

Hundreds of 'sluts' protest rape, victim blaming

Auraria students participate in international movement against sexual assault cliches

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"Whose street? Sluts' street!" chanted a mass of self-proclaimed sluts as they walked down Colfax Avenue, receiving curious looks and honks of support.

A group of students from Auraria's Gay-Straight Alliance and Metro's Feminist Alliance were among the crowd who marched and protested at Denver's Slutwalk July 2 at Civic Center Park. The original Slutwalk event took place April 3 in Toronto following a police official's Jan. 24 comment: "Women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized." Since then, many Slutwalks have been held or are being planned in multiple cities around the world.

"[The Auraria group] thought it was a good thing to reclaim the word 'slut' and to stand up and say that victim blaming is wrong," said

Crystal Hoffman, Metro senior and president of the Feminist Alliance. "So we thought it was a good way to get involved, especially since our generation doesn't really."

Hoffman said she's heard multiple criticisms from second-wave (beginning in the 1960s) feminists about how the third-wave (beginning in the 1990s) generation is apathetic. She thought the Slutwalk was a great way to get involved, and it serves as a platform to protest other issues.

The Slutwalk movement has also received criticism because of the negative connotation associated with the word "slut." Megan Fowler, Metro sophomore and director of education and activism for AGSA, said she understands why people would have that mind set, but that one can be an ally and a supporter without identifying with the term.

Emerald Green, co-organizer for the event and a victim of sexual assault, said she heard the movement was spreading beyond Toronto and asked friends if there was going to be one in Denver.

"[Co-organizer Felicia Sheumaker said] there will be one when we make one," Green said. They discussed the issue over a falafel, and Green, Sheumaker and Beth Feret decided to organize the event.

Due to the nature of their event permit, participants were split up into two marches around the park rather than one large demonstration. In addition to the march various people addressed the crowd, including keynote speaker Pamela White (Colorado journalist and women's-rights activist), and representatives from Sex Workers Outreach Project Colorado. Green, Sheumaker and



Slutwalk Denver participants march by the Capitol Building July 2. More than 400 protesters gathered at Civic Center Park to speak out against sexual assault and victim blaming. The original Slutwalk took place April 3 in Toronto as a protest against a police official whom said women should not dress like sluts in order to avoid being assaulted. Slutwalk events are being held in cities in multiple countries.

Feret spoke about the importance of the event and victim blaming, and also shared personal stories.

Feret, who wore the shorts she was wearing when she "woke up with a guy [she] trusted on top of [her]," addressed victim blaming, which she sarcastically referred to as victims asking to be assaulted by what they wear and how they act.

"Every single person here has the right to safety and freedom from sexual assault — regardless of what outfit you wear, how much alcohol you've consumed, if you have make-up on, if you knew the person, if you said 'yes' previously and on and on," she said.

Sheumaker said she never takes for granted the fact that she has not been a victim of sexual assault. She shared how she has managed to prevent being raped, including how she wears makeup every day and embraces her sexuality.

"I am living proof that short



Keynote speaker Pamela White addresses the crowd about the word "slut." "It's important to note the organizers of these Slutwalk events did not chose the word 'slut' themselves," White said. "It was chosen for them by a Toronto police officer who told a group of young college women not to dress like sluts if they didn't want to get raped."

skirts, alcohol, makeup, walking alone and enjoying sex have nothing to do with sexual assault," she said. "These so-called rules that rape culture has made up to prevent peo-

ple from doing what they want are bullshit! The rapist doesn't care what you're wearing, or drinking or who you're fucking; we all know that and we're hear to say 'I do what I want; I've had enough.'"

More than 400 "sluts" and allies attended the event. Green said 3,700 people RSVP'ed "attending" on the Facebook event page, and she thinks the much-smaller turnout was affected by the Fourth of July weekend, which the organizers did not take into consideration when they planned the event. However, she said it was the first time the friends had ever done anything like it and the participants seemed to enjoy it.

The Auraria students did appreciate the event and understood the purpose.

"I just think it's really important to keep this motivation alive as we go through our daily lives and not be afraid to be who we're going to be and to challenge people who are going to get in the way of that," Fowler said.



Quinn Berg takes in the atmosphere at the Civic Center Greek Amphitheater.



Metro senior and Metro's Feminist Alliance President Crystal Hoffman and UCD junior and Auraria Gay-Straight Alliance Vice President Kevin Anderson engage prior to the Slutwalk festivities.



Metro Senior and Auraria Gay-Straight Alliance Events and Communications Scout Craig Archuleta and Slutwalk participant Quinn Berg converse while waiting for the opening speech.

SOUNDING OFF

Brass Tree welcomes UMS inside

On July 24 — during the peak of the 11th Annual Underground Music Showcase — Leighton Peterson, Luke Bender, Tyler Campell and Ben Mund will be busy filming their sixth Brass Tree session. And, because this film crew's home is only one block away from all the UMS festivities, it is only natural that they round up six bands and let the cameras roll. *The Metropolitan* spoke to each member about this upcoming bill, their evening with Jens Lekman and the best way to maintain their signature "house show" vibe.

Interview by Ian Gassman • igassman@mscd.edu

IG: What does Brass Tree have planned for the UMS?

LP: It's looking like we're going to do an afternoon-long, "double" session [with] six bands instead of three.

IG: So who is set to play this UMS "double-header"?

LP: It's Wombmates, Achille Lauro, Vitamins, Bad Weather California, Overcasters and a band from Boise called Finn Riggins.

IG: Why did you all decide to set up this UMS session? Couldn't you guys just walk around and document the entire showcase?

LB: Yes and no. I think, [by filming in our house], we can still keep our aesthetic and control the environment more [instead] of going other places [without] audio and pre-production.

TC: My thought on [the UMS] was that we'd film the session in our house and showcase one or two songs in an episode. But, in between songs, we'd have some sort of b-roll of the actual festival that's going on around the house; showing that there is a huge event going on in our neighborhood.

IG: Is it nice to know that Brass Tree is supporting the UMS, as well as filming another great session?

TC: Yeah, to be apart of the Denver music scene — that's what we all love.

BM: It has to do with Brass Tree's [mission] ... current local bands, promoting ... how do you have "Brass Tree" and you're not involved in the UMS? I mean, come on!

IG: On June 16 the Swedish singer-songwriter, Jens Lekman, played

Brass Tree. How did it feel having a nationally renowned artist play in your home?

TC: It felt very natural and normal, in a very comfortable setting. Obviously, [the audience was] aware there was a national act playing, but the social environment was as laid back as any other house show we'd done.

IG: Also, The Denver Post Reverb blog did an exclusive, first-look at Lekman's Brass Tree performance. Does it feel good knowing that Brass Tree is getting some press?

TC: I love the fact that Brass Tree is getting some press. I want everyone in the city to see the great bands that they might not be aware of. Press is good. It opens people's ears.

IG: So, do you have anything set up after this UMS session?

LP: We're doing the next two sessions over at Jamie Bryant's place [from Fingers of the Sun].

TC: Basically, there's this festival coming into town called Gold-rush. I guess there's a lot of national acts that will be playing [at Bryant's]. So, she invited us over to use her house. She's got this great backyard; we can be as loud as possible and actually have an outside performance this time around.

IG: With this venue change in mind, are you all looking for a new place to film?



From left: Leighton Peterson, Luke Bender, Tyler Campell and Ben Mund are Brass Tree. Photo by Stephanie DeCamp • sdecamp@mscd.edu

TC: I think we'll just go with the flow with that ... if there are opportunities to go elsewhere and showcase a whole other venue —

LB: Speaking of opportunities, at 55 Elati, there is a preschool that's up for rent and it's got a whole kids playground in the back.

TC: Wow. Imagine shooting some video of bands playing music on swings or teeter totters [laughs].

IG: Either way, do you think the Brass Tree sessions would be different if they lost that "house show" vibe?

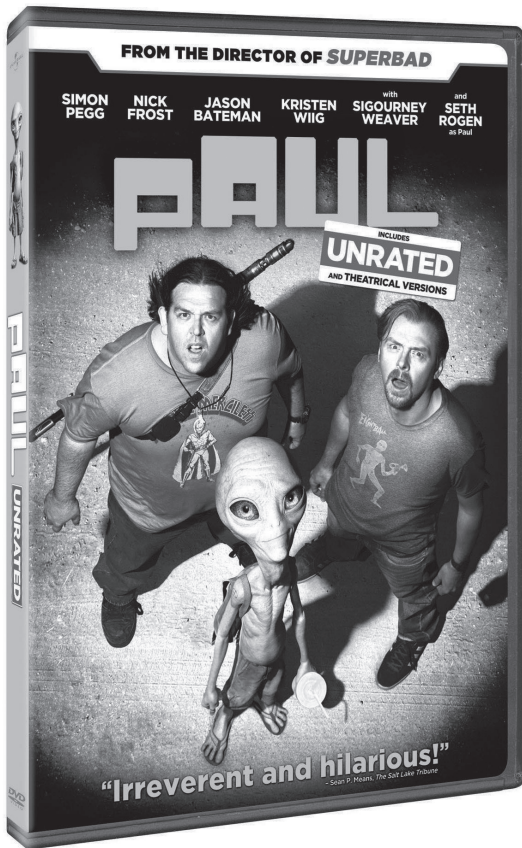
BM: I think it will always come back to the "house show" vibe, no matter what.

LP: As long as we keep it pretty unconventional [and] shoot it how we shoot it.

LB: When we get really big, we'll just bring houses with us [laughs].



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