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Portland^{MONTHLY}**COCKTAIL CULTURE**

Craig Hermann's Tiki Underground

The story behind the Monkey Hut, a North Portland basement that became a pilgrimage site for the tiki-obsessed.

By [Miranda Rake](#) • 7/1/2013 at 8:00am • Published in the [July 2013](#) issue of *Portland Monthly*

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IMAGE: [ASHLEY ANDERSON](#)

Craig Hermann remembers his childhood trips to Disneyland. Unlike other kids, once inside those pearliest of gates, Hermann ignored Space Mountain and made a beeline for the Enchanted Tiki Room—a lush, junglelike, singing-parrot-filled space, opened back in 1963 in the heart of Adventureland.

These days, Hermann, 41, is known in the small but fanatical world of tiki enthusiasts as “Colonel Tiki.” Over the past five years, Hermann and his wife, Heather, have transformed the basement of their N Russet Street home into the Monkey Hut, a 750-square-foot nexus for the nation’s mai tai–swigging Martin Denny aficionados.

“What I love about tiki is the dream aspect,” Hermann says as he mixes up a Navy Grog and pours it into a personalized Monkey Hut glass. Hermann and his wife first encountered this *tropicália* underworld in San Francisco in the late '90s, thanks to a now-defunct Yahoo group. Eager to realize their tiki fantasies, they moved to Portland in 2003. A systems administrator for TriMet by day, Hermann soon became the head organizer for Tiki Kon. The pinnacle of the annual three-day event—which may draw 250 this month—is a daylong crawl through Portland’s private and public tiki bars. The Monkey Hut is considered an unmissable highlight.

“Good tiki bars should have a sense of danger—of riskiness—as well as a womblike feeling,” Hermann says. The Monkey Hut embodies all those qualities. A disorienting walk down steep, creaky basement steps leads into pitch-blackness. As your eyes adjust, they feast on masks, nets, “war clubs,” and skulls packed on every wall, bathed in red and green lights. It’s chaotic and primal but somehow comforting.

“You’re surrounded by the art,” muses the Colonel. “With the music, it’s really like a performance event that you’re taking part in—almost like a movie set. It should be drug-trippy without taking drugs—an exotic otherworld that expands your senses.”

Colonel Tiki’s Navy Grog

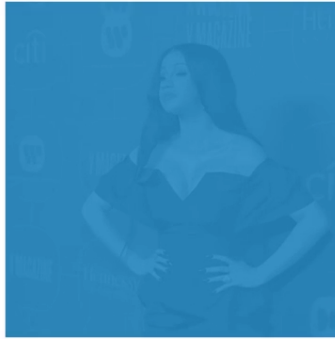
“Based on Don the Beachcomber’s recipe, with a nod to Trader Vic’s”

- **¾ oz** white grapefruit juice (canned can work)
- **¾ oz** lime juice
- **1 oz** orange blossom honey mix*
- **1 oz** Cruzan Puerto Rican light rum
- **1 oz** Coruba dark Jamaican rum
- **1 oz** El Dorado 5 demerara rum
- **¼ oz** St. Elizabeth Allspice Liqueur (or other pimento dram)
- **6 oz** crushed ice
- **1 oz** club soda

(1) SHAKE all ingredients except club soda over the ice, until frosty in the shaker. **Colonel Tiki says:** “For better effect, use a Hamilton Beach drinks mixer ... Think of it as a superpowered swizzle stick.”

(2) POUR directly into a double rocks glass.

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(3) ADD club soda and stir.

(4) GARNISH with a lime wheel and a rock-candy swizzle stick.

[Tiki Kon](#) takes place in Portland and Vancouver July 12–14.

*Mix equal parts warmed water and orange blossom honey and refrigerate. **Colonel Tiki commands:**
“Do not use clover honey. Insist on quality orange blossom.”

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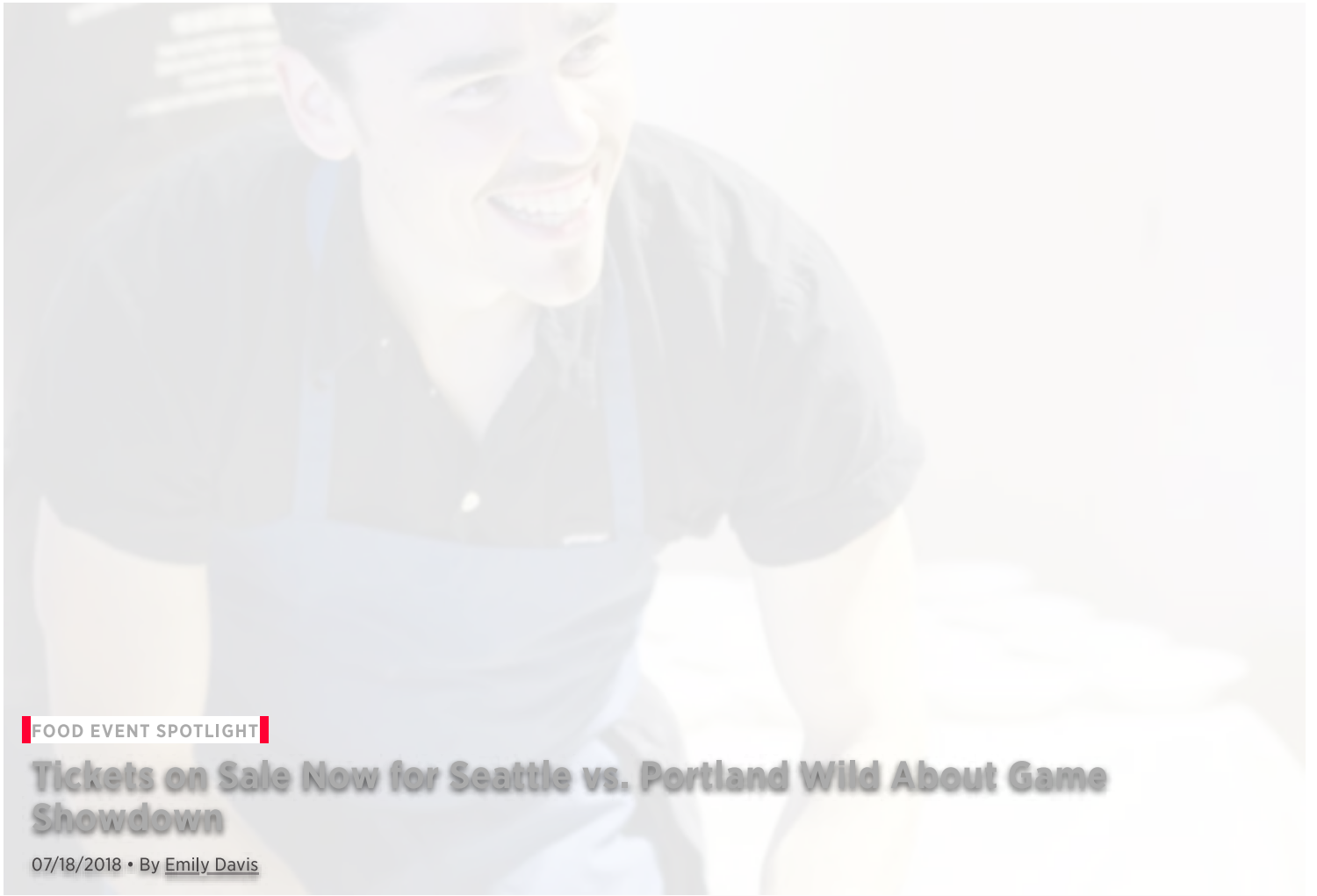
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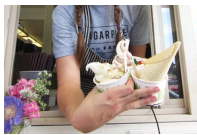
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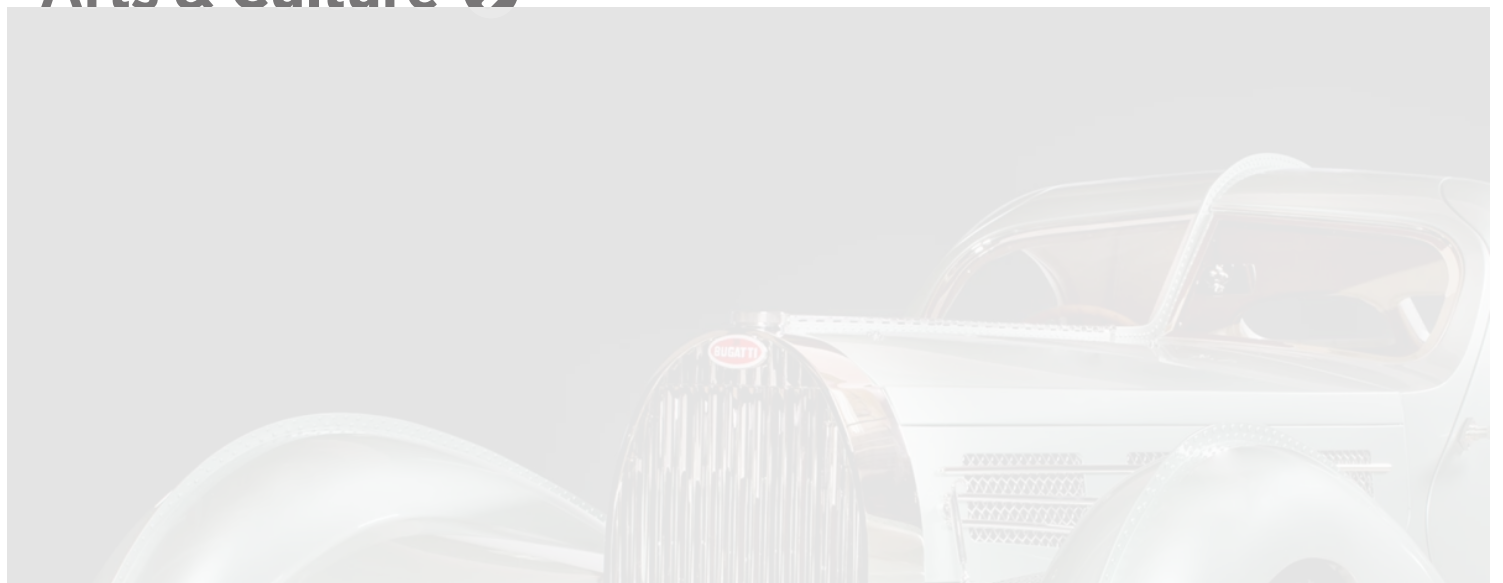
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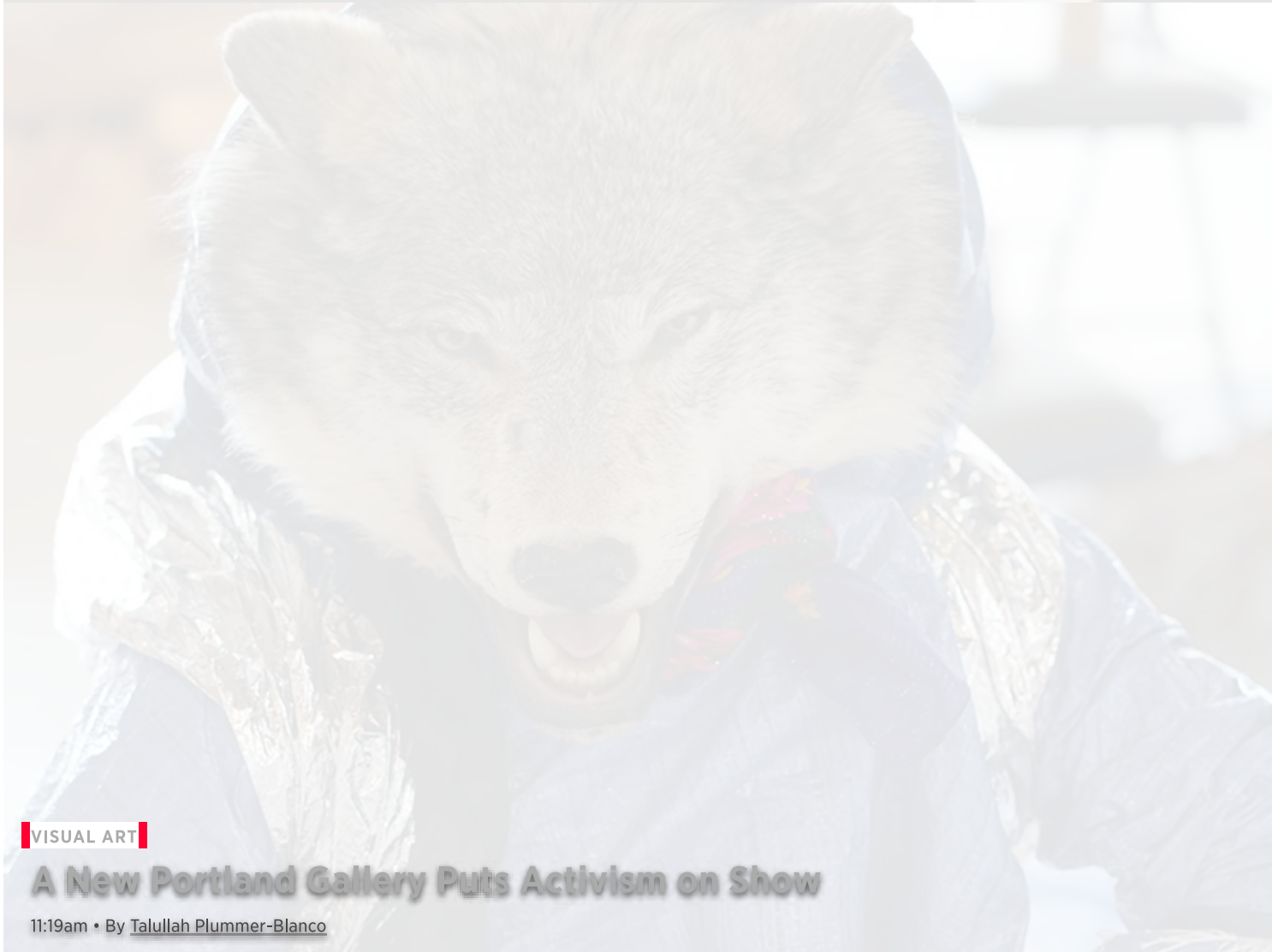




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