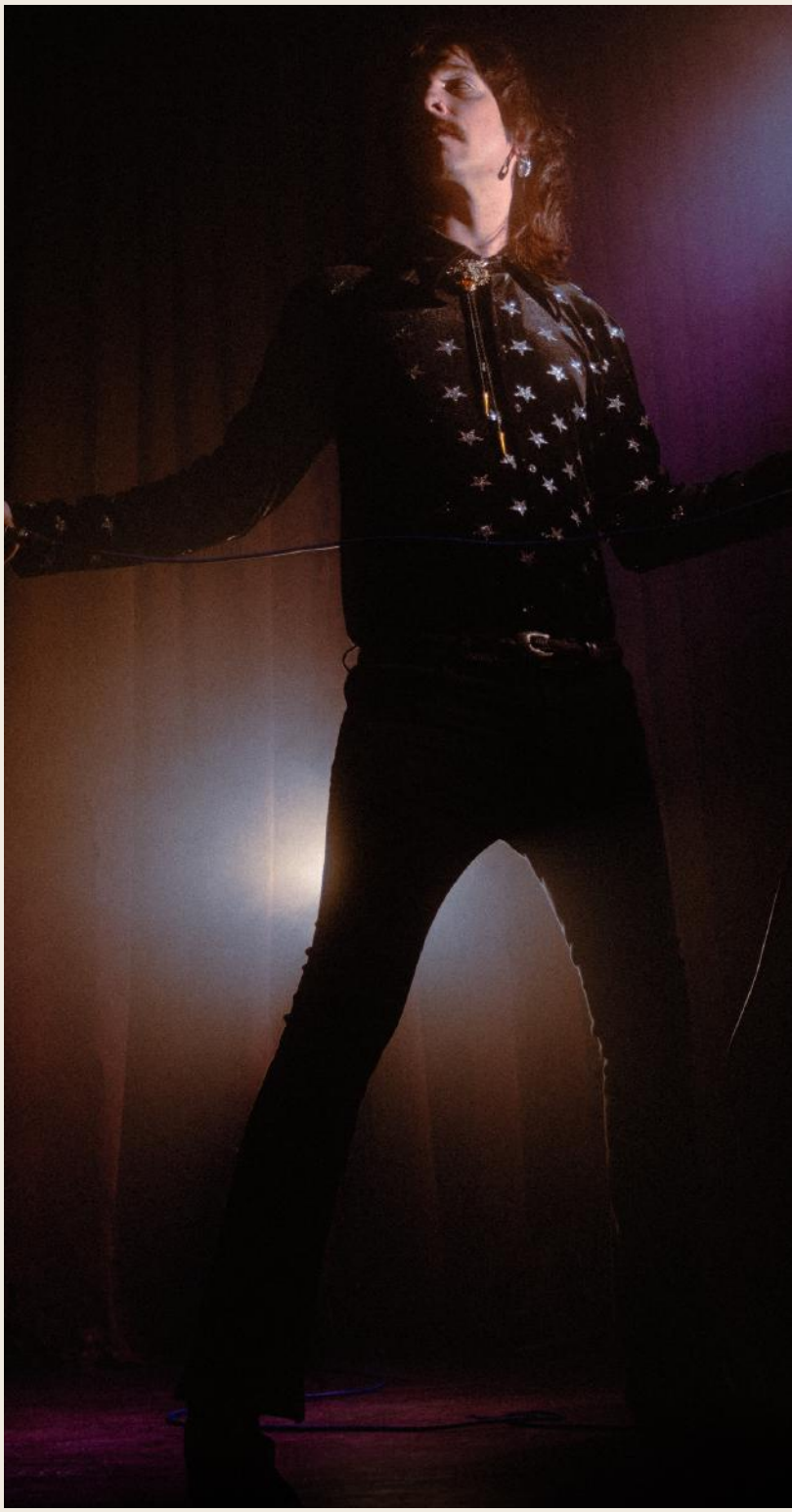
SELECTED DATE / DECEMBER 12, 2026

Midniter’s album-release show at Snug Harbor includes Pie Face Girls and La Brava. The Plaza Midwood venue was established in 2007. Doors are scheduled for 8 p.m., with the show at 9 p.m.; the event is 18+.

Interview conducted by email. Photography: Nick Sullivan, courtesy of UTM Music Group.

“Having early listeners surprises me.”

NIC PUGH / QCB INTERVIEW



PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK SULLIVAN



MIDNITER / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK SULLIVAN



A season with SOUL

SOULFUL NOEL / BOOTH PLAYHOUSE / DECEMBER 22–23

PROMOTIONAL PERFORMANCE PHOTO: GENA J PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY OF ONQ

A season with SOUL

Quentin Talley needed persuading to make a Christmas show. Then the music took over.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

Quentin Talley was not eager to make another Christmas show. He had grown up performing in holiday productions, and the season had become his least favorite time in the theater. When OnQ's board and staff began discussing a show to raise money and awareness, he needed convincing.

"I was definitely the Scrooge of the bunch," he told QCB.

He eventually turned to Tim Scott Jr., who has been Soulful Noel's musical director from the beginning. They agreed that the production should reflect OnQ's mission and the ways Black families and communities celebrate the holidays.

The first version had an original script and new arrangements of Christmas songs. Talley estimates it was roughly 70 percent script and 30 percent music. Five years of revision and audience feedback reversed the balance. By the time the show was about 40 percent script and 60 percent song, the team decided to abandon the script altogether.

Soulful Noel became a musical revue, with more room for Charlotte's musicians and vocalists. Now in its 14th year, it returns to Booth Playhouse December 22–23 for three performances.

Choosing the songs remains collaborative. Performers suggest material; Talley and Scott recommend pieces that suit their voices. Familiar Christmas songs and selections from Black holiday traditions fill the first act. After intermission, inspirational and spiritual music turns the focus toward the birth of Christ.

The production keeps changing. Talley says there are more singers interested than the show can accommodate, and duets and trios have become a larger part of the approach. The 2026 plans emphasize musicians who both play and sing. Strings were also being considered, though not confirmed at the time of the interview.

The dates

Talley knows the holidays can be difficult. He wants Soulful Noel to offer familiar faces, company and music for people who may need them. The music draws on soul, funk, R&B, jazz and gospel.

“We want audiences to leave full of joy and inspiration,” he said.

Booth Playhouse sits in Founders Hall, within the Blumenthal Arts Center complex that opened in November 1992. The room has orchestra and gallery seating.

The companion album, OnQ Presents A Soulful Noel, is available on major streaming and download platforms.

Interview conducted by email. Promotional photography: Gena J Photography, courtesy of OnQ Performing Arts.

DECEMBER 2026 / BOOTH PLAYHOUSE

22 / 7 p.m.
23 / 1 p.m. + 7 p.m.

Charlotte / official tickets & details



CURT KEYZ / GENA J PHOTOGRAPHY



SOULFUL NOEL BAND / GENA J PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY OF ONQ

WORTH *the drive*

NOVEMBER 8 / GREENVILLE, SC

Keb’ Mo’

Peace Center Concert Hall

The five-time Grammy winner brings his blues songwriting to Greenville. Before his solo career, Keb’ Mo’ played with Jefferson Airplane violinist Papa John Creach.

Sunday, November 8 / 7 p.m.

NOV 10 / CORNELIUS, NC

Spyro Gyra

Cain Center for the Arts

The jazz-fusion ensemble takes the stage at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m.

NOV 15 / CONCORD, NC

Evening in the Round

Davis Theatre

Linda Davis, Lang Scott and Bill Whyte trade songs and stories in an acoustic round, 4 p.m.

NOV 18 / DAVIDSON, NC

Renata Yazzie, Piano

Tyler-Tallman Recital Hall, Davidson College

Music by North American Indigenous composers, 7:30 p.m. Free and open to the public.

NOV 21–22 / MOORESVILLE, NC

Fine Arts Festival

Charles Mack Citizen Center

Indoor juried art festival. Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sun. noon–4 p.m. Free admission.

NOV 27–29 / HICKORY, NC

Frozen

Hickory Community Theatre / Jeffers Theatre

Opening weekend: Fri./Sat. 7:30 p.m.; Sun. 2:30 p.m. The musical runs through December 12.

Tap a pick for the official schedule and tickets. Confirm before travel.

Independent recommendations; not confirmed QCB assignments.

Give *the evening*



SOULFUL NOEL / GENA J PHOTOGRAPHY

Seven Charlotte holiday outings.

BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

NOVEMBER 22

A Magical Cirque Christmas

Belk Theater, 3 p.m. Acrobatics, comedy and magic join holiday music in an early-season afternoon performance.

DECEMBER 4–23

Charlotte Ballet's Nutcracker

Selected dates at Belk Theater, with live accompaniment by the Charlotte Symphony. Matinee and evening options are available across the run.

DECEMBER 11–20

A Christmas Carol

Theatre Charlotte. Dickens' Scrooge, the Cratchits and the possibility of change return to the local stage.

DECEMBER 12

Trans-Siberian Orchestra

The Ghosts of Christmas Eve at Spectrum Center, with performances at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 18

Nutcracker! Magical Christmas Ballet

Ovens Auditorium, 7 p.m. This touring production is separate from Charlotte Ballet's Nutcracker at Belk Theater.

DECEMBER 18–20

Holiday Pops

Charlotte Symphony at Knight Theater. December 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m.; December 20 at 3 p.m.

DECEMBER 22–23

Soulful Noel

OnQ at Booth Playhouse. December 22 at 7 p.m.; December 23 at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. Read our interview with Quentin Talley on pages 37–38.

Confirm dates, venues and ticket details with official sellers. Listings may change.

Behind the issue

EDITOR & PHOTOGRAPHER

Scott Jelleyman / Queen City Backstage. Original concert and runway photography: Scott Jelleyman / A&J Creative Photography.

ORIGINAL INTERVIEWS

Nic Pugh / Midniter, supplied through UTM Music Group. Quentin Talley / OnQ Performing Arts. Quotations are from email interviews.

PROMOTIONAL IMAGE CREDITS

Midniter: Nick Sullivan. Soulful Noel: Gena J Photography, courtesy of OnQ. Supplied press photographs appear in those features.

EVENT LISTINGS

Selected event listings link to official sources. Dates and ticket availability may change. Listings do not confirm QCB attendance or photography bookings.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN / A&J CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

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