

GO! talent

The Bulletin and Scalehouse, a collaborative for the arts, have joined together to raise donations to help Central Oregon's creative artists — musicians, visual artists, performers and creative workers — by offering grants and a platform to bring attention to local amazing talent. This is a crowdfunding effort with a first-round fundraising goal of \$40,000. To make a tax-deductible donation or apply for a grant, go to bendbulletin.com/talent

Songwriter Perez puts energy into activism

BY DAVID JASPER

The Bulletin

Kourtni Perez had been writing songs since she was a kid, but it was a few years after the Salinas, California-born musician moved to Central Oregon in 2012 that she got serious about her craft.

"I've actually known how to kind of play by ear since I was young, but I just kind of sat down and made myself do it," she said. "I taught myself to play keyboard just with iPhone apps and Googling stuff online."

Perez, who bills herself by her first name in her music, is this week's featured Central Oregon Creative Artists Relief Effort artist. Also known as CO CAREs, the grant program seeks to provide financial relief to creatives such as Perez whose incomes have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to learning keys, she also took voice lessons with Cascade School of Music



in the last few years, she said. The fruits of her labors can be heard on her 2020 EP "Kourtni," available on Spotify. She describes her sound as "sad-girl bedroom pop," and cites as influences female artists such as Lana Del Rey, Taylor Swift and Halsey.

Prior to the pandemic, Perez was performing regularly at open mics along with a few monthly paying gigs, "and that all ended," she said. "I was on my way to do a self-guided tour from Washington to San Diego. I had merch ... almost printed, and yeah, that just put a screeching halt to it."

But with things reopening and live entertainment again a possibility, Perez has a

July 18 show in the works at 10 Barrel (east) and recently recorded several songs for her next album at JamSpace Bend.

If a theme to the new songs is emerging, it's "still a lot of boy hate," she said. "That's about what it is, just broken-heart sort of vibes. My last two ex-boyfriends are going to get a lot of face time on this next album. I mean, never date a musician unless you're ready to have songs written about you."

Her energies, musical and otherwise, are not just directed toward nursing broken



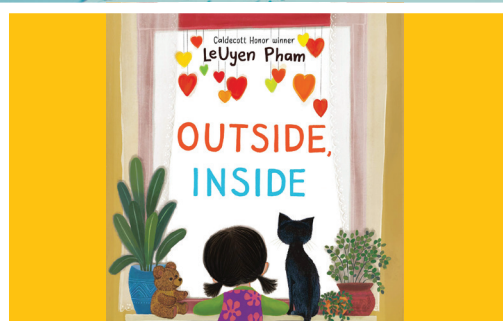
Kourtni Perez

hearts: Perez does social media and marketing for the Healing Justice Collective, "which sources BIPOC community members with nontraditional healing methods such as acupuncture and mental health services, holistic health services — things that are not able to be afforded by those communities," she explained, using a term that stands for Black, Indigenous and people of color.

"With everything going on post-pandemic, post-George Floyd, I got really into the activism scene, and so music took an absolute backseat to that because that just felt more important," she said. "I was organizing the protests. I was there at every single protest in Central Oregon last summer."

That activism turned up in the collaborative September 2020 single "Great Again," featuring music and production by Thelectik. Over a deceptively chill beat, she decries systemic violence and sings/pledges, "We won't stop until it's justice for all."

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staff

editor Jody Lawrence-Turner | 541-383-0308, jlawrence-turner@bendbulletin.com

editor & fine arts David Jasper | 541-383-0349, djasper@bendbulletin.com

outdoors writer Mark Morical | 541-383-0318, mmorical@bendbulletin.com

events specialist Makenzie Whittle | 541-383-0304, mwhittle@bendbulletin.com

page designer Jenny Johnston | jjohnston@bendbulletin.com

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address: 320 SW Upper Terrace Drive, Suite 200, Bend, OR 97702

to advertise: 541-382-1811