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UTEP says Farewell to Forty Years of Dinner Theater

For the past 40 years, the UTEP Dinner Theater (UTD) has entertained audiences of all ages, having their shows range from many cult classics like ‘Rocky Horror Picture Show’ to Tony Award-winning musicals like ‘The Prom’. However, the stability of the dinner theater continuing came to a screeching halt Sept. 29.

According to El Paso Matters, the UTEP Dinner Theater will have its final curtain call this current 2023-24 season. Coming as a surprise to many, students, alumni and dinner theater patrons but mainly to the man who started it all, Greg Taylor, the former director for the UTEP Dinner Theater.

Earlier this semester he announced he would be retiring after 40 years at UTEP, leaving the theater department and the dinner theater. Having retired Aug. 31, according to El Paso Inc., the announcement of the dinner theater closing its doors arrived when the UTEP website for the dinner theater it was in its ‘Farewell Season.’

“In the many meetings I had with the dean, it was never intimated to me that their plan was to close the dinner theater,” Taylor said.

“If they had told me...I would have stayed one more year and done the last show. I started it, I would’ve ended it.”

Being one of the most successful fine arts programs in El Paso, according to their website, the removal of the dinner theater would leave a hole not only in the fine arts program on campus but in the city. Producing four shows a year, the dinner theater brings in student actors and actresses as well as community members to take part in the fun of putting on a full production. The word of the dinner theater closing its doors has made its way to many, including student leader, Michael Gutierrez who started the petition to stop the doors from closing.

“I felt it was important for me, who is appreciative of the arts to defend (UDT),” said Gutierrez. “To start a petition and show the administration why it’s important and why we should continue this institution that has been around for 40 years.” However, it’s not just current students or alumni who are advocating for the dinner theater but patrons who have seen countless shows over the years and those who have taken part in the shows themselves.

Posted to the @savetheutepdinnertheater Instagram page, perform- ators of past production have voiced their experiences and love for the dinner theater in hopes that it can sway the misguided decision by UTEP. The page has been used as a way for those to support the dinner theater and its staff.

“Thanks to the UDT, (Karen) was able to learn from many talented people who helped her grow her mind spirit confidence skills and her love for the arts,” said @saverheutedt the fund raiser for the theater page. The dis- pleasure has been voiced not only on Instagram but in the comment section of the El Paso Matters Facebook page.

“This is a sad day for UTEP and very telling of the institution it’s be- coming. The UDT is a gem despite being neglected by UTEP’s current administration for many years.”

It’s clear to many that if the dinner theater were to close, it would greatly impact the arts not just at UTEP but across the borderland. With frustration and confu- see THEATER on page 6
Reconnecting with my Hispanic heritage

BY ANNABELLA MIRELES
The Prospector

During Hispanic Heritage month, many might take a moment to reflect on their own Hispanic lineage, the women and men who raised us with the notion of passing on the culture their parents passed down to them. However, as a Hispanic woman, I struggle with my own Hispanic identity.

I have a family who live in Mexico, Lebanon, and the United States, yet, I feel disconnected from each one. My grandmother was a big figure in my life, a Lebanese immigrant who worked for most of her life in Mexico.

My grandmother also taught me all the Spanish I know. However, she passed away when I was nine and I felt like a part of me died with her. I was no longer interested in keeping up with the language because that was a part of my connection to her.

That which was Arabic or Spanish, my tie to her felt broken.

I felt the pressures from family to make sure I was fluent in Spanish before joining the “real world” so I made sure I am fluent in Spanish with barely being able to hold conversations without struggling or forgetting the word completely.

I have been told I don’t listen to the right music, or I didn’t watch the right novelas growing up.

I felt like despite being Hispanic, my tie to her felt broken.

This frustration also came along with barely being able to hold conversations without struggling or forgetting the word completely.

I have been told I don’t listen to the right music, or I didn’t watch the right novelas growing up.

I would feel challenged when I would speak Spanish and accidentally use “la” instead of “el” and immediately feel embarrassed when I was told it was wrong by people snickering and mocking me.

I don’t think people talk about the type of isolation one can feel when living in one place and one’s heritage is another. In a way, I felt like I wasn’t good enough to be considered Hispanic or Lebanese. I feel like many people in El Paso might feel this way when living in a border city. In many cases it’s like we are too American for Mexico and too Mexican for America.

During this month, we reflect and identify with our heritage that make us unique.

I’ve tried my best to feel more connected by slowly becoming more fluent in both Spanish and Arabic. I have also made it a priority to learn more about my family and culture from Mexico and Lebanon to help close the gap I feel.

I wanted to write this not only for myself, but for others who feel the same and who feel a lack of connection with their roots or who have been made to feel less than others.

Whether it be not being fluent in the language, or because of the color of one’s skin, what others say does not change the blood that runs through our veins.

During this month, I reflect and understand that being Hispanic doesn’t have one look to it. We all have different stories and connections to our heritage that make us unique.

I am proud to be a mix of many different cultures and languages.

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A collaboration of queer and Latinx beauty

Continuous bills restricting drag performances, endless protests and arrests of drag queens; is all what the drag community has faced over the years, an uphill struggle fighting for their voices and freedom. Fellow Latinx drag queens like Gigi Chairez (Gagaboy) are here to spread their stories and culture to the community, and there are more than what society has painted them to be. Growing up in the Lower Valley and having a mixed relationship with her brother, the name ‘Gagaboy’ came to fruition with the help of her brother when creating a MySpace profile in middle school, a sentimental moment she will remember as Chairez tries to incorporate her story and culture into her drag.

“It did take me a long time to be proud of my Mexican culture, I used to be embarrassed of it because of what kids would make fun of me at school for,” Chairez said. “I would get called names and I would think low of it, but it wasn’t until I started drag that I started being happy with my culture.” Mesmerized by the dramatics of costumes, drag queen Rosita Thorne (David Ortega) always knew she wanted to connect her drag name to her heritage, but despite her love and confidence for drag, Thorne had difficulty expressing her authentic identity growing up due to the traditional Hispanic culture.

“We are right on the border, so we are in a mixture of two dominant cultures, but you still have this sense of tradition and sense of ‘I’m supposed to be doing this because that’s how it always been done,’” Thorne said. “Growing up there were times that I thought it would be a little difficult to fully express who I was because of tradition and in Hispanic culture we have (machismo) the idea of men must be manly and for me it was learning how to break out of that mold.”

A collaboration of queer and Latinx beauty

Flipping through fabrics and makeup brushes, leaning heavily with the vintage and 60s aesthetics, Thorne loves incorporating some of her heritage into her designs and costumes. One of her favorites looks she loves to wear is ‘Queen of Tejano Music’ Selena Quintanilla, who is one of her biggest inspirations and makes her feel empowered with her roots.

“Through culture, language, anything there is always this connection of self and others that is what culture is the exchanging of knowledge and tradition,” Thorne said. “To keep that within what I do and who I am is important because I feel like if we don’t tend to get somewhat lost.”

Performing on stage as the crowd cheers and chants her name, Thorne feels there is a sisterhood among her drag sisters, empowering and lifting each other but struggling when the LGBTQ+ community is not accepting and open-minded like she would hope to be.

“We try to put on this armor, I would say drag is almost an armor to deal with the world and it’s problems and sometimes it’s a little bit harder when it’s your own community that isn’t as accepting or open-minded like you would hope for,” Thorne said. “You would think that these are the people that are going to be your biggest supporters and sometimes they end up being one of your challenges.”

However, added to those challenges, drag communities across Texas are facing the ongoing threat to ban and restrict public drag shows. Those fears could wash away as, according to the Texas Tribune, a judge stated that if Texas bans certain drag shows, it would be unconstitutional. Thorne weighed in on the issue and thinks it all goes back to the performer and their art.

“We do agree that there are some drag venues or performances that may not be suitable for children, a large majority of them are and it is somewhat the same censorship as telling a child not to visit an art museum,” Thorne said. “It comes back to the performer of ‘What am I trying to do with my art’ and I think that’s something that gets lost in translation is a lot of people don’t realize that we are here to bring knowledge, joy, love and community to people that otherwise don’t have it.”

Alluring and enticing the audience with her performances is drag queen Malibu Doll, as drag has allowed them to find and express their feminine side without being ashamed of it.

“In Mexican culture it’s very hard to express your femininity and my mom was always super accepting about me being gay but she will tell me ‘It’s ok just don’t be flamboyant’ so drag was my steppingstone with my family to be able to introduce to them and find myself within that,” Doll said. “Coming from an accepting and loving family is something rare as many drag queens and people in the LGBTQ+ community can struggle with finding acceptance anywhere. Not having the support and love needed can be difficult and it is something Doll has seen up close and personal, which is why they try to be welcoming to everyone.

“In Mexican culture its complicated sometimes to find that accepting family in the LGBTQ+ community or even in the drag scene its complicated,” Doll said. “I have a lot of friends that struggle with having that blood family connection and I’m thankful to have mine and I want to go ahead and share that with other queens and people, which is why I try to be welcoming to new girls.”

Through endless bills and uphill battles continue to try and restrict drag shows, creating a stamina for the community. Doll and other drag queens will continue to fight the fight and show everyone that they are more than what the media portrays them to be.

“Some of my drag sisters do this for a living, from the drag queens I met all of us do this with well intention, we do this for fun and joy only positive remarks,” Doll said. “It is not like we want to go out there and hurt society or create this stigmatism of us, if anything we want to bring a joy, happiness with all these laws put into place and the thought of drag being banned is scary but it’s a fight that we will overcome.”
Love like Diego ‘D’ Martinez

People come into one another’s lives not knowing the impact they will have on each other. For Stephen Pitchkolan, President of Kappa Sigma at UTEP, the impact of Diego Martinez is an everlasting one. Unfortunately, some people leave this earth unexpectedly and their legacy is the only thing left for their loved ones to carry on.

After a devastating motorcycle accident Sept. 29, Martinez’s friends and family mourn his absence. Pitchkolan finds that he now holds the best parts of Martinez in himself despite no longer having his presence in his life. Having met in third grade in their catechism class, Pitchkolan remembers the inviting and open person Martinez was after inviting him to join his basketball team.

“Diego was an inspiration and a leader to so many people,” Pitchkolan said. “(He) best qualities were his competitive yet lovable nature.” That nature was seen throughout his time at UTEP as an engineering student and through his activism in the basketball scene in El Paso.

According to his obituary, Martinez spent some time being a referee for youth leagues at local basketball gyms. It’s also the amount of love Martinez had that made him not only a gravitating light but a joy to be with. “(He) is an example of what it is to be a great man and a great person,” Pitchkolan said. “I loved Diego, and he loved a whole lot.” Martinez was known for his heart and it’s something Pitchkolan hopes to carry with him. “I can speak for many people (when I say) that he was genuine and influenced a lot of people. He will always be remembered, and his impact will be forever.” Pitchkolan said. “In honor of Diego, I will continue to spread his joy and demeanor to anyone I can.”

Everyone is welcome to attend the visitation, which will take place from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 12, at St. Luke Catholic Church, 930 E. Redd Rd., with a Rosary at 6:00 pm. A funeral mass will be held at St. Luke Catholic Church at 10:30 am on Saturday, Oct. 14.

The Martinez family is asking that everyone wear white or vibrant colors and flower donations be sent to UTEP to create a memorial. It’s seen throughout the outpouring of love that those who knew Diego, want everyone and anyone to ‘Love like Diego’.

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Celebrate homecoming with a neon-smile

As homecoming nears, UTEP finds itself preparing to illuminate the campus with glowing spirit as they prepare to welcome back alumni. Golden Graduates and kick off the celebration during the week of Oct. 29—Nov. 4, UTEP hosted a series of events and traditions, and events will be taking place for UTEP faculty, staff, students and alumni to help ignite their UTEP pride. You knew it. This year’s homecoming theme is neon.

Decided by UTEP students and community, during homecoming week the campus will be bright with spirit as multiple events are planned, starting Oct. 9, with ‘Glow with the Flow’ Art Contest. Other events include the 13th Annual UTEP Miner Dash (5K run/3K walk), Student Org. homecoming games, Neon Carnival, and more.

Several traditions will be celebrated differently this year. For example, the homecoming pep rally is being held to celebrate Pay Dirt Perez’s 70th birthday. Replacing the annual homecoming pageant will be Mr. and Mrs. UTEP; inviting all students from all classifications to apply for a chance to be named either Mr. or Mrs. UTEP. Mallory Payan, Associate Director of Alumni Engagement, expresses her excitement towards the homecoming events planned.

“It is a cool way for students to see their university on a bigger scale,” Payan said. “[Spirit will be shown] not just [from the students] that are around campus, [but] we have the campus spirit that lives on through all of our alumni, and some of our special awardees.”

Payan states besides fun events, homecoming is a great opportunity to get in touch with fellow UTEP alumni. “This is a great opportunity for students to get involved,” Payan said. “There is no better connection than getting current students connected to our alumni who were in their shoes who graduated from the same major [or college].”

Welcome home alumni, homecoming week will feature many events highlighting them. For example, the Golden Nugget Recipients. Each year, alumni who have excelled in their profession expanding either locally or nationally become recognized.

Through a nomination process, these alumni earn the Golden Nugget Award; recipients can be alumni from any major. Payan encourages application for the Golden Nugget award as it is a great recognition.

“(Golden Nugget Recipients) are alumni who have received one of the highest awards that is the distinguished alumni and Gold Nugget award,” Payan said. “We are recognizing them with these incredible awards and all of their amazing impact, not just in their field but also to UTEP.”

Another emphasis during homecoming week is the Golden Graduates in 1973, many students earned their degree from UTEP, allowing them to excel in their profession. This year marks their 40-year graduation anniversary, and UTEP is encouraging graduates to come back to campus to celebrate. The Golden Graduates Recognition package includes a campus tour, meet-and-greet with fellow alumni, and recognition throughout homecoming week events. The class of 1973 is encouraged to come back to campus and relive some of those ‘golden’ years again, as tickets for the Golden Graduate package are still available for purchase.

“There are a number of people who graduated in 1973, that are coming back to see the campus and see how much it’s changed in 50 years,” Payan said. “It’s a really special reunion that many people may not know exists, it’s cool for folks to know about.”

UTEPT encourages students to participate in these events, to be a part of exciting experiences, and to meet alumni as well. More information about homecoming events, Golden Nugget recipients, applications for homecoming court, as well tickets for Golden Gradals can be found on the UTEP homecoming website.

“I would really encourage students to celebrate in the spirit of homecoming,” Payan said. “By getting excited about being a UTEP Miner, [and] then connecting with our thousands of alumni both here in El Paso and across the country.”

To finish homecoming week, UTEP football will be playing against Western Kentucky Nov. 4, at the Sun Bowl Stadium. UTEP’s homecoming celebration is welcome towards the community, to help them light the campus up with spirit.

To learn more about upcoming events, head to the UTEP homecoming website.

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Students seeking nomination to an Advisory Committee may serve on one of four Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) advisory committees for one academic year term beginning June 1, 2024 and ending May 31, 2025. The advisory committees are: Apply Texas; Learning Technology; Financial Aid; and Texas Transfer

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For additional information, contact SGA at 747-5584
Union East Building, Room 304.
At the curtains rise on the stage of the Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall, a harmonious celebration unfolds in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, where the rich tapestry of Hispanic culture takes center stage, weaving together music, tradition and artistry.

The recital hall was decked out in colorful papel picado and beautiful Spanish opera songs filled the air as UTEP Opera department celebrated Hispanic Heritage with a concert Sept. 28.

“It’s important to host shows like this one because we’re here on the border,” said the Director of Opera, Cherry Duke. “This show gives us a chance to celebrate how awesome these songs are, and it offers the students an opportunity for representation. A lot of the students associate these songs with their grandparents’ music, and they get the chance to elevate these songs here.”

Duke began the show by welcoming attendees of the concert and introducing the first performer, soprano, Odalis Aguirre. Aguirre started off the show by singing “Granada” written by Agustin Lara in 1932. An array of performances by UTEP students followed as they sang classics that included “Dame Que Si,” “Seguidillas Religiosas,” “Noche Hermosa” and “No Puedes Ser.” One of the highlight performances was by UTEP grad student, mezzo-soprano, Priscilla Gandara who sang “Que Te Importa Que No Venga” from Los Claveles written by Jose Cliffes written by Jose Serrano. She wowed the audience with her operatic voice and her Mexican attire.

When interviewed, Gandara recalls the importance of performing in shows like this one and why people should attend opera shows. “It’s important to host events like this especially in a community like ours that’s mostly Mexican American,” Gandara said. “Also, opera in general is important to the music world. Anyone who says opera is boring obviously hasn’t been to an opera show. It’s nothing but excitement and grandeur.”

The concert was separated into four parts which included Romanzas de Zarzuelas, Celebración de Compositoras, Canciones de Maria Grever, and Compositoras de UTEP.

The songs in the second section included “Lo T’Amo” (Te Amo) by Angela Penita sung by Brian Downen and “Noche de Ronda” written by Maria Teresa Lara. It was performed by opera director Duke, who was accompanied by Christoper Garcia. Most of the performances were accompanied by Esquiel Meza Jr. who played the piano.

The songs performed during the Canciones de Maria Grever portion included “Ahora Mi” sung by Emeralda Hernandez, Rebeca Salmeron sung “Te Quiero, Dijiste,” “Despedida,” sung by Fernanda Mendoza, Leticia Armas sung “Brisa,” Priscilla Gandara sung “Di, Que Has Dejado En Mi Ser” with Abner Astudillo ending the section by singing “Jurame.”

Special guest like cellist Michael Way played a haunting rendition of “SEVEN-Song of Isolation.” He wowed the audience with his expert playing of pizzicato and legato. The horse hairs of his bow danced on top of the C, G, D, and A strings. Other special guests included tenor Brian Downen, guitarist Christopher Garcia and vocalist Natalia Bermudez Samano who was just recently signed on as an artist and songwriter with Universal Music Publishing in Mexico. Samano performed alongside Mario Otero on guitar and Ricardo Ayub on trumpet. The three of them performed the song “Continuas” written by Samano.

The night ended with “Bésame Mucho” written by Consuelo Velazquez. The version of the song performed was arranged by UTEP commercial music student, Abeni Janae Merritweather.

“I was asked to do a quick arrangement of ‘Bésame Mucho’ two weeks before the semester started,” Merritweather said. “I had a joyous feeling hearing my own music being performed tonight. It was really great hearing everyone’s voices singing it and it being accompanied by the cello and piano.”

“Bésame Mucho” was performed by all the students who performed that night with the help of the audience. Cherry Duke conducted everyone in the auditorium.

“We took some of the students’ existing repertoire and gave them the opportunity to perform them here,” Duke said. “We especially put emphasis on Hispanic female composers. Everyone did a great job even though we didn’t have as much time as we would’ve liked to put this together. Everyone brought their A-game and put on a fantastic night of music.

To learn more about other performances and events being hosted by the opera department visit https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/music/ensembles/voice/opera-workshop.html.

Alyson Rodriguez is a contributor and may be reached at aerodriguez20@miners.utep.edu; @alyson_rod1127 on Twitter.
Imagine if the term “heaven on earth” were real. To some Sun City concertgoers, they experienced an event near that type of grandeur at the last stop of Kali Uchis’ “Red Moon in Venus” tour. The singer performed hits across seven different sold-out concerts, including her last one at UTEP’s Don Haskins Center. From vibe hits to fist-pumping releases, Uchis made her last concert one to remember. A last-minute change from her original opening act involving Dominican rapper Tokischa led to a short DJ session in which Latin hits were played to get the crowd ready for what was to come. After the act, the lights dimmed, and phone flashes lit up the arena accompanied by screams from excited concertgoers. The transparent curtain covering the stage was then lit up by the giant display board in the back as the screams intensified, revealing dancers holding hand fans that would later reveal Uchis. The R&B singer started off strong, performing songs like “Muñekita” and more laid-back melodies like “See You Again” by Tyler, the Creator which Uchis is featured in. Along with some of her features and other singles, Uchis did not hesitate to bring out hits from her latest album. Songs like “Moonlight” and “I Wish You Roses” had fans singing and swaying their arms while using their phones as flashlights. It is an understatement to say that Uchis just performed. From singing on an old-style couch to having her own solo dance on the stage, Uchis defined what it means to be a versatile artist. Each song entranced the audience, her vocals reminiscent of her studio recordings. The dancers did more than their part, providing striking dance numbers to performances coinciding with the stages. Performing and transitioning between English and Spanish songs may be difficult for some artists, but for Uchis it was nothing more than natural. Along with her English hits, Uchis performed some of her well-known Spanish songs like “Hasta Cuando.” Uchis had the audience singing in two languages for the night, bringing together the crowd that came to see her. While the artist hails from Virginia, she does not hesitate to represent her Colombian heritage through her music. A concert perfect for Hispanic Heritage Month, Uchis knew to bring her background to the spotlight through her amazing performance.

The singer not only represents her heritage through some of her songs, but her sexuality. Uchis is openly bisexual and has used music as a way to express that. Some may say this concert came in time for two reasons now, as the concert may have been a representation for LGBTQ+ History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, all in a style like no other.

Speaking of style, Uchis’ sets screamed glamour and class as well. The white arches on the stage with two staircases winding from the top gave a reminiscent look of 1950s or ‘60s style. The couch on which Uchis performed her song “Blue” looked like a vintage furniture piece featured on the set of show like “I Love Lucy.” So, colors like orange and purple contrasted with the sharp blues and reds that were featured throughout her sets. These lights accompanied by vibrant light effects combined with the music to create an environment that was ethereal. Uchis’ appearance was striking as well, taking the stage with a sparkling white dress with feathers on the bottom, a ponytail with curled ends and white high heel boots. All these factors reflected the artist’s distinct soul and R&B sound, making the sets come together for an exciting concert. To end the night, Uchis performed her legendary hits back-to-back, concluding with songs such as “After the Storm,” another song with Tyler, the Creator. From her early hits like “Melted” to some of her most famous like “Telepatía,” Kali Uchis brought her discography together for an unforgetable scene. With beautiful set design, lighting and performances given by Uchis with the dancers, everything came into place for the last show of her tour. Elisha Nunez is a staff reporter and can be reached at egnsnunez2@miners.utep.edu

Kali Uchis wishes EP roses

BY ELISHA NUÑEZ
The Prospector

Uchis singing “Blue” while the lights matched the song. Photo by Annabella Mireles/The Prospector

Uchis, who is a member of the LGBTQ+ community, performed in El Paso during LGBTQ+ History Month. Photo by Annabella Mireles/The Prospector

Uchis’ stage included a staircase as well as a couch that she sat and sang several songs for. Photo by Annabella Mireles/The Prospector

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THE PROSPECTOR - OCTOBER 10, 2023

Making Connections
Remembering queer voices and history through art

BY ERIN ACOsta
The Prospector

As crisp autumn leaves begin to fall, a month of celebrating and remembering queer history is upon us as brothers, sisters and siblings in the LGBTQ+ community hold hands to share their stories and experiences. In remembrance of those like Marsha P. Johnson and events like the Stonewall Riots, a community that has shed tears and fought back with perseverance, dedicates this month to celebrating and observing the history within the community.

Commemorating this history, UTEP arranged a Queer History Month Gallery which opened Oct. 2, highlighting various LGBTQ+ artists in the El Paso community, offering them a safe and welcoming space to display their unique experiences and voices on what it means to be queer through art.

One of the organizers for the gallery, Carla Sarinana, considers it a way for the public to view these sentimental pieces that are shared, that are sometimes not visible and get a raw outlook on the experiences of being queer in the borderland. “It’s important to let people express themselves and give them that platform to display things that are sensitive and personal to them,” Sarinana said. “A lot of the stories that are shared along the art talk about their experience being queer here in the borderland or the only queer person in their family. All of these things that people don’t tend to see so to make them visible in a space was important.”

A memorial wall filled with flowers dedicated to deceased LG-BTQ+ people, including Mercedes Demarco, a drag queen in the El Paso community whose story was displayed. Demarco passed away in El Paso police custody in October 2013, making this month more special for people who grew up like me and didn’t have an outlet, “This is one of the few pieces that touch on the stories of being queer in the Hispanic community,” Sarinana said. “UTEP as a Hispanic serving institution and El Paso being Hispanic in population maybe diminishes queer culture here so it’s important to view the art that was in the themes of being queer and Mexican since it is different being queer and White.” Sarinana said. “A view of the pieces touch on that so I thought that was beautiful and you see the Hispanic community also embrace their intersectionality.”

With pride flags in people’s hands, the exhibit displayed a pride flag allowing attendees to write and leave sentimental notes among the art listed at the gallery, artist José Montoya had a few of his pieces shown. Proud and open about his sexual- ity, Montoya recalls his personal experiences and the taboos conversations regarding his sexuality with his culture and family. Working with art to express his authentic self, he considers the exhibition a gateway for viewers to catch a small glimpse of his experiences.

“There are still a lot of taboo conversations in the Hispanic community sometimes revolving around LGBTQ+ identity and I am a perfect example of that, my sexuality is not a secret but because of my family it’s something that we don’t talk about,” Montoya said. “These conversations go under the table, they don’t even exist. That’s my experience so I want to be there for people who grew up like me and didn’t have an outlet.”

An El Paso born artist and member of the LGBTQ+ community, Daniel Gutiérrez, started drawing and painting when they were a kid. With one of their pieces highlighted at the gallery, Gutiérrez considers the exhibition essential to highlight the representation within the community.

“I feel good that this is happening because I studied in a catholic school for twelve years, so this kind of thing didn’t happen at my school,” Gutiérrez said, “I think it’s important to do these kinds of events so we can show people that we not just the stereotypes.”

Crafting their work in January, a time of feeling lost with their identity and dealing with depression, Gutiérrez’s work is proudly displayed at the gallery amongst the LGBTQ+ artists having their stories and voices seen in a creative and safe space.

Through this gallery, the El Paso community can reflect on some of the struggles and hardships LGBTQ+ people have experienced, all with different voices and stories to share. This event allows for that gateway of knowledge and celebration to happen. The university will have another event Oct. 11 for National Coming Out Day, open for the community to see and hear more unique stories within the borderland

“Pride in Marriage,” an art piece by Karen Dreher, on display at the Queer History Month Gallery. Photo by Joel Molina /The Prospector
Revival of Y2K: Behind the glitz and glam

BY AVERY ESCAMILLA
The Prospector

Iconic denim on denim, glittery tops and bright-colored tracksuits have returned as staples in this season’s fashion trends. Behind the Y2K fashion and makeup, is a culture founded by Black and Latinx communities. As Gen Z continues bringing back past fashion trends, the culture continues to be represented through the love of Y2K.

Oct. 24 | 1:30 to 2:50 PM
COMMUNITY AND THE EL PASO RESOURCES AT UTEP
MENTAL HEALTH

Oct. 24 | 9 to 10:30 AM
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
WORKING DOGS FOR
VIA ZOOM
DAY 1: PANEL DISCUSSION

Sept. 24 | 10:30 to 11:50 AM
STUDENTS
UTEP RESOURCES FOR
VIA ZOOM

DAY 3: PANEL DISCUSSION

STUDENT UNION
INFORMATIONAL CASS STAFF
PANEL FOR FACULTY

Oct. 26 | 10:30 to 11:50 AM

Oct. 26 | 1:30 to 2:50 PM
DAY 2: RESOURCE FAIR AT
CENTENNIAL PLAZA
UTEP resources for individuals with disabilities.
Giveaways and door prizes will be provided!

Oct. 25 | 9 AM to Noon

UTEP.edu/cass

915-747-5148
utep.edu/cass | cass@utep.edu

The Y2K style has been making a recent comeback with Gen Z embracing the culture of Y2K and its originality is the foundation of the expansion of fashion today.

“I was born in the 2000s, so I feel like it’s a great thing that Gen Z is incorporating trends and styles from back then because it shows how culture can grow and evolve,” Takem said. “And we as Gen Z, we’re taking the trend from back then (Y2K) and we are incorporating our own aesthetics and bringing it to life.”

The spin on Y2K creates a new, yet familiar foundation for the fashion trend. “It empowers us as Latina/o(s), and black and women and men because it’s basically like a heritage,” Takem said. “So, we’re able to be more confident and bolder about ourselves because we have a foundation we can look back on.”

Having the original style to look back on allows generations today to learn how to recreate outfits from the Y2K era and add their generational touch. “People from back in the day, (we) basically look up to them to build our style and confidence in growing that and it’s going to continue for generations,” Takem said.

Y2K fashion is accessible across genders, including men. Anthony Vasquez a junior majoring in nursing, incorporates Y2K fashion into her lifestyle. “I feel like it’s significant because it’s a way of embracing that culture that founded the fashion in a way,” Vasquez said. “I think it’s very cool that we are able to embrace it.”

Embracing the culture of Y2K and its originality is the foundation of the expansion of fashion today. “There’s definitely other ways to embrace the culture, fashion being one of them, it brings more light to the culture,” Vasquez said. When remembering fashion trends, it is important to remember the culture behind the statement pieces or looks. The memorable style of Y2K will continue for years with every generation’s new touch.

Fashion changes over time and trends die, but to adore the beauty of Y2K it is never mired to ad-

For more information about UTEP’s Ability Awareness Week, visit utep.edu/cass or Instagram @by_avery_escamilla.

The Prospector
BY AVERY ESCAMILLA

Emma Takem, a junior majoring in nursing, incorporates Y2K fashion into her lifestyle. “I was born in the 2000s, so I feel like it’s a great thing that Gen Z is incorporating trends and styles from back then because it shows how culture can grow and evolve,” Takem said. “And we as Gen Z, we’re taking the trend from back then (Y2K) and we are incorporating our own aesthetics and bringing it to life.”

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Carrying her Colombian heritage through golf
Emmanuel Rivas Valenzuela, editor

BY ELSA HUÉREZ
The Prospector

Some kids begin their childhood in preschool or by stacking toy blocks in the living room. For Daniela Chipchase, she remembers her childhood being in the back of a golf cart. It is memories like these that Chipchase cites as the roots to her lifelong golf career. From adjusting to many lives in many different countries to finding a home at UTEP, Chipchase brings her Colombian roots and passion for golf with her.

Born in Houston, Chipchase began moving around at an early age. From China to Libya to Trinidad and Tobago, Chipchase found the time to commit to one thing: golf. “I was introduced at a very young age,” Chipchase said. “I started liking it a lot and I just saw it as a hobby or something to spend more time with my parents, with my dad specifically. It wasn’t until I reached the age of like, 14, 15 that I actually started liking it in a competitive way.”

Committing to golf as a teen and later as a young adult, Chipchase felt it was her calling. During her last year of high school, Chipchase decided to take her future in golf seriously. After searching for a college that would help her continue her journey, Chipchase found that UTEP was the perfect choice for her. “About two years before when I was in my last year of high school, I started seeing different options of universities and I saw (an) opportunity to talk to a division one school, which is (UTEP),” Chipchase said. “I came on an official visit with my dad here back in 2019. We saw some of the facilities that were offered, (the) country club and we saw everything. I just really loved the environment, the community, the campus. It was very nice.”

After seeing the campus and getting to know El Paso, Chipchase was able to meet and click with some of the teammates. Meeting the coach, players and the city was all enough to convince Chipchase that UTEP was the campus for her. Though, her transition to a new city did not come without struggle. Moving away from her home in Bogotá, Colombia was difficult.

Today, Chipchase still misses her way of life in Colombia. Whether it is food or family, there are many things she longs to see again. “My parents are a huge support and I still talk to them if not every day, every other day,” Chipchase said. “The good thing is that I’m able to go back home every summer and Christmas to visit them. That’s really helpful because I (would) feel very alone if I had to stay here for like a couple of years.” Though she is far from home, Chipchase has been able to adjust to El Paso just fine. Finding similarities between Colombian and Mexican ways of life, Chipchase has been able to make friends and teach her peers about Colombian culture.

“I remember a couple of years ago, and I still kind of do, when I invite my friend over and cook (a) type of meal that I would have back home. It’s been a way of sharing (my culture),” Chipchase said. Through her roots are traced back to Colombia, Chipchase feels like she is “from the world.”

Growing up with an English father and Colombian mother, Chipchase did not only did her family stretch from two different sides of the globe, but her life spans across almost all continents. “I do say I’m from Colombia because I mean, that’s the truth, (but that is) the hard part for me when I come to any place. (For example), I’ve lived in China more than I’ve lived in Colombia,” Chipchase said. “It’s kind of hard for me to associate with one country. I feel like if there was an option to say I’m from the world I would.”

Not restricted to any country, Chipchase wears and shares her Colombian heritage proudly on her back. Through golf, she has been able to come to El Paso and exchange her culture with others. Not only that, but UTEP has allowed her to progress in her professional endeavors.

Chipchase plans to pursue golf after graduation, and to continue her journey in the states with the support of her friends and family. Chipchase plans to pursue golf after graduation. Photo courtesy of Minero Magazine/Annabella Mireles

Behind the beat of the Marching Miners’ success
BY EMMANUEL RIVAS
The Prospector

Although people come to the Sun Bowl on game days to watch the UTEP football team, it can be difficult to imagine the football experience without the spectacle put on by the Marching Miners. The UTEP Marching Miners have become a staple, performing across various athletic events and local exhibitions in and around El Paso. The ensemble has garnered the attention of over 200 members. Behind the flashy composition and extravagant choreography are the UTEP Drum Majors. This year, the Marching Miners are led on the field by drum majors Alexa Andrade Fuentes, Cassandra Gil and Ramirez Perez. All El Paso natives who decided to pursue UTEP with local talent also graduated from local high schools. Fuentes is a graduate of Eastwood High School, Gil attended El Dorado High School and Perez is a Parkland High School alum. From various backgrounds, the three drum majors have one thing in common; none of them are music majors.

This is something the trio says they are quite proud of. They pointed out that anyone can truly succeed in anything they want to do and not just with the Marching Miners, but in various facets of life. “I think most of the band (members are) non-music majors,” Gil said. “It’s part of what people want to do. They really want to have this be like a ticket out of academics. It is a fun time that you know you can look forward to after if you’ve had a bad day.”

Fostering a welcoming environment is a key goal of this leadership squad as all three drum majors have had less than ideal circumstances choosing between music and other extracurricular activities throughout high school. “I do think there is a stigma in high school of ‘You can’t do both sports and band,’” Fuentes said. “They always make you choose and that’s what I see a lot of high schoolers experiencing now.”

The Marching Miners recently experienced a change in professional leadership following the promotion of Andrew Hunter to UTEP Director of Bands. After a national search, Brandon Houghtalam was named Director of Athletic Bands. The trio says they have naturally grown attached to Houghtalam over the course of their band career. “I kind of like to describe it as we are like his kids and I’m the middle child who likes to get under his skin, sometimes for fun,” Fuentes said. “I do think our relationship is different. I think we are closer to him than you know, if you were not a leader simply because we do have to work with him one-on-one.”

With the drum majors in various stages of their academic careers, they say it may lead to situations where they have to deal with more than one issue at a time. They say this has not been a problem for them so far.

Fuentes is a senior pre-med major. Perez is a sophomore digital media production major and Gil, who is enrolled as an El Paso Community College, is an architecture senior. “Sure, it is having great upper classroom (to look up to), but re- ally, it’s just two great friends that I get to be co-drums major with,” Perez said. “Our personalities are a little bit different, but honestly, they work really well, and we have. Yeah, we have each other’s back all the time. It is a great dynamic.”

The Marching Miners perform at football, volleyball and basketball games throughout the year and participate in various high school marching band competitions.
The Prospector’s Student-Athlete of the Month: Sheyliene Patolo

By Elisha Nunéz

Sheyliene Patolo has always been a soccer player at heart. Patolo, a senior at UTEP, has been playing soccer since she was young. Her love for soccer started when she was just a kid and it has continued to this day. Patolo has always been a soccer player at heart.

Patolo said, “I always put my school first and then sports because without academics, you can’t play the sport.” Patolo said. “Time management and just putting in that extra work to get your work done to perform at your best on the field. It helps me mentally (because) I don’t have to worry about my school.”

Playing soccer at UTEP is something Patolo does with passion and determination. During her time in college, Patolo considered playing for other schools. From Arizona to Utah, to returning home to Hawaii, but Patolo does not plan on stopping at UTEP.

Planning to play soccer professionally, Patolo has gone through a long journey of finding her motivation. Though it can seem difficult, Patolo has found her motivation in many places. “I plan to keep pursuing soccer just by staying healthy and working hard on the field, then I could join like some pro leagues. I know there are still a lot of people that can hopefully get (me) to where I want to be,” Patolo said. “How bad do I want it? (might) want to go outside of El Paso or back home, maybe even abroad.”

For now, Patolo will stay focused on her journey in El Paso. While her trip to El Paso was not easy, she managed to make the most of everything and see the positives. Making friends and helpful connections, Patolo hopes to expand her pursuit in soccer to other states or countries.

The Marching Miners are led on the field by this year’s Drum Majors and all their hard work keeps me motivated and my faith in the Lord. I have been blessed with hard work. (Now) I have a different mentality, “Patolo said. With her motivation figured out, Patolo plans to move more through the ranks and play soccer professionally. First, she must focus on her studies and sports. Balancing sports and academics can be tough for some students, but Patolo found a way to pursue soccer while keeping track of her schoolwork. “I was always taught that family (was first), school and then sports. I always put my school first and then sports because without academics, you can’t play the sport.” Patolo said.

Volleyball busts out the brooms in series sweep against FIU Panthers

The UTEP volleyball team (13-6, C-USA 5-3) swept FIU in a two-game series which took place Saturday, Oct. 7, and Sunday Oct. 8, at Memorial Gym. The Miners extended the team’s 5-0 home streak.

Game one

Set one during game one, the Miners went out and took an early double-digit lead (10-4), however the FIU Panthers had a 6-1 run after taking a timeout. Senior right side hitter Marian Ovalle helped lead the Miners’ offense as she finished with 17 kills and 22 digs.

The Miners scored 25-16 in set one to take the lead and secure their first win of the weekend. Senior libero Alyssa Sianez played a key role in the game as she finished with 17 digs.

Set two was not very different as the Miners took an early 10-6 lead. Just as in the other two sets, the score was close. The Miners forced four tied scores and the Panthers made their way back into the set. The Miners had a massive 17 kill set with an accompanying 12 blocks. FIU was down 20-17 and was forced to take a time out. After the timeout, the Panthers managed to grab two more points as graduate student middle blocker Sakia LaCoop scored the final 12-0 and took the set 25-19.

Game two

The Miners offense was on fire as graduate student outside hitter and middle blocker Darley recorded a hitting percentage of .529 with ten kills while sophomore setter Martine Gantt and freshman setter Kaila Kohler combined for 38 assists on defense. senior right side hitter Kaya Weaver notched up six blocks and Sianez had a match high of nine digs which now has her sitting at a whopping total of 1,007 digs.

Set one UTEP had three consecutive kills which lead to an early 5-1 lead. The Miners managed to pull ahead with a 13-6 lead, however FIU had its own stint to catch up. Weaver and Ovalle put a quick end to the FIU run with a key block. FIU committed three errors which let Gantt score a key kill to take the set 25-16.

Set two was different, as the Miners took an early lead 9-4, which forced the Miners to take a timeout. Both teams went back and forth for ten serves, however Patolo’s team scored two more points to take the lead and secure their first win of the weekend. Senior libero Alyssa Sianez played a key role in the game as she finished with 17 digs.

Set three was not very different as she, the Miners took an early 10-6 lead. Just as in the other two sets, the score was close. The Miners forced four tied scores and the Panthers made their way back into the set. The Miners had a massive 17 kill set with an accompanying 12 blocks. FIU was down 20-17 and was forced to take a time out. After the timeout, the Panthers managed to grab two more points as graduate student middle blocker Sakia LaCoop scored the final 12-0 and took the set 25-19.

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