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The singer, clad in black with bug-eyed shades gripping his face, motioned first to his left.

“Adam Clayton on bass guitar!”

Turning to the rear of the stage: “Larry Mullen Jr. on the drums!”

“And,” he said just as the skull-capped guitarist to his right punctuated a groove-ridden “Mysterious Ways” with a pealing solo, “this is the Edge!”

But the man on the mic wasn’t Bono — and the four-piece band onstage that languid June weeknight at [Four Mile Historic Park](#) wasn’t the stadium-filling U2.

Instead, Nikki Zamora commanded a small stage in the tree-shaded park along Cherry Creek, fronting Denver’s [Bullet the Blue Sky](#), which promises “the ultimate U2 experience.”

“We’re going to do one more, and then a short intermission,” Zamora told the cheering crowd arrayed in lawn chairs and on blankets, before briefly slipping out of rock-star character, “so you can get some fresh churros over there.”

Cover bands and, increasingly, artist-specific tribute acts like Bullet the Blue Sky are a popular fixture in Colorado’s expansive live-music constellation, offering concertgoers a chance to more easily experience some of their favorite songs, old and new.

Traditional cover bands, with deep and varied repertoires, and often encountered by chance in bars or at weekend civic festivals, can be great entrées to the live-music experience for the novice concertgoer or casual fan. And tribute acts make the music of iconic artists — including bands that can no longer play — more accessible and more affordable.

The Denver-based U2 tribute act Bullet the Blue Sky, photographed at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Morrison. (Photo courtesy of Paige Hackathorn/PAH Photography/Bullet the Blue Sky)



Nothing but a good time

At Four Mile Historic Park last month, Blake Denney stood in the back, behind the picnicking crowd, surveying the scene before the faux U2 took the stage.

He'd never seen Bullet the Blue Sky before, and hadn't been to a proper U2 show since the [Vertigo Tour](#). For the band's Colorado fans, a number of whom were at this creekside park, it's been a long drought — U2 last performed here a decade ago.

"For 20 years, U2 was my favorite band," Denney said. "I haven't really been into them for the last couple decades, but I checked these guys out online and they sounded really good."

Denney found a spot at a picnic table on the periphery of the crowd, and the band soon took the stage to "Elevation" before running through "Beautiful Day" and "I Will Follow," sounding impressively like the Irish foursome — thanks, in particular, to Zamora's arching vocals and Ted Gravlin's guitar mimickry.

By the time the band turned to the soulful "Angel of Harlem," Denney was visibly tapping his foot to the beat. Surely nobody here expected this to be even better than the real thing, but fans are singing along, shouting out obscure requests ("Play 'Wire!' ") and happily dancing in front of the covered stage.

Denney walked past a short while later. His verdict? "It's a good time, yeah."