



## **Nine next-level Marion County performing artists chosen to receive professional development opportunities through Next Up fellowship program**

*Next Up is part of #IndyKeepsCreating Series, featuring events, visual art, and grants to support the city's arts community*

**INDIANAPOLIS (February 15, 2022)** – The City of Indianapolis and GANGGANG today announced nine Marion County-based performing artists selected as part of the Next Up Fellowship, a new professional development program that will provide local artists the opportunity to work with experts to enhance their music careers. The Next Up program, which will invest \$100,000 in career growth opportunities for these artists, is supported through the #IndyKeepsCreating Series. The program, which features music, art installations, and cultural programs through March, is part of a City and Indy Arts Council collaboration.

Nearly 35 candidates applied through an open call issued last fall or were nominated by a selection committee, chaired by GANGGANG, that represented seven Indianapolis arts and culture community members. The committee chose the nine finalists based on criteria that included their artistry, brand, live performances, recorded performances, and social capital.

The artists will receive customized coaching and master class opportunities across areas including entrepreneurship, law, brand identity, touring, performance impact, and the history and legacy of music culture in Indianapolis. The program will culminate in a group showcase at The Vogue in Indianapolis on Friday, March 25.

"Next Up is another incredible opportunity for artists and for Indianapolis at large," said GANGGANG Co-Founder Alan Bacon. "If this program helps more artists make it to the next level, then we all win. Individual success will eventually elevate other performing artists and the entire creative economy within the city."

The nine Next Up fellows are as follows. More information, along with photos, websites and/or social media handles for the artists, can be found at [indykeepscreating.org](http://indykeepscreating.org).

- **NORRIE THE GOAT**  
The self-taught artist, 24, takes pride in having 100% creative control on his sound, from lyrics to engineering. "I consider myself to be an artist rather

than a rapper because of what I bring to the table,” he says. “I produce and engineer my own sound and I created my own sound from scratch. I started making beats, rapping, engineering, mixing and mastering my own music in 2014.”

- **NATIVE SUN**  
Brandon Meeks (bass), Richard “Sleepy” Floyd (drums) and B Young (emcee) began to intertwine their musical backgrounds within the context of hip hop when Native Sun formed in 2008. The musicians draw from their familiarity in gospel, rock, electronic, jazz and soul, creating music that sounds much bigger than what one would expect from a three-piece act. This solid foundation in live music (as compared to produced beats) sets Native Sun apart from others in hip hop.
- **TRIBESOUL**  
Led by national spoken word artist and emcee Mariah Ivey, TribeSouL brings a message of hope, communal healing, love, unity, and sacred spirituality. Combining sounds and art forms, TribeSouL found its niche in the stream of hip hop, neo-soul, funk, and reggae with gospel influences. Their shows reflect versatility, warm energy, and natural chemistry; their music and poetry enhances the culture whether performed over an acoustic set, a solo poetry set, or with the full band.
- **ALLISON VICTORIA**  
Allison Victoria is a multi-genre performing artist and musician. With a positive movement and raw energy, her style ranges from soul, jazz and hip hop to folk, pop and more.
- **PSYWRN SIMONE**  
PsyWrn Simone (pronounced Sī-ren Si-mōn) is a performing artist, teaching artist, and arts advocate. Guided by Nina Simone’s words, “An artist’s duty...is to reflect the times,” PsyWrn marries music and activism, while merging elements of song, lyricism, and spoken word. Her performances are a powerfully immersive experience—“wrecking the status quo with a beat, some lyrics, and a seductive melody.”
- **HUCKLEBERRY FUNK**  
Huckleberry Funk is a gritty soul/R&B band based out of Indianapolis. Their genre-bending sound attracts a diverse audience, affording them opportunities to open for bands such as Khurangbin, Dumpstaphunk, and the Main Squeeze. In this band, funk itself is considered more of an attitude and feeling, and they aim for that funk to come across in the high-quality, cohesive shows they perform.
- **STARCHASER**

Kara is a guitarist, composer, producer, and vocalist who focuses on progressive metal/modern guitar playing. She has been playing music in the Indianapolis area since 2006 and has worked with local artists including Nick Tucker (Tucker Brothers), Carrington Clinton (Clint Breeze and the Groove), and Adam Gross (SM Wolf). She writes music and fronts Eliot Bigger and has recorded two albums of her original music: *Space Ocean* (2021) and *Murals* (2017). She holds a music performance degree from the University of Indianapolis.

- **BRANDON MEEKS**

Brandon Meeks has been a part of Indianapolis' soulful and eclectic music scene for nearly 20 years. As a bass player, he's created compelling live music with every artist in the city's jazz scene as well as with national artists. Meeks has worked with noteworthy creative minds such as Don Cheadle, Robert Gasper, Black Milk, and Thundercat. He has teamed up with a new collective of regional musicians from Indy, Chicago, and Cincinnati to explore musical ideas inspired by modern jazz and hip hop visionaries such as Christian McBride, Roy Hargrove, and Madlib.

- **WIFE PATROL**

Wife Patrol is a rock trio consisting of Nicole O'Neal (bass/vocals), Natasha O'Neill (drums/vocals), and Greg O'Neill (guitar/vocals). Formed in 2015, the band takes its inspiration from alternative rock, punk, metal, and pop music. The band's debut album, *Too Prickly For This World* (2020), earned praise in publications such as *VICE*, *AFROPUNK*, *The Alternative*, and *Overblown* (UK); received airplay on radio stations from Montreal to Melbourne; and landed a "New and Notable" mention on Bandcamp, in addition to a slot on its list of 16 all-time best-selling alt rock albums.

### **About the #IndyKeepsCreating Series**

The #IndyKeepsCreating Series engages artists and arts and culture partners with paid opportunities to support the vibrancy, beautification, and activation of Marion County's neighborhoods and public spaces, reconnecting residents and visitors with the places and experiences they've been missing during the pandemic. The Series is powered by a \$500,000 allocation made possible through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, unanimously approved by the Indianapolis City-County Council. Nearly \$230,000 has been awarded to support 250 artists engaged in opportunities across 16 city neighborhoods, including collaboration with more than 30 community partners to support existing art and culture events or create new ones. To date, 56 percent of all grants and paid engagements have been awarded to artists of color.

### **About GANGGANG**

GANGGANG activates the creative economy to bring more beauty, equity, and culture to cities. Born out of the pandemic and a civil rights movement, GANGGANG is an

Indianapolis-based cultural development firm on a mission to produce, promote, and preserve equity and culture. Learn more at [www.ganggangculture.com](http://www.ganggangculture.com).

**About Indy Arts Council**

The Indy Arts Council fosters meaningful engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations can thrive. Read the Arts Council's Equity Statement [here](#).

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