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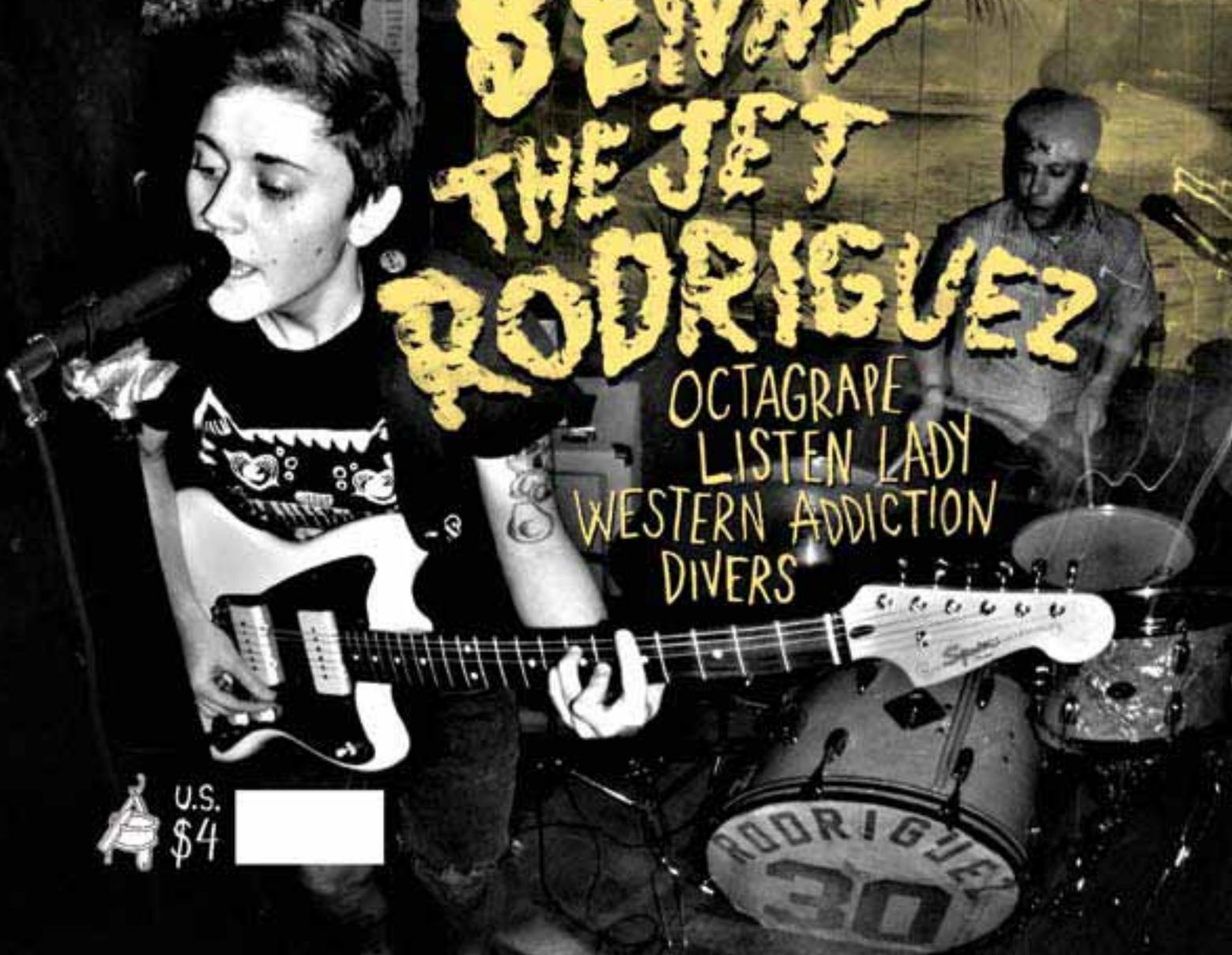
# RAZORCAKE

#87

NON-PROFIT PUNK ROCK

## BENNY THE JET RODRIGUEZ

OCTAGRAPE  
LISTEN LADY  
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DIVERS



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# READ THIS PAGE

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**Razorcake exists because of you.** Whether you contributed any content that was printed in this issue, placed an ad, or are a reader: without your involvement, this magazine would not exist. We are a community that defies geographical boundaries or easy answers. Much of what you will find here is open to interpretation, and that's how we like it.

In mainstream culture the bottom line is profit. In DIY punk the bottom line is a personal decision. We operate in an economy of favors amongst ethical, life-long enthusiasts. And we're fucking serious about it. Profitless and proud.

There's nothing more laughable than the general public's perception of punk. Endlessly misrepresented and misunderstood. Exploited and patronized. Let the squares worry about "fitting in." We know who we are.

Within these pages you'll find unwavering beliefs rooted in a culture that values growth and exploration over tired predictability.

There is a rumbling dissonance reverberating within the inner walls of our collective skull. Thank you for contributing to it.

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## Thank You.

"Thank You." is the title of the most heartbreaking email I've ever received.

The email was from Chris Pepus, a decade-long contributor to Razorcake. I emailed him back. I called him. His voicemail picked up. I called contributor Tim Jamison in St. Louis. Tim's first reaction mirrored my most hopeful thoughts. Perhaps I read it incorrectly. Maybe Chris wanted to take a break from writing. It happens. We all get overwhelmed sometimes. I asked Tim to pop by Chris's apartment.

People who decry Razorcake as "non-political" just prove to me they don't read it carefully. One chamber of our political heart is Chris Pepus. He's also part of the invisible scaffolding holding up Razorcake, a stalwart contributor who I rely heavily on. He's deeply concerned with social and economic justice and writes about it extensively. (The most popular story on razorcake.org is Chris's article "The Murder of Emmett Till.")

I feel a deep kinship with Chris. We both went to public school. We are both working class. We both believe in the power of education but struggle with institutions of higher education. We are both equalists, critical thinkers, and leftists. We both see that America is entrenched in full-scale class war. All of his articles are fearless, compassionate, controlled, and information-rich. Nowhere else is anyone writing and publishing sentiments like, "Elite liberals will probably never realize how absurd they look fervently waving the banner of diversity while relentlessly enforcing class privilege," and then back it up with a string of unimpeachable facts. Chris's article "Class Bigotry in Higher Education" does just that (without being a blowhard, kneejerk Republican douchebag about it). Chris wants to change the world with his writing, to right some of the wrongs of "hate crime[s] against working-class people." It sounds grandiose, but it's not untrue.

A difficult byproduct of being truly independent is the risk of being largely ignored. With no corporate backing and not being a node under a

parent company or a larger institution, Razorcake has limited reach. We try the best we can with the tools and resources we have. In a nutshell, Razorcake is neither rich nor well-connected. Our currency is treating our contributors and their contributions with the utmost respect.

Recently, Chris focused his attention on his blog "Against Class Bigotry." It wasn't a hollow gesture. Chris uncovered that his employer, Washington University in St. Louis, was complicit in class bias for rich legacy students while cooking the books to outwardly appear more diverse. In protest, Chris recently resigned from his position as film archivist at the university. He received a classist, condescending email from Jane Karr, the Education Life Editor at the *New York Times* for the paper's errors and misleading articles on college social diversity: "Good luck with any new ventures. We see you've quit your job over this statistic, but we are comfortable with what we've written." Candice Tobin recently did a podcast with Chris about his travails.

Tim Jamison was a couple hours out of St. Louis but had a buddy who lived two blocks away from Chris go by his apartment to see what was up. Police tape and a neighbor confirmed the worst.

The email Daryl, Candice, and I received that morning was a suicide letter. Chris thanked us for everything; assured us it wasn't our fault. In the evening of Monday, June 9, 2015, Chris Pepus took his own life. The email was sent after he committed a deliberate act. His mind was made up. He didn't want anyone attempting to talk him out of it.

Now go back to the beginning of this editorial and put Chris in the past tense. I can't. I start crying all over again.

No matter how much I try, none of the songs I'm listening to have brought him back, but my family and friends have been phenomenal, checking in on me. "I'm okay," I keep telling myself. I'm okay, but a part is missing.

Rest in peace, Chris.

—Todd Taylor

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Cover design by Eric Baskauskas,  
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**"Because inside of me  
there's a revolution,  
there's a permanent  
change that won't let me  
fall back into the stupor.  
I'm awake."**

—Alice Bag  
*Pipe Bomb for the Soul*

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**THANK YOU:** A whole lot of sunshine in the front of our minds thanks to Eric Baskauskas and Shanty Cheryl for the cover design and photo; How has not a weasel buddha never been rendered before? thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Treasure map of reading adventure thanks to Genesis Bautista for her illo. in Jim's column; The three phases of Cassie J. Sneider (one enjoying free French Toast) thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo; Oopsy!, indeed thanks to Alex Barrett for his PSA illo. in Norb's column; Mount Rock-more thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Dale's column; A business isn't serious until it's got tote bags thanks for Bill Pinkel for his illo. in the Rhythm Chicken's column; It may take a nation of millions to hold them back, but only one Nardwuar thanks to Cody Richards for his Chuck D/Nard illo.; Transferring nervous energy into dance parties at independent ice cream shops thanks to Kayla Greet, Adrian Chi, Lukas Myhan, and Tom Lowell for the Listen Lady interview, photos, and graphics; Songwriting inspired by thinking about robbing banks thanks to Dani Kordani, Joe Greer, Colin Sanders, and Dylan Davis for the Divers interview, photos, transcription and layout; Ken hates guys that wear sandals, Chad has the best ass in the band thanks to John Mule, Alan Snodgrass, and Eric Baskauskas for the Western Addiction interview; Avocados, weed, and cop merchandising advice thanks to Marty Ploy, Derek Whipple, Matthew Hart, Shanty Cheryl, Gabie Gonzalez, Paul Silver, and Becky Bennett for the Benny The Jet Rodriguez interview, transcription, photos, and layout; High-energy strapless guitar playing by a bunch of astronauts fuelled by hard candies thanks to Paul Silver and Becky Bennett for the Octagrape interview and photos.

"It is important to redefine traditional expectations and learn that masculinity is a characteristic that shouldn't belong or be assigned to any one gender." —Simon Sotelo reviewing *Masculinities* zine; Our reviewers examine DIY punk at a DNA level; Thanks to #87's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Kurt Morris, Keith Rosson, Monique Grieg, Mark Twistworthy, Sean Arenas, Narb, Rich Cocksedge, John Mule, Art Ettinger, Ty Stranglehold, Sal Lucci, Craven Rock, MP Johnson, CT Terry, Garrett Barnwell, Bryan Static, Matt Werts, Mike Frame, Jimmy Alvarado, Ryan Nichols, Steve Adamyk, Matt Average, Camylle Reynolds, Billups Allen, Indiana Laub, Juan Espinosa, Matt Seward, Kelley O'Death, The Lord Kveldulfr, Sean Koepenick, Paul J. Comeau, Jackie Rusted, Kayla Greet, Lisa Weiss, Jeff Proctor, Tim Brooks, Steve Hart, Jim Woster, Tricia Ramos, Robin Effup, and Simon Sotelo.

If you're a woman who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an open invitation to drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for Razorcake. ([razorcake.org/contact-us](http://razorcake.org/contact-us))



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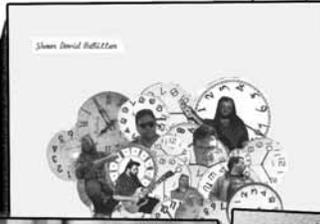
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Issue #87 Aug. / Sept. 2015

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This Issue Is Dedicated to Marge and Tony Taylor's  
50th Wedding Anniversary, August 21st, 2015!

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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is:

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Phill Legault, Steve Couch, Chris Baxter, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, James Hernandez, Alice Bag, Seth Swaaley, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "I Want to Be a Hilton" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Rishbha Bhagi, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Alex Martinez, Jimmy Alvarado, Andrew Wagher, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztlil Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Yvonne Drazan, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Chris Pepus, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Nighthawk, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Nation of Amanda, Eric Baskauskas, Vee Liu, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Samantha Mc Bride, Christine Arguello, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camille Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Brooke McCarley, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Cahnie Galletta, John Mule, Chris L. Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Kelly Lone, Alex Cady, Aaron Zonka, Rick V., Kelly O'Grady, Pete Stapleton, Rachel Gouk, Alex Harris, Rodrigo V., Cathy Hannah, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Jim Kettner, Tracy Stansbury, Travis Fristoe, Ronnie Sullivan, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Al Herbert, Gabie Gonzalez, Shereen Dudar, Keith Rosson, Rorey Sotela, Sabrina De Martini, Megan Razzetti, and Karina Sotela.

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Enriching Lives



This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by grants from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs and is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles Arts Commission.



A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

“We can only access the moment.”

# Four Songs for the Summertime

## 1. “First Day of Summer” by Screeching Weasel

I rarely listen to Screeching Weasel anymore. Two decades ago, I never would’ve guessed that *Bark Like a Dog* would be the Weasel album that I keep digging out of the archives. But it is. This song gets in my head about two weeks before the semester ends, when summer break feels imminent. It stays there until I listen to the whole album and let the song blend in with all the other sugary pop punk tunes. Then I listen to it again, just to celebrate the beginning of summer.

The song starts with Ben singing, “Things will change. So will you.” A simple sentiment. I remember reading somewhere that Ben studied Buddhism for a while. I like to think the first line is more than a broad, empty statement. That it’s in line with one of the core tenets of Buddhism: The only constant in life is change. Nothing is stable—not any meaning we develop; not our identities. Nothing. We’re just energy moving through time, experiencing a moment somewhere between the birth of this energy we call ourselves and the death of it. Summer punctuates the passing of one season, the opportunities of the next one, and a present for us to experience.

Listen to the song. These ideas are there. Ben asks, “What’s the matter with today? You’re always chasing something and that something’s always twenty years away.” It reminds me of something I’ve heard attributed to the Dalai Lama: We’re so anxious about the future that we don’t enjoy the present, and so we live neither in the present or the future. I don’t know if Ben Weasel meant to express that, but the idea is recognizable to me. One thing that defines life in this decade is a kind of cultural anxiety. Should we be checking our email right now, our phone, our Facebook feed, our Twitter account? Are we current on the news? Are we missing anything? Are we missing everything?

The simple answers are no, we shouldn’t be checking all of these things. It doesn’t matter if we’re current. And, yes, we are missing something. We’re missing this moment. This one right here.

So I like to hear Ben sing about the first day of summer when it really is summertime. It reminds me to be a part of it.

## 2. “Summertime” by Shang-a-Lang

The song starts with guitar chords and Chris singing, “Everything feels better in

the summertime. Seasons change and I start feeling fine.” It’s a departure from Screeching Weasel. Ben tells us to “squeeze all of the life out of it.” I don’t like that idea. I hate to view time and the seasons through a lens of capitalism. We’ve all heard that time is money. It’s a cliché that’s every bit as ridiculous as it sounds. Still, this ideology goes deeper inside of us. We think about spending time. But time is not a currency. It’s a series of moments that move from the past into the future. We can only access the moment. Our memories of the past shift and fade. When we’re able to compare them to actual, physical evidence, we realize how tainted and biased and unreliable our memories are.

The future is a fantasy. Even on the simplest level. Think about what you’re going to do next. Maybe you’re going to get up from the couch and make a sandwich. Envision it. Then do it. The first thing you’ll notice is how incomplete your vision is, how, even if you got all the steps right in your fantasy, the reality includes things you forgot about: unscrewing the lid off the peanut butter, scraping the last bits of jelly out of a jar even though you’re now realizing it’s not going to be enough, then eating that sandwich while reading the rest of this column without bothering to taste the dry, jelly-shy sandwich. That’s what time is. It’s not a dollar bill. We don’t spend it. We don’t weigh out whether it’s worth it or not. All we do is live in it, for better or worse.

Most of the time, we miss it. We get so wrapped up in faulty memories and future fantasies that the present moment eludes us.

So let’s live in this Shang-a-Lang song. There’s a little more going on beyond the sentiment “Everything feels better in the summertime.” There’s the comparison to how winter sucks and is depressing and summer is better. Another simple sentiment.

What’s not simple is the music. Before Chris can sing “seasons change,” Andy hits the cymbals three times, and the song explodes with energy. Guitar chords and bass riffs barrel their way into the song. The drummer fills any silent space that tries to creep in. It’s almost like everyone in the band is fighting to be heard over everyone else. It gets loud, whether you turn it up or not.

Keep listening. Not twenty seconds in, the drummer gives the song some space. Everyone pauses with him, maybe half a beat, maybe a quarter. They’re all in that break together. Then, they’re all back at it. Heavy chords. Thumping bass. Screaming vocals. Riding the

wave of the song. Staying right in that sweet spot where all the power lies. The recording quality is poor. The band is loud and blown out. But everything is so tight.

This song, this is what it means to live in a moment. You don’t have to seize the day. You don’t have to squeeze the life out of it. You don’t spend time like it’s money and hope to get a fair trade value for it. You just become part of the song. You listen to every bit of it, the tension tightening and releasing. It doesn’t have to be a happy moment. You just have to be present in it. Everything’s better when you are.

## 3. “Summertime” by Fear Of Lipstick

This is a love song as near as I can tell. The narrator starts by telling us it’s been a long winter. Both he and the “you” he sings to have been feeling alone, feeling the pain of lost loves, feeling the chill of winter. He asks you to wait for the summertime, when you can fall in love again.

This sense of waiting for the future may seem to go against the other songs (and the Dalai Lama, for that matter). By waiting for the summertime to fall in love again, the present is being sacrificed for a fantasy, a perfect summer when every problem in the relationship is fixed. This calls to mind the last part of that quote that I’d heard attributed to the Dalai Lama: That we live as if we’re never going to die and die having never really lived.

Now, I don’t know if the Dalai Lama really said this stuff. I heard it quoted on a *Philosophy Now* podcast. For all I know, the woman quoting it got it from an unreliable source. It doesn’t really matter. The idea is good. In our anxiety for the future, we don’t consider the fears behind the anxiety. We don’t confront the ominous, horrifying specter of death that follows all of our moments. We don’t search for the things in life that make it meaningful and rich. We instead distract ourselves a million different ways, vaguely believing in our culture’s nebulous promises of a future when we get all the things we want, when we live the good life. Our deepest fears will be abated and our biggest questions will be answered.

But it doesn’t work like that.

These things don’t come easy. Money can only buy a few of them. Money matters when you’re poor. It can saturate every aspect of your life when there’s not enough of it. But once you get enough money so



BRAD BESHAW

# It doesn't have to be a happy moment. You just have to be present in it. Everything's better when you are.

that your housing is covered, you can eat food (as opposed to chemistry experiments masquerading as fast food), and sudden expenses like a new transmission don't spin your financial life out of control, money provides only things with diminishing returns. Once you get there, you have to ask what really matters.

Sometimes, our fantasies give us hints. You can hear a few of the hints at the end of the Fear Of Lipstick song. Early in the tune, he sings, "Don't worry that you're all alone" and backing vocals sing, "You're not alone." I think this is a fear for all of us. Surely, we can appreciate a bit of solitude—time to ourselves to think, to be creative, to recharge—but loneliness can take over. Look at the way we're invited to live our lives now. So many of our friends and our conversations are filtered through various communication

technologies. They linger in a time that's neither the present nor the future. We send messages and wait to maybe get a response. We see pictures instead of people. It can be lonely for all of us.

The end of the song gives us hope. When the summertime comes, "We'll go inside a van. We'll get wasted with our friends. We'll catch a couple bands. And rekindle our romance."

These are bigger ideas than they sound initially. When we consider the times that really are meaningful in our lives, they're mostly encapsulated in Fear Of Lipstick's four short sentences. Travel takes us out of our day-to-day lives and gives us time to reflect and reconsider everything. Face-to-face time with friends—whether you're getting wasted or not—is the best way to ward off our cultural loneliness. Shared art experiences like going to see bands or to

a reading or to an art opening or even to a movie in a theater allows us to experience something that's hard to articulate but still shows us the best of what it means to be human. And rekindling romance, well, we all want to be in love. Nothing's better than that.

#### 4. "Cut My Hair" by Bright Ideas

Every summer is the same in this song. You get a good feeling and you stick with it. You cut your pants into shorts, cut your hair so it won't be so hot, and have a glass of lemonade. Nothing can "replace those lazy valley days." Bright Ideas sing, "We don't need another dubious honor." Just let the summer come. Or, as they put it, "Sing ba ba ba ba."

—Sean Carswell



**“I was the fill-in rhythm guitar player: unspectacular but reliable.”**

## European Vacation

This summer I did something I've always wanted to do: I went on tour with other writers.

Maybe it's a holdover from my teenage fantasies of being in a band, traveling the world and tearing shit up with my best friends. I don't know. But when I was invited to participate in a series of readings in Europe with a trio of writers, I said, "Hell yes."

It started with an invitation to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> Prague International Microfestival of Poetry (PMF). I'm not a poet, but the event kicked off with a fiction night where I would perform. The festival couldn't afford to pay for me to travel to Prague but they offered to pay for my accommodations once I got there.

One of the founders of the festival is a writer named Louis Armand. I met Louis at a conference in Seville, Spain twenty years ago. In fact, it was Louis who convinced me to travel to Morocco with him after I met up with Razorcake Grand Poobah Todd Taylor. The three of us, along with an Italian who spoke no English, ended up staying at a drug dealer's house and smoking copious quantities of hashish harvested from the Atlas Mountains.

Nowadays, Louis teaches at Charles University in Prague and, in addition to poetry and James Joyce criticism, has written some astonishingly good novels like *Breakfast at Midnight* and *Cairo*, which he read from at my reading series Vermin on the Mount while touring the U.S.

Louis is also the editor of *VLAK Magazine*, a massive international journal of image and text that just released its fifth issue. If our foursome were a band, Louis would be the singer/songwriter/lead guitar player who craps epic eight-minute guitar solos in his sleep.

He proposed that we make it a VLAK and Vermin tour and added dates in Berlin, Brno (!), and London. So in the middle of May, I filled my suitcase with books, T-shirts, and zines and headed for Berlin where I met up with the rest of the band, so to speak.

\*\*\*

Berlin is an ugly city. Leveled in WWII and then trapped behind the Iron Curtain for half a century, it's a city made up of blocks and blocks of boxy buildings and drab utilitarian structures. Berlin's acceptance of extremes is out-of-step with the rest of Germany's mania for order, and I was

surprised to see graffiti splashed across bridges, buildings, and train cars.

Nowhere is Berlin's anarchic spirit more evident than in Kreuzberg, the part of town just south of the city center where bars and record stores sit along Turkish kebab shops and off-license liquor stores.

I walked the five kilometers from my hotel in the city center to the venue where the first reading was to be held. I walked past Checkpoint Charlie down Oranienstrasse and when the office buildings gave way to street art, cafés, and even a punk rock club, I'd reached Kreuzberg.

The Normal Bar is a small, dank café with a stage that takes up over half the café. I sat outside, tapped into the free wi-fi and waited for my touring partners to arrive. I wondered what would happen if there was some kind of mistake and no one showed up and I'd come all the way to Berlin for nothing. I took reassurance in the "VLAK + Vermin on the Mount" sign chalked on the blackboard out front and shortly afterwards the band arrived.

We unloaded the books and got ready for the show. The place was so small it didn't need a PA and while we waited for the guy who was Louis's liaison with Normal Bar to show, we explored the bunker-like Rave Cave and art space down below. Finally, the liaison arrived, a disheveled, erratic-seeming Berliner named Jeroen whom I would later find out had been up for two days on a ketamine binge, and the show started one hour and forty-five minutes after the scheduled start time. So much for German punctuality.

After the show, which concluded with Jeroen rambling incoherently and flipping through the pages of a chapbook he'd stapled together earlier that evening, Louis and I retired to the kebab shop to catch up. David Vichnar and Thor Garcia, the second and third members of the band, stayed behind to watch over the merch and get drunk, respectively. When we returned, David was ready to drive me to my hotel but Thor had disappeared. This would become a recurring theme.

\*\*\*

The next day, the band arrived at my hotel promptly at 8 AM. I expected Thor to look hungover but he was upbeat and alert, wearing knock-off Ray Bans with orange frames and a T-shirt that read "PUSSYLAND" that he'd made himself. "It's always a sad thing to

leave Berlin," he said. In our make-believe band, Thor is the wild child drummer who is always in danger of wandering off and choking on a tampon soaked in gin.

We had a lot of driving to do. Our plan was to drive across the Czech border where petrol was cheaper, make our way to Prague where Louis had a cricket match, and then go to Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic. It didn't work out like that.

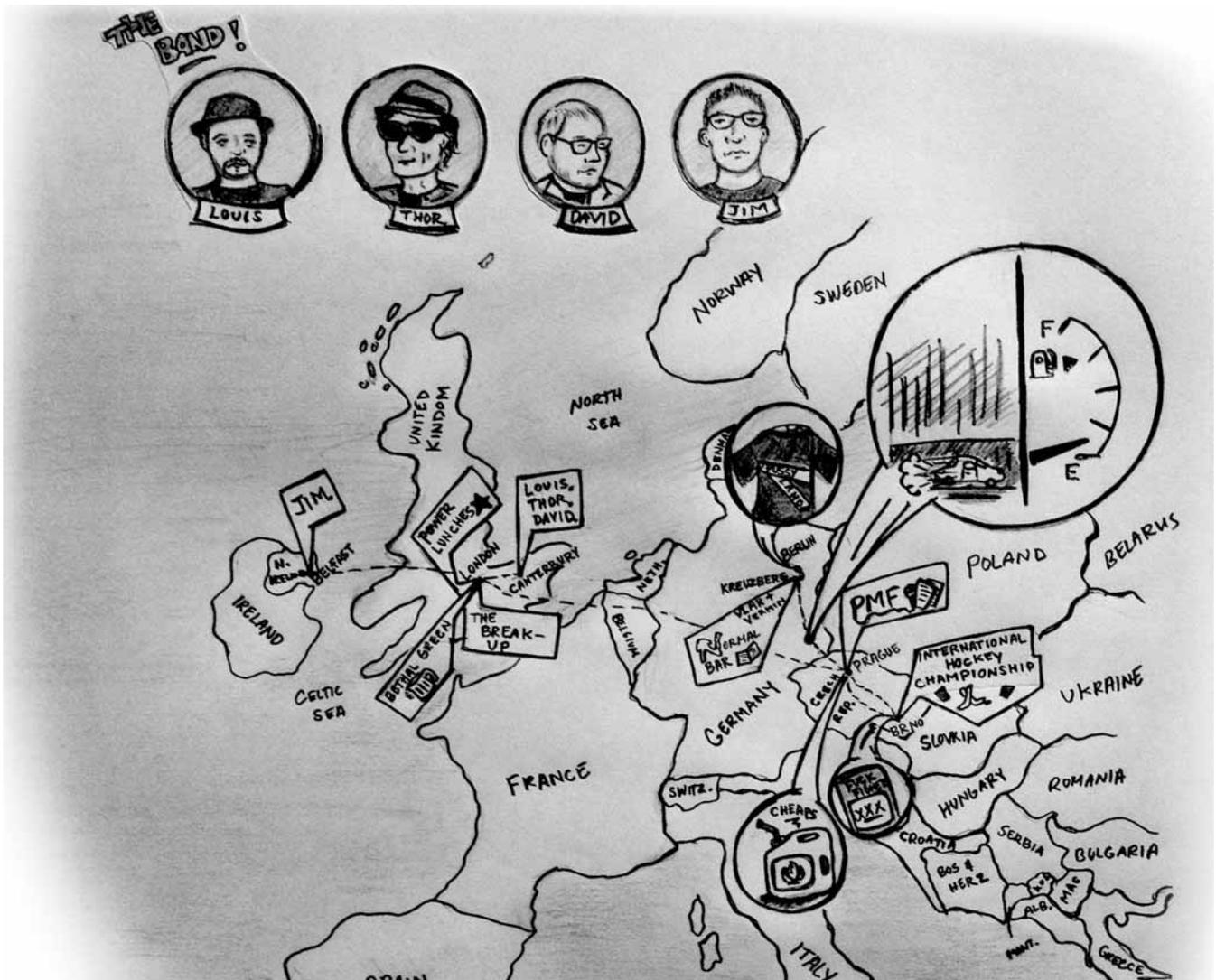
After nearly running out of fuel, we pulled off the highway and considered our options. None of us had phone service and the petrol gauge was in the red. Along came a friendly German Samaritan who directed us to the closest station. We got just enough fuel to get us across the border and then stopped at another station for food and fuel. At each stop, Thor drifted away to smoke a cigarette and make a phone call and someone would have to chase after him.

Thor is an interesting character. He's a Southern Californian who has lived in Prague for most of his adult life and, after twenty years of working for news organizations and being married to the same Czech woman, he is jobless and divorced, both of which he is thrilled about. Through the tour he wore the slightly inebriated "I'm just happy to be here" grin of someone crash landing into a new phase of his life.

After a respite in Prague, we drove on to Brno. The venue was a café on the third floor of a building next to the largest brothel in the Czech Republic. The pink building took up a quarter of a city block and at night the lights pulsed red. The reading was a disappointment. No one turned up and we learned a very valuable lesson: don't schedule readings in the Czech Republic on the day of the International Hockey Championships in hard-to-find cafés next to brothels. I'd like to tell you we explored the big pink building next door, but instead we piled into the car and drove back to Prague. No one was more disappointed than Thor. As a consolation prize, Thor bought a Czech porno called *Fuck Fighter* at the petrol station. It cost fifty crowns, the equivalent of two dollars.

\*\*\*

After Berlin and Brno, we were ready for a great show and PMF didn't disappoint. David, our translator and tour driver, kicked off the event with his English translation of an unpunctuated experimental novel he translated from French and was put out by



GENESIS BAUTISTA

his publishing company, Equus Press. He is also fluent in German and Czech, his native language. In band terms, David is the bassist who is proficient in many instruments but holds the group together by laying down a steady beat.

Louis read from his cyberpunk novel *Cairo*, I read from *Forest of Fortune*, and Thor stepped up to the stage with two beers and read from a new story about a chance encounter with a porn star. One of the highlights of the evening was seeing Phil Shoenfelt play. Phil is an English writer and musician whose New York based-band Khmer Rouge was a fixture on the post-punk scene. Phil has lived in Prague for almost fifteen years and the following evening he and his wife Johana took me to Zyzkov, the neighborhood where he first met his wife and now lives.

We started at a pub in a public park that will never be developed because it sits on top of a labyrinth of Cold War era nuclear fallout shelters. We got to visit one thirty meters underground that does double duty as a climbing wall and music venue. At least no one will ever complain about the noise...

My wife Nuvia joined me in Prague and we spent the rest of the week going to some really cool museums, eating delicious meat, and doing the things that tourists do in a beautiful European city.

\*\*\*

Our last stop on the tour was London. We took a combination of subways, buses, planes, and trains. Five hours later we were in Central London. We had two events: one in Bethnal Green, which is around the corner from Brick Lane, and one in Hackney in London's East End. Louis asked me to emcee the events and I scrambled to familiarize myself with the dozen poets and prose writers I would be introducing over the next two days. In our motley quartet, I was the fill-in rhythm guitar player: unspectacular but reliable.

During our first London show, I made a blunder: I put Thor in the last spot in the lineup. I should have realized that this would give him plenty of time to get drunk, which he did, and his performance was a wee bit confrontational and a number of people walked out. The next night the venue was a

tiny punk rock club called Power Lunches. Thor went on first. Lesson learned.

The Power Lunches show was my favorite. Thor, David, Louis, and I did our thing. A novelist read poems while standing on his head and a poet named Sean Bonney read an epically intense police protest poem that has a line now burned into my memory: *Don't say tall skinny latte. Say, "Fuck the police."*

The night ended with the readers retiring to a kebab shop for roasted meat, more beer, and fond farewells. My wife went home, I got on a plane for Belfast, and the rest of the band went on to Canterbury for another gig. We have officially broken up.

Looking back, the highlight was when the four of us were crammed into David's car burning down the highways of Eastern Europe on fumes. Our show that night was crap, and everything I ate that day came from a petrol station, but I loved the camaraderie that united us together.

Maybe it's not too late for me to join a band.

-Jim Ruland



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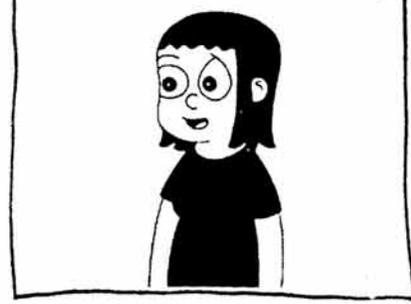
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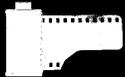


RAZORCAKE READERS KNOW HIM WELL, BUT I JUST CAN'T LEAVE OUT MY GOOD FRIEND **MR. MITCH CLEM!**



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**Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page**  
The 87's, The Redwood, Los Angeles, California



**“The sun started to rise and the skyline lit up the color of junkie urine on the way to our free meal.”**

# Supermarket Fantasy

I left copies of my first zine in every coffee shop I went to, so responses came from coffee drinkers of all walks of life, insomniacs, weirdos, and people looking to water down the fumes they were running on to stay awake just a little longer. My kind of people.

One email came from someone named Garbage Dan, who it turned out, lived only a few blocks from my house. *Cool zine. Come to my party.*

“Wanna come to a stranger’s party?” Me and Mick were sitting in his living room after his shift at Thundercloud Subs. He smelled vaguely of a combination of mayonnaise and banana peppers even though he had stripped down to his boxers. We were watching a VHS I bought at a yard sale that was labeled *AMERICAN VIDEO AWARDS 1985*. It was unnaturally real in a way: You could see the lines where Tina Turner’s make-up ended and her face began as she crawled across the stage snarling “Private Dancer.” 1985 was a simpler time. No airbrushing or soft focus.

Mick reached over for the bag of chips on the collection of milk crates Legoed together into a coffee table. “Uh, I dunno. Whose is it?”

On screen, an award was presented. The camera panned to an audience shot of Hall and Oates laughing so hard Oates was crying. “Some stranger who liked my comic.”

“Will there be beer?” he asked.

“Probably. That usually happens at parties, right?”

Mick thought about it. “Yeah, usually.” He scratched his stomach, then looked up at the ceiling. “Okay. I’ll put on pants.” There was rustling in the kitchen. I called out to Cello, the only other person who was home, and asked if he wanted to go. He poked his head in.

“Will there be beer?”

Twenty minutes later we were driving past my house to the newer development Garbage Dan lived in. There weren’t as many cars as I thought there would be, but I noted a pile of skateboards on the porch.

“Well, here goes nothing,” I said, getting out of the Toyota.

“Wait.” Mick’s eyes shining in the yellow of the interior light. “Maybe we should have a safe word, like, for when things get awkward.”

“Beanbag,” Cello said.

“Okay,” Mick said, closing his eyes. “Beanbag.”

We walked up to the porch and Cello rang the doorbell. The door swung open. A man with crazy eyes and a blue mullet was standing on the other side of the door. “Uh, I’m Cassie J. We came to party.”

“Garbage Dan,” he said, extending his hand. “Welcome to the Garbage pad.”

In the living room, a handful of people were gathered around the largest bong I’ve ever seen.

Garbage Dan lit a bowl. “Guys, this is Cassie, the chick who wrote that comic about Whitesnake.”

“That shit was funny as hell,” some guy said.

“I laughed so hard,” someone else said, coughing out a cloud of smoke. Cello went out back to the cooler and brought in some PBR. We sat around the circle of people who were celebrating a major score of a few open-box iPods freed from the dumpster of a Best Buy. It turned out there was a network of places Garbage Dan knew of that didn’t have compactors, and he and his friends went out at night, filled their van with corporate waste, and then went home to eat, refurbish, or sell whatever they found.

I only ate at places where I got the Pretty Lady Discount, and otherwise was doing just about everything I could to get by. I hadn’t yet made the foray into trash-eating, but that sort of collective industriousness seemed like something I could learn a thing or two from.

The room fogged up and the conversation slowly turned to skateboarding, a subject I felt unqualified to speak on. I had a skateboard my older cousin gave me, which I toted around in the trunk of my car during high school, dreaming of the day I would meet a boy who would teach me how to ollie in exchange for dying his liberty spikes or giving him a handjob. Here I was, twenty-four, surrounded by actual skater boys and living the dreams of my fifteen year-old inner self.

“Um, do you guys want to go?” Mick and Cello were obliterated and the amnesia haze was starting to make me lightheaded. “I have to tutor in the morning. Um, beanbag.”

Garbage Dan rose to his feet. “I gotta door prize for you. Meetcha at the car.” Cello, Mick, and I filed out to the front yard and the garage door went up. We watched as Garbage Dan pulled a box off of a pallet and carried it out to the car.

“Pop the trunk, Cassie J!” The box landed with a dead thud between an ice scraper and a dog costume. “It’s from *the land*. Enjoy.”

By the time we got back to Mick and Cello’s, Lori was home from stripping, and we stood around the car and opened the box. It was filled with six gallons of pear juice.

“Should we drink it? Like, as a celebration?” I held up the bottle and looked for an expiration date. It was still good, which made it somehow even more questionable.

“I’m gonna pass,” Cello said.

Lori picked up another bottle. “A stranger just gave this to you?”

“He’s not a stranger anymore. To friendship!” I said, unscrewing the lid and taking a long, pensive swig. It tasted normal, which worried me even more than if it had been outright bad.

The next morning, it felt like I had swallowed several balloons the size of bocce balls full of hot, wet air that were slowly being putted out. I laid in bed with Pug and googled “e. Coli.”

Then I checked out Garbage Dan’s Myspace feed to see if there were any incriminating pictures from the party. There were only some new photos of him eating watermelon slices and an omelet. The accompanying blog post explained that after everyone passed out, he had woken up in time to take advantage of the free continental breakfast at the Embassy Suites Hotel near our house. *Tag, you’re it, Cassie J.* it said.

I called Lori.

“Are you dead yet?” she answered.

“No. But listen to this. If we wake up early enough, we can probably pretend to be tourists and get free breakfast at the Embassy Suites.”

Lori yawned. “What makes you think we can get away with that?”

“Garbage Dan did it this morning and he has blue hair. He just wore a suit and they believed him.”

The next morning it was still dark, and Lori and I were idling outside of our friend Jessie’s house, waiting for her to come out to the car.

“Do you think they’re gonna believe us?” Jessie said as she buckled her seatbelt.

I already drank sixty-four ounces of gas station coffee in my plight to stay awake through the night to procure this breakfast bounty. My hands shook on the wheel. “So, I looked up the floor plan while you were sleeping, and we’ll say we’re staying in room 308. Our story is that I’m your counselor at a Christian camp for girls. You guys are troubled teens, and I am just trying to show



STEVE THUESON

## Dreaming of the day I would meet a boy who would teach me how to ollie in exchange for dying his liberty spikes or giving him a handjob.

you that God is the way and the light. My name is Miss Beth, and I am gay but don't know it yet." I was wearing an American flag T-shirt tucked in to high-waisted corduroy pants with a white cardigan, wire-framed glasses, and my hair in a bun.

"Holy fuck," Lori said. "Well, all right. I guess you've thought of everything."

The sun started to rise and the skyline lit up the color of junkie urine on the way to our free meal. We parked the car and walked toward the entrance.

"Stick to our story, and if anyone gets split up, we meet at the car or run to my house." Lori and Jessie nodded. The Embassy Suites was the nicest hotel I had ever seen. The lobby was all marble, with waterfalls, wishing pools, and glass elevators shooting the actual patrons to their rooms. Jessie and Lori followed me to the dining area, where a buffet was lined with tourists and businesspeople, power suits and Hawaiian prints, shoulder pads and too-small Texas

Longhorns T-shirts stretched to their tearing points. "Act natural," I whispered, then loudly, "Girls, you really should get some protein. Try the omelet station, Stephanie. Your parents are going to kill me if your anemia acts up again."

No one questioned our presence. People seemed more interested in the overabundance of food and taking pictures next to the ice sculpture on disposable cameras.

"I can't believe no one is stopping us," Lori said, eating a cube of pineapple while she refilled her coffee for the hundredth time.

"I'm gonna do this every day," I gobbled, shoveling French toast into my mouth with an alarming urgency. I ate more that day than I had in the last three months of my life. When we left the hotel, we threw pennies in the fountain near the check-in counter. I wished to be a writer and to also go for a swim in the river when our breakfast binge was over. I kept it a secret though, in the tradition of all good,

unspoken wishes. On the way out to the car, a woman asked if we could take a picture of her standing with her sister. She wore a burnt orange U of Texas shirt and flip flops. Her sister was dressed identically.

"Where are y'all from?" the sisters asked.

"Oh," I said, pushing my glasses up, "Ohio. I'm their camp counselor. Isn't that right, girls?"

Lori and Jessie looked at me blankly. "Yes, Miss Beth."

"Well, we're from Indiana, so we're practically neighbors. How about I take y'all picture on your camera for you?"

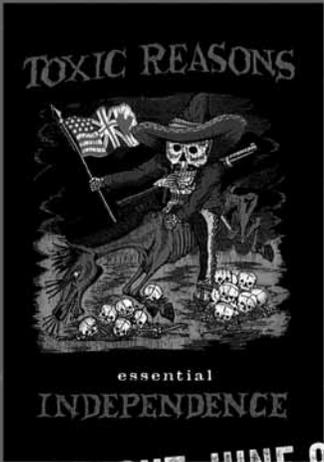
Lori handed over the camera and we stood together with unnaturally good posture, smiling in the parking lot next to the car until the flash went off. Then we drove to the river and went for a swim. None of us cramped up, and one of my wishes came true.

Well, now, maybe both.

—Cassie J. Snider

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\*I know it can happen for any season, but it's much rarer in the summer.



# AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

REV. NØRB

“I don’t have a kitchen table because...”

## ONE OTHER PUNK’S GUIDE TO PINBALL

I was pleasantly surprised to find Kayla Greet’s excellent “One Punk’s Guide to Pinball” article in issue 85 of *Razorcake*. Pinball—like comic books, roller derby, SweeTarts®, and heavily caffeinated diet sodas—is a subject near and dear to my heart. Ask me if I have a kitchen table. Go ahead, ask. *Oh, what’s that you’re asking? You want to know if I have a kitchen table?* No. No, I don’t. Thanks for asking. Do you want to know why I don’t have a kitchen table? *Sure you do! The suspense is killing you!* I don’t have a kitchen table because I removed it years ago to make room for pinball machines. I eat on the couch, because I have four old pinball machines where my kitchen table and chairs used to be, all of them old electromechanical contraptions from the ‘60s and ‘70s. I dunno, I just think solid state pinball machines—i.e., anything after 1977 or so, with the fancy glowing numbers as opposed to black numbers painted on white rotating wheels—just look tacky, like a digital watch or something. Also, they rarely match my drapes. *Chatsworth, have these obscenities removed at once!* So, it is against this cultural backdrop that I, as a kindred pinball enthusiast, must make my voice heard. I must speak up. I, like The Kids, will have my say: Kayla, you left one very important detail out of your otherwise excellent article. There is one glaring omission—one sin of exclusion—one HUGE, VAST, TERRIBLY IMPORTANT detail that you left out. *It’s a matter of most compelling urgency! Of life and death! Of sin and salvation!* This important point—this be-all and end-all—this SUPREME HIGH TRUTH OF PINBALL—is as follows:

### **KIDS, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU ATTEMPT TO FUCK ON A PINBALL MACHINE.**

I hate to be the bearer of bad news. Worse than that, I hate to give the appearance of counseling self-restraint. However, i’ve fucked on jukeboxes, i’ve fucked on grand pianos, i’ve fucked on lavish dining room tables whilst “Swallow Everything” by the Mr. T Experience blared out comically coincidental lines about tables for two, and i’m tellin’ ya, DON’T FUCK ON A PINBALL MACHINE. You’ll break the glass, and it’s like fifty bucks to get it replaced. Kids, your partner is always gonna think that they can do it so the glass doesn’t break. I AM HERE

TO ASSURE YOU that no matter how wafer-thin they think they are, THEY’RE GONNA BREAK YOUR GLASS. And if you DON’T break the glass, you’re not doing something correctly. *Let my selfless trailblazing in these matters serve as your beacon of light in the darkness of temptation and insanity!* I broke the glass on my Zig Zag machine ((Williams, 1964)) doing just that, and my cohort in this abbreviated bout of ill-advised copulation couldn’t’ve been much more than ninety pounds. DON’T DO IT, KIDS! THERE’S OTHER WEIRD PLACES YOU CAN FUCK! Zig Zag is the first pinball machine I ever bought. It’s what they call a “reverse wedgehead.” A “wedgehead,” in pinball terms, is a machine where the lightbox ((i.e., the big part on the back, with the name and the scoring and such)) is wider at the top than it is at the bottom, an isosceles trapezoid instead of a rectangular shape. It was a popular look in the ‘60s and early ‘70s. A “reverse wedgehead,” as the name implies, is a machine where the lightbox is widest at the bottom and tapers up to the narrowest point at the top instead. There were only about a dozen different types of reverse wedgehead style machines manufactured; all of them made by Williams in the early-to-mid ‘60s. I might be one of the only people on earth who can claim they attempted sex on a reverse wedgehead, yet I still caution thee against the practice! Zig Zag is pink and blue and yellow and red, and has some very happy water skiers on it ((as opposed to the very unhappy fornicators who would be atop it in years to come)). It’s what’s known as a “replay” machine, which means a player can win a free game by surpassing a certain point total—in this case, 2500. “Replay” machines contrast with “Add-A-Ball” machines, where free games are never awarded—the player just gets an extra ball when they do well. The reason for the Replay/Add-A-Ball duality was that free games were seen, in some quarters, as gambling-y. SIN! FUROR! MORAL TURPITUDE! Awarding the player with an extra ball was seen as less sinful, and also eliminated the potential problem of a skilled player amassing large amounts of free games, and “selling” them to other players. That triumphant WHACK! sound one hears upon winning a free game is caused by a spring-loaded “knocker rod” ((you can’t make this shit up, folks)) smacking into the side of the cabinet. Seems like something out of *The Flintstones*, except there’s no long-

suffering pterodactyl-billed creature inside. The “Add-a-Ball” version of Zig Zag is called “Wing Ding”—the same machine, just with a different title and extra balls awarded instead of free games. Zig Zag is so old that you have to push a rod to manually load up a new ball; it doesn’t just automatically pop into place each turn. The game operates with five separate balls, one for each turn; newer games just reload the same ol’ ball, turn after turn ((i’m sorry, I really can’t make any more ball or rod jokes, I apologize for my lack of ambition)). If one was of a mind to, one could load up and play all five balls at once. FIRE ALL OF YOUR BALLS AT ONCE AND EXPLODE INTO SPACE!!! Also unlike newer machines, you can score a single point at a time on Zig Zag—not the standard ten-points-minimum of the last forty-five years or so. The next machine I got was Darling ((Williams, 1973)), a great multi-player game that my late bandmate Perry and I used to play after school at a sub shop reputed to be owned by drug dealers. It was already old and funky-looking by the early ‘80s, so we loved it. The machine we actually played was called Jubilee, which was the four-player version; Darling is the two-player version. It’s fluorescent pink and green and dark blue, and has a bunch of sleazy and/or virile looking Grecian types ogling some happy slave wenches on it. I love the art for pinball machines in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s; it’s like there’s some vaguely insinuated orgy always almost ready to erupt. No wonder you kids keep fucking atop them! Life imitates art! The graphics on the sides of old pinball machines rarely get their due; they’re just crude, stenciled spray paint images but they look really cool. Darling has some dancing girls and a lute player or two sprayed on the side. When we played this machine after school, we discovered a pleasant fact about Williams™ electro-mechanical machines: If you hold in the start button whilst depositing your quarter, the machine starts up a new game without subtracting your just-deposited credit. You get two games for the price of one. Apparently that tactic works on almost all Williams EM machines ((play four hundred games and you’ll have saved enough quarters to buy a new glass when you ignore me and fuck on your machine!)). My third machine was Aquarius ((Gottlieb, 1970)), which continues the theme of orgiastic revelry with three lovely nymphettes flirting with a beefy, bald water-bearer ((against a



ALEX BARRETT

## ...I removed it years ago to make room for pinball machines.

lunar landscape, because, you know, the moon?)), two fish kissing, and a lion contemplating inter-species erotica with a goat. This is my one and only standard wedgehead, and the only pinball table I ever attempted to “work on” above and beyond just changing light bulbs and rubber bumper elastics ((not to be confused with “getting busy on,” covered in detail numerous times already)). When I bought Aquarius, the bumper housings were really faded, so I bought some replacement bumper tops. You’d think you could just unscrew a few screws, take the old “100 POINTS WHEN LIT” thingie off, put the new one on, and away you go, right? HELL NO. The bumper housings are held on by the light fixtures inside of them; to change these gaudy little plastic circles I had to open up the machine, lift up the playing field ((you kind of prop them up like the hood of a car and then stare in amazement at the ridiculous tangle of wiring that looks like forty-five-year-old angel hair pasta)), de-solder the light fixture

from the playing field, pull everything out, change out the old crappy plastic part with a new crappy plastic part, then shove everything back into place and re-solder the light fixture back on. All this just to put a new plastic top on the bumper! I advise against doing this only slightly less strenuously than I do screwing on top of it. The start button doesn’t work on this one, so you gotta open the coin door and stick your finger into the switch to get it to start. I have yet to be killed doing so. My fourth and final machine is Daffie ((Williams, 1968)), which features some very angular and androgynous mod types enjoying consumer luxuries like sports cars, bicycles, and guitars. It’s the add-a-ball version of Doozie. By this time, machines were displaying five-digit scores instead of four-digit scores. On first glance, this score inflation seems to have been affected by making all the targets worth ten times as many points, but, on closer inspection, the score reel on the far right—which never needs to change, since all targets are worth

some multiple of ten points—is actually a fake, it’s just a part of a score reel permanently fastened in place with the zero showing. It never moves; the scoring is identical to how it was in the olden days of the four-digit scores, there’s just a cosmetic, non-functioning, permanent zero added to the end. *You’ve been had!* Score reels were only invented in 1960; prior to that, numbers were painted on the backglass, and would light up in correspondence to the player’s score. If you watch the movie *The Buddy Holly Story*, you’ll see a scene set in 1956 with a number of pinball machines with score reels in the background, which is almost as bad as having Gary Busey playing a Fender TELECASTER instead of a Stratocaster. Now, if you’ll please excuse me, i’m going to go fuck on one of my pinball machines. Do as I say, not as I do!

Love  
—Norb



**"I still try to be optimistic that there's gonna be a resurgence of folks doing rock'n'roll right."**

# Proto Punk

Years before punk rock got tagged with that genre, the primordial polliwogs leading up to it squirmed around the dirty waters of rock'n'roll a few decades prior. Laying down the blueprints in the 1950s, there were—in my opinion—the big three movers and shakers who spearheaded what became rock'n'roll: Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Jerry Lee Lewis. Take a second to let that soak in: what *became* rock'n'roll. Meaning, there wasn't dick before that. Nada. When asked about his early influences in interviews, Lemmy Kilmister often states that he actually remembers when there wasn't rock'n'roll (yeah, Lemmy's that old: homeboy turns seventy December 24).

Although a lot of people like to romanticize the idea of the '50s for its all-American allure and appeal, the unstoppable force behind this new trend of music was frowned upon by many as a threat to the country's well being. Luckily (and thankfully), some record labels at the time saw the potential rock'n'roll had, especially in the youth market. Kids had money to spend in the '50s being that they were the first wave of young'uns from the baby boomers post-WWII.

Little Richard signed with RCA Victor and Peacock Records to not much success a few years prior, paying his dues on the blues circuit, developing his high-energy stage shenanigans. It wasn't until 1955 when he signed with Specialty Records that he exploded, planting his flag as one of rock'n'roll's fiercest first with his new lineup and hard-driving sound. Art Rupe, owner of Specialty, played a major hand in getting Little Richard's new sound out internationally, buying out his existing contract with Peacock, who supposedly had a very strained relationship with Little Richard at that time. A good number of hardcore fans will tell you that Little Richard might have never been able to get this new sound out had it not been for Rupe. Now, you might be asking what do the early sparks of Little Richard have anything to do with the ever-burning punk rock flame? Let's see, there's a R & B-laced molotov cocktail of sound that's being rocked out on a piano by a flamboyantly gay dude (who happens to be black) from Macon, Georgia, and all the kids (including teenage girls) are losing their shit over it. Remember, this is 1955. It doesn't get much more punk rock than that. Many thanks to you, Art Rupe!

Chuck Berry's early rock'n'roll beginnings were very close to the same time Little Richard unleashed his band onto the world. Although Berry did some time as a juvenile (and later on in prison as an adult), he soon got his guitar chops honed by playing in the local club circuit in St. Louis, Missouri where he was born, raised, and currently lives.

Berry played in a trio in his mid-twenties with pianist Johnnie Johnson (a gnarly musician in his own right who went on to be Berry's touring piano player and collaborator for almost the next twenty years, then occasionally off and on until he passed back in 2005). It was around this time as a trio that Berry's signature locomotive style with his winding, wild leads—and a slight countrified background—were getting dialed in like a sniper's rifle.

In 1955, Berry traveled up to Chicago where—through the word and suggestion of his guitar homie Muddy Waters—he met Leonard Chess, the owner and co-founder of Chess Records. Chess dug Chuck's style right off the bat, especially seeing Berry's influences went beyond the normal R&B standards at the time and saw it as a chance to break into a new market. He was signed immediately. That new market called "rock'n'roll" saw Berry's first Chess release, "*Maybelline*" b/w "*Wee Wee Hours*" released in July of '55, four months prior to Little Richard's first single on Specialty ("*Tutti-Frutti*" b/w "*I'm Just a Lonely Guy*"). Chuck Berry has always been my favorite artist from this era, and I've always wanted to meet Leonard Chess, simply to thank him for signing on Berry to his legendary R&B roster. Any self-respecting NY Dolls, Heartbreakers, or Ramones fan can clearly see the significance Chuck Berry had on punk rock.

Jerry Lee Lewis. If his fuck-all attitude doesn't get your goat, then his unmistakable hellfire playing on a piano surely will. Hailing from the small town of Ferriday, Louisiana, Jerry Lee started playing piano as a kid. The home he grew up in was pretty religious, and his mother enrolled him in Southwest Bible Institute in Waxahachie, Texas, in an attempt to get Jerry Lee to stick with evangelical songs. He soon played a boogie-woogie rendition of "My God Is Real" at a church assembly that got him into some deep shit. Peary Green, the president of the student body at the time, shrugged and said that Jerry Lee was just performing some "worldly"

music. The next morning, the dean of the school called Lewis and Green into his office to expel them. Lewis said Green shouldn't be expelled because he had no idea what was going to happen.

Immediately after the incident at the institute, Jerry Lee got the shoe and returned home, soon getting his piano technique locked in with the brand new rock'n'roll sound that was just taking off. He soon moved to Memphis, Tennessee, and got his foot in the door at the infamous Sun Records by lending his piano prowess to recording artists Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins. Although a cover originally recorded by Big Maybelle in 1955 on the Okeh label, Jerry Lee's first record as a solo artist with Sun Records was "*Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*" b/w "*It'll Be Me*" in April of 1957. Sam Phillips, the guy who founded the Sun label and continued successfully with a slew of heavy-duty artists during this period, eternally gets full kudos for signing on "The Killer," even though Jerry Lee's success fell hard soon after he married an underage cousin and didn't give a mad fuck about it.

A new decade was soon upon America, and besides the obvious British Invasion, there was a group of wild teens from Tacoma, Washington that were about to carry the proto-punk torch from the previous decade into the mid-'60s and beyond: The Sonics. The solid lineup so many have come to love was officially founded in 1960 by guitarist Larry Parypa and solidified in 1964 with the addition of the wild animal-throated singer Gerry Roslie. That year they also released their first record, "*The Witch*" b/w "*Keep A-Knockin'*" (yep, a Little Richard cover) on the Etiquette label, owned by three members of another local Tacoma band, The Wailers. Although The Sonics went on to another label (Jerden) just a few years later, fans cite their Etiquette era as the band's raucous finest. It cannot be stressed enough, especially for garage rock punkers, just how important The Sonics were and continue to be. Muy apreciado, Wailers!

Pushing towards the end of the '60s, two bands set the stage for the near-'70s onslaught that was to be called punk rock: the MC5 and The Stooges. Just outside of Detroit, Michigan, in the town of Lincoln Park, the MC5 had roots going as far back as the early '60s, with guitarists/old friends Wayne Kramer and Fred "Sonic" Smith each in their



JACKIE RUSTED

## Any self-respecting NY Dolls, Heartbreakers, or Ramones fan can clearly see the significance Chuck Berry had on punk rock.

respective garage bands. Together, they soon had an outfit of epic proportions going on. The MC5 quickly recorded their first single, “*I Can Only Give You Everything*” (Them cover) b/w “*One of the Guys*” on the local, tiny AMG label in 1967. Another single was released on another local label (A-Square) in 1968, and their buzz started turning into a roar. That same year, Danny Fields of Elektra Records (and later the manager of the Ramones in the ‘70s) came to Detroit to see the MC5. At Kramer’s urging, he also went to see The Stooges. Fields was so impressed he offered contracts to both bands in September 1968. They were the first hard rock groups signed to Elektra. In February of ‘69, the MC5 debuted with their politically charged, electrified live album, *Kick Out the Jams*. A fucking *live* debut record. *Yes!*

Residing in Ann Arbor, about thirty miles west of their MC5 brothers-in-arms, The Stooges were at the ready to deliver the message to the current hippies that their flower-laden, harmonious dream was over. Shit in this world was getting real. Real

disturbing. Real bad. A real look in the mirror for America. And lord, yes: real, real loud. Their wall of sound—though in the band’s beginning was close to that of an airplane wreck—was fine-tuned into what frontman Iggy Pop heard as the blues in his head. It worked like a motherfucker, setting the amplified tone and desperate feel for punkers to come, punkers who didn’t even know they were punkers yet, just like The Stooges. Their 1969 self-titled debut brought quite a few alienated types together, and their 1970 classic *Funhouse* sealed the deal beyond a shadow of a doubt. If people are given a key to a city, then Danny Fields deserves one to this country.

The early seventies. A rather unique bunch from Forest Hills, Queens New York (you see where this is going) knew each other from their neighborhood since high school, all of them shared a love of similar bands, especially a band not a lot of people were hip to: The Stooges. These guys got a band going in early ‘74. They called themselves the Ramones. Without getting into the heavy

details like I often do with this band, here goes: in 1975, upon the urging of his wife who had seen them play, Sire Records co-founder Seymour Stein went to catch the Ramones at their next gig and was immediately blown away. And thanks to Seymour, we have him and ex-wife Linda (RIP) to thank for signing one of the greatest rock’n’roll bands that ever existed, a band that paved the way for countless punk rock bands, beginning with their self-titled debut album on Sire. I’m still stoked that I got to meet him years ago and tell him just that.

Although I have little to no faith in the major labels, and that goes double for the miniscule amount of duly noted fuckwits flying the DIY banner who’ve scammed their own over the years, I still try to be optimistic that there’s gonna be a resurgence of folks doing rock’n’roll right, like the examples of people involved above.

Thank fuck for magazines like this one.

—Designated Dale  
designateddale@yahoo.com



**BITE THE CACTUS**

# SELF-CARE VS SELF-WEAR

**ADRIAN CHI**

A LOT OF MY FAVORITE THINGS TO DO, ALSO KIND OF WEAR ME OUT. IS IT POSSIBLE TO FIND A COMPROMISE SO I CAN KEEP DOING WHAT I LOVE?

PLAYING DRUMS/PLAYING SHOWS.



BUT IT REALLY WEARS ME OUT.



THE COMPROMISE...



TRAVELING AND TOURING



BUT COUCH SURFING WEARS ME OUT.



THE COMPROMISE...



GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING



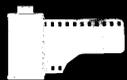
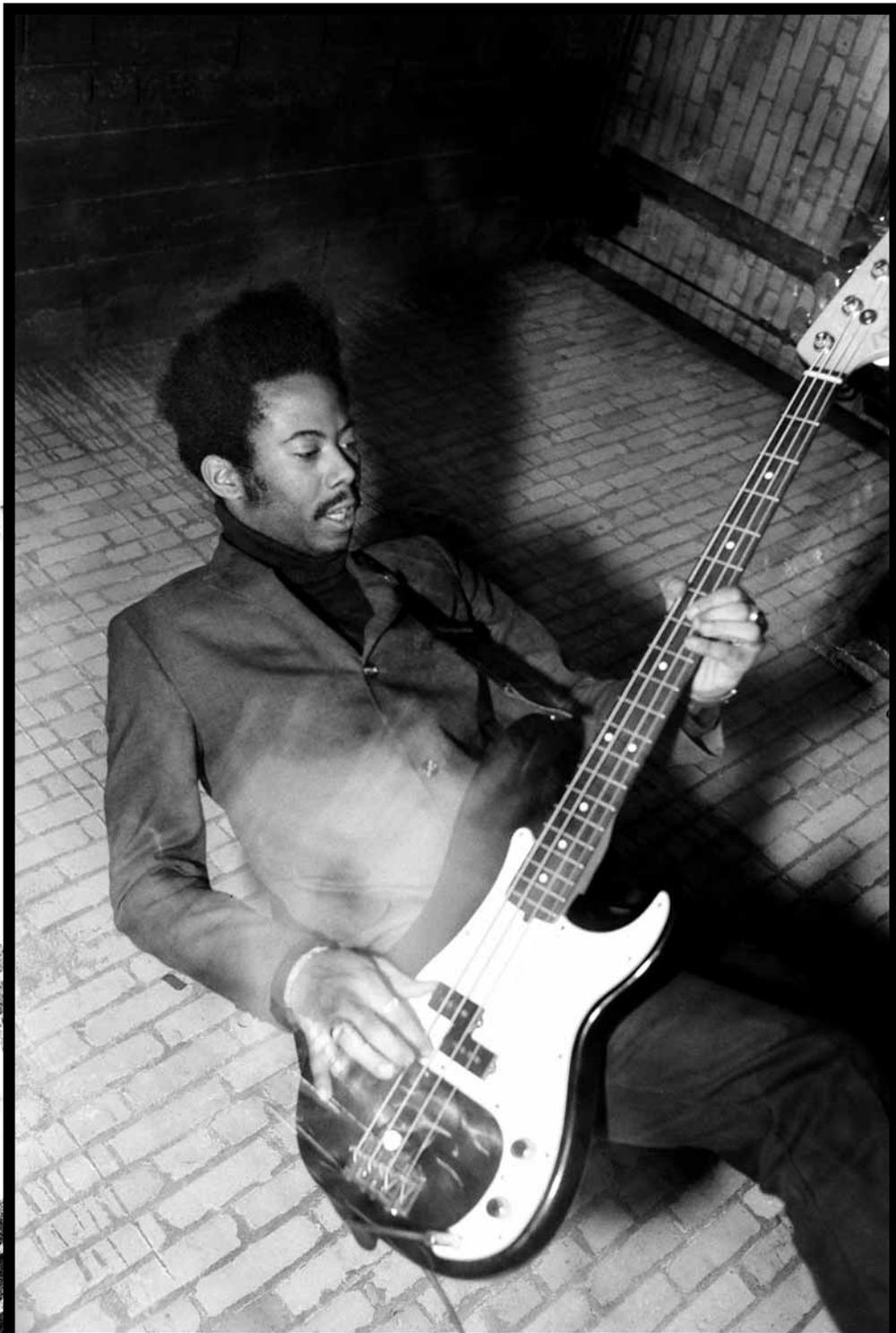
BUT I KEEP HURTING MYSELF



THE COMPROMISE...



I DON'T KNOW IF ANY OF THIS WILL HELP, BUT BEING ABLE TO DO WHAT I LOVE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE IS SUPER IMPORTANT TO ME. SO I GOTTA TRY!



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Rob Lowe, 90 Day Men, MPLS, 199something

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 (BAD COP/BAD COP)

TONY FORESTA  
 (MUNICIPAL WASTE  
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# WON TON NOT NOW THIS IS YOU

GOTTA PEE! DUDE, SOMEBODY FORGOT TO LIFT THE SEAT BEFORE ME! NOW MY PEE IS EVERYWHERE.



WELL THIS IS NOW THE NEXT PERSON'S PROBLEM.



LATER THAT DAY  
DUDE, I THINK I'M ABOUT TO HAVE A DIARRHEA ATTACK.



AH BRAH, I'M SITTING ON MY OWN PEE.



NOW MY DIARRHEA HAS GOTTEN ALL OVER THE SEAT AND MY BOTTOM. AT LEAST I'M DONE AND THIS IS NOW NOT MY PROBLEM.



LATER THAT NIGHT  
UGH, FECAL FINGERS MUST HAVE HANDLED MY BURRITO. GOING TO PUKE.



SLEEPING FACE FIRST INTO MY OWN PEE AND FEELS WHILE PUKING. DISGUSTING.



UGH! I HATE THE WORLD!!



LUCKY NAKAZAWA

K 6/15



**“I’m not a very good capitalist.”**

# Into the Eaves

Imagine taking everything you own and cramming it all into one room. About three years ago I decided to lower my monthly cost of living by moving from a rented house into the attic of my soup shop. Practically everything I own, all those things I’ve held onto for the last forty-some years, was crammed into boxes and moved into the tiny A-frame attic, shoved back into the eaves as far as they would go. Boxes and boxes full of old punk flyers, old soccer trophies, records, tapes, photographs, various Pabst knick-knacks of all kinds, childhood memories, old clothes, appliances, dishes, glasses, silverware, books, VHS tapes, guitars, drums, and basically everything else imaginable with barely enough space for a bed in the middle. That’s where I sleep.

Each morning I wake up and look to my left. There’s a cardboard sign from a punk show about fourteen years ago. It was the New Bomb Turks playing in Green Bay. I drove up from Milwaukee that night with my chickenkit and a crock pot full of chili, my first batch of Rhythm Chili. The sign plainly says, “Official Rhythm Chicken ‘Rhythm Chili’. Only \$2.00 a bowl!” Now I own and

with the shop’s name on it. I always admired my friend’s insistence on never creating merchandise to advertise his business. What he was selling was damn good coffee and the experience of a very cool little log cabin coffee shop playing great music and having a perfect environment for free minds to gather and socialize, or just relax with a book. His shop is now twenty-two years old and has become an institution. I’m sure he could’ve sold *thousands* of shirts and stickers over the years, but he doesn’t want to maximize his profit or the reach of his branding. He only wants to maximize the quality of his product. His shop is wildly successful.

Now I run my own shop selling soup, just four doors down from the coffee shop. Many of my friend’s business habits have rubbed off on me. I’m actually a little shocked when a customer walks in, comments on how cool the shop looks, and what a great idea it is. Then they immediately ask for a shirt or sticker without ever trying the soup. I can’t get over how bizarre that is, wanting to advertise a stranger’s business without even trying the product. There seems to be an expectation that, of course, any small

I can live with myself. Maybe if I sold shirts, stickers, and ice cream in the summer I could afford a more comfortable lifestyle. But I can afford a good supply of Hamms and Blatz along with an occasional trip to Los Angeles or Poland. What else would I want?

More often than I care to mention, I have customers tell me their ideas on how I could do more business. I need a bigger sign. I need a better location. I need a rewards program. I need a bigger dining room. I need a larger menu. I need a smaller menu. I need a sampler platter (some even refer to this idea as... *gulp*... “soup flights”). I need to sell paninis. I need to open more locations. I need to be on some travel network on-location, foodie show. I need to enter chili-contests. I need to open a food truck. I need to follow a soup schedule. I need to do mailorder. I need a website. I need to do everything they learned in their business marketing class. *Sheesh*.

The bizarre truth is that my business does pretty well. Sometimes a customer will stop in and complain because they couldn’t find my number in the phone book. I’m met with a blank confused stare

**I keep living like a punk rock college kid. I don’t live like a king, but I can live with myself.**

operate my own soup shop where I serve Rhythm Chili every Saturday. The price has gone up, but so has the overhead. That’s business. I remember selling out of chili that night. I grossed about twenty bucks, all of which was spent on beer next door. The other performers sold shirts, records, CDs, and stickers. I sold hot chili for too cheap. I’m not a very good capitalist.

About nine years ago, I started working as a barista at my friend’s coffee shop. This is a very popular and busy shop he runs, and he prides himself on the quality product he serves. Customers would frequently ask about the shop merchandise, the shirts, stickers, mugs, anything they could purchase

business would sell such stuff. That’s good business, right? People *paying you* so they can do your advertising for you? I can’t bring myself to go that route. Maybe I keep thinking that one day my business will fail and there will be too many reminders around of my profiteering audacity? I sleep better at night knowing that all I sell is food.

My business does pretty well. I pay all the bills on time and I’m paying off my loans ahead of time. Then again, I live in the attic practically on top of all my possessions so I don’t have to pay rent, I drive a junker ‘95 Honda, I eat the leftovers, and I live off the cash in my tip jar. I keep living like a punk rock college kid. I don’t live like a king, but

when I tell them, “That’s because I don’t have a business phone.” My only means of communication with my customer base is my Facebook page, because that is quick, easy, and best of all, free. Many customers ask for my business card. Nope, don’t have those either. Heck, I actually made Rhythm Chicken business cards long ago, but my actual *business* has no cards. Now and then I will make cheap photocopied brochures that look more like punk flyers. Sometimes I think about what would happen if I really started trying to push my business to its full potential. I could probably grow into a bigger location and then multiple locations. I could probably afford a pretty



BILL PINKEL

nice house and a fancy car. I could maybe have health insurance again for the first time in twenty-one years. I wouldn't have to sleep next to all my possessions in boxes in my business attic. I would actually have a place to set up both my drums and my Grandpa's drums. I would have a living space with more than one window. I might even get to retire at a reasonable age. Even though all this stuff sounds pretty luxurious, it just wouldn't feel right. I think maybe I was born to be a soup maker who lives in his own attic.

Oh, yeah, and I play my drums now and then while wearing a chickenhead.

**Dinghole Report #151: Wedding Ruckus and Back to Work! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #..... uh, last summer)**

It was a long day of stirring and serving soup, bussing the tables, doing the dishes, and chopping vegetables. I was covered in soup splatter marks. The kitchen was a mess. I had just flipped the "closed" sign and left the mess to deal with later. My Hen and I zoomed my Rooster Roller over to the next village where a wedding party had just arrived at Husby's, the local tavern. We quickly threw the rusted and crumbling chickenkit together in the middle of the beer garden. Wasting no time, I thrust

on my chickenhead and began pounding out a relentless batch of random rhythms! I rumbled through a quick and chaotic set of my audio-visual lunacy! Then, with a violent thrashing about, the kit was scattered to and fro with a panting chicken lying on his back. The crowd went nuts. My Hen and I threw the drums back into my car and zoomed back to the soup shop. I had to flip up the chairs, finish the dishes, count the till, sweep, mop, and then collapse in the attic.

Two dollars for a bowl of chili. What was I thinking?

—Rhythm Chicken



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## Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

Doll parts for sale in Chicago.

DOOT  
DOOLA  
DOOT  
DOO...

DOOT  
DOO!

WHO ARE YOU?

“How much  
booty is too  
much booty?”

# Nardwuar vs. Chuck D

The Human Serviette

**Nardwuar:** Who are you?

**Chuck D:** My name is Chuck D and the name of my group is Public Enemy.

**Nardwuar:** Right off the bat, Chuck, I have a gift for you.

**Chuck D:** Okay, thank you.

**Nardwuar:** Here it is right here.

**Chuck D:** I am not good at accepting gifts.

**Nardwuar:** What do we have right here?

[Nardwuar hands Chuck D a Blowfly Throblehead]

**Chuck D:** Is this Flavor? You know they've got a bunch of Flavors around. Aw, okay. Who's this?

**Nardwuar:** Clarence “motherfucking” Reid.

**Chuck D:** Oh yeah, Blowfly. Right, right. That's my man.

**Nardwuar:** And this is interesting because Blowfly's “Rapp Dirty,” that influenced “Fight the Power.” How did that happen?

**Chuck D:** Well, in 1980 we collected records. It was on the TK label, which was known for a lot of different records in '77, '78, '79 and '80. “Dance to the Drummer's Beat” was one of them. You know, so Blowfly had one of the first rap records with *Blowfly Rapp* and in there he came up with this sequence about the KKK and Muhammad Ali, and so that stuck with me.

**Nardwuar:** I wanted to ask you Chuck D about this particular record right here, *Malcolm X* by Keith LeBlanc.

**Chuck D:** Doug Wimbish, who was one of the founding members of Living Color and the house band for the Sugar Hill record label, made this record. We played the heck out of it and it was highly influential to how Public Enemy made records. It actually used sampling before sampling was even known as sampling—they sampled Malcolm X's voice over the funky beat of Keith LeBlanc.

**Nardwuar:** And if you open it up there it's got an ad for a “record pool”—and I was curious—were you ever a part of this record pool? Do you know what that is? What is that all about?

**Chuck D:** Well, *Dance Music Report* wasn't really a record pool. What they did, they had DJs that recorded in the early '80s. It was Tommy Silverman and Monica Lynch's creation. They were around the whole New York City dance scene and rap was a component of it. So the rap records that they

had were really rap records, but were also a combination of electronic music. Planet Rock was Afrika Bambaataa and Arthur Baker getting together. So, you know, *Dance Music Report* was actually their own trade rag, you know, which talked about music. It was way ahead of its time. From this you had the New Music Seminar.

**Nardwuar:** Very influential for the battles and stuff. And I wanted to ask you about this other Malcolm X record, Chuck D, because you loved Malcolm X.

[Nardwuar hands Chuck D a Malcolm X LP]

**Chuck D:** Yes, I heard about it. I never had this but it's Alan Douglas—who also produced The Last Poets—probably figured out how to, you know, record one of his lectures and put it out as an album. As a matter of fact, I have one of my lectures I'm putting out as an album maybe next month. I did a lecture at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida and found it to be kind of relevant and on point to kind of emulate my heroes.

**Nardwuar:** Speaking of heroes, these guys, this guy, Herman Kelly, this is Foundation, isn't it? [Nardwuar hands Chuck D a Herman Kelly LP]

**Chuck D:** That is why I talked about this earlier because this album actually, although was the original version on Electric Cat—Herman Kelly And Life, “Dance to the Drummer's Beat”—percussionists used on a lot of sessions, but also from the Electric Cat independent label. Another great pioneer who we just recently lost, Henry Stone, just passed away, from Florida.

**Nardwuar:** Blowfly's label boss.

**Chuck D:** Blowfly's label from that particular time. And then Henry Stone had the TK label, which also did the single “Dance to the Drummer's Beat.” They were very explosive as far as a label putting out 12”s.

**Nardwuar:** I also wanted to ask you a little bit about Spoonie Gee. I love that Spoonie Gee speaks about 8-tracks. [Nardwuar hands Chuck D a Spoonie Gee LP]

**Chuck D:** [singing] Dooh-doooh-doooh. One of the first records that we picked up in rap records—myself and Hank Shocklee—I heard this record walking down 125th Street in a cold December and it was an old, busted speaker and amplifier playing a turntable with a record out on the street and myself and

Hank heard this record being played from Paul Winley's office, who also put out this record sound in New York, *Spoonin' Rap*. Spoonie Gee was one of the pioneers. This came out not too long after the whole sensational phase of Sugar Hill Gang and before Curtis Blow, so it was right there in the middle and, as a matter of fact, at the same time that we bought this record, *Spoonin' Rap*, we also bought a record by Willie Wood, who was Woody Wood from Queens who had actually taken his whole style off of DJ Hollywood.

**Nardwuar:** Chuck D, quote: “I remember hip hop.”

**Chuck D:** I remember hip-hop as being...

**Nardwuar:** “I remember hip-hop,” Davy DMX.

[Nardwuar hands Chuck D a Davy DMX's LP]

**Chuck D:** Right, right, yes. I remember.

**Nardwuar:** Who worked with Spoonie Gee.

**Chuck D:** Who worked with Spoonie Gee and also Davy DMX is the bass player in Public Enemy now and a good great friend. He's a Hall of Famer of both sides—the Run DMC side and the Public Enemy side—and there's no better human being heart-wise and contribution-wise than Davy DMX. Anything I could do for him, I'd do for him. He's really one of the unspoken-for legends of this genre.

**Nardwuar:** And on one of the coolest record labels, Tuff City.

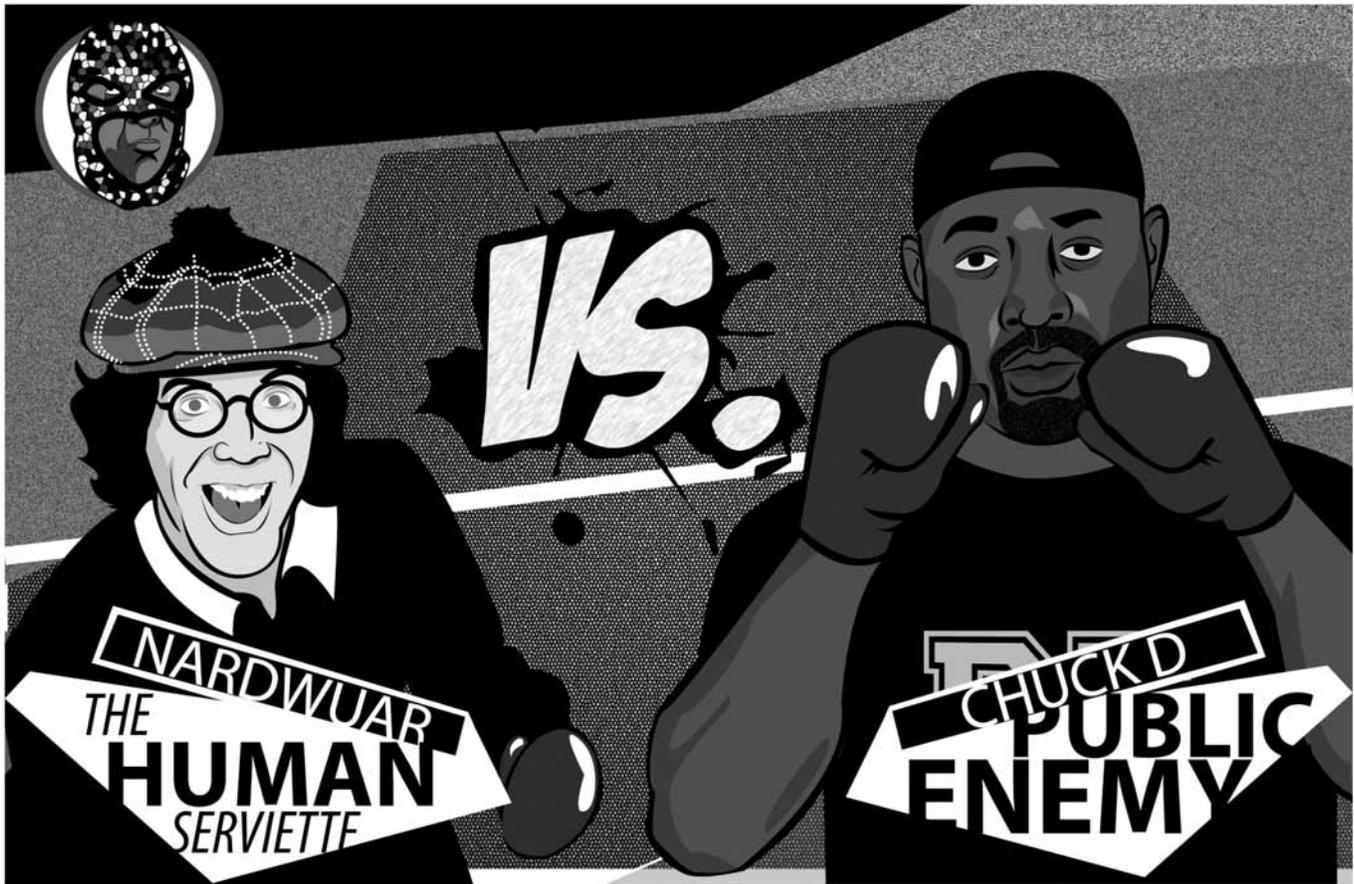
**Chuck D:** That's a whole other story. I would tell you that Davy DMX—this record “One for the Treble” is so instrumentally profound, it created a lot of records after it.

**Nardwuar:** And Davy DMX also worked with the important gentleman called Lovebug...

[Nardwuar hands Chuck D a Lovebug Starski LP]

**Chuck D:** That's right, Lovebug Starski, “Positive Life” and he'd talk about DJ Hollywood and Lovebug. Starski was one of the main guys that seriously held a hip-hop event together—you are talking about three, four or five hours. So that's why when rap records first came out, it wasn't a miraculous fact that they were long, it was that they were compressed into a record from a three-hour event.

**Nardwuar:** And this record begins with a sample of Wolfman Jack, which is really influential to you. Did you listen to Wolfman Jack through bedsprings? [Laughs]



CODEY RICHARDS

## I remember one time Dee Snider and I were in the same amusement park with our kids.

**Chuck D:** No. But yeah, that came from the fact that Wolfman Jack, when he was at XERB 1090 AM, this transmission signal was set up in Mexico. It was so powerful that people used to be able to hear sounds on bedsprings on the other side of the border. But Wolfman Jack, remember he was the host of *The Midnight Special* on television, on the NBC networks, did radio, did mainstream hit radio. He, along with a lot of the black jocks, was influential not only to myself and others in hip hop in general, but just like they kept soul moving and very organic.

**Narduar:** Chuck D, what do you know about The White Boys? [Narduar hands Chuck an LP by The White Boys]

**Chuck D:** Yes, The White Boys. I think they were from Florida. But, you know...

**Narduar:** Producer Todd Ray.

**Chuck D:** Todd Ray, yes. I remember when this came out. I thought it was interesting. They tried to actually do the Beastie Boy thing but the Beastie Boy thing already was very true to its core. A bunch of New Yorkers so they could understand it and get it. I don't know where these guys were from.

**Narduar:** Carolina or something like that.

**Chuck D:** I don't know but...

**Narduar:** [Reading the title of The White Boys LP] *This Is Hardcore, Is It Not?*

**Chuck D:** Well too far ahead of its time [laughs]. Too far ahead of its time.

**Narduar:** It's so awesome Chuck, you covered Twisted Sister. That's amazing!

**Chuck D:** They're from Long Island. That's that.

**Narduar:** That's it, period.

**Chuck D:** Dee Snider. I remember one time Dee Snider and I were in the same amusement park with our kids.

**Narduar:** Money and hip hop. Eddie Cheeba was making two thousand a night in '75 DJ-ing?

**Chuck D:** I think he made two thousand on some nights, yes.

**Narduar:** That's quite a lot back then, isn't it?

**Chuck D:** Yes. Definitely back then, especially back then you could do five or six gigs in the same night. So I could imagine when Cheeba was hot, he was doing more than one gig in two or three different places.

**Narduar:** Winding up here, you did a song with Isaiah Thomas's son?

**Chuck D:** Yes, Zeke Thomas. He's good in the electric dance music scene. We did a song called "Blackness" with Jasiri X from Pittsburgh.

**Narduar:** And Chuck D, how much booty is too much booty? And how much thug is too much thug?

**Chuck D:** When you can't control it: you can't control your thuggery and you can't control your booty.

**Narduar:** Chuck D, lastly, can you give a shout out to DJ Z-Trip and Brother Ali for helping to broker this interview?

**Chuck D:** For helping to broker this interview—my guys, my brethren—Brother Ali and Z-Trip and other people that helped you track me down, peace. And I'm out.

**Narduar:** Thanks very much for your time, Chuck D, keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

**Chuck D:** Doot doot.

To see this interview hop to [narduar.com](http://narduar.com)

# LISTEN LADY



ADRIAN CHI

L Henderson – Guitar & Vocals / Brizer St.Cyr – Bass / Siobhan Whalen – Vocals / Tom Lowell – Drums

No matter the quality of the content, nor my own genre preferences, I am always impressed when people find each other in this world and make music. Based in Seattle, WA, Listen Lady is a merger of three New Hampshire natives and one member from the Bay Area. Touring in the DIY circuit from San Jose, they met in New England and, by way of random happenstance, they all landed in the Pacific Northwest. The band is relatively new and the bulk of its members are even newer to musicianship. Though I never would've guessed it when I first heard Listen Lady, guitarist L Henderson is the only member with experience in songwriting. Off stage, they're a quiet clan of creative introverts—a prose writer, a flyer artist, a collage maker, and a comedian. On stage, this band is tight, bubbly, and animated. They truly come alive when performing, and embody a cohesive expression of joy.

Some of the best pop anthems and punk jams are being pumped out of these transplants. With flutters of Sonic Youth and waves of the Pixies, Listen Lady has strong melodic vocals working in concert with beautiful guitar work over a warm, bubbly bass and snappy, crashing drums. Siobhan and L share vocal duties throughout many of their songs, which creates call-and-response style songs and layered songs that build intensity. I've seen them play an independent ice cream shop, an underground guerilla radio station, and the basement of a bar.

L is also going through a hefty transition—both in their gender and their health in dealing with cancer. Much like Marge Simpson's character—which the band is named after—Listen Lady has become a much-needed source of creative output as well as a supportive group of close friends. So long as the band's ethics aren't compromised, they'll put on a show that makes you smile, hold hands, and dance.

Interview – Kayla Greet / Layout – Daryl / Illustrations – Tom

**Kayla:** So what's the Listen Lady origin story?

**L:** I met Tom in New Hampshire on The Pillowfights tour of 2010 at a cool house, Slaughter House Five.

**Kayla:** Kurt Vonnegut punk house.

**L:** And I kept in touch with Tom over the years. I moved to Seattle in 2011 and then Tom came a little later.

**Tom:** And we hung out at a Joyce Manor show.

**Kayla:** That's a really good place to meet up.

**Tom:** And Brizer lived next door to us, next to Slaughter House Five.

**Tom:** And he came to our house because we had shows.

**Brizer:** I moved in eventually because I liked it so much. Tom and I had been trying to do something in New Hampshire for a while. They (Tom and Siobhan) moved out and a year later I moved to Seattle, too. One day he said, "Hey do you mind if L comes out and jams with us?" Then L brought two full songs.

**Kayla:** Did starting a band end up being easier that you thought it would be?

**Brizer:** Definitely. I don't mean to sound like an asshole. [All laugh] I mean, definitely L helped me learn a lot. I had tried playing bass for about a year, but on and off because I didn't know what I was doing.

**L:** Then I came in with my experience and was like, "This is how you structure a song!" I had to be a drill sergeant at first to keep things focused. Then they got the hang of it after two or three practices. We pressured Siobhan to do vocals. [All laugh]

**Kayla:** So how much pressuring was that?

**Siobhan:** It wasn't all that much.

**Kayla:** Good, because you sound really great.

**Siobhan:** Aw, thank you! It's just mostly my schedule is really stupid. All of our work schedules are so different. So I think that was my biggest reason to be like, "Oh, well I don't know if I have time." And I was *really* nervous.

**L:** It was adorable. She came to the first two practices and didn't touch the mic the whole time. But then after a while she got out of her shell and started killing it.

**Kayla:** That's awesome. So, have you done any musical projects before this Siobhan?

**Siobhan:** No. All through high school I worked backstage. The one experience being in front of people performing was in third grade. I was Mr. McGregor [all laugh] in our play of *Peter Rabbit* and I almost threw up. And then I was really away from performing or doing anything in front of anyone. Then I met Tom, started hanging out at Slaughter House, and he showed me the way!

**Tom:** We did a Bikini Kill cover set for a Halloween show.

**Kayla:** Clearly, Siobhan should sing for that!

**Tom:** The three of us and our friend Chris Bovio.

**Kayla:** So L, you played a house show in New Hampshire and decided, "This is awesome. These people are great," and end up forming a band in Seattle later on.

**L:** Yeah, it was the best—my favorite show on tour because everyone there was really, really cool and it was a scene that felt so

familiar to me and so unified. We even wrote a song about it in Pillowfights. So I was like, "I need to keep in touch with these people."

**Tom:** Also you had half-jokingly said that the show had to be formal wear only.

[All laugh]

**L:** That was Danny (from Pillowfights). So everyone was decked out in formal wear and there was a massive pillow fight with feathers fucking everywhere. It was the best! It was packed, hot as fuck.

**Siobhan:** There was no shower because we had zero hot water.

**L:** And I remember it was so hot in that basement that most of us in Pillowfights started getting naked, except Danny. They were all in formal wear, covered in feathers. We were all mostly nude, covered in feathers.

**Kayla:** So it was like a sweat-and-feathering of a non-Hot Water Music show? [All laugh]

**Kayla:** Did you guys have any other experience in that house like that Pillowfights show? I'm sure that wasn't the first show you booked there.

**Tom:** That show was relatively early on. We had a couple other really cool shows. We had Lemuria play there, too... we probably fit eighty people in the house. Maybe.

**Siobhan:** Capacity there was maybe forty-five and then we crammed an additional sixty.

**Tom:** We counted 120 at the door.

**Kayla:** Wow!

**Tom:** So that was awesome and we got Hunchback to do a reunion show in our basement once. And that was also very packed. It was technically our last show.

**Siobhan:** Yeah, 'cause we were done.

**Tom:** Shut down! We were gonna have Emily's Army—Billie Joe from Green Day's son's band—play with Vacation and The Dopamines. Billie Joe's record label promoted it and it got printed in the local paper.

**Siobhan:** That was the straw.

**Tom:** It was a mixture of a perfect storm.

**Kayla:** It's dangerous to get too noticed.

**Siobhan:** Yeah, and that was too noticed!

**Kayla:** So how did you guys first get into the Seattle music scene?

**L:** When I first moved here, I only really knew people through the kinda bro-y pop punk scene. And we all sorta knew the same people, like Chris Crusher. Most people knew me from The Pillowfights, so they knew I played music.

**Tom:** My connections were also from Slaughter House where I met Crusher from Smokejumper. And I met CJ when he was touring with Big Eyes. When we got here, it was like, "Oh, you live here too?"

**Siobhan:** But I would say in the beginning when we all first moved here, it was slow and I don't know if it was just because of our own personalities or what. It took a little while to know where show venues were and I feel like in Seattle, there's kind of these little pods. Like pockets of music. And so you sort of had to learn the landscape of like, "Okay, this kind of music I like, and this I'll go to because my

friends are going but it's not my favorite thing." It was kind of a learning curve.

**Tom:** The Funhouse helped. 'Cause they did everything.

**Brizer:** Also going to four shows a week.

**Kayla:** I remember seeing you around when you first moved to town, like, "Hey, I've never seen him before!"

**L:** Now Brizer's famous and everybody recognizes him.

**Brizer:** Yeah, going to shows four days a week helped.

**Kayla:** Totally. One of the things I really like about your band is that you'll play just about anywhere and meet people outside of those little pockets.

**L:** Well, when we started, I openly made this complaint: "I don't want to be stuck in one place with one community. I want to meet people in the queer community and play all-ages shows, not just the same bar that all of our friends play all the time." We got to do that by people coming to shows and booking us for all kinds of different venues and things. I'm actually shy as shit and I'm afraid to talk to new people most of the time, but I wanted to make it a point to do what I do back home and talk to people who come to the shows. Get to know people and get more involved.

**Siobhan:** It helped a lot to know people who are booking too. At least just to get our foot in the door.

**L:** Our first show was booked because I was living with Ogre. Mickey and Ogre had their twentieth anniversary and they knew that we had a band, so they asked us to play. We ended up putting it together and it was nerve-wracking.

**Siobhan:** Yeah, you're ruining someone's major life event here if you fuck up.

**L:** But it ended up being a really good show, apparently, and then we got booked non-stop after that.

**Kayla:** How long had you been playing together at that point?

**L:** We'd been playing like two or three months by the time.

**Kayla:** So had you written your own stuff and then started singing for them?

**Siobhan:** No, most of the lyrics are L. There are a couple that we have collaborated on. There are tweaks that we all make, but the majority of the lyrics are L. I just don't feel I have enough of a voice. I feel like I need a perspective and I don't know if I have that yet.

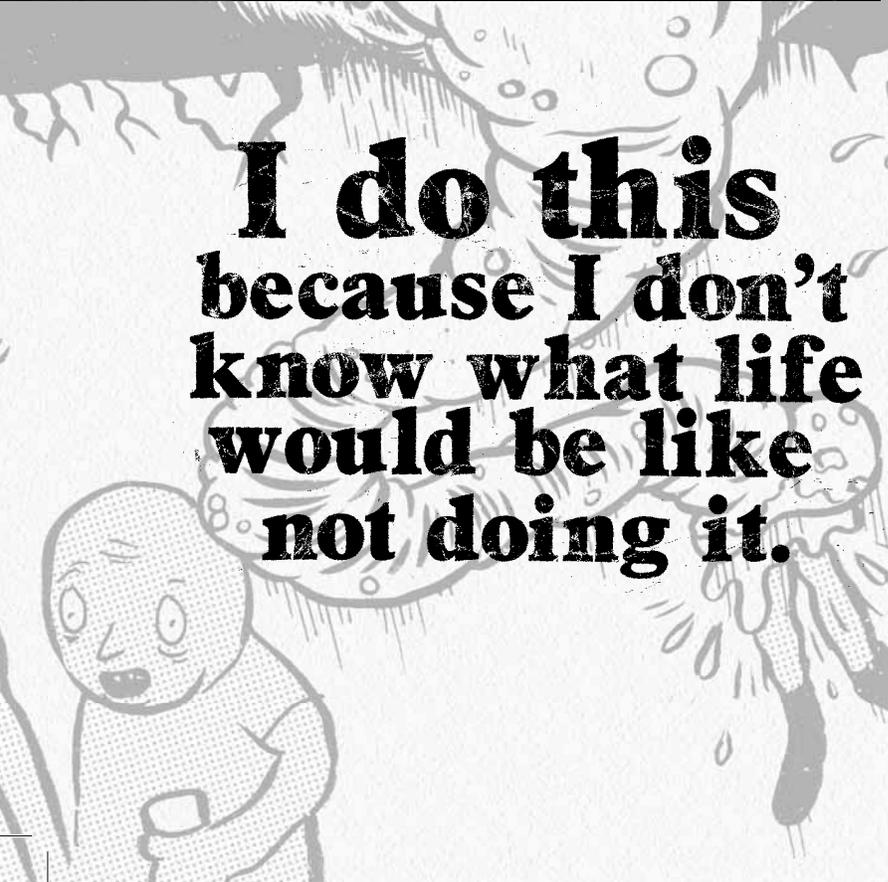
**L:** There are some songs that, at first, I'd write the structure for the song and show it to all of them and change parts however we needed to. Usually, as we started getting more and more into it and learning how to put songs together, it became more of a collaborative thing. So now we all contribute, whereas at first I was the only one with any experience.

**Brizer:** Yeah, none of us knew how to play our instruments!

**Kayla:** Well, we all know from punk rock that that's not necessary.

**Siobhan:** But it's fairly helpful. [All laugh]

**L:** But even then, I liked that. Guitar is not even my main instrument. I don't really





PHOTOS BY LUKAS MYHAN

know how to play guitar. I just make it up. I only play guitar in this band because no one else wants to.

**Kayla:** That's so rare in a band. Like, "I need someone in my band! Oh you play guitar? We already have six of those."

**L:** Bass is my main instrument. Historically, I play bass and drums. I've played guitar in two bands total and those bands lasted for three weeks. So I didn't have a lot of experience with it, but I'd played a lot of solo acoustic shows, so I had some basis—and I know music theory—so I just taught myself how to play solos and do fills and all that weird stuff.

**Kayla:** So how did you guys all get into local music and the punk rock scene?

**L:** I started with a mixtape exchange in seventh grade with my friend Jessica. She gave me a tape that had Tilt and Blatz and MXPX and a couple of other pop punk bands. We became best friends and I haven't stopped going to shows since.

**Tom:** I didn't really like drinking that much and I didn't smoke or anything but I went to weird metalcore shows in the suburbs of New Hampshire for a while. That's all I knew about. I moved in with people when I was in college who knew about more punk stuff and then it kinda went from there.

We went to Boston a lot. That was why we started doing shows. 'Cause we had to drive to Boston for anything remotely good and it was an hour and a half away. So we'd do it two or three times a week sometimes, and it was stupid. We were like, "Why isn't anyone doing anything here?" So that's what started getting me really involved, like booking things and doing flyers.

**Kayla:** You've been drawing flyers for a while now right? They're all so rad.

**Tom:** Yeeeeeaaah.

**Kayla:** You've done a lot of cover art, too. Like Stab Me Kill Me, Lipstick Homicide—both had album art from you. How did you expand into all of that?

**Tom:** Uh, well I just kept doing it. I don't know. [All laugh]

**Kayla:** Bands would see your stuff and then ask you to do their cover art?

**Tom:** Yeah. So Servo—the guy who does Bloated Kat Records—he was very helpful in getting me more involved in all that. He lived in New Hampshire for a while, and we had a similar friend group. I was doing all the flyers for our house shows just because I wanted to and I like flyers a lot. Servo got me to do the Mikey Erg flexi, that *Fucifer*, fuck a fire or whatever. And from there he kept asking me to do stuff for them and that eventually lead to Lipstick Homicide, which was really cool. I did stuff for Awesome Fest seven. I did two things for a zine for The Steinways, Skinny Jeans. CJ was a hard sell at first. I was like, "I can draw, I make flyers!" He was like, "Yeah, whatever." He was focused on something else. So I just did something anyways and CJ's like, "You're doing all the flyers from now on!"

**Siobhan:** Brizer how did you get involved?

**Brizer:** One of my co-workers actually met Tom's brother on the bus 'cause he was wearing an Ergs! shirt. And he's like, "So I found out about this house and they have a show there and we should go." Then I was like, "Oh shit, it's next door to me. I'm definitely going to this!" And I went to pretty much every one after that.

**Kayla:** That's pretty amazing to just be totally in the right place at the right time.

**Brizer:** I think it was their third show or so. I had heard loud noises next door but I didn't know what it was at the time. Thought it was just a party or something.

**Kayla:** Well Slaughter House ended up with some good neighbors then. Who's going to call the cops when the neighbors are at the show?

**Tom:** We really did. Even after they moved out, the next people there had their own weird stuff going on so it was fine. And the people on the other side were young college students. They didn't care.

**Kayla:** So the band name is a Simpsons reference right?

**L:** Yeah. Tom names most of the things. Because Tom is better at naming things than I am. [All laugh] One of the songs on our record, "Rain It Down," has nothing to do with the song itself. It was just a thing I heard Tom say once and I liked it a lot.

**Brizer:** And he rains it down on the drums.

**L:** Yup, rain it down, rain it down a little.

**Kayla:** The pitter patter of drumsticks.

**Siobhan:** He names stuff all the time and he has whole pages in his sketch book dedicated to band names, song titles, album titles.

**Tom:** I'm not gonna drop any right now.

**Siobhan:** Yeah, they're all copyrighted.

**Tom:** Ninety percent of them are Simpsons references.

**Kayla:** The name works really well for the band, though. You're a female-fronted band named Listen Lady, which could be interpreted as people listening to Siobhan. And you have a voice, in this genre, that isn't represented in many scenes. Who's writing songs about cat calling? Fucking no one. It's really good to hear.

**L:** We came up for the name for "Hey Listen" because of Zelda. (the Nintendo video game).

**Tom:** I think we were going to put a sound clip of that on the record.

**L:** But it's a short record and we already have two sound clips from the Simpsons on it." So we didn't want to oversaturate.

**Tom:** We're not Dillinger Four!

**Siobhan:** My thing about cat calling—that song is about a specific event and I took some creative liberties because this gentleman was probably not the most sane person. He was offering me things and telling my friend and me how beautiful we were. It just made me feel extremely uncomfortable. But I feel like most cat calling events are—how do I want to put this? They're not, "Hey baby wanna suck my cock?" type of thing, it's mostly like, "Hey, I like your smile and you should smile more." It's still inappropriate and I

**Brizer: Yeah, none of us knew how to play our instruments!**

**Kayla: Well, we all know from punk rock that that's not necessary.**



feel like that gets glossed over because it's not threatening, but it *is* threatening. Because there's no reason that you should feel it's necessary to talk to me. I don't need to talk to you. I'm not looking at you. If I want to talk to you, I'll talk to you. So, that's my one thing about cat calling. I feel like the majority of the time it's not threatening in content, it's threatening in *context*.

**L:** That's dope.

**Kayla:** The things that they say to you, they wouldn't say to their guy friends.

**Siobhan:** Right. For the most part, I'm fairly polite so I instinctively react and I think, "Why did I feel like I had to do that?" You don't have to engage them at all. There's no obligation. And then I feel guilty and that's dumb, too. I shouldn't feel guilty. *They* should feel guilty.

**Kayla:** The victim shaming snowballs.

**Siobhan:** Totally.

**Kayla:** Have people come up to you after shows and tell you they're into it?

**L:** People usually tell *me* that they like that song, the people who do talk to me. Most are too shy to talk to anyone, but then when they do, it's always about how awesome Siobhan is and how great that song is.

**Siobhan:** See, I always feel really uncomfortable after shows. I feel very vulnerable and that sounds so lame, but...

**L:** I feel that too every time, though. And I've been doing it for years.

**Siobhan:** When people talk to you after shows you're just, like, "Oh okay! Bye!" I don't know what to say! It's just really uncomfortable for me, so I usually just try to be away from people after shows.

**L:** I've been doing this for a long time and I still always feel like the scared kid at the show. Then I remember that most people feel like the scared kid at the show unless they're drunk.

**Kayla:** Well, what are some of your favorite moments after shows, or places you've played? You guys played with Lemuria just last year, right?

**Tom:** Yeah. That was fun!

**L:** I have a pretty fun interaction. It started off when we were setting up.

There was this group of teenage boys in the front and they were making fun of my gear because I have a cheap Squire Telecaster and it's got duct tape on it. My pedals are super flimsy. And they're just, "I have better gear back home" kind of attitude. Then we started playing and the whole time they were the ones going the most nuts over us. At the end of it, they all came up to me outside and were like, "That was so good. You guys were so awesome." In my head I was just like, "That's right, you privileged motherfuckers! Don't you dare try to judge a band by their gear!"

**Tom:** The spirit of rock'n'roll!

**L:** That was my favorite "people talking to me" story because it was one of those *Revenge of the Nerds* gotcha! moments.

**Tom:** We slumped our way onto that bill.

**L:** I was shameless about it cause Lemuria is one of my favorite bands. (Our friends) flooded the event page, saying, "Listen Lady would be good for the show," and it worked! Then we got to play the biggest show we've ever played. So that was fun.

**Siobhan:** So be persistent is the moral of that story.

**L:** If you want something

**Kayla:** Annoy your way into it.

**L:** My favorite set though was at The Cockpit.

**Kayla:** That's in Capitol Hill? Kind of a DIY spot?

**L:** Yeah. It was the first show that we played that was a primarily queer, people of color crowd. That's my people and Seattle is super white. It's easy to feel like an island for me, especially at shows. Not only am I up there being vulnerable and getting low self-esteem after every set, but this was one of the ones where I'm playing to people who understand my voice and who I want to hear what they have to say, too. I even said to the crowd, "I'm nervous for the first time in a long time because you guys all look really cool and look like you have stories to tell that I wanna hear." That's what I do when I'm nervous; I just ramble like an idiot.

**Siobhan:** It works well because you come off as really cool. [Laughter]

**Kayla:** I remember the first time I saw you play “Little Mouse” and you were like, “This is gonna be everyone’s ring tone for 2015. It’s the pop jam of the year!” [L laughs]

**L:** It’s that kind of nervous energy that propelled me to do stand-up, where I said, “Fuck it. I do this on stage all the time anyway and I make people feel cooler by the way I talk.” Give people cool nicknames. That’s not true, I’m not cool.

**Kayla:** That’s pretty cool that you’re not cool, though.

**Tom:** It’s hip to be square! As Huey Lewis once said.

**L:** Because you referenced Huey Lewis, you are not cool.

**Kayla:** Now we’re at a paradox. Have you run into any opposition to the identity of your band—that you do have a trans person of color in the band?

**L:** I don’t think we deal with anything collectively. It’s mostly shit that I deal with, like while I’m alone. No one’s gonna be shouting shit while I’m on stage.

**Kayla:** I sure hope not.

**L:** People are too afraid to heckle me, I guess. I can handle a heckler. I’m on stage all the time. I can deal with it, but most of the stuff that I encounter just happens in isolated instances with one person or a group of people outside of a venue, or on the way to it. Literally every time that we don’t take a cab and I try to go on my own, I get harassed. It’s mostly stuff that I get. We don’t get hate mail or anything.

**Kayla:** You guys just put out a 7”. Is this the first record that you guys have been on?

**Brizer:** This is the first band I’ve ever played in. It’s awesome. If you had told me five years ago, this would not even be in the realm of possibility.

**Siobhan:** I think something about it has made me realize, as a relatively young person, that you’re never too old to do what you want. Like, Tom, you’re not a spring chicken.

[All laugh]

**Tom:** I am like an autumn chicken.

**Siobhan:** But it’s true. Sometimes, you’re like, “Oh I’m too old for that.” Maybe that’s just me.

**L:** I feel that shit all the time, though.

**Siobhan:** But with your comedy stuff, you just decided that was something you wanted to reintegrate into your life in a huge way and you did it. That’s one thing that I really like about this group of people: I think all of us have done things like that where we’re like, “You know, I just wanna do thing this and I’m just gonna do it.”

**L:** Just take that leap.

**Tom:** We’re leap-takers. We’re leap-taking spring chickens.

**Kayla:** Write that one down in Tom’s sketch book. You think you might start touring any time soon?

**L:** I’d like to, but I’m still pouting.

**Siobhan:** I have a really hard schedule and I run a summer program. That’s probably when we most likely would wanna go and I just can’t. Our schedules are just so crappy.

**Tom:** We’ll figure it out eventually.

**L:** But I want to. I want to tour.

**Kayla:** That’s how you met each other, too. Just passing through on tour.

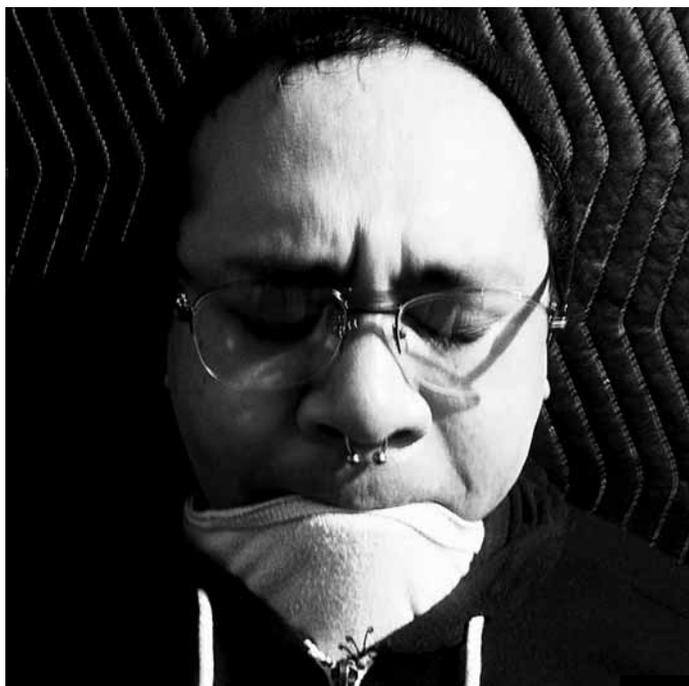
**L:** And it’s not something I ever thought I would be in a situation to do again. But this band has been going really well and people wanna hear us. This might not be something we end up doing at some point, but not for a while.

**Tom:** If we came out with an LP, we would have to. We might start recording.

**L:** We have plenty of songs, but some of them I want Tom to rename. Most of them I just use two words from the song and make that the title. One song I came up with the name because I didn’t want to write anything sincere. The whole song is about me dealing with cancer and being really depressed about it. I didn’t want to make the title like, “The Sad Song,” or “I’m Dying.” I didn’t want to do that, so I just called it “PMA Can Suck My Butt.”

**Kayla:** That’s a good way to look at it.

**L:** There’s sometimes when you’re dealt something and it’s just unreasonable to try and be positive about it. It’s just like, “Fuck this.” It’s just unfair. It’s shitty. So PMA (positive mental attitude) does not apply here and so it can suck my



PHOTOS BY THE BAND

**Siobhan:**  
**But it’s fairly helpful.**  
**[All laugh]**



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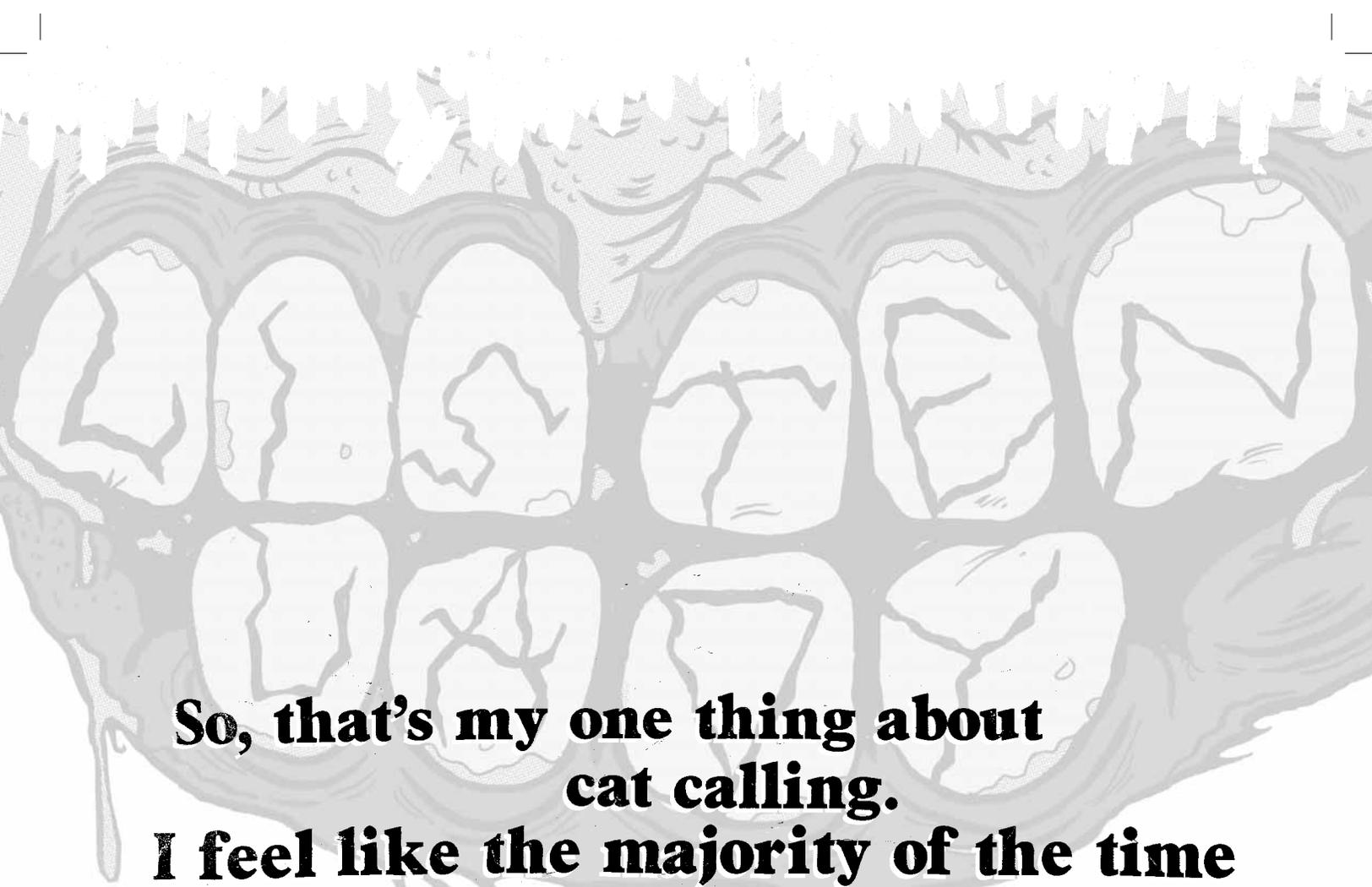


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**So, that's my one thing about  
cat calling.**

**I feel like the majority of the time  
it's not threatening in content, it's  
threatening in context.**

butt. It's the most upbeat-sounding song we have and it's the one I get to sing like a diva in. It's fast and it's fun, but it's actually about not wanting to die here.

**Tom:** It's unrealistic to have a positive outlook. It's great to strive for that—really, you're just doing yourself a disservice if you don't let yourself have the bad times.

**Kayla:** All great art comes from tragedy. That's sometimes the best place to create from.

**L:** And I'm sad as fuck! That's why I'm so god damn artistically prolific!

**Kayla:** So how do you go through that process of dealing with creative demons—depression or angst about your health situation?

**L:** You don't. I don't, anyway. I just find something to put it to 'cause it's always there. Instead of sadness, it's more anger. Anger is the most prolific emotion that I feel. I write songs all the time, but most of the time we don't end up using them. I have so much shit that I wanna say. I know that, as a group with our schedules and all that's ahead of us, it's hard to keep up with how much I put out there, just

by sheer volume. So, yeah, you don't get over them. You just sorta use them and it becomes a part of how you float through this dumbass world. It makes joke writing easy. When you're mad, it makes it easier to make fun of things.

**Tom:** More honestly, too.

**L:** Yeah, I get to be just straight up mad. That's why getting on stage to do stand-up was easy for me. I wasn't scared because I had been doing this—all scared and stuff—in front of people and trying to make them laugh somehow. I'll think of something or I'll just nervously ramble and get a laugh. I can get on stage and do that professionally. And now I do. I get paid sometimes to do it, which is weird.

**Kayla:** Do you have anything I haven't covered that you want to share—why you do what you do?

**L:** I do this because I don't know what life would be like not doing it.

**Tom:** I like that sentiment, too. I'd rather spend my time being creative because this is fun. It's just fun.

**Siobhan:** Despite our scheduling conflicts, personal lives, work lives, and all that, I think that we'll make time. And I think we'll continue making time for it because we like to do it.

**L:** And the best part about it is that I genuinely know I'm lucky that I actually really enjoy being around these people.

**Kayla:** It's not just like another job where you're like, "Ugh, I have to go to band practice."

**L:** Except Brizer. He's sitting here like, "Ugh, speak for yourself."

**Brizer:** Oh no, I agree with that. I sometimes describe it as having two jobs but this isn't really a job. This is *why* I have my other job, so that I can do this.

**Kayla:** This is the part that you enjoy. It's always funny how you don't get paid for the things that you love to do, and you get paid to do things that are terrible instead.

**Tom:** ... Yeah, I find that hi-lar-ious.

# DIVERS



James Bass/Vocals  
Colby Drums  
Harrison Guitar/Vocals  
Seth Guitar/Vocals

(l to r) Harrison, James, Seth, Colby | Photo by DANI KORDANI

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Interview Dani Kordani	Transcription Colin Sanders
Photos Dani Kordani & Joe Greer	Layout Dylan Davis

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This interview took place after the last show of a dying punk house. Portland, OR is changing. It has been changing for a long time, and we are part of the flux as much as we might try to deny it. House after house is bulldozed to build condo units selling at \$250,000 a piece—glistening, promising a hip life in a chic neighborhood. These transitions again and again give birth to the resilience of our punk, which is epitomized in Divers. This is the kind of band that pops up where you least expect it, its members bringing sheer energy that could actuate a rocket ship to explore new territory. They can whip you into a frenzy and bring you to a screaming halt, begging for more. This is every show, every time—in a basement, on a beach, under the bright lights, in a dingy bar, or a living room. You leave the show with a sing-a-long on your breath and it seems like the stars shine just a little brighter.

# Everything about us starting was, “Don’t give a shit. Don’t be too uptight, just go.”

**Dani:** So what brought you four together to make music? [All awkwardly pause, then laugh, then pause.]

**Dani:** We can start out with an easier question.

**Seth:** Yeah, that should be easy, right?

**James:** Seth and Harrison have the same parents.

**Harrison:** True.

**James:** And I think Colby lived down the street and I found them together in a basket.

**Seth:** He found us wandering through the desert. And brought us here.

**Dani:** How did you meet the group, James?

**James:** At a Drunken Boat show.

**Dani:** Drunken Boat is Harrison and Seth’s old band. Colby, Harrison, and Seth, you’re all from Las Vegas.

**Harrison:** Yes.

**Dani:** What’s Las Vegas’ music scene like? What was it like when you were growing up? [pause]

**Harrison:** When we were living there, it seemed like it changed every year. What was it like? Some of the really cool things there were desert shows, like generator shows. There was this place called The Tubes that was just this crazy, concrete structure out in the middle of nowhere. You’d drive through these desert roads for an hour just to get there.

**Seth:** It was pitch black.

**Harrison:** Then suddenly you’re in this insane, post-apocalyptic place with all this graffiti and it’s nuts.

**Dani:** Does it still exist?

**Seth:** It does not. Now it’s a bunch of houses. The city expanded outward.

**Dani:** What were your first shows as young kids getting into the DIY scene in Las Vegas? [to James] I’m gonna ask you about stuff in Vancouver, so don’t worry. I’m not trying to leave you out.

**Harrison:** One cool thing about Vegas is that everything was just mixed together. There wasn’t enough going on that you could be like, “Oh, I only listen to this sub-genre of punk: or whatever. My early shows were at a record store called Benway Bop, in the desert, and some house shows. I remember seeing some pretty insane bands at houses. I saw Modest Mouse in a living room. If you’re

into music, you just go to that and then you go to see Strychnine at the record store. Just go to whatever was happening. It was all fair game and cool.

**Dani:** It wasn’t quite as subdivided as Portland seems to be.

**Harrison:** Not at all.

**Colby:** My and Seth’s old band, Rooftop Theories—we played at a high school on the weekend. Just in an open area, between the gym and where the rest of the school was.

**Seth:** There was an outlet outside the school so we plugged in and played. And that would happen all the time, stuff like that, which is cool.

**Dani:** Did you foster that scene at all or did you move to Portland pretty soon after? Did you all move together, actually [to Harrison] ‘cause you’re older?

**Harrison:** We moved in waves.

**Seth:** Probably exactly our age differences actually. [To Harrison] I think I moved five years after you moved. [To Colby] I guess it was like two years after you moved. We did it separately.

**Dani:** Were you part of the DIY scene as older people?

**Seth:** Me and Colby worked at this café called The Skillet Café and from fifteen or sixteen to eighteen we set up shows a couple times a week. In Vegas, that was my booking experience.

**Dani:** You’re from Vancouver, James.

**James:** True.

**Dani:** Vancouver, Wash. How did you get into punk?

**James:** Uh, *Punk-O-Rama III. Survival of the Fattest. Volume II.* [All laugh.]

**Dani:** Did you go to shows in Vancouver a bunch when you were a kid?

**James:** No. I went to the *Punk-O-Rama III* tour.

**Dani:** Warped Tour?

**James:** Oh yeah. That happened, that was cool.

**Harrison:** Do you have a story about the Warped Tour?

**James:** It was super cool the first time.

[All laugh.]

**James:** It was cool. Some college-age women gave me a bunch of Yellow Jackets and beer and it was super fun.

**Harrison:** How old were you?

**James:** I was like, fourteen.

**Colby:** Are Yellow Jackets firecrackers or drugs?

**Seth:** Is that like a sexual drug?

**Harrison:** I think it’s like trucker speed.

**James:** Yeah, it’s trucker speed. It is cool. I woke up. Well, I didn’t wake up ‘cause I never fell asleep, but I had a paper bag full of beer and I was like, “This is the best day of my life. [All laugh.] The next year I went and there was a Marine pull-up bar and I was like, “Oh, that’s not tight.” And then in Vancouver the only actual punk shows that happened were at the grange hall. And they were like Christian beatdown hardcore. That was weird.

**Dani:** What’s the best thing that’s happened to you while on tour? [All laugh.]

**Colby:** Spending two grand on a rental van. [laughs]

**Harrison:** We’ve had rough tours so far, but we haven’t done much touring.

**Seth:** Yeah, I think in the long run, losing our van...

**Harrison:** ...was the best thing? [laughs]

**Seth:** Yeah, was probably the best thing that could have happened to us.

**Dani:** Losing it in what way?

**Harrison:** We were in Oklahoma. Our transmission died so...

**Seth:** ...we sold it for scrap.

**Dani:** And you rented vehicles after that?

**Seth:** Yeah, we rented a minivan. That seems like a pretty positive...

**James:** It was the final, shittiest thing.

**Harrison:** And that’s what has to happen for you to get to the next part. And, honestly, Drunken Boat bought that van and we had a terrible time with it, too.

**Dani:** I thought with Drunken Boat—didn’t you get your van stolen completely?

**Seth:** No, we got robbed. But, yeah, that van had a certain dark cloud over it.

**Dani:** Did it have a name?

**Harrison:** It did it was...uhhh...

**Dani:** The Boat?

**All:** No...

**Seth:** Was it Dorothy?

**Harrison:** It was... it was Billy Joel.

[All laugh.]

# *I spent a lot of time while we were writing, thinking about robbing banks.*

**Dani:** That was probably why. It had a certain dark quality.

**Harrison:** It was bad before it got the name, but it was Billy Joel.

**Colby:** The name didn't get said very often.

**Dani:** So the best thing that happened to you on tour was your transmission died. And the worst thing that's happened?

**James:** Fuck that.

**Seth:** That's the first thing that come... came on my head.

**Dani:** Came on your head? [All laugh.]

**James:** We got free pizza once and kids were into the show. That was the best time.

**Harrison:** We have had some great shows, actually.

**Dani:** Do you have a favorite tour snack? Like if you go to a gas station and it's—I don't know—the middle of Montana?

**Harrison:** Taco Bell is my favorite tour snack. That's my go-to.

**Colby:** Yeah, the bean burrito with a side of nacho cheese and mild is mine. I like that quite a bit.

**Seth:** I like sour Skittles.

**James:** I think outside the Tim's potato chip company radius, all the food is inedible.

**Dani:** Does the fact that you've had so much trouble on tour prevent you from going on more tours?

**Harrison:** Nope. [All laugh.] We are gluttons for punishment. Bring it on!

**Dani:** Who's the money guy in the band? You are the responsible one. People give you the money.

**Harrison:** Seth is the money guy.

**Colby:** He's left handed.

**Harrison:** But James is also responsible.

**Colby:** We're all pretty responsible.

**Harrison:** Yeah, but Seppo (Seth) is officially...

**Dani:** ...the treasurer?

**Harrison:** Seppo is the treasurer.

**Dani:** The account's in your name? The band account? [pause]

**Colby:** Do we need to get an account? [All laugh.] Do we have an account?

**James:** Uh oh, Razorcake assumes that we have an account. [so much laughing.]

**Seth:** Uhhh yes. I, uhhh...

**Harrison:** Seppo, I thought you said there was an account.

**Seth:** And I can tell you exactly where it's at.

**Harrison:** It's in a box in the backyard of our old house. We put an acorn on it or something.

**Seth:** It's a piece of paper that says like, negative five hundred dollars. "Good for five hundred dollars."

**Dani:** So walk me through a typical practice session.

**Harrison:** Do we have a typical practice session?

**James:** Yes, we do.

**Harrison:** There's a lot of jamming involved.

**James:** But before that.

**Harrison:** But before that, we show up and put on a pot of coffee.

**Dani:** How much coffee do you drink a day?

**Seth:** Way too much.

**Harrison:** No, we do. We show up, we drink coffee, and kind of like, try to waste time.

**Dani:** Is anyone the late guy? Like, "Oh where's that person?"

**Colby:** I think we all take turns.

**James:** You're always there a half-hour early [to Harrison].

**Colby:** You're pretty punctual.

**James:** You're really early. You're the earliest guy in punk.

**Harrison:** I'm late sometimes. Everybody's late sometimes.

**James:** I'm the late guy.

**Harrison:** James lives at the practice space so he's late 'cause he's a bit more comfortable. If anybody wants to *not* play, you're just in your pajamas and you're like, "Let's do this instead!" You have some other idea. But we actually do play. And our practice looks like—we drink some coffee, we talk some shit, and then we go down and we jam.

**Colby:** We jam. We'll have certain songs we're working on. And then even while we're playing those, we'll start turning those into jams and then we'll get back to reality and we'll be like, "All right let's play the song again." And then we'll play it. And then it'll sometimes turn back into a jam.

**Dani:** I can see that with your music. I feel like you zone in and just groove with some parts and it flows in a way that makes sense. You've also been playing music together for so long. Do you write songs and bring them to the band, Harrison, or do you all work it out together?

**Harrison:** It goes through both phases. The batch of songs that are on the album, they mostly started as songs that I would bring in, but then they would completely change. And like Colby said, we play the song and then we sort of let ourselves meander and go off course. The better things always happen on accident or through us tinkering and playing "What if?..."

**Dani:** It just morphs?

**Harrison:** Yeah.

**Dani:** Cool. Let's talk about your newest album. It's being released on Rumbletowne Records.

**Harrison:** Yes.

**Dani:** How did you form a relationship with the people who run that label?

**James:** We stole Henderson (former drummer).

**Dani:** You stole him? Oh yeah, from Olympia?

**James:** Yeah.

**Harrison:** Drunken Boat used to play a bunch of shows with RVIVR. They're our friends. They've been our friends for a long time. And when Divers started, Henderson played drums. He had just recently moved to Portland from Olympia. He played on our first 7".

**James:** We recorded at Joey's house, Punkall in Olympia, and said, "Hey, put our record out!" and then what did he say? [laughter]

**Dani:** There was a considerable gap between the last 7" and this record. What's up with that?

**Harrison:** Really? [laughs]

**James:** Right on time, like the Falling Sickness record.

**Harrison:** I think we take our time.

**James:** It's on time, it's on time.

**Dani:** Did you have the songs for a long time before you recorded them or are the songs pretty new?

**Harrison:** We had most of the songs. We just had to keep running them through that process that we were talking about.

**James:** One song we wrote the day before we got in there, "Breathless". It was the newest and the quickest.

**Dani:** Art is translated by the person receiving it, but you as the artists, intentionally, what are you trying to say? Does the album follow a theme. Do the songs tell a story?

**Harrison:** There are themes. Change. Movement. Transformation.

**Dani:** Is it a concept album?

**Harrison:** It's gonna end up being called a concept album, but I don't know if that's totally accurate. At some point it became clear that there were these characters that tied it all together though. When I was a kid I was obsessed with Dillinger and Bonnie and Clyde; just completely obsessed with that stuff. These kind of romantic folk heroes. They're on the road and they're living this fugitive life. So that's the thing that ties it together. It's those types of characters, set in the present. But it was also important to make sure that the songs made sense on their own, not just as slaves to a concept or a rock opera or whatever. Every song, I hope, you can listen to and be like, "Oh, a love song" or "a this" or "a that," and if you take 'em all together, you can see a thread going through them.



Colby | Photo by JOE GREER

**Dani:** What parts of the stories of these unattached and romantic characters are conveyed in the music and what's the significance of that in your life? Is that something you want to do in your life or is that a nice idea to think about?

**Harrison:** I spent a lot of time while we were writing, thinking about robbing banks.

**Dani:** Like what robbing banks would be like?

**Harrison:** Yeah. Should I say all this in an interview? I mean, it made going to the bank more interesting. I would go to the bank and I would be like, "What if I was planning to rob this place? What's it like?" I was approaching it as if I was an actor studying for a role, or a novelist doing research. I would start to do that in my everyday life and think, "What's it like?" Every part of your life; how is it different? Not being grounded, having to keep moving. And, of course, all of that works fine as metaphor. You don't have to be a bank robber to feel like something is nipping at your heels.

**Dani:** Well, it seems like it really strikes up your imagination, too, helps you notice things, and put yourself in other people's positions. That's really cool. I can't wait to hear it. I hear you gave away a free mix tape with the first one hundred copies sold of your most recent album. What's on it and why did you do it?

**Harrison:** We were thinking that the characters on the record spend an awful lot of time driving, moving from one place to the next. So maybe they listen to the radio a lot. What are they listening to? The mix tape is a window into that. And, ideally, you would listen to it in your car. We picked songs that seemed to mirror what the characters would be going through, as well as some allusions to songs from the album. That got us about eighty-percent of the way through. But then it seemed like something was still missing.

The idea was that this was a bunch of music you would hear just flipping through the radio. Then we thought, "Well, wouldn't it be cool if our friends were all on the radio?" It's our little fictional universe we are creating, so why *wouldn't* our friends be on the radio? So we put the word out last minute and asked folks to send us songs. Anybody who wanted to could send in anything they felt like sending. It was a tight deadline, but we got eight or nine songs from contributors, and those songs made the tape about a hundred times better.

**Dani:** How did you choose your name, Divers?

**Harrison:** We started out with a different name.

**Dani:** What was it?

**Harrison:** It was Salvage Love.

**Dani:** I remember that! That's a good one, too.

**Harrison:** Yeah? It's all right.

**Dani:** It's kinda corny. [All laugh.]

**Harrison:** It's corny! It's not a good name.

**Dani:** I like it!

**Harrison:** I mean, come on. But it got us started. Everything about us starting was, "Don't give a shit. Don't be too uptight, just go." We wrote tons of songs and just put 'em in the trash, like, constantly. So Salvage Love was a pretty good name for what we were doing. But I dunno, Divers? [laughs]

**Dani:** You don't have to answer all these questions. That's fine. I'm just really interested in how bands land on their name and if they have significance or if they don't, 'cause sometimes they don't and it's just a cool word.

**Seth:** I'd say it has significance.

**Harrison:** It has to do with exploration.

**Seth:** And a viewpoint of the other side, like an alien.

**Dani:** Sounds like it's congruent with your record a bit, too.

**Harrison:** Yeah, and I think there was the intent of things being more of a discovery, rather than going into it with the mindset of, "Hey, we're gonna write a song that sounds like this." We just constantly try to be open to...

**Dani:** Change.

**Harrison:** Yeah.

**Dani:** Movement.

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# Doing something terrible every day for a year, fuck that.



(l to r) Harrison, Seth, Colby | Photo by DANI KORDANI

**Harrison:** And being surprised by it. What you're really looking for is the thing you didn't know you were looking for. So the name Divers did connect with that on some level.

**Dani:** That's cool. I like that. What keeps your heart in the DIY music scene? Y'all have been such a strong staple for the Portland music scene as I've seen it for the last seven years. You're always so down to play anywhere, any time, in any slot. You always do it with such passion—which is something that has impressed and moved me—and I've seen this consistently over the years with you guys. Where does that energy come from and how do you keep it alive? Ugh. I feel like the *Reading Rainbow*. [All laugh.]

**Colby:** I think that's what music is.

**James:** Well, when you have four people who have different tastes when you're getting asked to play shows, you're gonna say "yes" a lot. Just a lot, yeah.

**Seth:** Also it just feels good to play shows. It's kind of why we do it.

**Colby:** My favorite experience is playing

live. That's where the ultimate energy is at.

**James:** And, obviously, playing house shows is great. But playing other kinds of shows is also fun. It's exciting. Like playing at a bougie, indie rock place is fun.

**Harrison:** It's fun for us, I think, pretty much every time. We kinda did talk about that at the beginning.

**Dani:** Of the band?

**Harrison:** Yeah. Just "don't limit it," basically. 'Cause most bands kind of draw a line right off the bat. And our thing was, "Let's just say yes to almost any show."

**Dani:** You specifically talked about that?

**Harrison:** We did. Wherever there are people who want to hear music, that's where we want to play. They wanna hear music and we wanna play music. It's simple when you think of it that way.

**James:** We wanna play the Blazers halftime show. We wanna play the Portland Spirit.

**Dani:** I know you're serious.

**James:** That'd be cool.

**Dani:** What is that?

**James:** It's a boat. It's a lunchtime thing. I wanna get french fries.

**Dani:** You say that your perspective is simple, but I feel like it's pretty unique because I see a lot of bands not solely draw the arbitrary lines between venues, but just stay in their own friend group. There's just so many bands here in Portland and it's so compartmentalized that people just kind of end up playing the one or two venues/houses that they and their friends frequent. I'm mostly talking about bars and stuff, but I'm impressed that I've seen you play in so many places with so many different kinds of bands. It reminds me of when I first moved to Portland seven and a half years ago—how integrated the scenes were—and that's really important to me. It's cool to hear that it's important to you, too.

Okay, so if you had to eat one nugget of your worst enemy's shit or drink one cup of your own pee every day for a year, what would you choose?

**Colby:** A nugget of shit or some pee?

**Dani:** You would have to eat one nugget of your enemy's shit, so you would have to get that from them and eat it.



# FEST 104



**LAGWAGON**

**DESAPARECIDOS**

**THE MENZINGERS**

**MUSTARD PLUG**

**OFF WITH THEIR HEADS**

**INTO IT. OVER IT.**

**MODERN LIFE IS WAR**

**TEENAGE BOTTLE ROCKET**

**MODERN BASEBALL**

**WESTON**

(REUNION)

**ME WITHOUT YOU**

**BIGWIG**

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**Seth:** They wouldn't supply it themselves?

**Dani:** That's the question. How good friends are you with your worst enemy?

**James:** Well, really a no-brainer. You'd eat the poop.

**All:** Yeah, yeah.

**Harrison:** You deal with it and you do it and it's over. Doing something terrible everyday for a year, fuck that.

**Colby:** Wait, how long did the poop eating last for? Just one? Oh okay. Well, my first thought was the pee but if it's just one day, I'll take the nug. [All laugh.]

**James:** I'll drink the piss of an elk or something. Eat a little elk poop.

**Harrison:** I think it helps if you visualize the worst enemy—which I don't, I can't—who would be my worst enemy right now? I can say it in the interview. It would be funny.

**James:** Yeah, let's name names! Tate Valle. Tate Valle we're gonna eat your shit!

**Seth:** He's a sketchy dude. We really don't like him.

**Dani:** Or you can make him eat his own shit.

**Seth:** Wait! Is that an option?

**Dani:** Yes. Or you can make your worst enemy eat their own shit.

**James:** And our pee for a year?

**Dani:** Sure.

**James:** Thanks for letting us borrow your truck, Tate.

**Harrison:** We drove it to the interview.

**Colby:** Would you rather eat Taco Bell every day for a year or drink your own pee once?

**James:** I'd drink my own pee once.

**Harrison:** That's a really good question, 'cause, honestly, you're talking about major self-destruction.

**Dani:** I mean you don't have to eat Taco Bell every meal every day, just once a day.

**Harrison:** Once a day, that's rough.

**Colby:** But doesn't that ruin your life for a long period of time?

**Dani:** A year is not that long.

**Colby:** A year is long! It's long!

**Seth:** Colby was just talking about probiotics. He would maybe eat poop if it was packaged in the right way.

**Colby:** I feel like urine is considerably less harmless than feces.

**James:** No they, like, poop in capsules and that's the medical breakthrough of 2014.

**Harrison:** Yeah, but you can kill yourself by eating shit.

**James:** You can kill yourself by *not* eating shit. That's why it's medicine. [All laugh.]

**James:** You gotta recolonize your probiotic community.

**Dani:** What happens is you kill all of your digestive flora—if you have digestive problems of a certain nature—and you ingest somebody else's poop, it repopulates your gut and it literally happens.

**James:** And you take a lot of antibiotics for disease. That just gets all of 'em. But then your gut doesn't have good ones, so you gotta put them in there.

**Dani:** Are you high right now?

**James:** I'm not high. No, no, just a lot of beer.

**Colby:** I think they're those elephant capsules, so it takes a long time. They, like, make sure



Harrison | Photo by JOE GREER

## *What you're really looking for is the thing you didn't know you were looking for.*

to dissolve when they're in the correct area. [Someone clears throat. All laugh.]

**Harrison:** How do we get that throat clearing in there? That's very important.

**Dani:** You put in brackets "[clears throat.]"

Cool, well, thanks y'all.

**Seth:** Yeah, thank you.

**Colby:** Thanks, Razorcake!

**James:** Cake Razor.

# Western Addiction

Western Addiction is a heavier-than-heavy San Francisco hardcore band, its lyrics a labyrinth of meanings within meanings. These lyrics include anything from references to movies and punk history, to words that lyricist/guitarist Jason makes up on his own—something he says he has always done.

We were scheduled to meet at the legendary Rainbow Bar and Grill on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood on an afternoon when they were scheduled to open for Swingin' Utters and Lagwagon, along with ToyGuitar, at the Fonda Theater. The Rainbow is known for its high society parade of hair metal has-beens, burnouts, and one Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead, the latter being the reason drummer Chad insisted on this destination for our meet. According to local legend, the inimitable Lemmy can be seen almost any day of the week drinking Jack Daniels and cola, sitting alone at a bar-top video game.

The guys I met with were unbelievably more gracious and down to earth than the part of Los Angeles where they found their white tour van parked. To our dismay, we discovered that the Rainbow doesn't open until five PM on a Saturday. By then, Western Addiction had to be in the middle of a sound check four miles away which, in L.A. space-time, might as well be another state. We ended up doing the interview in the van, sitting in the middle of an empty bank parking lot and, like the aforementioned L.A. space-time paradox, our conversation was all over the map. We discussed Jeb Bush, San Francisco, topics for future therapy sessions, why bands shouldn't say they are taking a break, heavy metal, the differences between recording analog and digitally, more heavy metal, '80s hair band stage antics, and Motörhead-themed holiday decorations.

**JASON HALL: GUITAR/SINGER**  
**KEN YAMAZAKI: GUITAR**  
**CHAD WILLIAMS: DRUMS**  
**TONY TEIXERA: BASS**

INTERVIEW BY JOHN MULE  
LAYOUT BY ERIC BASKAUSKAS  
PHOTOS BY ALAN SNODGRASS



**John Mule:** You guys released *Cognicide* in 2005 and *Pines* in 2013. We'll get to what Jason says wasn't a "break" in a minute, but you're working on a new full-length now?

**Jason:** Yes.

**John:** Do you think Jeb Bush will be in his presidency by the time that comes out?

**Jason:** Hopefully not.

**John:** Of course, but wouldn't that be the best thing for hardcore music?

**Jason:** It would be easier.

**Tony:** I could see that happening, actually. I could see him becoming president.

**Jason:** You think so?

**Chad:** Before we finish the record?

**Jason:** No, we'll finish the record first but that would just be bad for all things. But I could still be angry with a good president.

**John:** There's certainly enough to be angry about in the United States. Do you guys feel like you're angry people?

**Ken:** [Laughs] There are a couple angry people.

**John:** I don't want to out anyone.

**Ken:** There are maybe three angry people and one super nice person. Everyone else is just...

**Chad:** Ken hates guys who wear sandals.

**Ken:** No, flip-flops.

**John:** With socks, without socks, or both?

**Ken:** Without socks, but you can't go out at night and go to bars in your flip-flops. That's just my thing.

**Chad:** There better be sand under your fucking feet if you do.

**Jason:** I have a theory—it's a loose theory—that people who like our style of music, or heavy music, are somehow restless souls. It's just a theory. With any kind of hyper aggressive music, there's something about being a little restless. Not in a bad way. Just something.

**John:** So about that, Jason, you've said a couple times in interviews that when you write lyrics, they're related to things you're "obsessing" over. You've used the word "obsessive" a couple times. [Laughter]

**John:** One time you used the term "OCD."

**Jason:** I think about things often or I'll get into something heavily and it'll become a song.

**John:** Does the rest of the band see Jason as obsessive?

**Ken:** Not obsessive, just a little worried.

**Jason:** I've been described as obsessive before. Band, work, life...

**Ken:** Wife.

**Jason:** Wife. [Laughter] I can really get into things and I need to pull back a little.

**John:** Well, speaking of pulling back, there are eight years between *Cognicide* and *Pines*. Jason has said that that wasn't a break. Does everyone else in the band feel that way? What was going on?

**Ken:** Was it a break?

**Chad:** It wasn't intentionally a break.

**Ken:** Yeah. It was just like life was happening and other things needed to be taken care of.

**Jason:** It was my fault. I just stopped doing things. But I don't like when bands say, "We're breaking up." Like, why don't you just say nothing and just hover,—unless it's something horrible and you need to break up. But I mean, we're all buddies and any time during life that we needed to make something

we would just say, "Hey, let's make that," under Western Addiction.

**Ken:** Yeah. We were never in the position to tour. That was never in mind. I joined after (2003's *Remember to Dismember 7*). We were all working together at the time, and we just played some shows here and there and didn't really do much touring.

**Chad:** There was never any ambition. It was just, "Let's make some songs," and we got lucky. And we got to do a record, we got to do some cool tours, but that was never something we set out to do. So, in this band, everything is gravy. It's all fun and there's no disappointment because we never had any grand ambitions.

**John:** So when I look at your lyrics—and I'm thinking of certain songs: "Corralling Pestilence," "We Tech Support a Manipulator," "Mailer Meet Jim," which is a reference to *28 Days Later*—they seem to deal with almost apocalyptic.... [Laughter]... almost like "doom and gloom" stuff. Getting back to Jeb Bush as president, do you guys hold that apocalyptic vision of the world? Jason, you're the lyricist.

**Jason:** I've been described as anxious as well, but those aren't.... I guess those topics are about something else, but everything has an underlying theme, right? [Laughter] Or a side story. Like with every documentary you see, there's the main topic and then there's this thing that squirts out the side and you're like, "Oh, *this* is what it's really about." Yeah, I have anxieties, and some of our new song titles aren't going to help much to stop this idea.

**John:** I should apologize. This is turning into a therapy session. [Laughter]

**Jason:** No, it's fine.

**John:** Would you prefer to lie down?

**Jason:** Yeah, I wanna talk about my parents too. [Laughs] I'll feel better after.

**John:** I want to read a couple lyrics that stood out to me from *Pines*.

**Jason:** Okay. [Laughs]

**John:** We're gonna analyze you a little further. From "Black Salt": "Mercurial twists of temperament/ Force majeure took my last red cent/ Alms-giving for a real well-wisher/ Solvent for an angry bed pisser." [Laughter]

**Jason:** [Laughs]

**John:** We can talk about your bed pissing later. [Laughter]

**Jason:** Oh, jeez...

**John:** From "God Says No": "Eagle claws land on golden barrels/ Black fingers firmly grasp the cold spells." Here's my question about lyrics—if I didn't know your band, if I had never heard your band, I would think you were progressive rock from reading these.

**Ken:** Ooh.

**Jason:** That's bad. [Laughs]

**John:** Or maybe power metal?

**Jason:** Okay, that's fair. [Laughter]

**John:** Is there an influence on your lyrics that wouldn't be immediate to people who are listening to punk music or are only listening to Fat Wreck Chords? A writer or other bands? You guys seemed to have a positive response when I said power metal.

**Ken:** [Still laughing]

**Chad:** Half the band does like metal. Not power metal, though.

**Jason:** Chad and I really do like metal, but I don't use that to influence lyrics. I like metal lyrics when they're interesting. For my job, I see a lot of words and I catalogue words and sayings and phrases. I'll either see a word at work or I'll hear a line in a movie and I'll know instantly if it's a lyric. Like, something will say to me, "That's a line!" and I'll write it down immediately. Then I gather all these ideas and weird words, I think of a topic, and I retrofit those ideas so they become something new.

**John:** And you make up words too, right?

**Jason:** Yeah. But I have to do that for my job, too.

**John:** What's your job?

**Jason:** I name products and services and companies. But I found out that I was making up words before I named things. I was like, "Woah, there's a job where you can do this and you do this in music." Somehow it worked out.

**John:** For the rest of the band, what's the process like when Jason brings a song to you? Do you read the lyrics? Do you ask him to explain it line by line? Do you make fun of him? [Laughter]

**Jason:** Often.

**John:** Often?

**Jason:** Yeah, lyrics can be embarrassing.

**Ken:** As far as Jason's lyrics, there's a lot there.

**Chad:** I love the lyrics but we don't....

**Ken:** We never ask. Or, I never ask.

**Chad:** It's never a requirement to show us the lyrics before we do the song.

**Jason:** Yeah, they're good about that actually. There've been a couple times when we're in the studio and they finally read them. They just shake their heads and laugh.

**Chad:** We've only made you change one thing ever.

**Jason:** One lyric, yeah. But most bands, I find, don't really veto the lyrics that often. I think they're okay with it, generally. I mean, our lyrics are too cryptic and weird. I wish I could write more accessible lyrics, but those things are really boring to me. It would be weird if I was talking about some girl I saw on the corner. That doesn't happen. It doesn't exist. That's why when they ask what the heaviest style of band is, a lot of people will say metal or black metal. But I don't think so. I think it's real songs about real people and real things. Those are the heaviest songs that you can get. But when the other dudes in the band have to sing a line or two? That's when they ask, "What is this? Why are you doing this?" [Laughter]

**John:** The rest of you are in other bands. Do you also write lyrics? Are you writers?

**Ken:** No, not at all.

**Chad:** Not really.

**Jason:** You're writers in terms of shaping music, though.

**Tony:** I write lyrics, and I really appreciate Jason's lyrics. I think it's the most interesting part of the band. And I think the music's great. I'm talking just from being a Western

Addiction fan first. I've only been on one recorded song at this point. But, as a fan, I think Jason's lyrics are the most interesting part. And, as a lyricist myself, I look up to Jason and I wish I could write things that interesting. My lyrics are more like, "I walk down the street..."

**Ken:** [Laughing] "I saw a girl on the corner..."

**John:** You mean the stuff that Jason just said doesn't mean anything?

**Ken and Jason:** [Laugh]

**Tony:** All the clichés that Jason shot down right now are pretty much what my lyrics are about.

**Jason:** Sorry, man. All bands need all types of people and I can only do certain things, but these guys can do other things that I can't do. In shaping a song, I pretty much bring in a skeleton and they fix the timing, all the parts. They say, "This doesn't work here," and they mold it. And I'm not as good at doing that. So it works.

**John:** I really like the latest song, "I'm Not the Man I Thought I'd Be." What was the process of introducing that song to the rest of the band? Because I read that Jason was kind of nervous about it. What was that experience like for the band? It's not a typical W.A. song. It's slower. It's a duet. There's a female guest vocalist.

**Ken:** I didn't mind it. I don't know why he thought that. I mean, it is really different.

**Jason:** It's a rock song.

**Ken:** It is really slow and it's rock. But I thought it was really heavy and a good song. There are definitely other songs that I'm like, "Hmmm..." But that one was definitely not strange to me at all.

**John:** Do you guys play it live?

**Jason:** We have, a couple times. We're gonna play it again. It's tough when bands drift genres too much. Chad and I love rock'n'roll a lot, and Ken does too. We all do. But we don't want the band to drift that way. But rock feels good to play.

**Chad:** As a one-off, it's fine. It's fun to play a slow song, too, because we never do it.

**Jason:** Yeah.

**Tony:** I feel like, especially live, that song is pretty heavy. When we do it, that song is rockin'.

**Chad:** When you have one slow song in the middle of a bunch of fast songs, all of a sudden, it stands out. It's rad.

**Ken:** We'll probably try it soon.

**Chad:** I'd like to play it live. I think it would be fun, but we want our guest vocalist to be able to do it.

**John:** What's her name?

**Jason:** Dara. She's from a band called Serpent Crown.

**John:** They're friends of yours?

**Jason:** Tony's friend, actually. She's awesome and a real singer.

**Tony:** And an amazing guitar player too, in a great band. Serpent Crown is awesome.

**John:** They're a Bay Area band?

**Jason:** Yeah. She's in a couple metal bands. But she's a totally different style, too, like real metal. It was cool.

**John:** Her voice is pretty heavy. I like it.

**I WISH I COULD WRITE  
MORE ACCESSIBLE LYRICS,  
BUT THOSE THINGS ARE  
REALLY BORING TO ME.**

**Jason:** It was interesting for us to do this track with her.

**John:** I feel like if you guys did play it live, there's an opportunity for some Spinal Tap ass-shaking. Just turn your back to the crowd?

**Jason:** Turn the amps up to eleven.

**Ken:** Chad's got the best ass, though.

**John:** Chad has the best ass in the band. That will make the edits. [Laughter]

**Tony:** I can picture Ken doing that Angus (Young of AC/DC) dance to the beginning, across the stage. [Laughter]

**Jason:** The duck walk?

**John:** Yeah. Shirt off, of course, with the shorts.

**Ken:** And my schoolboy backpack.

**John:** Last night, you guys played VLHS in Pomona, which I think is a great place and Marty (Ploy) is a great guy. Tonight you're at the Fonda Theater in Hollywood. Can you compare and contrast those two experiences?

**Jason:** [Laughing] That's our life!

**John:** What do you like about both? What would you have preferred when you were thirteen years old?

**Ken:** It's hard to say. I don't like going to see bands at big places. I like playing big places and I like playing small places too, so it's two different things. I'm so used to playing shitty, dumpy places, as well as pretty big venues. I like both. There are some people who say, "I only like small places." I'm not like that. I'm excited either way. It's definitely got a different vibe. Like, I've played VLHS a couple of times and I played the other one, 12th & G, before that, and it's fun. It's a totally different thing. It's kind of like Gilman Street, too. It's a collective. It's dirty and dumpy. But it's always cool to go there.

**Jason:** People are happy to be there, too. There are no problems. People are nice to each other and friendly and happy to be there. I like the balance of playing a big place

and a small place, because tonight is like a full-on rock venue, security passes, that sort of thing. It keeps you grounded when we're pulling up to a warehouse in the middle of nowhere, you know?

**John:** Yeah. VLHS is in the middle of nowhere.

**Jason:** Yeah, but I liked it. It's cool. They're making stuff, there's weird art on the wall, and kids are having a good time.

**John:** They have a skate ramp, too.

**Jason:** Yeah! People were skating while we were playing. It was pretty fun.

**Ken:** It's cool that they're doing that and there's a space like that where you can go and just play. And, it's fun.

**Chad:** It's nice that bigger venues have a monitor to hear your own band, though.

**Jason:** We're pretty lucky. We've got to do some things....

**Ken:** ...that we shouldn't be able to do.

**Jason:** And I'm so thankful, you know? People clown you for being on a cushy tour or something, but everyone would say the same thing. It's wonderful when you can do something like that. I'm thankful for it.

**Ken:** Yeah. It's not like we play big venues all the time, so when we can do that, it's great. And playing small venues is also great.

**John:** I was surprised when I read on the Fat site that you guys primarily record straight to tape with just a few overdubs. Is that still true?

**Chad:** Well, for the *Pines 7* we did. And for our upcoming *7*". Exclusive! We're putting out a new *7*". But those are all recorded to tape and, I think, mixed in Pro Tools. But the tape gives you that nice sound for the drums and bass, especially.

**John:** What do you think of when you record to tape? Is it something you're rejecting about the new technology or something you're trying to embrace from the past?

**Chad:** I think it is mostly me who insists on the tape.

**John:** And why is that?

**Chad:** I think it sounds better.

**Ken:** To me, I started on tape, so when everything went to Pro Tools, I thought it was very strange because my old band recorded at Westbeach (Recorders), down the street here, with Donnell Cameron doing it. We used to watch him splice tape and put things together and make weird sounds out of it. To me, that was normal and once we heard that tape is no longer, we were like, "Okay."

It's a different way to record on computer, digitally. It sounds different. I don't think it's bad or better or worse. It's just a different way to do it. But doing it on tape is a skill for the engineers and for the musicians to get it right. So there's an art in that. That's really cool. I think you have to be more on your game to record to analog rather than digital, because you can fix everything digitally.

**Chad:** But now you get the best of both worlds. You can record your basic tracks to tape and then dump it into Pro Tools, and you still retain that really natural, warm sound of the tape. But then, the process is so much quicker, digitally, to do all your overdubs and fixes and all that stuff.

**Ken:** Yeah. I think you can cheat a lot more digitally. You can't really hide stuff on tape. You have to keep doing retakes if it's not good. You can cut out pieces and tape stuff on. I think it'll make you a better musician if you can do it on tape.

**Tony:** I think the digital technology has gotten so good that I would be lying if I said I could tell the difference. But there's something about when you do it and you know that you recorded that shit on tape. It just feels so much more real. That's the thing for me. I know you could probably totally fake it, but doing it to tape feels a lot more real than just zeros and ones.

**John:** Do you guys all live in San Francisco?

**Jason:** These guys do. I live above the city.

**John:** What are the San Francisco bands that you think of coming up?

**Ken:** You know what? It's such a different city now. It's really hard for bands to be there.

**Jason:** Growing up—or who do we like now?

**John:** I guess I meant you growing up, but feel free to say what's going on there now. With the technology companies and housing prices going up, it's obviously changed so much.

**Ken:** Yeah. I used to go to Gilman, which is in Berkeley, of course. So all those East Bay bands were the bands that I saw. And then just friends' bands.

**Jason:** Yeah. I associate my youth with the (Swingin') Utters. There's something about that timeframe and seeing the Utters often. It's just a San Francisco thing—and that sound; they're wonderful guys—and going out to places like Stinky's Peep Show and seeing all those bands.

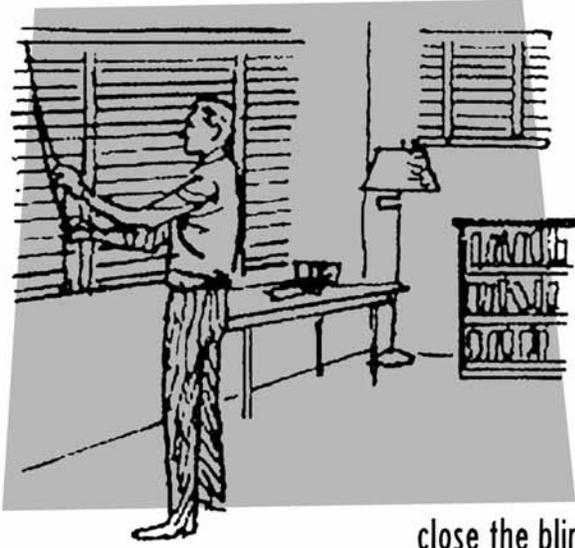
**Chad:** Yeah. (Club) Cocodrie.

**Ken:** I think we were spoiled maybe, like, in the early '90s. Every weekend someone was playing in the city, and it was the big punk explosion.

**Jason:** Lots of parties. It was fun.



# VARSITY WEIRDOS



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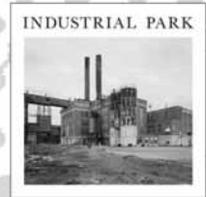
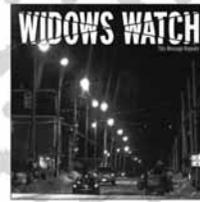
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**Ken:** Yeah, it was all the time. First you were a fan and then you got to know these people. It became this thing where you get to go and see these amazing bands.

**Chad:** My first time in the city was when TKO Records was just going. So I would go see Swingin' Utters, Working Stiffs, The Bodies. There were all these great bands that were doing something that was like the first element of '77—original punk rock style. It was really cool.

**John:** All the bands on TKO's *Punch Drunk* (1999) compilation, right?

**Jason:** Yeah! [Laughs]

**John:** So it must mean a lot now, to be opening up for Swingin' Utters tonight.

**Ken:** Yeah, it's amazing.

**Chad:** It's awesome. We love them as people and as a band. Their new record is so good.

**John:** I agree. It's great.

**Tony:** But, also, I think of bands that are exciting in San Francisco now. I think of Terry Malts, Great Apes, Creative Adult, Culture Abuse. Those are bands that I think are rad and exciting and causing a bit of a stir in this modern world, which is not what it used to be, really.

**Chad:** Because they're different. They aren't just pop punk bands or street punk bands or

whatever. They're doing something that's just a little different.

**Jason:** There are tons of metal bands, too. [Laughter]

**Chad:** Yeah, the metal scene is actually really, really strong.

**Jason:** I love Saviours so much.

**John:** Saviours? I'll have to check them out.

**Jason:** They're not new or anything but....

**Chad:** That could be an entire interview in and of itself.

**Jason:** Yes. Gosh. Dang it.

**John:** Do you want to plug them real quick?

[Laughter]

**John:** Just tell people why they should listen to Saviours.

**Jason:** I don't know... epic riffs. They're such good players—it's incredible.

**Ken:** They're metal, right?

**Jason:** They're a metal band. I almost feel like the first four Metallica records, like their songs are in there, or like Judas Priest riffs, right?

**Chad:** Right.

**Jason:** I don't know. I love 'em. I'm not speaking for everyone here. [Laughs]

**Chad:** There's a band called Lecherous Gaze which is the ex-Annihilation Time guys, and

they're doing way more rock'n'roll riffs, but they still retain that same kind of Annihilation Time, skate, Black Flag sort of thing.

**John:** Speaking of metal, I'm sorry that we didn't get to see Lemmy.

**Jason:** Someday. Maybe he and Chad will run into each other. It's like a mirror image.

**John:** Yeah. Chad, you wore your Motörhead shirt for him.

**Chad:** I did. I felt weird. I wasn't sure if I should wear it into the Rainbow or not.

**Jason:** Well you can't hide that thing [pointing to one of Chad's tattoos] on your shoulder there.

**John:** There it is: the ace of spades.

**Jason:** How do you approach him? We were wondering what we would say first.

**John:** Yeah.

**Jason:** I do have a good in, though, because I carved this Motörhead pumpkin for Halloween and they used it on their official site.

**John:** No shit?

**Ken:** They stole his picture that he posted.

**Jason:** They took it off my family's blog.

**John:** So, you were going to walk up to him and kick his ass, obviously.

**Jason:** No, at first I was like, "This is



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 By Craven Rock



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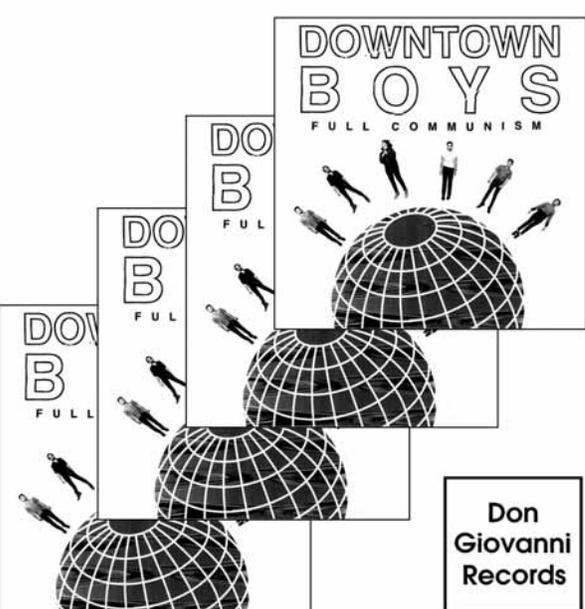


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awesome! They used it!" And I emailed—this is embarrassing—all of the management companies and told them, "This is my pumpkin!" You know? "Maybe you could send me an autographed picture of Lemmy."

**Ken:** Because we know Lemmy was at home, on his Facebook page like, [imitating Lemmy's gruff voice] "We're gonna put this on our site!" [Laughs]

**Jason:** It's an exquisite pumpkin, man. It's pretty tight.

**Chad:** He did a good job.

**John:** That's rad. You did the warthog on the pumpkin?

**Jason:** I did the—what's the guy's name?

**Chad:** Snaggleteeth, the War Pig.

**John:** War Pig, that's right. Well, the homeless man outside the Rainbow just told me....

**Tony:** He told you he did the pumpkin?

**Everyone:** [Laughter]

**John:** No. He told me that Lemmy was there a few nights ago and that he doesn't like his new look. He says he looks like a cowboy, which, I don't think of Lemmy as ever changing his style.

**Tony:** He's always worn a cowboy hat!

**John:** He also said that the best band he ever saw on the strip was W.A.S.P., and that Blackie Lawless would drown girls in blood on stage, but, according to this guy, the girls were just holding their breath. They weren't really dying. [Laughter]

**Tony:** You mean they didn't actually get murdered on stage?

**John:** No.

**Tony:** Okay, I'm surprised

**Jason:** He's revealing a magician's secret.

**Chad:** W.A.S.P.'s first album [1984's self-titled] is not terrible.

**Tony:** Were they a hair metal band?

**Chad:** They kind of evolved into one. Metal, rock.

**Tony:** So like Slaughter, who were hard at one point and then not. [Laughs]

**Jason:** He's in *Decline of Western Civilization*, right?

**John:** The second one?

**Jason:** In the pool? Chad, is Blackie Lawless the one in the pool in *Decline of Western Civilization*, part two? Where his mom is like, "Get out of the pool!"

**Chad:** No, that wasn't Blackie. That was somebody else in the band.

**John:** He's drinking vodka like crazy in that scene, right?

**Chad:** Yeah.

**Jason:** Right.

**Chad:** Yeah, it's some other guy in the band. I don't know the rest of their names.

**Jason:** But that was W.A.S.P.?

**Chad:** Yeah.

**Jason:** Don't they have that record cover with a Speedo with a blade on it? The animal one?

**Chad:** Oh yeah, *Animal: Fuck Like a Beast*. [Laughter] I have that album.

**John:** That scene is so sad because he's like, guzzling vodka and his mom is sitting by the pool, just looking so depressed.

**Jason:** That's the epic side story, right? You're like, "Oh, it's about metal, cool!" But then, side story, "Dude, this is so sad."

**John:** Right.

**Tony:** It's about addiction, really.

**Everyone:** [Laughter]





Photo: Paul Silver

Summers in Los Angeles are custom built for simple, laid-back punk rock fun. It's too hot for black leather jackets. Bullet belts rust from sweat. Pants don't help. Benny The Jet Rodriguez reminds me of the ninety-nine percent of L.A. that never gets on TV. They sound like morning haze burning off and giving way to 326 days of sunshine, cracks in the sidewalks from the roots of trees, 1960s AM radio, and Mexican food in strip malls. Simple pleasures.

The close friendship between Lauren and Joey is at the heart of BTJR. They play buzzy-melody, catchy punk that's in line with Thee

Makeout Party and Underground Railroad To Candyland. This isn't stabbing music or kill dad music or hurt animals with firecrackers music. But it's still undeniably modern, DIY punk in both sound and action. Think: cut-off shorts. Sleeve-optional shirts. Backyard grilling. Avocados in multiple forms. A San Pedro that celebrates Mike Watt. Strong female lead. Nationwide drives in vans with episodes of California-suspicious law enforcement.

Don't you worry; Benny The Jet Rodriguez leaves their unique fingerprints. There's no denying Lauren's voice and

lyrics. She exudes a perennial, rosy-eyed confidence when they play, conveying it with a clear, understated strength. Joey's the anchor, the corn dog on a stick... on a stick (read to the end of the interview), the one who's willing to take the fall. They work as a team. I want to say it's sort of like Cagney and Lacey—if Cagney and Lacey smoked a ton of weed in their parents' garage, weren't cops, and one of them was a dude—but BTJR is nothing like that. They're L.A., year-round summertime punk.

# BENNY THE JET RODRIGUEZ

Lauren Freeman—guitar, vocals  
Joey Centofanti—drums, guitar  
Todd Congelliere—keyboards

Interview: Todd Taylor and  
Marty Ploy

Transcription: Derek Whipple  
and Matthew Hart

Photos: Shanty Cheryl, Gabie  
Gonzalez and Paul Silver

Layout: Becky Bennett

**Marty:** So Joey, how do you play drums and guitar?

**Joey:** Well, sometimes I play guitar. The new recordings will be featuring me on guitar, and we're going to be having someone else play the drums. I also play bass in a band called Black Sparrow Press.

**Marty:** Have you guys found another drummer or are you looking for one?

**Joey:** We're still looking for one. We found someone to do the recordings and someone to go with us on tour, but no stable...

**Marty:** No Craigslist ad?

**Joey:** No Craigslist ad.

**Lauren:** I was thinking about Guitar Center, actually. [laughter]

**Joey:** On the bulletin board.

**Lauren:** Yeah, on the bulletin board.

**Todd:** So Joey—because there's only two of you—why move from drums?

**Joey:** Me and Lauren sit down and co-write most of the songs together on guitar. During

the writing process, sometimes I'll stray away from the regular chord progression and do a lead. We just can't get that lead without...

**Todd:** The lead drums?

**Joey:** Yeah, yeah. [laughs]. It doesn't translate well. We figure we have enough friends who play drums that could help us out as we need it, and just try to record the record as full as possible, as a four-piece.

**Todd:** That makes sense. So there are two other people?

**Lauren:** Yeah. There are two other people now. And I think our lineup has always changed around. When we first started playing shows, it was me and Joey playing guitar.

**Todd:** Both of you playing the same guitar?

**Lauren:** [laughter] It's always kind of changed around. We've played with a bass player for the past year.

**Lauren:** Different bass players.

**Todd:** I've seen you with Jack Doyle (Underground Railroad To Candyland).

**Lauren:** Cool! It started with Jack Doyle. I think. Something like that. We did a tour with Matt Dobbins.

**Joey:** From Rumspringer.

**Lauren:** We've done a few tours with our awesome friend, Ryan Whelan. He lives in Oakland. We've known him since high school. Joey went to high school with him. We just asked him because he was a good guitar player.

**Todd:** So you put him on bass. [laughter]

**Lauren:** Yeah, yeah. So I put him on bass. I like guitar players playing bass. It sounds good. But now we have Tanner, who plays in this band called Hillary Chillton.

**Todd:** Nice.

**Lauren:** Hill Chill!

**Todd:** So, for a year, you've been playing with him?

**Lauren:** Yeah. For a year or a year and a half, we've had different bass players, on and off. My girlfriend played bass for a few shows.

It's cool. It's fun.

**Todd:** Let's get some bases covered, first of all. You guys are named after a character from *The Sandlot*, correct?

**Lauren:** Yes. Not the Elton John song.

**Todd:** And there is another band with your name.

**Joey:** Is there?

**Lauren:** It's very similar.

**Joey:** Like Benny And The Jets Rodriguez?

**Lauren:** I think it's The Jet Rodriguez.

**Todd:** Okay. So, fuck them.

**Lauren:** I don't, I've never...

**Joey:** I'm not going to say fuck them, because I don't know them, but, like, if you had to ask me, I'd say fuck them.

**Todd:** Okay, good. So, you know that the actor who played Benny "The Jet" Rodriguez is from Torrance, right?

**Lauren:** Yeah. That's where I was born. That's where Joey was born.

**Joey:** Born and bred.

**Todd:** So that was intentional? Was the band named after the guy, or the character that he played?

**Lauren:** It is named after the character that he played in *The Sandlot*. But it was also kind of cool that he is a firefighter in Torrance. I

always thought about burning something down to have him come save it. [laughter]

**Joey:** While we're having band practice!

**Lauren:** Exactly! And then say "Hey, could you just take a picture with us real quick?"

**Todd:** [laughter] Have you reached out to him at all?

**Lauren:** No. I should, though.

**Joey:** We might get sued.

**Lauren:** I don't know. I don't think we'll get sued. I own bennythetrodriguez.com. So they can buy that from me.

**Joey:** No one has come after us so far.

**Todd:** Well, the guy who Squinty was based on tried to sue the makers of the film because he said the character depiction was a negative stereotype of him. He lost.

**Marty:** You know a lot about *The Sandlot*!

**Todd:** Internet research. There was nothing on these guys, so I was reading about *The Sandlot*, which I have not seen. [laughter]

**All:** It's a really good movie!

**Joey:** It's nostalgic.

**Todd:** What do your parents do? Let's try to get some framework here. Let's look inside of who you are.

**Joey:** My mother works for American Express, typing on a computer, doing some

stuff, answering some calls. I don't know her exact title, but she's in there.

**Todd:** [laughter] For a while?

**Joey:** Yeah, for a while. She used to work at LAX as a flight attendant. That's how her and my father met. He was working at the restaurant/bar that's in that thing with the legs...

**Todd:** Oh, the fancy thing?

**Joey:** Yeah.

**Todd:** From the future?

**Joey:** Yeah! The fancy restaurant at LAX from the future. That's how they met. He was working while she was getting a drink.

**Lauren:** I love this story.

**Joey:** My dad is just recently retired, loving that.

**Todd:** Does he do fly fishing?

**Joey:** He is a fly fisher. He fly fishes. [laughter]

**Marty:** How do you know all this?

**Todd:** It's on the internet!

**Joey:** My dad is on the internet as a fly fisher?

**Todd:** There aren't a lot of Centofantis.

**Joey:** Yeah. Not too many of us here.

**Todd:** There is a really fancy tailor named Joey Centofanti.

**Joey:** We're not the Centofanti with the "E," either. We're with the "I" at the end.



Photo: Gabie Gonzalez

He worked for the city of Torrance for like thirty years and ten years for the city of Hermosa Beach, before that. Doing parks and recreation type stuff. And he recently retired from that. He's a pretty stand-up guy.

**Lauren:** Gino!

**Joey:** Gino, yeah. [laughs]

**Todd:** That is very Italian.

**Joey:** Yeah.

**Todd:** How about you, Lauren?

**Lauren:** My parents own a clothing company together. My dad does the numbers part of it and my mom is a clothing designer. They're kind of retiring now. My dad has always wanted to get into the farming business, so they run an avocado farm now.

**Todd:** Wow!

**Lauren:** Yeah, it's pretty cool.

**Marty:** That's a good farm.

**Lauren:** Yeah.

**Todd:** Do you know what they were called before avocados?

**Lauren:** No. What were they called?

**Todd:** Alligator pears.

**Lauren:** Oh, that makes sense. There is an alligator avocado, so that totally makes sense.

**Todd:** Do your parents like what you're doing with your lives, like with making music?

**Lauren:** Yeah.

**Todd:** Are they encouraging?

**Joey:** My parents have always trusted me, for the most part. My dad played drums and a little bit of guitar, growing up. He played in bands since he was fourteen. So he knows what I'm getting into. As long as I'm paying the bills and stuff, he doesn't care what I do.

**Todd:** Right. [laughs]

**Joey:** No, they care! They care. They're proud of me. They say what any other parent says when you show them your recordings. It's like "The music sounds good, but why all the yelling?" [laughter]

**Joey:** Sorry we don't sound like The Beatles!

**Lauren:** We're working on The Beatles. That's why we turned into a four-piece.

**Marty:** You're one of the most laid-back people that I've ever met...

**Lauren:** He's Ringo... [laughter]

**Marty:** ...so your family has got to be amazing.

**Joey:** They're very laid-back, very supportive. They trust me. They know what I do. As long as I'm still healthy and I'm coming to Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner, they're really cool.

**Lauren:** Sometimes you don't go to Thanksgiving dinner.

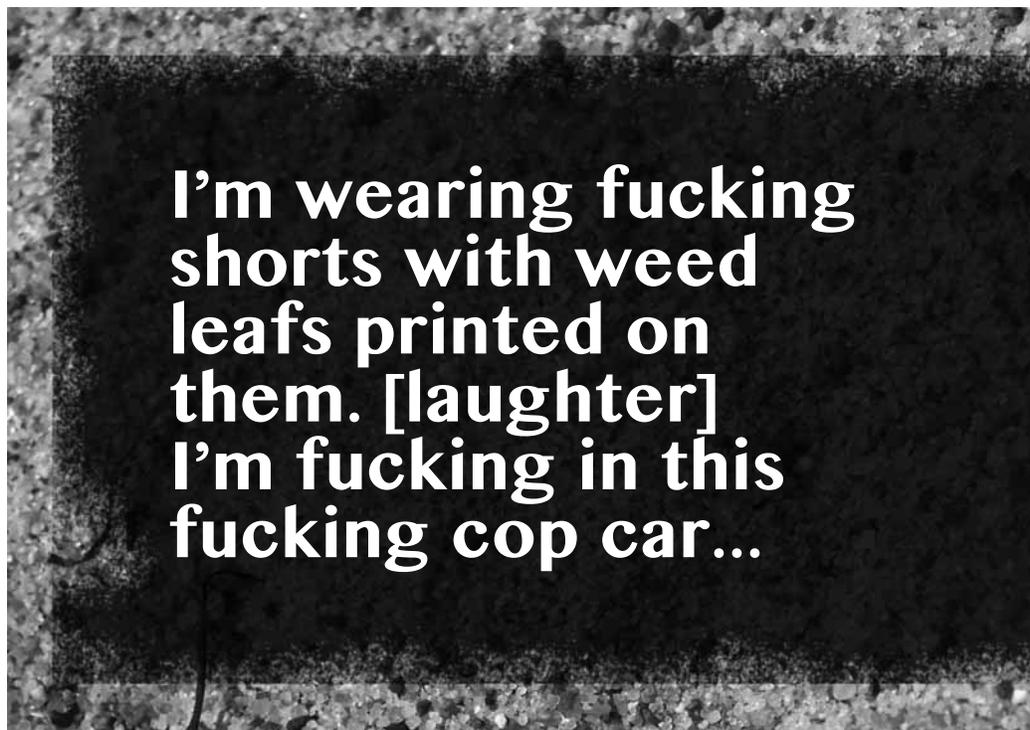
**Joey:** Yeah, sometimes I don't. They get a little upset.

**Marty:** That's good. It's important to have a supportive family.

**Lauren:** Yeah. My parents have always been very supportive. Ever since I was little. They bought me my first amp and my first electric guitar when I was ten.

**Todd:** Oh wow, that's early on. That's fantastic!

**Lauren:** Yeah! My dad is really cool. He listens to a lot of really good music. Ever since I was little, he has gotten me into a lot of awesome bands. I've always been encouraged to play music.



I'm wearing fucking shorts with weed leafs printed on them. [laughter] I'm fucking in this fucking cop car...

**Todd:** Would you say that your parents and your family helped shape what music you play currently?

**Lauren:** Oh yeah. One-hundred percent.

**Todd:** Because, there are two things going on with Benny The Jet Rodriguez, and I've read this in a couple places. There is definitely a foundation in music from the fifties and sixties, but it's contemporary music that you're playing now. How do those two things fit together? Or do you think about that conscientiously, the sound that you make?

**Lauren:** [laughter]

**Joey:** I guess it does make sense. My oldest memory of my dad is driving to swap meets on Saturday mornings and listening to "Breakfast with the Beatles." Is that Saturday or Sunday?

**Lauren:** Sunday.

**Joey:** Yeah, one of those. Sunday stuff. Going on long trips with him, listening to things like The Beach Boys and Frank Zappa; a lot of stuff like that. I never thought about it as those songs were influencing me, but I just always knew that those songs sounded good. And I don't want to rip 'em off, but I want to do my own take on that. So, I guess in a way, it influenced me like that.

**Todd:** I think it's just more sponging, just being around it all the time.

**Lauren:** Yeah.

**Todd:** Because they had melodies. Awesome. You understand how things are composed, the length of songs. All those things.

**Marty:** You can definitely see a lot of that in your music. Just how it sounds. It's very widely known, not opinion, that Benny The Jet Rodriguez is one of the best summertime jams.

**Joey and Lauren:** [laughter]

**Marty:** Because it's very warming, like childhood. It's not overblown. There's not a whole lot going on, but it's so straightforward and it's catchy. People take to it. I think it symbolizes you guys as people as well, through your music. That's cool.

**Lauren:** I didn't like The Beatles until I was, like, twenty.

**Todd:** I can admit I still don't like The Beatles. But I like other people liking The Beatles.

**Lauren:** I got into the fifties and sixties, that era of music, when I was eighteen or nineteen years old. When I was younger, I was into a lot of nineties music. That's what my dad listened to. And a lot of eighties music. The Smiths, Joy Division, stuff like that. I loved Nirvana when I was little. I loved all those bands... Elliot Smith. I guess that influences the sound. I just really liked those melodies from the sixties. I really loved The Beach Boys. I can say they heavily influenced me, at least on this past record.

**Joey:** I think it shows, with the range of music that we have listened to, that simplicity works. As long as you're having fun with that simplicity, and making it fun for others to like it, that's what we have really taken away from our influences.

**Lauren:** Yeah. I don't like songs that aren't catchy. That's a really big thing for me. There has to be something catchy.

**Todd:** So, the next record won't be a grindcore record?

**Joey and Lauren:** No!

**Joey:** The rumors are not true.

**Todd:** How much does weed influence Benny The Jet Rodriguez, both topically and psycho-chemically?

**Lauren:** That's what I think originally brought us together as friends, in high school. Joey's garage.

**Joey:** Yeah. That goes back to my parents being laid-back. Really trusting me with my decisions. [laughter]

**Lauren:** They really, really trusted him!

**Joey:** Knowing that your kids are going to do it, why let them go to the park? Let them be safe and hang out with their buds in the garage.

**Todd:** That's top-notch parenting right there.

**Lauren:** It was really smart of them.

**Joey:** We're gonna let you be stupid, but under our supervision. [laughter]

**Todd:** Okay. So when has weed or weed paraphernalia backfired?

**Joey:** [sighs] I think only once, maybe once and a half.

**Lauren:** I guess only once.

**Todd:** Let's go for once, and then do the half.

**Joey:** All right. Once, we were coming back west from Las Cruces, going into Arizona.

**Lauren:** We were in Deming, New Mexico. At that checkpoint.

**Joey:** Right. And there wasn't a checkpoint going *in* to New Mexico. So we thought we were totally cool.

**Lauren:** We were coming back from Fest.

**Joey:** As soon as we got in the line of cars, we saw the dogs. I think if it was just the humans, we would've got away with it.

**Todd:** Those dogs smell things.

**Lauren:** Those damn dogs! Just kidding...

**Joey:** They can smell through plastic bags. [laughter] They were on our car very quick. So we got pulled over. This is the sketchy part, 'cause I had weed in my backpack, and Lauren had a bag hidden in the car somewhere.

**Lauren:** I had it hidden in a secret compartment, under the cup holder.

**Joey:** Our secret spot.

**Lauren:** You have to be a cop to find it.

**Todd:** Or a dog.

**Lauren:** Or a dog.

**Todd:** A cop dog.

**Lauren:** But I thought it was pretty secret.

**Joey:** We're sitting on this bench, they throw my backpack out of the car, and the dog is all over it. I'm like, "I am busted." And Lauren, great friend that she is, she's like, "Don't worry, my parents will probably get me out of this. My aunt is a lawyer. I'll take the blame." [laughter]

**Lauren:** Yes.

**Joey:** And then, they ask me again if there is weed in the bag. I'm like, "There might be." [laughter] They pulled it out and sprinkled it in their hand. It's a very small amount, like a gram. They got in their little huddle, having their buddy talk...

**Todd:** The cop huddle, with the dogs.

**Joey:** The dog is actually on the shoulders also, with their paws around. [laughter] They come back and say that it isn't really a chargeable amount and to go throw it away. There is a trash can like fifty feet away.

**Todd:** Full of weed.

**Joey:** Full of other little canisters. So I go and throw it away, and they're like "Don't try to come through here again. And stop selling cassettes, because that died in the eighties."

**Lauren:** They made fun of our merch! [laughter] They weren't laughing when they found our money. They were like "I guess you guys *do* sell cassettes!"

**Joey:** We knew they found the stuff in my backpack. But they never said they found the stuff in the bag, in the secret stash. When we left, we were like, "Fuck, yeah! They totally missed that!"

**Todd:** They took it?

**Joey:** It wasn't in there. They totally stuck it in their pocket.

**Todd:** I think the dog took it.

**Lauren:** The dog ate it!

**Todd:** I have a theory that there's a half in here, too.

**Lauren:** Is that my story? [to Joey] Driving twenty-four hours, overnight to Denton. I'm driving the last stretch to Denton and we're outside of someplace like Lubbock or some shit like that in the middle of Texas. It was on one those stretches of highway where you can't be in the left-hand lane for too long. It's a passing lane.

So I was passing, but in it for too long. So they pulled me over. The guy immediately looks at my address and he goes, "California? Please step out of the car." [laughter] He has me step into his car. I'm sitting in his car. There's a camera on me. I'm wearing fucking shorts with weed leafs printed on them. [laughter] I'm fucking in this fucking cop car...

**Joey:** They look like maple leafs to me...

**Lauren:** They're weed leafs.

**Todd:** "I'm Canadian."

**Lauren:** He's like, "Can I search your car?" Just upfront, he tells me why he pulled me over. I'm like, "Fair enough." And then he asks to search the car and I go, "No." He didn't give me any probable cause. He didn't say it smelled or anything like that.

**Todd:** You're not glassy-eyed.

**Lauren:** He's like, "Well, you're from California." Just asking me all these questions. I blew him off. He kept trying to ask to search the car. I was just like, "All right, am I getting a ticket? Or can we move on with this?" He was just trying to stall it out. I got through, didn't get anything. Just got a warning. But Matt Dobbins posted a status saying that I got arrested. [laughter] So everyone freaked out. Everyone was asking where they could sell bail money.

**Marty:** A kickstarter to get Lauren out of jail.

**Lauren:** We had a little bit of weed.

**Joey:** We were running out...

**Lauren:** In Texas they're really... If we had another cop, we would've been donezo.

**Todd:** Does weed go into your lyrics at all?

**Lauren:** Yeah, sometimes. I refer to being stoned if I'm referring to a mental mindframe.

**Todd:** Got it. So how do you self-identify as a band? We can frame it in a couple of different ways. One would be like, somebody who doesn't know you, say friends of your parents; how do you explain what your band does and sounds like? And, sub-question, does punk come into the description or not?

**Joey:** I always start off by saying it's like a poppy, punk band.

**Todd:** Like Green Day? [laughter]

**Joey:** Yeah, they'll either say, "Oh, like Green Day?" Or they're like, "Oh punk?" And they've just seen pictures of...

**Lauren:** Sid Vicious.

**Todd:** "Oh, you put firecrackers in cats' ears?"

**Joey:** "This is what you do."

**Todd:** "You kick out my toilet."

**Lauren:** Yeah, exactly.

**Joey:** And then I'll just say it's like a poppy, punk... pop, rock, California-feeling music. [laughter] That's a pretty good explanation, right? [laughter] "You don't know what that sounds like?"

**Marty:** "You're not from California."

**Lauren:** I don't know. If I'm describing it to someone, I'd say pop punk, just to be straightforward. I think in the sense of four chords and a melody, it's pop punk.

**Joey:** I think it changes on who's asking and how much you think they'll comprehend... I work at the warehouse of Lauren's parents' clothing company.

**Lauren:** We both do.

**Joey:** The ladies I work with...

**Lauren:** We work in shipping.

**Joey:** Like, I'm the only guy that works there... besides Lauren's dad. [laughter] The ladies ask me, "What does your band sound like?" To them I'll say, "The Foo Fighters." [laughter]

**Lauren:** Because that's the biggest reference they'd know.

**Joey:** "You guys like the Foo Fighters?"

**Todd:** "Then you'll love us."

**Lauren:** I do like the Foo Fighters.

**Joey:** Dave Grohl, if you're listening... [laughter]

**Marty:** "We need a drummer"

**Joey:** You're a good guy, we need a drummer.

**Todd:** "I really like your work in *Scream*."

**Joey:** I've been to a couple of your shows.

**Lauren:** Fuck, I hate that question.

**Todd:** It's tough. Even when I tell people, "Yeah, I do a punk rock fanzine." They're like, "It makes no sense." "Oh, you guys want to be like *Rolling Stone*?" "No... and everything I can tell you, you're not going to know."

**Lauren:** Yeah.

**Joey:** "You're not going to know and you're not going to take the time to understand." [laughter]

**Todd:** Oh, do you have tinnitus, Lauren?

**Lauren:** What's that?

**Todd:** The constant ringing in the ears? Because I've seen you playing with the big headphones.

**Lauren:** I just have really bad hearing. So I can't hear myself sing. So, yeah, I wear headphones or I got ear plugs. But then I lost them. [laughter]

**Todd:** To go back to weed... [laughter]

**Lauren:** I just wear...

**Todd:** I like the big cans because you have to carry them around.

**Lauren:** Yeah, yeah.

**Todd:** Remember where they are.

**Lauren:** Yeah, you can't miss those.

**Todd:** So, the first time I met you, you couldn't talk.

**Lauren:** Oh, yeah!

**Todd:** You went through throat surgery? That's pretty intense.

**Lauren:** Yeah, and that was part of the hearing thing. So I couldn't hear myself sing, so I couldn't hear that I was either screaming or I just couldn't hear at all when music was playing...

**Todd:** So you were yelling too much?

**Lauren:** Yeah, I was yelling too much. There were a lot of things. I was smoking cigarettes and you know... terrible acid reflux from drinking and stuff like that. I had to make a lot of...

**Todd:** Lifestyle adjustments?

**Lauren:** Yeah, exactly.

**Todd:** So it was invasive? Did you have polyps?

**Lauren:** Yeah, I had basically polyps, like cysts on my vocal chords.

**Todd:** Jesus.

**Lauren:** So I got them removed.

**Todd:** So a hundred-percent back now?

**Lauren:** Yeah, I mean once you have the surgery it's never a hundred-percent again. But it's been like a year now and it feels so much better.

**Todd:** You recommend throat spray to other people?

**Lauren:** Yeah, I'm really generous about that. [laughter] I need to get a sponsorship by them. Singer's Throat Spray, in case you're listening. You can buy 'em at any co-op or whatever. Todd (Congelliere) actually recommended those to me, 'cause he had the same thing. He had polyps.

**Todd:** Oh right. So did Ryan from Off With Their Heads.

**Lauren:** Yeah, it's really fucking common.

**Marty:** How long was the recovery process for that?

**Lauren:** It was supposed to be a month, but it got pushed back because I got mono somehow. [laughter] It was like two months.

**Joey:** Add more gas to the fire.

**Todd:** What do you hope is universal in your songs? What do you intentionally put into your music in the hopes that people will take away from a song?

**Lauren:** I think to have a voice. I talk a lot about, in a sense, speaking up.

**Todd:** In what way?

**Lauren:** In "Don't Call a Girl a Tony Robbins," I talk about if you're a shy person to use this chance to talk about your opinion or your feelings. And in "Stand Around," that song is about using your voice to express something you're pissed about in your environment.

**Joey:** And not just sitting on it.

**Lauren:** If you really want to get into it, I guess pop punk songs, a lot of them are written by men about women. But to be a female writing about females, that's something I would assume people maybe, straight males, wouldn't be able to relate to. But I'm surprised how much of them come up to me at shows and relate to the songs.

**Joey:** I would say they can relate to them, but it's something they could never process the



They say what any other parent says when you show them your recordings. It's like "The music sounds good, but why all the yelling?"

Photos on this page: Shanty Cheryl

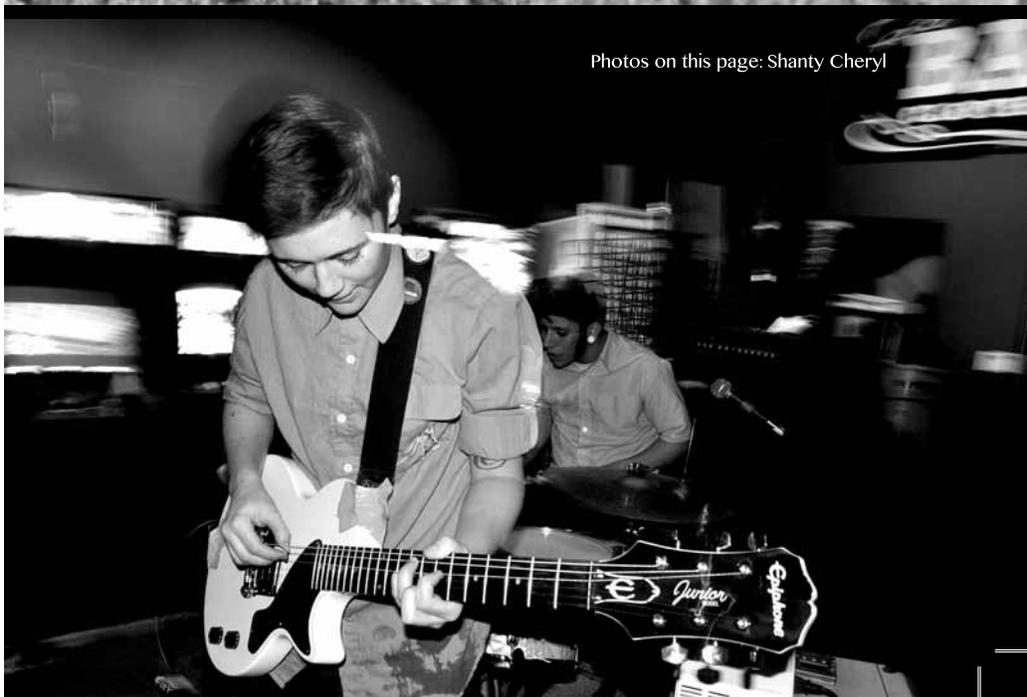




Photo: Shanty Cheryl

thought of, so they couldn't say it. But once they heard it, they're like, "Oh, that's what I fucking meant." [laughter]

**Todd:** You're talking about a song like "Alley Cat."

**Lauren:** Yeah, yeah. Exactly. That's a song written from a female perspective about another girl.

**Todd:** That's one of the wonderful things about the band, is that I love other perspectives, period. Getting flooded by the same thing over and over again; it's just so boring. I think it's important and you have such a strong voice. It seems so natural.

A lot of our songs are about pretty serious subjects that you wouldn't really expect the tone of the song to be presenting. We leave this light side to a rough situation.

**Lauren:** Joey brings the light side.

**Joey:** I try to bring the light side. Or try to bring the groove or suggestions that make a hook more interesting. Certain timings and stuff. Stops and pauses.

**Lauren:** Yeah.

**Todd:** So important. The Undertones, they were in the middle of a civil war between the English and the Irish, and they're one of the poppiest, most positive sounding bands.

**Todd:** So it's like—I don't want to put words in your mouth—having a discussion, opening it up, and having a dialogue. And also trying to find allies, because I'm not a gay woman, but I really appreciate it.

**Lauren:** Yeah, exactly.

**Todd:** I want to go out of my way and support different voices. That's very important to me as a person.

**Lauren:** That's why I try not to close it off.

**Todd:** Right. There's pride and then there's prejudice. "Oh, you can never understand."

**Lauren:** Exactly.

**Todd:** That's a fine line, to keep your own

**Joey:** The cops said, "Don't try to come through here again. And stop selling cassettes, because that died in the eighties."

**Lauren:** They made fun of our merch! [laughter]

That's where a lot of the power comes from.

**Lauren:** Yeah, I think that's why I was bored with a lot pop punk bands that I was listening to.

**Todd:** That's why I have a hard time calling you pop punk, because I have so many derisive things in the back of my mind. I can name a bunch of bands I don't like, and I don't want to lump it in with that.

**Lauren:** I was into a lot of that in high school. A lot of Saves The Day and stuff like that. [laughter] That was my shit.

**Todd:** When people say, "Punk with melody," I think Toys That Kill. That kind of thing.

**Joey:** Should we start saying that? Punk with melody.

**Lauren:** Yeah. Punk with melody. Melodic punk.

**Todd:** Okay. So, Joey, you said you do a lot of the co-writing. Is that correct?

**Joey:** Yes.

**Todd:** So, same question. What do you put into your songs that you think will have universal appeal?

**Joey:** Well, Lauren is more or less in charge of the lyrics of the song. She basically gets the structure of chorus/verse and the structure of the guitar chords. Then I kind of come in.

"If we want to see carnage, we go outside."

They're great songs. And that's what I like about Benny The Jet. You're deceptively California-sounding. Your lyrics are serious. I think it's a great way to do it.

**Lauren:** Yeah.

**Joey:** I think it just shows our laid-backness.

**Todd:** Yeah... but serious and laid-back.

**Joey:** Laid-back but still getting the job done. Productive.

**Todd:** What do you want to express to a very specific audience—say an audience that is well-versed in punk rock and knows the signifiers around you? What would be a message to them?

**Lauren:** I feel like this is a harder question.

**Todd:** I did the soft ball, now it's a harder ball.

**Lauren:** I think it's still the same thing. Originally, why I did this, I was writing songs for myself. Then I was like, "You know, if I put these out there, other people who feel like me are going to hear these songs and take something away from that." So, I guess it's the same thing. I realized that this was my chance to have a voice about my feelings. And other people who are like me, lesbian or whatever, people who identify as feeling somewhat oppressed are going to understand.

identity and broadcast it.

**Lauren:** That's a little too political for me, for my tastes. I mean, I have friends that are totally like that and that's awesome. But yeah, I just want to be friends with everybody. [laughter]

**Joey:** Who wants to be our friends? [laughter] Hit me up.

**Lauren:** I need some friends.

**Joey:** We'd love to be your friends. All of you.  
**Marty:** I got a question for you, Lauren. I know it's been brought up, and it's really important that it gets addressed. How do you feel being a girl in punk rock? How do you put yourself out there for other girls to relate to you, and give kids who are maybe unsure of themselves a voice? Positive modeling? How do you feel about that, just as a person?

**Lauren:** I guess I never really thought about it until you mentioned that people look up to me, or women especially. I didn't have a lot of that. I mean, I did from the '90s. I looked up to Kim Deal (Pixies, Breeders) and Patty Schemel (Hole, Upset), stuff like that. But besides that, there aren't a lot of females in pop punk, and that was always really weird to me. I guess now that's why I'm writing these songs and putting them out there. A lot

of them I wrote in high school, and I didn't know what to do.

**Todd:** How old are you now?

**Lauren:** I'm twenty-three now. I guess those songs were released when I was twenty, twenty-one. I'm just using my voice as a channel to model for other girls out there. You can just pick up a guitar and start doing it. I just started learning Ramones songs and turned them into my own. Yeah, that's a hard question.

**Marty:** I know, personally, I do merch for you and I've been on tour with you. I'm in contact with a lot of your fans and people who like your music. I've had them tell me how excited they are that Benny The Jet Rodriguez was playing their town. How important it is to them. I see that in pop punk and that's cool. I do shows. I'm a huge fan of girls being involved. My favorite bands have girls involved. I think it brings a different aspect to the writing process, perspective, and making things... Like you said, taking it from an outsider's perspective, because I don't deal with those things.

**Marty:** That's what's up.

**Todd:** We'll take it full circle. I'm not just talking about music now; I'm talking about the operation of punk. I always call it "punk on the best days." What have you learned and then put back into this band, hopefully for other people to kind of pick up on?

**Joey:** I went through my middle school phase where I was what I thought was punk. [laughter] Through the years...

**Lauren:** Superficial...

**Todd:** Well, at thirteen you're allowed to have terrible taste. It's fine.

**Joey:** It always seems like punk gets a bad rap because of what people think the word means and what it associates with. To me, no matter what type the music, if you're my friend, I feel like you're in the punk community. I feel like I surround myself with people who have the same beliefs as me, want to have a good time, don't want to hurt anyone, want to party all the time, party all the time. [laughter]

**Marty:** That's such a good song.

**Lauren:** I think there are so many different

dollars or something crazy. I see bands that raise five thousand dollars to put out a 7". To have someone record it they don't know in some fancy fucking studio...

**Todd:** What is that doing?

**Lauren:** You have friends that will record you.

**Todd:** So, you can get some little kid in a Pokemon costume, and then play to teddy bears. (Referring to the video for "Summer Hatin' (H.S.F.)")

**Lauren:** I've just always been into working with my friends. It's more fun that way.

**Todd:** It's more gratifying. You can create your own world and live in it.

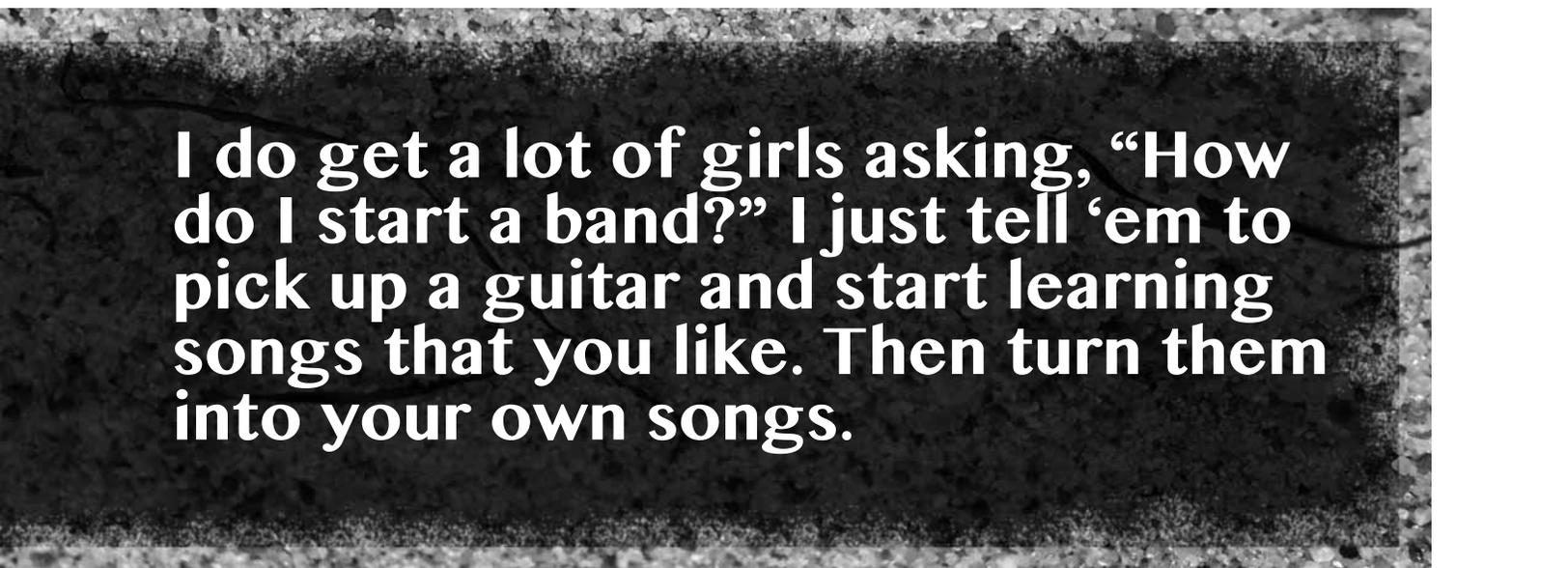
**Joey:** That's a better way to say: "Punk is it's own world. It's a self-sufficient world."

**Lauren:** Yeah, a microcosm.

**Joey:** You need some artwork? You have a friend who can do artwork. You need to record something? You want to screen print something? You have a friend that can do it.

**Lauren:** I think it's reciprocity. You have to put something back in.

**Marty:** Everybody's got the thing they do.



I do get a lot of girls asking, "How do I start a band?" I just tell 'em to pick up a guitar and start learning songs that you like. Then turn them into your own songs.

**Todd:** It would be disingenuous if Marty wrote those songs. It's wanting punk on its best days to be a culture that's accepting of that. "I never really thought about that. That's awesome."

**Lauren:** Yeah. I want other women, and other queer women, whoever, to listen to my songs and be like, "I feel the exact same way." And take something away from it.

**Todd:** It's so much better than people punching each other in the face. [laughter] Or someone getting stomped.

**Lauren:** Exactly. If you're pissed off at someone, write a song about it. I guess I do get a lot of girls asking, "How do I start a band?" I just tell 'em to pick up a guitar and start learning songs that you like. Then turn them into your own songs.

microcosms in the punk community...

**Todd:** Absolutely.

**Lauren:** I don't relate to all of them. I've been in some of them and it's not the same party for me.

**Todd:** I think, just from the people that have done your videos and photography.... Abby Banks, Shanty Cheryl...

**Lauren:** Yeah, to me it's a lifestyle, in the sense that it's the community I use. I use a lot of my friends. I see that they're great artists in other fashions. "Hey, would you do something for me?" At the same time, they get exposure. It's just really cool.

**Todd:** And you have a good time together.

**Lauren:** Yeah, it's not doing it with some stranger and paying them like five hundred

**Lauren:** You have to put something in to get something out.

**Joey:** Give a little, get a little.

**Lauren:** I deal with people sometimes who just try and use me for shit, essentially. To get a show or something. "When have we ever been friends?" [laughter]

**Todd:** What happens is—and Marty can attest to this—is this thing called your bullshit detector gets built. And you're like, "Oh, it's totally vibrating right now." [laughter]

**Joey:** "I thought my battery on this thing was dead, but it is *going off*."

**Lauren:** San Pedro really taught me a lot, in that sense. Now I know. Now I have a really good bullshit detector.

**Marty:** Dude, I do that shit in my sleep. On

any given day I'm hit up by like twenty bands for a show. Every show I have I'm approached by like five people.

**Todd:** So have you always been in San Pedro?

**Joey:** I grew up in Torrance, but I've been living in San Pedro the last five years.

**Todd:** Ever live in Long Beach? Because someone in Long Beach is claiming you as a Long Beach band.

**Lauren:** Yeah, Long Beach claims us too. I lived in Long Beach for a year. [laughter] We were getting shows there sometimes.

**Joey:** I don't think we've played that many shows there though... [laughter]

**Lauren:** We've played a few shows there.

**Todd:** Some places say that your band is *from* Long Beach.

**Joey:** I don't know who those people are out there.

**Lauren:** I would say people just go to my Facebook and see wherever I'm currently living and list that. And that's cool. [laughter] I've heard people say we're from San Pedro because the album was recorded there.

**Todd:** That's true.

**Lauren:** It's like a "Made In San Pedro" sticker on it.

**Joey:** A lot of people say in reviews and stuff that it's like another San Pedro-sounding band. [laughter]

**Lauren:** I wouldn't say it's San Pedro-sounding...

**Todd:** That's fucking lazy describing.

**Lauren:** That's them wanting to write something quick.

**Todd:** Just looking at the back...

**Lauren:** I don't think there's another band from Pedro that sounds like us.

**Marty:** If there is, let me know. [laughter]

**Todd:** I think that you're a ripple of Thee Makeout Party. Very sunny, very catchy.

**Lauren:** Yeah, I like Thee Makeout Party.

**Todd:** Most people don't even remember them though. Great band.

**Lauren:** I'm into that.

**Todd:** [looking over to Joey's notes] Something about corndogs?

**Joey:** If you can ever get a corndog on a stick. It's not a regular corn dog. It's like, not a regular corn dog. It's a hot dog, with the bread, on a stick, *on a stick*. [laughter] Corn dog on a stick. Get one near you.

**Todd:** Thank you very much. That was really great.

**Lauren:** Thanks!

**Joey:** Thanks for having us.



Photo: Gabie Gonzalez

There is a place in the U.S. called the Pentagon. It's a nerve chamber of humans ready to attack other humans. Somewhere better, kinder, and louder, there is a similar building, but burgundy colored and oval shaped. Its purpose is producing light, dense sound waves that defend, attack, sustain, and release you in the best possible ways. It was seen in a dream, and it is called Octagrape.

Octagrape lives in that region between the glitz and glamour of Los Angeles and the grittiness of Tijuana, both literally and figuratively. Hailing from San Diego, Octagrape is made up of two veterans of the 1990s heyday of that scene, plus transplants from the East Coast and the Midwest. The San Diego veterans, guitarist/vocalist Glen Galloway and drummer Ely Moyal, played in Trumans Water, a band known for its creativity and for achieving wide underground acclaim via an appearance on John Peel's BBC radio program. Guitarist/vocalist Jason Begin and bassist Alex Dausch have both played in other bands as well, in and out of San Diego.

Octagrape is difficult to classify, with a variety of influences, from punk to grunge to psych and beyond. It straddles these styles to create something unique, partially fueled by sugary Jolly Rancher candies. Being a member of Octagrape requires physical health and strength. Their live shows are among the most animated and energetic you'll see anywhere, with members constantly moving around, jumping into the crowd, and even Ely standing at his drum kit pounding away at times. It's an intensity that leaves a lasting impression and brings the faithful back show after show. Being a member of Octagrape also requires a strong sense of humor.

Glen Galloway—vocals/guitar  
Jason Begin—vocals/guitar  
Alex Dausch—bass  
Ely Moyal—drums

Interview and photos: Paul Silver  
Layout: Becky Bennett

**Paul:** How did the band come together?

**Glen:** I started it in late 2012 with Kevin Maliszewski, and Ely started playing when Kevin moved from drums to guitar. Then Kevin moved out of the city about four months later. Jason was recording our first nine songs. He knew the band inside and out. Since Kevin moved, Jason asked, "Can I fill in for shows?" It took about five minutes of a rehearsal to ask, "Uh, could you join?" [laughs] It was so funny, because Ely, O (Otis Bartholomew, Olivelawn and Fluf), and I were sitting there playing. Going from a four-piece to a three-piece is a bit like a flat tire. So, here we are, just pushing through it, and Jason's standing there in the doorway, watching us, and asking, "Hey, could I maybe try, just in case you need a fill-in every now and then?" It was perfect. It was like, "Can I play, coach?" [laughter]

**Paul:** O was the bass player, initially. What were the circumstances behind the change from O to Alex?

**Jason:** The simple answer to that is O was kind of burned out on it. He left very amicably, and just told us he wasn't going to do it, and then we had to find another bass player.

**Paul:** How did you find Alex?

**Jason:** Craigslist personals, actually. Men looking for men. [laughter]

**Alex:** I needed some extra cash. [laughter]

**Jason:** Alex and I played briefly in a band called Forever Boner.

**Paul:** Forever Boner?

**Ely:** Like we said, briefly. [laughter]

**Paul:** Were you sponsored by Viagra?

**Ely:** It lasted almost four hours, so they had to call a doctor. [laughter]

**Paul:** Alex, what was it like integrating yourself into the band?

**Alex:** It's not so bad. It's a fair amount of, "We'd like this kind of feel here," and then I can play what I want. I like playing music. These guys are energetic, and we go all-out and have fun. There are fewer "marital squabbles" so far than I've had in other bands—and that's always why I end up becoming less interested—because it turns into...

**Jason:** Because he tries to marry everyone. [laughter]

**Alex:** Nobody wants to get married and it's super weird.

**Jason:** That being said, we're still looking for a bass player, so reach out to us. [laughter]

**Paul:** I have a difficult time categorizing Octagrape's music. It seems to straddle different categories, with influences from punk, psych, grunge, indie, and garage, but it isn't really any one of those. [Jason gives a thumbs-up.] Is that intentional, and how would you describe your music?

**Glen:** We're straddlers. Straddle-rock.

**Jason:** I think the very reason it's working right now is because it isn't exactly any of that stuff. I don't think it's deliberate; I think it's the culmination of what we all are as players and our musical tastes. One thing I like about this band is there's no steering it towards anything. If Glen brings a tune to the band that's totally different from anything we've done, then we do it. We don't say to ourselves, "We're only a grunge band or only a psych band," or anything like that. At least for me, that's what's interesting about it is it doesn't fit anywhere.

**Ely:** What I like about this band is the spirit of just enjoying playing, as opposed to bands who have this very serious attitude toward music. There's a healthy balance between enjoying playing and going all-out and having

fun with it, and then also paying attention to the songwriting. But sometimes you can go too heavy on the songwriting where everything becomes totally left-brained and has to be for a purpose and logical.

**Paul:** Since you brought it up, who does the songwriting?

**Ely:** I write all the songs, actually. [laughter] I do the drum parts and everybody else works around my drum parts that I make up.

**Glen:** He just looks at us and wills the song into us. I'm the one who says, "Hey! I've got a new song!" But Ely was just giving me that stare.

**Ely:** I write the drum parts, then I look at each person and I've worked out this elaborate sign language. It gets interpreted through the moves I make with my hands and they figure out what the music should sound like.

**Glen:** But doing the exact opposite of what he's willing into us.

**Alex:** I think Glen and Jason write the vast majority—if not all—of the songs in this band, and we run them through in practice and all come up with our own parts.

**Jason:** It's pruning.

**Glen:** It shifted quite a bit, because from the beginning, when we went from a two-piece to a four-piece, it went from, "Here are these songs I've written that Kevin will play with me," to it being way more fun when you have a room full of people to chisel away at stuff. People feel strongly about, "It should go this way." "No, it should go this way." But it finds its way. And there've been a lot of songs where we'll do them live for a month or two and then rewrite them. Because you picture this thing in your head, and then you get in front of a room full of people, and this amazing end of the song that was supposed to soar off into the



# Octagrape

sunset is digging its way twenty feet into the ground. [laughter] I think this band wants to play live. Because of that, you bring ideas in; you throw them into that chemistry, and then what comes out...

**Jason:** The song becomes what it's supposed to be.

**Paul:** Jason, you also write and perform electronic music, and you also write for TV commercials. Glen, you produce music for TV commercials and you also have done Soul Junk (Glen's side project with family members) as an on and off thing. It's interesting that these side projects are very different from Octagrape. Usually, when people in bands have side projects, they tend to be relatively similar to what they're doing in the band. But this is all over the place.

**Jason:** I, physically and mentally, would not be able to listen to any more rock'n'roll outside of Octagrape, pretty much. My other outlet is super important to me, but it's been the story of my life, musically. I ebb and flow between rock music and experimental noise

and electronics. I think that's just the way I swim the stream.

**Ely:** He goes both ways. [laughs]

**Glen:** A lot of what I get into in music is immersive. When Ely and I were in Trumans Water, most of the band lived in the same house and we'd play four or five times a week. We'd go through our set and then hit the tape player and improvise for hours. It was having that kind of beginning to music that kind of wrecks you. There are some bands where the whole idea is just to put the pedal to the floor and never let up. Like High Rise ('80s Japanese noise rock), Mainliner ('90s Japanese noise rock), you just go.

It's like what Jason was saying. Phasing away, looking at other things, and doing projects that aren't just a couple clicks away, they're way far away. Then when you return to something like Octagrape, Octagrape's the first band I've been in since Trumans Water where I feel there's so much synergy when we play, because we play so much that you can lose yourself, musically, in it. There are times

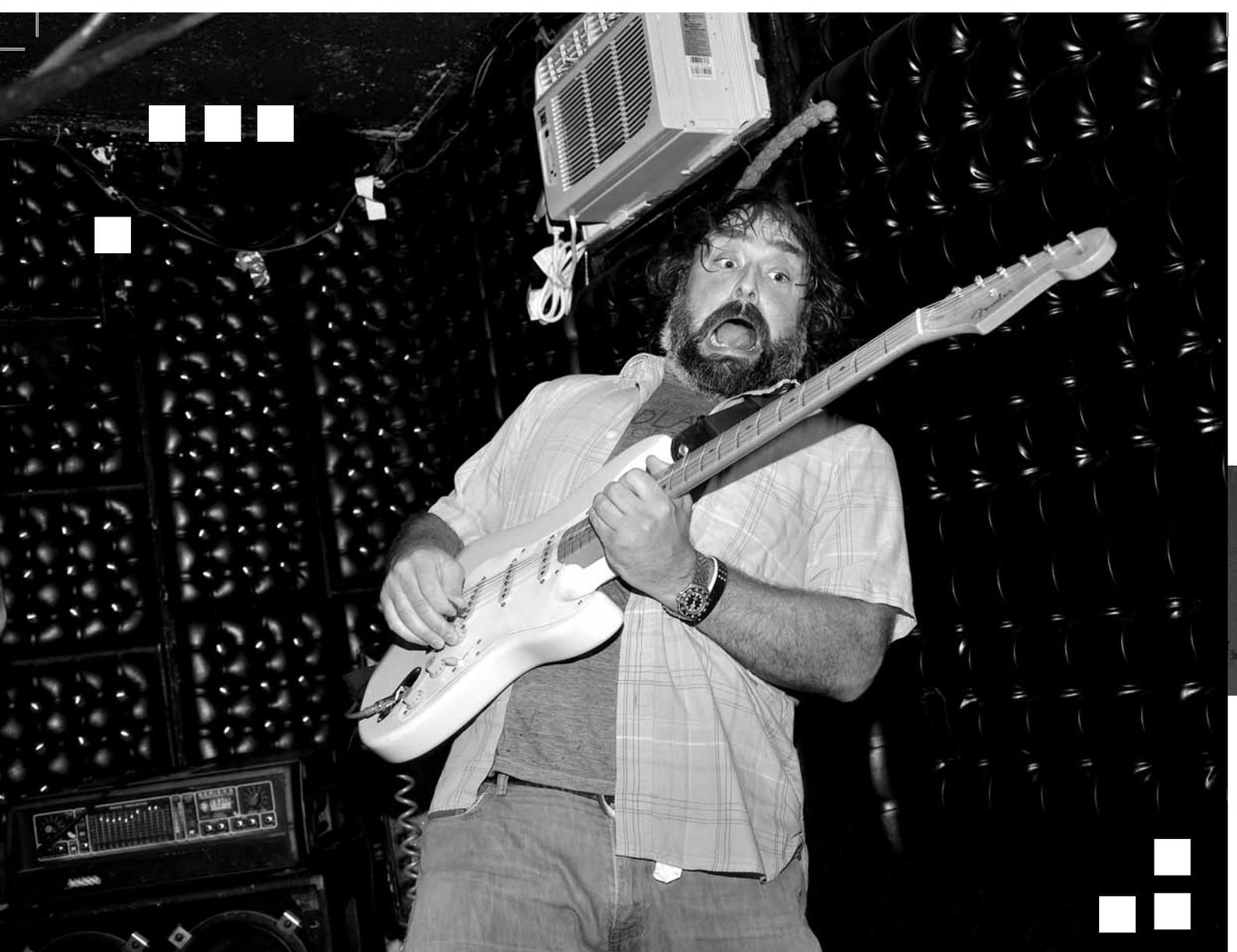
when a couple of us will be out of town for eight nine ten days, and the first practice back is always, "Ohhhh, I miss this." It's only been ten days, but it's pretty physically addictive.

**Paul:** Alex, you have a side project that is significantly different, a surf band (Opaleye).

**Alex:** That's the mellowest band you could be part of. Everyone's got young kids, and we play sushi bars. [laughs] Basically just drink for free and have a good time. It's a cool instrumental surf band, all original tunes. It's super fun. I play bass in that band so that couldn't be more different than this band.

**Glen:** In which you play bass. [laughter]

**Alex:** Exactly. I play in Tiger Milk Imports, which is an electro-experimental pop thing. I play guitar and make noises in that. I run a recording business out of my home, called Studio Studios. A lot of the clients are local rock bands or pop artists, people who write their own tunes and sing, but they don't have a band, and I happen to be able to play all those instruments, so I record the whole band



for them. That's very different. It's not my full-time job. I do it maybe ten to twelve hours a week on top of my day job. It's exhausting, but like Jason's outlet, it's very important to me to keep doing it.

**Jason:** If you're not a healthy musician, you don't bring your best. Being a well-rounded musician is work.

**Paul:** Glen and Ely, you're veterans of the San Diego music scene. Jason, you've been in bands elsewhere. You guys are all, shall we say, a little bit older? [laughter] Older musicians tend to want to settle down and not tour so much. But you've done multiple national tours in the past couple of years. What drives you to do that? [Ely makes snorting sounds and rubs his nose.] [laughter]

**Jason:** Ely came to our Halloween party as a cokehead. [laughter] I think the simplest answer is that we can and we're all willing to.

**Glen:** What the band is is live. Even when we rehearse. It's funny, because we play with so many bands where you can tell it's a cool record and somebody thought up a cool concept, but everything about it is a project. This is not that—it's like you're viewing the explosion.

**Ely:** It's like performance art, when we're

“on.” The music is really important, but I almost see it more as an energy delivery system than anything else. Because, when it's “on,” everybody looks at each other right before we're about to start playing, or somewhere in the middle of the first song, and we say, non-verbally, to each other...

**Glen:** “Your fly's down.” [laughter]

**Ely:** It's like we're all at the top of a ski slope and we're all going to go down together. It's that feeling of not knowing what's going to happen next and having it happen, and being surprised each time that it does. It's like being on drugs without being on drugs.

**Alex:** I eat so many Jolly Ranchers. [laughs] That's totally like being on drugs.

**Glen:** [Speaking in an announcer's voice] Jolly Rancher-fueled straddle rock, from San Diego!

**Paul:** Glen and Ely, between the end of your involvement in Trumans Water and the start of Octagrape, there was a considerable period of time. Was this purposeful, because you were raising families? [Ely again makes snorting sounds and rubs his nose.] [laughter]

**Alex:** Ely is just letting his family down. [laughter]

**Glen:** It wasn't conscious at all. I didn't think about playing or not playing with Ely since we finished playing in Trumans.

**Ely:** That hurts.

**Glen:** We both finished our time with Trumans within about four months of each other. It just seemed like that chapter was closed. We stayed in contact, but it never crossed my mind that I'd play with Ely again. And then as soon as this band was coming together and I could see where the songs were going, it was, “Boom, I'm going to call Ely.”

**Ely:** I thought about playing with Glen again, because I remember it being so much fun, and such a rush. I played with other bands, but Glen has this punk rock abandon, like a five-year-old kid who picked up a guitar and jumped up on stage and acts like he's...

**Glen:** Four.

**Ely:** He doesn't act like it; he's in the moment. That's part of how I get into it, I'll look over and he'll be acting like a little kid.

**Jason:** There's an on-stage chain reaction that happens. It's a fuse that's lit and it completes its thing in half of the first song. [Everyone nods in agreement.] And you just know, it's “Oh, boy.”

**Paul:** And I've noticed that whatever "it" is, Alex is now infected, too. [laughter] I remember seeing the first show after he joined the band and he was just there playing the bass. And nowadays, he's jumping around just as much as everyone else.

**Alex:** I enjoy playing like that. I'm an animated guy, so it's a happy accident that they're like that.

**Jason:** We're mostly just jumping out of the way. [laughs]

**Alex:** A big part of that is that at that point we had practiced together only a handful of times. You're less comfortable when you're not exactly sure what's going to come next. But from that point forward I didn't have those worries because we play so often.

**Paul:** How did you find the reception to Octagrape from Sebadoh's fans?

**Glen:** They were amazing.

**Jason:** We sold a lot of merch and a lot of people came up and talked to us after. You're always going to have people who are just there to see the headliner, but I think we made some fans.

**Paul:** How would you compare that reception with audiences in San Diego?

**Jason:** There are audiences in San Diego? [laughter]

**Glen:** It's like "jumbo shrimp." [massive laughter] [barely able to speak] "Military intelligence!" [guffaws]

**Jason:** That's my comment on that.

[More laughs]

**Ely:** I remember the look on your face!

**Jason:** I had to get my guitar, to tune it backstage, but it was already out in front of my amp. I pulled the curtain back to grab my guitar and I looked out. There were three tiers of people that started clapping. I went and had a massive diarrhea attack. [laughter] I was so nervous.

**Glen:** We had been playing together for all of ten months at that point.

**Jason:** That was the same tour when we played the Fillmore (in San Francisco). It was big venues. It's a different vibe than playing smaller shows. Because when you jump off the stage, it's a long way down. [laughter] Sometimes we would have to go and get Glen.

# Jolly Rancher-fueled straddle rock, from San Diego!

**Paul:** A couple of your big tours have been with Sebadoh (a long-running indie pop band), who are very different from Octagrape, stylistically. How did you get hooked up with them?

**Glen:** I knew Lou (Barlow, Sebadoh's frontman) from back in the Trumans days. O knew Lou from tour managing Dinosaur Jr. (an indie pop band since the '80s), and Jason (Lowenstein) from Sebadoh is a huge Trumans Water head. They were going through bands to open for them, and Lou threw out the idea, and Jason said, "Done." Sebadoh was great to us. And, for a band that's been around, they pick places, like the Casbah (a small but significant club in San Diego) that they'll sell out. They don't play Belly-Ups (a large club in San Diego County). They just play Casbahs all over the country, which is ideal. You walk into a 250-400 capacity place that's packed almost every night, no matter what night of the week. And you do that for two weeks and you go home. It's a blast. Nobody knew us or expected anything from us, so it was this amazing dynamic where the first two or three songs, there's space in front of the stage that slowly fills in, and by the end of the set they're thinking, "Who are you?" It's an ideal spot to be in. Nothing expected, everything delivered.

**Ely:** I remember when Glen and I were in Trumans and we went to England the first time, our tour manager had *Bubble and Scrape* (Sebadoh's fourth album), and that was playing in the tour bus over and over. Back then I thought, "Wow, Sebadoh's great." The idea that we would ever tour with them was totally out of my realm of possibilities. And I think they're great songwriters, so it was a big honor.

**Glen:** You have to pick the right night to play here.

**Ely:** There are good fans in San Diego. We don't want to say anything bad about San Diego.

**Jason:** San Diego is a weird place. I lived in Philadelphia for ten years before moving here about five years ago, and the music scene is much different there. You would never be at a show that didn't have a lot of people at it. I don't know if that was because there are only a couple places to see shows. Here, it seems very hard to get people to come out of their houses to see anything. We're grateful to whoever shows up, but it's a different scene than everywhere else in the country.

**Glen:** It's like when you watch *It's Gonna Blow* (a documentary film about the San Diego underground music scene from 1986-1996), that movie that Bill (Perrine) made, and it was amazing, because it put you back in that time, when everybody was at everybody's shows, and all the footage of the live shows, you could look around at the crowd, and you're thinking, "Oh, there's Scott (Nielsen) from Napo and there's Rob (Crow) from Heavy Vegetable. And I feel there's been a little bit of reconnecting that way. We've seen more people coming out lately, more synergy. That film did a really good job highlighting what the town has and where it all came from.

**Jason:** We also did a tour with Pinback (Rob Crow's band) and that was because Rob came and saw us once, liked it, and convinced us to do it. We owe a lot to him for that. That was playing really big places. And scary.

**Paul:** Why was it scary?

**Jason:** I remember we were playing the Observatory (in Santa Ana, Calif.).

**Paul:** Let's talk about those live shows. They're very dynamic. Where does all the jumping around come from?

**Alex:** We pay a lot for our choreographer. No, I think it comes from Glen not wearing a (guitar) strap.

**Ely:** It's Glen's catharsis of recklessness. It's all the areas of his life where he's not reckless, where he wishes he was. He takes it all out on us.

**Glen:** Vicariously, through my straplessness.

**Ely:** I've known Glen long enough to know that's the case. He's got to let it go, somehow. And nobody gets hurt. At least, not most of the time.

**Alex:** I think that's probably true for everybody. It's a release. The music is certainly energetic, and that facilitates it. And we all have our own stresses in life, so it's nice to have an outlet like that.

**Ely:** I know I have some degree of OCD. At least doctors have told me so. And girlfriends have told me so. Buying three hundred dollar cymbals, then jumping up in the air and smashing them is definitely counter to everything that I normally would do. It's like the whole superhero thing. You want to go outside of your normal existence and, for just a little while, do something you never would do.

**Glen:** And then wake up three hundred dollars poorer. [laughter]

**Jason:** I actually feel that playing live with this band is somewhat close to being possessed for half an hour. I'm without conscious awareness of what I am doing and it's operating on a different level. I don't know if you've ever read the book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*? It's about when you're doing something in such a concentrated way that you forget you're





**Ely:** That's the whole fun. You're watching a band, and they're completely going off, and they've lost all consciousness of the crowd even being there. They're just working off each other, and you're watching it. You get to vicariously enjoy people going off. Not people showing off.

**Paul:** Glen, you play your guitar without a strap. When did you start doing that, and why?

**Jason:** The strap's not on his guitar.

**Alex:** There is one. [laughter]

**Ely:** You've got to look.

**Alex:** You've got to catch the right angle.

**Jason:** [turns to Glen] You're going to catch so much shit!

**Glen:** It was at the end of 1993, when I was still playing with Trumans, and at that point my strap was two thrift store leather belts duct taped together. The strap went on the second song of the set, and none of the other bands had

a strap to lend me. I had this Peavey (guitar), and it was heavy, and it was either quit playing the show, or figure out a way to soldier on. In a matter of seven songs, I went from just trying to make it through the set, to thinking this was doable, to thinking this was amazing. As soon as that show was done, I decided I wasn't wearing a strap again. I had to figure out a way to play all my songs without a strap.

**Alex:** Were you already playing with the tuning you use, at that time?

**Glen:** Yeah.

**Alex:** Okay. It seems like that would make it a little easier.

**Glen:** Right, standard tuning would be a nightmare.

**Jason:** Glen's tuning is really fun to play. I've been playing it a little bit lately, and it makes you look at it in a different way and you get different results.

**Glen:** I got really sick of what muscle memory was doing for me when I was about nineteen. As a teenager, you learn to play a lot of stuff, and when your fingers always do that thing you learned on that one song you learned when you were fourteen, you think, "No, no, no!"

I went through a year where I would set up a 4-track and I would twiddle the guitar's tuning knobs and tune to whatever half step they were closest to. Then I would do the first track, then fill the other tracks up, and put drums on the last track. It made me switch from muscle memory to—you would start to move and you wouldn't know what note was coming out. All your playing had to be completely on your feet, intuitive, reactive. It was one of the best things I ever did. When I finally came out of that, I thought, "What tuning would work the best?" It took about

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# I feel like this band is a team of astronauts.

a year coming around to this tuning, so I've stuck with it.

**Paul:** Shifting gears a little bit, there are a lot of bands who try and get signed to a record label—whether it's an indie or a major—that they hope will subsidize the cost of recording, pressing, distribution, and promotion. Especially bands that are made up of veteran performers. But you record all of your own music and you self-released your EPs and album. Why is this, and would you say that Octagrape embraces the DIY ethic?

**Glen:** Yeah, definitely.

**Jason:** I think it's partially because we have this facility (Singing Serpent Studios), so it makes it easy for us to do that. We're moving so quickly and generating so much stuff that we've got to grab it as it's being ejected. The thing is, we really love doing it. The process is fun. We do everything quickly and kind of crudely. We're not spending too much time getting sounds or figuring out where to put a microphone. It's a bit of a return to some sort of garage rock, kids hanging out and 4-tracking.

**Glen:** We've gotten really good, too, at knowing when the song is at its apex. We've had stuff we've recorded too early, and later we realize we just don't play it live anymore.

**Jason:** The song needs to have its own personality before you grab it.

**Ely:** But then there's the other side. We want to capture it during that window of time when it's still fresh enough that we're really enjoying playing it to where it's like we're discovering the song. Because there's a point where you're still discovering it, the edge of its identity. When is the beginning and the end of creating the song? It keeps evolving, but there's that certain sweet spot, and if we can record it at that time...

**Glen:** You have to still be high on it. We show up to our practice and—we should run through our set so we sound good the next time we play—but there are certain songs that you just can't wait to play. And that's when you should record them.

**Paul:** Glen, you're a rarity in the underground music scene in that you're a devout Christian

in a sinner's world of rock'n'roll. Has this caused any difficulties for you?

**Jason:** My favorite part about it is the theological van rides, where I get to ask him questions, and he [points to Ely] is a Jew, so I get two angles.

**Alex:** I'm an agnostic. [Turns to Jason] what are you?

**Jason:** I wasn't raised as anything. I wouldn't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member.

**Glen:** That's a good one. I do what I do. And no matter what I do, I completely dive in. It's the same thing with my spirituality as with my music, and there are some points where it's head-on, hold-up, this seems like it's going the exact opposite way. But I've learned to make it work in both contexts, because they're both very much a part of me.

**Jason:** I've never met a Christian like Glen Galloway. From what I've heard, he's playing loud guitar music at church. Maybe there are others like him out there, but my preconceptions of what I thought Christians are—he breaks all of those.

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**Paul:** What were those preconceptions?

**Jason:** Well, to be very narrow-minded about it, I thought all religious people fit into these clean little boxes, they have all these rules, and live in fear of whatever. But it's actually a lot different than that. From what I've learned from talking with him in the van rides, he's just a normal dude and has this other thing that he does and he believes in really heavily. [Turns to Glen] Actually, you're not a normal dude. [laughs] My whole point is that he's not a normal dude.

**Ely:** When I was in Trumans, I'd be listening to the lyrics he'd make up, and I couldn't understand how it was possible to write lyrics like that and not do drugs. [laughter] The way Glen thinks and the abstract way that he looks at lyrics and music, it was hard for me to have that gel with the idea of him being Christian, only because my view of anyone in a Christian band was...

**Jason:** Jars Of Clay.

**Ely:** Yeah. Soul Junk is a Christian band, but it's playing song structures that aren't typical Christian song structures. Which I thought was fantastic that he made a band to do that, because I'm sure there are plenty of cool people who are Christian who have these crazy, weird ideas about music and destroying typical song structures, who would listen to it and think, "I'm not alone. I can still be this way and listen to this

music." And, by doing that, he's opened that up to a whole group of people who would, otherwise, have nothing but Creed to listen to. I have a lot of respect for that. It's a big risk to do that.

**Jason:** I think the real thing is that everyone in the world is different, even if they belong to groups.

**Alex:** A lot of my experience with people who are devout in any kind of religious faith, is that they became that way because they had trouble with their own identity or they had made some poor decisions, and this was an escape from that or a way to rectify those decisions. But it's refreshing to meet and befriend and make music with someone like Glen who is Glen, and then a musician, and then a Christian.

It's Glen first, then the other things that he's involved in. It doesn't really matter what he's involved in, he's going to be the same, unique guy. I have some close relatives who have gone the right-wing, Christian route because they had checkered pasts, and you cannot interact with them without hearing all about it and without them trying to convert you. In this band this never happens. This is never imposed on me or anyone else. And I think that's cool.

**Ely:** I, on the other hand, have been trying to convert them to Judaism. [laughter]

Every time we were on tour, I'd want to go to a kosher Jewish restaurant, and they wouldn't go.

**Paul:** What are your goals, as a band?

**Jason:** My personal goal is to just keep being able to do it. I think if we steer too hard, it does it a disservice.

**Glen:** The only rule is that it can't stagnate. If we went for three or four months and all looked at each other, and we were just doing what we were doing three or four months ago, it would be over. We have to continue to surprise ourselves—the new songs that come in have to make us think, "What? Okay."

**Jason:** We did a song called, "Medicinal Glop" that was an exercise in free improvisation. Glen and I took that twelve minutes of material, hacked it up and edited it, and did some fun dub techniques on it. We take a section and put a bunch of delay, let it spill over and bring it back in. It has this fun second layer of reworking.

**Glen:** That's probably been the greatest development. We go on tour and listen to tons of bizarre stuff. Everybody breaks out their collections. Listening to stuff like This Heat (experimental British rock group from the '70s and '80s), the Rock In Opposition stuff (collection of bands in the late '70s that were united in their opposition to the music industry), Pop Group (a British post-punk band active from 1978-1981). We reverse engineer these tunes that sound like complete chaos and find the logic beneath them, and realize they're even more incredible than we thought before. And we do our own version of that. It informs our own songwriting. Why would you just want to write a song? Our recording process has changed to leave things a lot more open to interpretation. We don't want to just be, "BOOM! Here's all four barrels, now just manage it." We're trying to create this canvas that then we get to throw stuff on.

**Paul:** Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

**Jason:** Now our questions for you! [laughs]

**Alex:** All I want to know is where to get one of those shirts. [Points to Paul's Razorcake T-shirt.]

**Paul:** I don't know if they have any of these left.

**Alex:** That's not the answer I wanted to hear, Paul.

**Ely:** I was waiting for him to say, "Medium or large?"

**Glen:** He's the kind of guy who would give you the shirt off his own back, literally.

# TOP FIVES

## RAZORCAKE



### Andy Garcia

1. Benny And The Roids, Demo CS
2. Rule Of Thirds, Self-titled LP
3. Part 1, *Pictures of Pain* LP
4. Gay Kiss, *Preservation Measures* LP
5. Dead Squad, Demo CS

### Art Ettinger

- Underground Railroad To Candyland, *The People Are Home* LP
- Louder, Self-titled 7"
- Brass Tacks / Virgin Whores, *Off the Top Rope!* Split 7"
- Bad Cop/Bad Cop, *Not Sorry* LP
- Screeching Weasel, *Baby Fat Act 1 2 x LP*

### Bill Pinkel

- Tenement, *Predatory Headlights*
- The Replacements live at the Palladium
- Sidekicks, *Runners in the Nerved World*
- Hex Dispensers, *III*
- Hillary Chillton, Turkish Techno, French Exit at VLHS. French Exit actually did the opposite of what their name implies and played an awesome final show. What a bummer!

### Billy Kostka

- Mystic Inane, *Ode to Joy* EP
- Coneheads, *L.P.1* LP
- Black Time, *Aerial Gobs of Love* LP
- Black Time, *Walkman Abortions* CS
- The Achtungs, *Full of Hate 7"*

### Cahnie Galletta

*Top 5 Reasons It Sucks to Be a Girl in the Scene*

1. Nobody ever believes I am really into the scene.
2. Rad band T-shirts come in rad guy sizes
3. If I am at a show everyone thinks I am with my boyfriend
4. I always stand out, even if I don't want to
5. My boobs are targets for elbows, hands, and beer

### Camille Reynolds

- Top 5s on My Mind*
- Feminism
  - Equal pay
  - Sex education and access to affordable birth control/healthcare
  - Abortion rights
  - And last but not least: *smashing the patriarchy*

### Chad Williams

1. Culture Abuse, *Spray Paint the Dog 7"*
2. No Problem, *Kid Killer 7"*
3. Terrible Feelings, *Tremors* LP
4. Darius Koski, *Sisu* LP
5. High On Fire, *Luminiferous* LP

### Chris Mason

1. Sonny Vincent And Rocket From The Crypt, *Vintage Piss*
2. Hop Along, *Painted Shut* +live
3. California X, *Nights in the Dark*
4. The Replacements live
5. Ex-Cult, Private Room, and Dark/Light, live

### Chris Terry

- Nudity, *Astronomicon* LP
- Jamie XX, *In Colour* LP
- Refused, White Lung at The Roxy
- Anything by Digital Underground
- This fall, my short story "At Home with Rapper's Delight" will be anthologized by Queensferry Press in *The Best Small Fictions 2015*

### Craven Rock

1. Tie: Paddle In Seattle, kayaks fighting Shell's oil rigs, and resistance to killer cops and white supremacy in Olympia
2. *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, by Doris Lessing
3. The Mountain Goats at Headliner's
4. Sharkpact, *Run* LP
5. Tie: RVIVR, Poor Form, Seaside Tryst at Narwhal, and Listen Lady, Spokenest, Slow Code, Mommy Long Legs at Victory Lounge

### Daryl Gussin

- Mikal Cronin, *MCHH* LP
- Sheer Mag, "Fan the Flames"
- Listen Lady, Self-titled 7" + live
- Detached Objects 12"
- Pinned In Place unreleased LP

### Designated Dale

1. The Replacements at the Hollywood Palladium.
2. Joan Jett & The Blackhearts getting a spot in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.
3. Motörhead officially turning forty as a band this past June.
4. The Sonics, *This Is the Sonics* LP.
5. *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*.

### Dylan Davis

- Top 5 Dives in Greater Los Angeles*
- Harold's, San Pedro
  - The Desert Room, Gardena
  - The Vee Room, Long Beach

- The Branch Office, Torrance
- The Schooner, Manhattan Beach, though now deceased

### Eric Baskauskas

- *Hardcore: Gimme Some More 7"*
- Retox, *Beneath California*
- Watching The Brokedowns play a big outdoor street fest in Chicago
- Red Death, *Permanent Exile*
- The cover of this issue

### Garrett Barnwell

1. Success, *Radio Recovery* CD
2. Death By Armborst, *Salome* CD
3. David Torn, *Only Sky* CD
4. Los Crudos, *Doble LP Discografia 2 x LP*
5. The Go-Go's, *Return to the Valley of the Go-Go's* CD

### George Rager

*I Like the Following Bands*

1. Violent Reaction
2. Camera Silens
3. Incredible Kidda Band
4. Eskorbuto
5. Criminal Damage

### Jeff Proctor

*Top 5 Events to Kick Off Summer 2015 in LA*

1. Shannon And The Clams, Saturday June 20 at the Getty Center
2. Screening of *It's Gonna Blow: San Diego Music's Underground 1986-1996*, Friday June 26t at the Downtown Independent
3. Television, Thursday July 2 at the Teragram Ballroom
4. Clorox Girls and People Talk, Thursday July 2 at the Redwood
5. Shellac, Wednesday July 15 at the Regent Theater

### Jennifer Federico

*Top 5 Things that Remind Me of Heiko Schrepel (RIP)*

1. "Victoria" by One Man Army
2. Ping pong
3. "London Calling" by The Clash
4. *Moon* (movie)
5. Persephone's Bees (band)

### Jim Ruland

- Cheap Death, *Angst* CS, especially the track "Brutal Death."
- Hearing Sean Bonney's police protest poem at Power Lunches in London.
- The film *Lucifer Rising* by Kenneth Anger, still weird after all these years.
- *This Must Be the Place*, by Sean H. Doyle.
- Thor Garcia being Thor Garcia.

### Joe Dana

1. Pu\$\$y-Cow 10th Anniversary with French Exit at The Redwood. I never mention my own band in *Razorcake*, but it's been ten years.
2. French Exit's last show ever with Turkish Techno, Hillary Chillton, and Horror Squad at VLHS
3. Not seeing any punk shows or bowling at Punk Rock Bowling
4. Last Bar 107 Razorcake <3s Drinking Beer and Listening to Records with DJ Little D, Juan38, DJ Comic Sams, Jeff Proctor, and myself
5. All the closing parties at Bar 107. Sad to see another downtown dive go.

### John Miskelly

*Five Stand Out Shows of 2015 So Far*

- Andrew Jackson Jihad, Full Moon Club, Cardiff, UK, 06/08/2015 (thanks for the interview Sean!)
- Hutch And Kathy, Mississippi Studios, Portland, US, 05/23/2015 (Best Green Day cover ever!)
- Martha, Roll For The Soul Bike Café, Bristol, UK, 02/15/2015 (Afternoon matinee hang times with my mate Duncan!)
- Hutch, The Exchange, Bristol, 09/05/2015 (New jams sounding fucking mint!)
- That first band Jennifer Federico and I saw at The Stork Club, Oakland, 05/22/2015 (Great Californian hang times with Razorcake friends and affiliates!)

### John Mule

1. Bernie Sanders
2. No Problem, *Kid Killer*
3. G.L.O.S.S, Demo
4. Murder Mystery Party, *What's the Deal with the Devil?*
5. Moon Bandits, *Property Damage: A Love Story*

### Juan Espinosa

- The Simpletones, *California* LP
- Flesh World, *The Wild Animals in My Life* LP
- Despise You, *All Your Majestic Bullshit 7"*
- Rixe, *Coups et Blessures 7"*
- DJing for the final Razorcake <3s Drinking Beer and Listening to Records event at Bar 107. Never forget!

### Kayla Greet

1. Jesus and Mary Chain, *Psychocandy* 30th anniversary tour
2. Spokenest, Listen Lady, Mommy Long Legs, Slow Code at Victory Lounge
3. RVIVR, Sashay, Poor Form, Seaside Tryst at The Narwhal
4. Success!, *Radio Recovery*
5. Starting my first podcast: *Skill Shot* Podcast

# What a bummer!

**Kevin Dunn**

1. Dott / Night School, Split 12"
2. Der Faden, *Best Guess* b/w *Filaments 7"*
3. Apocalypse Meow / Todd Congelliere, Split 7"
4. The Tombstones, *Twang From the Grave, V. 2* EP
5. *Still Bill* (documentary)

**Kiyoshi Nakazawa**

- Top 5 Pinball Games*
1. Lord of the Rings
  2. Terminator 2
  3. The Twilight Zone
  4. Pirates of the Caribbean
  5. The Adams Family

**Kurt Morris**

1. The Dillinger Escape Plan, *Miss Machine*
2. Guided By Voices, *Bee Thousand*
3. Sharon Van Etten, *Are We There*
4. Tool, *Aenima*
5. Coliseum, *Anxiety's Kiss*

**Louis Jacinto**

- Top 5 First Wave Punks Who Never Stopped Kicking Ass!*
1. Randy Stodola from The Alleycats
  2. Alice Bag from The Bags
  3. Edward Stapleton from Nervous Gender
  4. Willie Herron III from Los Illegals
  5. Phranc

**Mark Twistworthy**

- Coneheads, *L.P.I. aka 14 Year Old...* LP
- Unrest, *Imperial f.f.r.r.* LP reissue
- Sweet Baby, *It's a Girl* LP reissue
- Dirty Fences, *Full Tramp* LP
- Metz, *II* LP

**Matt Werts**

- Aweful Kanawful, *Brave As Hits*
- The Temptators, *Welcome Home*
- Various Artists, *East Side Story Vols. 1-12*
- Downies, *Tour Tape*
- João Gilberto, *The Warm World of João Gilberto*

**Meztli Hernandez**

1. KXLU Fest II with The Muffs, Tony Molina, La Sera, Colleen Green, and Habits, April 26, 2015
2. Razorcake <3s Drinking Beer and Listening to Records at Bar 107 before it closed its doors.
3. Thrillhouse Records and 1-2-3-4 Go! Records in San Francisco
4. Rudy's Can't Fail in Oakland, CA
5. Watching tourists get attacked by seagulls (who are obviously super punk) at Fisherman's Wharf in SF.

**Mike Faloon**

1. Andrew Drury, *Content Provider*
2. Craig Ibarra, *A Wailing of a Town: An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More 1977-1985* (book)
3. David Kilgour And The Heavy 8's, *End Times Undone* CD

4. Treasure Fleet, *The Sun Machine* LP (and book and movie and whatever else they cook up!)
5. Josh Wilker, *Benchwärmer* (book)

**Mike Fournier**

- Five Best Readings on May/June Swing State Tour*
1. May 11, Cambridge, MA at State Park with Duane Gorey and Lina B. Tullgren
  2. May 14, Trenton, at Millhill Basement with Joe Evans III and Jeff Schroeck (his debut!)
  3. May 16, Baltimore, at Red Emma's with Eric DeJesus and Colin Seven.
  4. May 24, Nashville, at Dino's with Luke Wiget and Robin Leah Lear.
  5. May 30, Pittsburgh at East End Book Exchange with Jen Bannan, Ben Stein and Ben Gwin.

**Mike Frame**

1. Badfinger, entire catalog
2. Paybacks, "Don't Lay It on Me"
3. John Krautner, *Fun With Gum Vol. 1* CD
4. L7 reunion
5. Replacements, live

**DJ Naked Rob****Radio Valencia 87.9FM | SF**

1. Culture Abuse, *Spray Paint the Dog 7"* (SF sickcore)
2. The Beaumonts, *Get Ready For* CD (Texas country punx)
3. Action Swingers, *Quit While You're Ahead* LP (Garage punk collection)
4. Sonny Vincent and Rocket From The Crypt, *Vintage Piss* LP (rock'n'roll punk)
5. Loud Boyz, *Tough Love, Hard Feelings* (DC hardcore/punk)

**Nighthawk**

- The Mopes, live in Chicago
- Opening a bodega in our house
- The Business, live in Saint Louis
- Winning a metal detector at a silent auction
- Raw Power, live in Saint Louis

**Patrick Houdek**

1. The Brokedowns trying to stretch their usual twenty-two minute set into a fifty-five minute set at Do Division Street Festival.
2. Iron Chic, Spraynard, Canadian Rifle, and Horace Pinker at Fizz
3. Punk Rock Karaoke at Cobra Lounge
4. The Copyrights, Rapids, and Hospital Job at Beat Kitchen
5. Iron Reagan, Angel Du\$t, Noisem, Stone, and The Mons at Reggie's

**Paul Silver**

1. Drive Like Jehu at The Casbah, San Diego. Twice in a week!
2. Der Faden, "Best Guess" b/w "Filament" 7"
3. La Escalera Fest at Til-Two Club, San Diego, with Vena Cava, Bastards Of Young, Breaker Breaker One Niner, Civil War Rust, Black Dots, Western Settings, Gentlemen Prefer Blood, DFMK, Caskitt, and Dudes Night

4. French Exit's final show at VLHS, with Turkish Techno, Horror Squad, and Hillary Chillton
5. Vomitface, *Another Bad Year* EP

**Rene Navarro**

1. Black Rainbow at the Wulf Den, tied with the Wulf Den itself. Thanks for the shows!
2. The last summer of Bird Strike.
3. Still living with our friends at the punkest house ever.
4. Having a radio show with my awesome best friend Janeth Galaviz. KCHUNG!
5. Getting silver at Dream BJJ in L.A. then travelling to Vegas for Jiu Jitsu World League the next week only to do super shitty; then get hurt a few weeks later and just fucking hate everything.

**Replay Dave**

- Creepoid, *Cemetery Highrise Slum* LP
- James McMurtry, *Complicated Game* LP
- Dropout Patrol, Self-titled LP
- Basement Benders, Self-titled 7"
- Uncle Tupelo, *No Depression* LP

**Rich Cocksedge**

- Five Great Gigs In Four Weeks*
- Timeshares, *Pure Graft, Divider, Question The Mark* (Cardiff)
  - Crazy Arm, *The Dissociates, Boxkite* (Plymouth)
  - Sweet Empire, *Irish Handcuffs* (Plymouth)
  - Lemuria, *Woahnnows, Personal Best* (Plymouth)
  - Lemuria, *Woahnnows, Personal Best* (Bristol)

**Ryan Nichols**

1. Charles Bukowski, *Love Is a Dog from Hell*
2. Eagulls, Self-titled LP
3. Lower Dens, *Escape from Evil* LP
4. Modelo Especial
5. Summer

**Sal Lucci**

1. Thee Tsunamis, *Saturday Night Sweetheart* LP
2. Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments, *Straight to Video* LP
3. Giorgio Murderer, *Lazer Lord 7"*
4. Gories 7"
5. Sick Thoughts, *Gonna Be Your Dog 7"*

**Sammy thrashLife**

5. Tenement, *Predatory Headlights*
4. *Forced Entry* (movie)
3. Angel Lust's demo (AL=the new Like Bats)
2. Zack Gontard's new home recording (potentially a new Dear Landlord song)
1. Selling a \$3,000 painting to a girl I met on Tinder

**Sean Arenas**

- Upsilon Acrux, *Sun Square Dialect* LP
- Alarms And Controls / Secret Smoker, Split 7"

**Sean Koepenick**

- Most Colorful Wax for Summer 2015 Jams*
1. Hüsker Dü, *Warehouse: Songs & Stories* (yellow / green)
  2. Dag Nasty, *Minority of One* (green)
  3. Gang Green, *Another Wasted Night* (white)
  4. Jerry Nolan & The Profilers, *The Final Recordings* (pink)
  5. The Nerves, *Live at Pirates Cove, Cleveland, Ohio, 5/26/77* (pink)

**Steve Adamyk**

- Top Five Non-Ottawa Bands I'm Excited to See at Ottawa Explosion 2015*
1. Tranzmitors
  2. Sheer Mag
  3. Hysterese
  4. Mick Futures
  5. Underground Railroad To Candyland

**Toby Tober**

- Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed*
1. *Broad City*
  2. *Kung Fury*
  3. *Slow West*
  4. *Garfunkel and Oates*
  5. *Terms and Conditions May Apply*

**Todd Taylor**

- Black Rainbow, *Spokenest at the Wulf Den*
- *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* by Alice Bag (book)
- Pinned In Place *Ghortwritten* By LP
- Worriers, *Caves at VLHS*
- Worriers, *Imaginary Life* LP

**Tommy Vandervort**

1. Pale Angels, *Imaginary People* LP
2. The Brokedowns, *Nervous Passenger, Success, Direct Hit* at Beat Kitchen, Chicago
3. Lysol Gang at Redwood, Los Angeles, tie with The Slow Death and Pale Angels at Fizz, Chicago
4. Smith Street Band, *Throw Me in the River* LP
5. The Razorcake family for helping me celebrate my birthday in LA... again

**Tricia Ramos**

1. Gudetama
2. *Mad Max: Fury Road*
3. Hop Along show at The RickShaw Stop
4. Baus, "Mind Your Biz"
5. Fetty Wap, "Trap Queen"

**Ty Stranglehold**

1. Bad Future, *Golden Age* LP
2. Hex Dispensers, *III* LP
3. The Nervous, *Demo Tape 2015* CS
4. The Hates, *People's Church* CD
5. Drakulas, *OWOWOWOWOWOWOW* EP



## ABIGAILS, THE: *Tundra*: CD

Blind Rorschach Mr. Potato Head testing. Close eyes, press "Play," construct MPH accordingly. At the end of The Abigails' *Tundra*, my bespeckled, mustachioed Potato Head was wearing tight jeans and a fringe jacket, smoking a corncob pipe and tipping his floppy hat like Dylan on the cover of *Nashville Skyline*. Sonically, The Abigails throws Waylon outlaw slides, Dylan shuffle, and Cohen delivery into palatable three-minute joints that would be graciously passed around at early 1970s L.A. country rock parties. Songs about medication and jail wrapped up in packaging reminiscent of Exene's doodles on X's lyric sheets. Slackers and dirt bags take heed, The Abigails has your lazy summer jams covered. —Matt Seward (Burger)

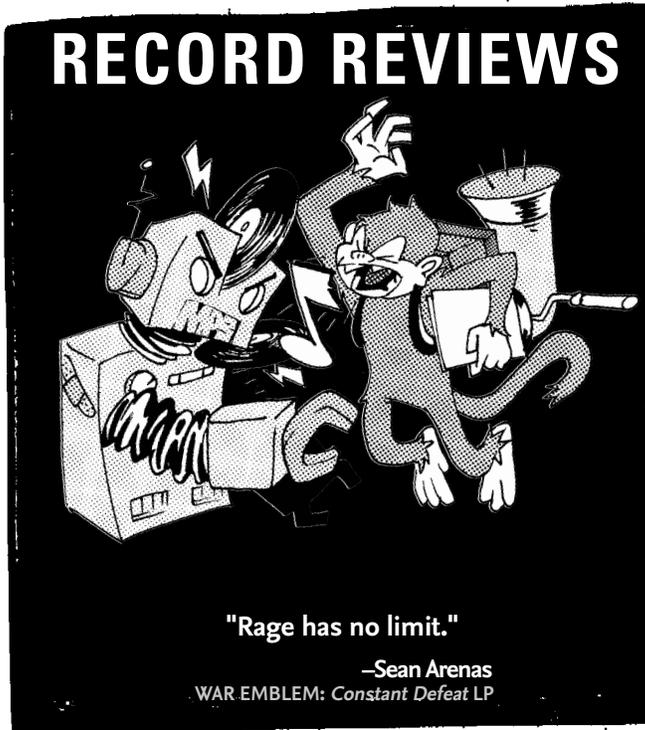
## ADAPTIVE REACTION:

### *Carjack My Heart*: 7"

I had to do it. As soon as I saw this record, I had to do the research to figure out what it was all about. The record itself is beautiful, but mysterious. Pretty, piss-yellow vinyl with nothing more than the band name and song titles on the label. There's no cover, just a generic sleeve with cartoony art of some people dancing around a jukebox. So mysterious. I put the record on and it revealed fast and growling garage punk. Angry, fussed-out shit with the kind of lyrics that rhyme "epitomize" with "alibis." Not your typical no-brain stomp and skronk. This is the kind of stuff that I can get into, so I had to learn more. I had to turn to the internet for help. I usually don't do this before writing my reviews, because I don't want my opinion tainted by what I might find. In this case, I found something very strange. First of all, I discovered that this is part of a cool subscription 7" series released by Jukebox Records. Then I found the Adaptive Reaction Bandcamp page and learned that a super weird transformation has taken place since the release of this record. They must have discovered synthesizers and drum machines, because it has become a gothy, electro band that sounds almost completely different than this record. Still fun, but maybe they could consolidate the two sounds into something that's totally unique to them. —MP Johnson (Jukebox)

## ADOLESCENTS: *La Vendetta... É Un Priatto Che Va Servito Freddo*: LP

Hafta admit it's been a good spell since I last heard something new from the Adolescents (my fault, not theirs), so this is a welcome catch-up visit. As can be expected, Tony's got some things on his mind—pigs running amok, the threat nuclear energy poses to the planet, the peaks and valleys of relationships, and the sorry state of society in the twenty-first century, for starters—and he does so with his usual élan as Steve and the boys lay down the solid sonic terra from which he promulgates. The tunes may occasionally have a bit more "rock" swagger to 'em, but the wicked hooks, dual-octave guitar



noodling, multi-part harmonies and overall feel of the proceedings are unquestionably Adolescents. Seeing as this release marks both the band's thirty-fifth anniversary and its first new full-length on Frontier since their rightfully revered debut "blue" album, it's especially sweet that this is as good as it is—a worthy addition to an already stellar, influential career from a band that remembers that punks should be undaunted by careerism to tackle heady, potentially controversial topics, especially in this era when taking a stand on damned near anything can be twisted into controversy, and back it all up with the kind of tunesmithing that'll burrow into the noggin for decades. A tip of the worn beret is most definitely in order here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Frontier)

## ADULTS: *This Is Our Year*: LP

This LP comes with a bookmark-sized insert that implores listeners to "Get Drunk. Read Books. Go to Sleep." If that were the only formula for making music this fun, this inspired, and this catchy, then every college sophomore would be a fucking punk rock icon somewhere between the likes of Elvis Costello and Laura Jane Grace. Adults hails from New Orleans and this album sounds great. There are portions that sound comforting and familiar, like the gravelly voice and lightning speed, but there are also some surprises like the cleverly arranged guitar riffs and the not-always-so-straightforward beat of the drums. So, to review: Get drunk. Read books. Go to sleep. And, check out Adults. —John Mule (Hurry Up & Wait)

## ALARMS AND CONTROLS / SECRET

### *SMOKER*: Split: 7"

Alarms And Controls released a full-length on Dischord in 2013, and the

sonic tethers to other D.C. luminaries, like Hoover and Circus Lupus, a band which guitarist Chris Hemley cites on his punk resume, are audible in the band's inventiveness. The funky bass groove and tight minimal drumming on "Your Mamma's Sleek Ride" conjure Minutemen. "Flood Plane" features nearly spoken word lyrics, like "Sibilance in the birdless trees / Grey and the black before the freeze." The cryptic words pirouette off the tongue and stumble over the jangly guitar. Both songs are memorable and constantly unraveling without ever being mathy. Secret Smoker's contribution picks up from where they left off on their debut LP *Terminal Architecture*. If you're familiar with the LP then this 7" has few surprises, except that the vocals seem to be mixed inaudibly low this time as opposed to simply sitting in the music. Regardless, both tunes are solid emo punk tinged with post-hardcore that is more conventional than revisionist. —Sean Arenas (Protagonist, protagonistmusic.tumblr.com / Zegema Beach, zegemabeachrecords.com)

## ALBERT DEMUTH: *Self-titled*: LP

Beautifully packaged solo record by Aaron DeMuth of The Libyans and Cottaging. The effected acoustic guitar and vocals will transport you. You're no longer home. You're where Aaron (or Albert?) wants to take you. A journey into the darkness. The guitar reverberates through the air before settling like snow on the streets of a small New England town. The whispered vocals echo off the walls of the narrow alleys. The record dissipates into the night as mysteriously as it arrived. A change of pace for DeMuth, and an enjoyable one at that. —Daryl (Self-released, albertdemuth.bandcamp.com)

## AMOEBAS: *Telephone*: 7"

Gotta love Modern Action. They have their specific sound dialed the fuck in and have this uncanny knack of finding bands that maintain that root sound while poking at its softer corners. Ramones downstroke and Undertones stun-pop mixed here for some prime singalong punk. Ain't breaking new ground here by a long shot but it definitely delivers some tasty tuneage. —Jimmy Alvarado (Modern Action)

## ANCHOR: *Distance & Devotion*: CD/LP

Swedish vegan straightedge hardcore that uses the line, "Like a hammer smashing through my chest." The eleven songs on *Distance & Devotion* sound like something that would've come out on Bridge 9 a few years ago—generic, forgettable, and uninspired. It seemed as though over the entire thirty-four minutes the band was phoning it in: dry vocals, tired riffs, and a sound I've heard way too often over the many years I've listened to and reviewed hardcore music. —Kurt Morris (Gaphals, gaphals.se)

## ASMEREIR:

### *Caravana De Insectos*: 7" EP

Interesting bit of Peruvian hardcore here. At its base you get primal hardcore with shouted vocals, but the first tune is a mid-tempo workout with a guitar lead that recalls Peter & The Test Tube Babies, the middle two tunes alternate between mid-tempo and hyper-thrash, and the closer sounds like the band's decided they wanna go on a hard rock bender. Nice work. —Jimmy Alvarado (Cuaderno Roto, facebook.com/cuadernorotoproducciones)

## BAD DADDIES / HARD LEFT: *Split*: 7"

East Bay's Bad Daddies is fronted by Razorcake contributor Camille Reynolds. Boy oh boy, the pipes on this one! At times melodic and sweet, there are some sharp-ass teeth, too. A fuzzy memory of a raw, bloody, skinned knee and a kiss to make it all better in the '90s. Like Veruca Salt meets The Smears. Really great! Hard Left brings the barroom singalong with "Stay True." Self-proclaimed mod punk, I'm getting solid, classic street punk rock sans the oils with rock'n'roll riffage and gravelly vocals. A well rounded mix! —Jackie Rusted (Emotional Response, emotional-response-recs.bandcamp.com)

## BAD WEED: *Self-titled*: 7" EP

The four tracks here try, with mostly successful results, to meld power pop sensibilities to garage production values. Results are quite catchy without being overly saccharine, delivered with a production that maintains a raw quality without sounding like utter shit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bachelor)

## BARBECUTIES: *Go Down with Style*: CD

Really, really good poppy punk in the vein of *Don't Look Back*-era Queens, when its music became more diverse and a bit more polished in the sense of tight-as-hell with a good, clean mix. These Germans have got it going on; I



O, Pennsylvania

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have a bazillion records that sound like this, but in no way does the Barbecue sound rehashed or derivative. Rather, they've created something that's fresh and vibrant within the glut of pop punk. Really worth my time. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Monster Zero)

**BITCH SCHOOL: *Bite Down on This*: LP**

With an all-female lineup and a cover that harkens back to the graphic opulence of Buy Our Records circa 1986, I have been trying for hours to think of some band other than Girlschool of which this nonessential platter reminds me, and failed miserably. Some of the songs are pretty cool if you stop and listen to them for a while ((which is, duh, what you're supposed to do)), but the whole mess is dragged down by this stiff and prominent one-two-one-two beat that gives everything a sort of amateurish feel that doesn't fit well with the more polished guitar and vocal parts. When the drumming kicks it up a notch to quarter-note cymbal rhythms as in "Sucker For a Pretty Face," the whole thing seems so ready to go off the rails that I half expected Scotty to come bolting up from the engine room, bitching about how the dilithium crystals can't take the strain for much longer. I played this album the first time for makeout music, having no idea what it sounded like. Neither one of us was terribly impressed, but we didn't stop to take the record off, either. **BEST SONG:** "Think about Love" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "I Got Dissed by Dave Mustaine" **FANTASTIC AMAZING**

**TRIVIA FACT:** Albums depicted on the bed on the back cover include Elvis, Dolly Parton, AC/DC, and the Loveseers. —Rev. Nørb (National Dust, nationaldust.bigcartel.com)

**BLACK LANTERN, THE: *We Know the Future*: Cassette**

Style-wise, the Black Lantern sounds like it could easily fit somewhere on a Three One G or GSL sampler. The first few songs have some dance-y punk, neo-wave elements—not unlike the Julie Ruin or maybe even Sweden's The Sounds which—then give way to sudden tempo changes akin to Melt-Banana's frantic unpredictability or the 400 Blows stomping heaviness. Even with all that positive influence, I can't help but feel like I just can't get a firm grasp on what audience The Black Lantern is looking to appeal to. This is being released on Burger Records' "little brother" imprint Wiener Records, which means you can look forward to another few hundred cassettes being released next month. —Juan Espinosa (Wiener, theblacklantern.bandcamp.com)

**BLIND SHAKE, THE: *Fly Right*: CD**

The Blind Shake takes a garage rock base and piles on shit-ton of different ingredients—pick pretty much any tune and you're inevitably gonna hear one or more of the following: punk, surf, psychedelia, space rock, garage stomp, spaghetti western, and a helluva lot of reverb 'n' noise. Their songs are deceptively simple, dense and often have every nook crammed with sound,

no small feat for a three-piece with no bass. The piece de resistance, though, is the closer, "Salt," a catchy little ditty that could easily be a radio standard in some alternate universe where lysergic acid was administered to the population at some key point in the world's evolution. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

**BORN LOOSE: *I Loathe You: 7"***

Hound Gawd! Records are well on their way to becoming the Junk Records of this decade, which is to say that half of what they put out is great and half is so-so. This single by Born Loose is absolutely in the great category—strong songs and the speed don't take away from the rockin' to be had. The band is fronted by Larry from the Candy Snatchers and sounds a whole lot like that band. Honestly, this might be the best stuff I have heard from this guy since the classic first Candy Snatchers' album. Members of other NYC bands such as Snuka and Ghetto Ways appear to be in the lineup as well. This band would have torn down the rafters at the Continental in NYC. They're probably ripping it up in Brooklyn these days. —Mike Frame (Hound Gawd!)

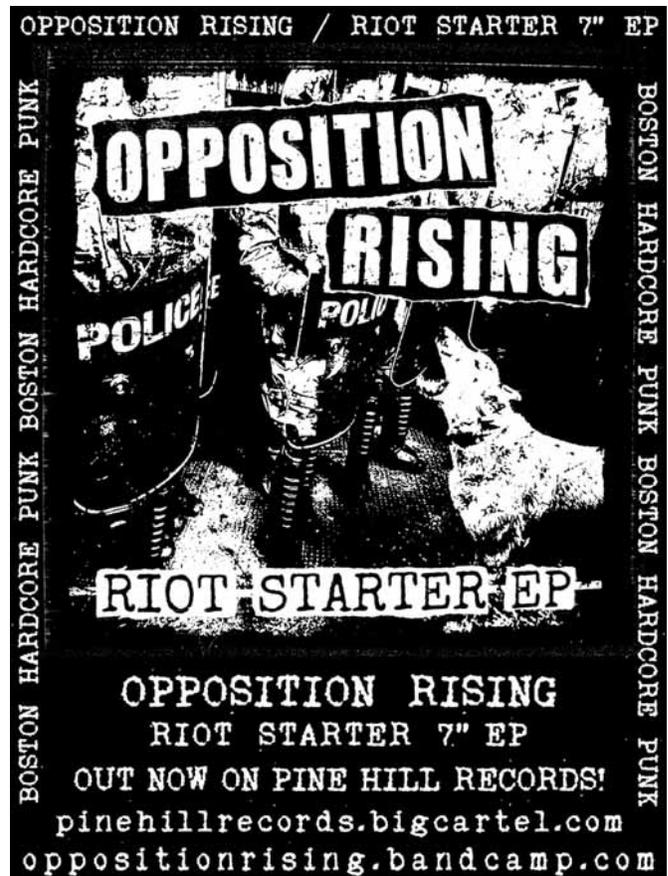
**BRAIN TRAPS: *Self-titled*: LP**

Super scuzz lo-fi goodness out of Cologne, Germany? Sounds more like the musky garage sounds out of S.F. from the likes of Coachwhips and Useless Eaters. I dunno, perhaps Marked Men and the punk-as-shit Buck Biloxi And The Fucks as well.

True greasy surfer garage sludge. It's laden with enough "Whoos" and "All right's" to make even the non-believer believe that shit is indeed going to be all right. No giveaway bin for this LP. This stays in the permanent collection. —Camillye Reynolds (Alien Snatch, aliensnatch.com)

**BRASS TACKS: *Just the Facts 15th Anniversary Edition*: LP**

I lived in Madison, WI from 1998-2001, three of the peak years for the city's oi legends Brass Tacks. Their live shows were incredible, and as much as I loved their full-length CD, I always felt that it was a shame that it wasn't available on vinyl. The band is back together, and to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of *Just the Facts*, Beer City released it for the first time as an LP, as well as rereleased it on CD. Both versions include the full-length, as well as *The Good Life* EP and a song from a classic Helen of Oi! compilation. Conspicuously absent is the hidden cover track that appeared on the initial CD version, but keeping the original collectible isn't a bad thing, especially since this new edition is essential, too. Tragically, the drummer passed away 2011, but the band lives on. Influenced more by hardcore-driven U.S. oi than by classic European oi, Brass Tacks fits on the harder edge of the subgenre. Brass Tacks is lyrically interesting as well, covering standard skin tropes, but with lyrics that are simultaneously humorous and intelligent. Some of the



best times I had in Madison were spent crammed into basements watching Brass Tacks rip through their hits. Finally being able to hear those songs on vinyl is a real treat. *Just the Facts* is a true classic. Hopefully this reissue will help keep the Brass Tacks legend alive. —Art Ettinger (Beer City)

**BREAK ANCHOR: In a Van Down by the River: LP/CD**

I was looking forward to hearing this, purely based on the fact of Jay Navarro—also of Suicide Machines and Hellmouth—being the vocalist. However, apart from at best three tracks, the album failed to ignite any lasting interest from me. Whilst looking up information on the band, it seems that the aim was to create a sound with an East Bay/Lookout! vibe but nothing on the record really brings to mind anything remotely resembling something from that diverse scene. It's not as if the constituent parts of the music are bad—the guitar sounds good throughout, the lyrical content is strong, and I still find Navarro's vocals appealing—but after half a dozen plays, not enough is gelling for me to want to continue with the album. —Rich Cocksedge (Paper + Plastic, customer@paperandplastick.com, paperandplastick.com)

**BRIEFS, THE: Singles Only: 5 x 7"**

If you're a fan of their Boys-meets-Voidoids brand of catchy-yet-quirky punk, but are either a latecomer to the party or were too busy getting high

first go-round, here it is, your one-stop instant Briefs singles-and-ephemera collection: a box set with ten singles-worth of tunes crammed onto five 7-inchers, a six-song demo cassette, a download that includes even more tunes, a promo poster for their *Hit After Hit* debut album, a promo postcard, an exclusive button, and a booklet. As with most Modern Action releases, the pressing is quite limited and different packaging versions existed within said pressing, so you'd best act quick-like if you wanna keep from mortgaging your home for a copy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Modern Action)

**BROKEN PRAYER: Misanthropocentric AKA Droid's Blood: LP**

Was fond of their debut and this just ups the ante. Essentially they're a hardcore act, but they infuse all the thrashing with heavy dollops of buzzing synths and a lot of psychoses, which give the finished product a sweet, unhinged sheen that makes 'em come off just as disturbed as angry. "Bad ass" is the verdict, and it is well earned. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sorry State, sorrystaterecords.com)

**BROTTSVÅG: Ingenting Är Som Det Ska: LP**

Buoyant Swedish stuff that toes the line between punk and power pop. Like the Tranzmitors if it was unafraid to get a little operatic here and there—I mean, this guy *sings*, you know? A moving and fun record, even if I can't read Swedish. —Keith Rosson (Luftslott)

**BUNNYGRUNT; Vol 4: CD**

This is my first time hearing Bunnygrunt and I'm wondering where it's been all my life. I need '90s indie pop, especially the effortless distorted sugar-rush of Bunnygrunt, a band that writes a sweet acoustic song called "Where Eagles Dare Pt 2" and a solid gold hit like "I Quit, Mr. White," that's smart enough to add strings to "Chunt Bump," that chooses covers like Crime Squad's "Young Abe Lincoln" and Warren Zevon's "Carmelita." I want a band that was included on the *Bad Santa* soundtrack, a band that reminds me of staying at my sister's apartment in DC in August of 1995 and raiding her roommate's record collection and finding Tuscaloosa's *The Pink Album* and Sonic Youth's *Experimental Jet Set*, the beginning of a whole other world opening up (underground noise, Teen Beat pop, punk tangents). Rare is the band that can induce a kind of nostalgia without sounding stuck in the past, that can be jokey but also not a joke. Bunnygrunt has been around since 1993 and has a million releases out there and now I can add them to the list of things to obsess over for the summer. —Matt Werts (HHBTM, hhbtm.com)

**CAIRO GANG, THE: Live at Burger Records Vol Three: Cassette**

Drenched in reverb, this lo-fi live trip has the feel of a bleary-eyed morning and a struggle to recall the events of the previous evening. Piecing together glimpses of faces and a scan of the

vessel, searching for new bumps and abrasions in hopes of a clearer picture emerging, but it never does. At times, the feeling is urgent and purposeful, at others uncertain. Regardless, there is sense of optimism here. Not usually one for trippy, jammy outros, but I'm not mad at this. —Jackie Rusted (Burger, burgerrecords.org)

**CANCEROUS GROWTH: Late for the Grave: LP**

This is a reissue of the debut of Boston's often overlooked thrash units. Originally released on the respected Ax/cton Records in 1985, arguably the tail-end of hardcore's first "golden age," it is comprised of fifteen tracks of high-speed thrash. The tunes are short on both frills and time, with the bass high up in the mix to add a bit of wiggly lines amidst the barrage of chords, jackhammer beats, and gruff vocals. Whether or not it is a "classic" is something that'll no doubt be argued back and forth ad nauseum—no surprise there—but it most definitely is a nice example of what was making the rounds back then. On clear gold vinyl, has some nice flyer reproductions on the inner sleeve, and I believe this is a run of one thousand copies for Record Store Day 2015, so start scrambling. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

**CHELSEA: Saturday Night Sunday Morning: CD**

One of the originators of the late '70s punk sound is back with a brand new full length. Catchy choruses, spiky

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guitar riffs, and thunderous drums are the order of the day here. The lyrics still cry out to right the wrongs of human injustice. You'd be surprised how much this still happens around the world every day. It's all here in these grooves; especially in songs like the title track and "We Don't Believe You." Now how about bringing this across the pond for the U.S. punters? It would be fun, I promise! -Sean Koeppenick (4WorldsMedia)

**CHRIS BROKAW:**

**The Periscope Twins: 2 x LP**

First two sides, "The Periscope Kids Are out on the Skids, My Love," is a droning tone that sounds like a sputtering mini bike, with the occasional blasts of cold white noise, twittering screeches, and other disruptions of sonic service. There's something about this that hooks you in for the duration. No idea what it could be, but I enjoy the ride. Whether it's how the drone changes pitch, or sometimes how it just hangs there for a few minutes creating tension as other sounds come in and hover around. The second half of this double set is sonically completely different. Instead of electronically generated drones, this is a series of long multi guitar-only tracks. I'm reminded of later Flying Saucer Attack when I listen to this. The ending to the final piece on here, "Do You Really Want to Know What That Means? Do You Really Want to Know What That Means?" is perfect. It's the kind of music you put on and zone way out to, watching light and

shadows move across your wall. A nice respite at the end of the day, and a good antidote against dumb music. -Matt Average (12XU, 12xu.net)

**CHRIST KILLER: Nailed It!: CD**

One has to save a special spot in their heart for a band like this. In a time when christian zealotry is being stoked to a fever pitch by rich assholes looking to maximize profits by enslaving pretty much anyone that ain't them, it takes a rare breed to step into that fray and lift high a middle finger. This thrash metal unit doles out eight tracks that repeatedly poke at the infamous, now-latent christian fear/prejudice about Jewish deicide as both band name and central conceit. Clearly they're pissing-taking on religion, but I can easily see 'em ending up being prattled on about ad nauseum on those "christian" television programs as some sort of proof of a satanic conspiracy to destroy America's woefully persecuted religious majority, as well as adding fuel to the burning ember that still resides in the deepest recesses of their bigoted, black hearts that the Jesus-killers really do run the world. Fuggin' brilliant, ballsy, and hilarious on many different levels. -Jimmy Alvarado (Cubo De Sangre)

**CHUCKY WAGGS: Low Road Ramble: LP**

This record is a whole lot of banjo pickin', acoustic guitar, and harmonica with the slightly used rough and tumble, honky tonk of Charles Wagner layered over top of it. Chucky Waggs is

accompanied by three other musicians on a handful of tracks on this record, but the rest of it is Wagner displaying a wide berth of musical prowess. It's really a bit too country/bluegrass for me, though Chucky and his Company of Raggs, as he calls them, pull off the sound they're going for. I have to admit that I do enjoy the trumpet on track three, "Sticks and Stones," which was both surprising and well executed. *Low Road Ramble* is a follow-up to the *DIY Company of Raggs* collection of songs. Though I haven't heard anything else from the group, it sounds as if they've struck a cohesive balance between one man band and fill-in musicians, as the album has a mix of both. While the lyrics can be punk-leaning, I'm not sure this is their target audience. Good record for drinking lemonade or whiskey (or both!) on your porch during a hot summer night. -Kayla Greet (Let's Pretend)

**CHUD: Self-titled: 7"**

Four solid blasts of feedback-drenched garage rock (and one weird outro) from Bloomington, recalling New Bomb Turks or a slower Zeke. The lead singer sounds snide and angry, with an underlying sexual and existential frustration. More evidence of this comes out in the lyrics of "Nice Guy" and "Kick Rocks," though, I admit I can make very little out. They bring the rock in a major way; not much else to say. Wait, they're better than the movie they stole their title from. Heresy it may be, yet, I can confidently say that. -Craven Rock (Let's Pretend)

**CITIZEN FISH: Dancing on Spikes: LP**

Back in high school I used to be really, really into ska. I had a boyfriend at the time who hated it (probably still does) because it was "too happy and sounds like circus music." To that I told him legend of bands like the Mephiskapheles, the satanic ska band, and it still wouldn't sway him. For that, I wish I had known about Citizen Fish in my youth. With *Dancing on Spikes*, the band is up to its usual political calling out and taking a stance on issues. Though this record came out originally in 2011, this is the first time this album has been on vinyl. Themes include rejecting religion and 9/11, so it's much heavier than the aforementioned then-boyfriend's version of ska, though I have to say that the song, "Write It All Down" does sort of sound like a circus. My favorite lyrics are the chorus of "My god's bigger than your god's bigger than his god's bigger than mine / Hands together, eyes close / Who do you believe in? Cus I don't." peppered throughout the song "Beyond Belief." Dick and crew always bring through a quality project though, and I'm guessing if you're a fan of Citizen Fish at all then you already have a copy, but this one is on vinyl! -Kayla Greet (PHR)

**COLISEUM: Anxiety's Kiss: CD/LP**

After starting out as a hardcore band whose releases include an album on the metal label Relapse, the past few albums have found the Louisville trio Coliseum rotating between post-punk

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and catchy, driving tunes. Songs like "Drums & Amplifiers" are great punk anthems while the following track, "Dark Light of Seduction," the longest song on the album (clocking in at over six minutes), is a hypnotic number that gives the listener a breather without losing any muscle. The mix of the fast and heavy combined with the Killing Joke-influenced sound is sequenced so well, giving the listener a great emotional ride. J. Robbins produced this latest offering, just as he did with Coliseum's last album, the excellent *Sister Faith*. As per usual with a Robbins-helmed album, it sounds great; clean without losing its edge, and every instrument is represented just right. What makes Coliseum most remarkable is that they really don't give a fuck. They play the music they want—punk or post-punk or whatever you want to call it—and have no interest in creating that perfect single that might get them noticed. And what they do create are catchy, powerful, and emotionally resonating tunes. I only wish more acts could create as well-rounded an album as *Anxiety's Kiss*. —Kurt Morris (Deathwish)

**COOL MUTANTS: Surfin' THC: Cassette**

A solid stack of three-chord songs. There's good distorted bass and the type of occasional guitar solos you don't mind. The guitars get into twangy surf territory occasionally, sort

of Radio Birdman style. "Be Dumb" is very catchy. The pace slows down a bit with "I'm Not Worried." I don't like that, but it's just my taste. When it rocks, it rocks. Good tape. —Billups Allen (Let's Pretend)

**COSMONAUTS: Oh, You Know: Cassette**

Cosmonauts plays moody, bass-driven garage with a '60s Euro-pop aesthetic. Sadly, the songs are overly long, unremarkable, and entirely drained of energy. The languid vibe can easily be mistaken for boredom. Listening to Cosmonauts for an extended period of time results in one drifting off into oblivion and asking life's biggest questions: *Why are we here? What is the point of all of this? Who am I? Why am I still listening to this tape?* —Sean Arenas (Burger, burgerrecords.org)

**CUT 45, THE: Self-titled: 10"**

Punk rock of an Amphetamine Reptile nature, with four-minute-long songs and that sort of tight, heavy, stern guitar churn. Reminds me a bit of Hammerhead, if I remember correctly. Decent if you're into that sort of thing, or miss the early '90s before pop punk and garage came along and ruined the speculative value of your Sub Pop Single of the Month Club investment. **BEST SONG:** "House Flies" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Plague of Information" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Back cover features the Hebrew National Frankfurter Queen of 1952. —Rev. Nørð (Sex Sheet)

**CYANIDE PILLS: Government: 7"**

The title track is a fuggin' sweet bit of rock/punk, a pitch-perfect melding of Heartbreakers swagger and early Cheap Trick chutzpah. The band is just on-point from beginning to end, so much so that you could slip this puppy into your next *Killed By Death* DJ session and none would be the wiser. The flip is a blues-in-A guitar workout that ain't anywhere near as crucial but does what it's supposed to do, namely, get you back to flipping the record over and starting again. —Jimmy Alvarado (Damaged Goods)

**DANNY JAMES ETC.: Pear: CD**

It's difficult to avoid drawing Beatles comparisons when listening to *Pear*. Seriously, this sounds like the goddamn Beatles—it's ridiculous. Danny's got a sugar-sweet voice, but with an Oakland tinge to it, rather than U.K. flare. It's pretty true to a *Rubber Soul* sound, too; tons of piano and hooks galore, not to mention a bit of speed and old-fashioned psych to keep Lee and pals at Burger happy. Hats off to the pear-style sticker on the album cover, as well (not far removed from Mother's Children's "Lemon"). These hippies may have what you're looking for. —Steve Adamyk (Burger, burgerrecords.com)

**DARIUS KOSKI: Sisu: CD**

Alright, this is Darius, mighty stakeholder and humble leader of Swingin' Utters and Filthy Thieving Bastards. Truth be told, this could have been a half-eaten, grilled cheese

sandwich stuffed into a CD case and I still would have given it a chance. Koski's musical abilities have always pushed the boundaries of his bands out of punk's more recognizable formats, but this is a whole other planet of genre exploration and recording. As usual, the songwriting is tops, somehow full of angelic whimsy while remaining grounded like boots on the picket line. I would not call this a "country" album, but Darius explores some of that territory as he has in the past, without lazily sinking into the outplayed, cringe-worthy, all-too-familiar tale of punks gone hotrod rockabilly. Instead, Darius comes off more like some of the outlaw country bad asses who, in my opinion, have always been honorary punks. Names like Steve Earle, Gillian Welch, and Townes Van Zandt come to my mind. Darius does it, thankfully, without donning a brand new cowboy hat on the cover, and while still not giving in to the pressure to make an album that sounds just like anyone's expectations, other than his own. —John Mule (Fat, fatwreckchords.com)

**DAY CREEPER: Central States: LP**

Know fuckall about these cats, but this has all the earmarks of laid-back Middle American punky pop of mid-'80s vintage. Upon closer inspection, however, one finds it was recorded last year. They've got the moves and the sound down pat and they do it well—pick any two songs here, press it on wax and you've got yourself a fine single.

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**DEADNECKS (MT) / TALES FROM GHOST TOWN: I Smoked Meth and All I Got Left Is This Lousy EP: CDEP**

Two bands from Montana come together and lay down their jams on this disc. Tales... is actually a one man band project. It looks like Deadnecks has actually thrown in the towel at the time of this writing. But maybe if you buy a truckload of these CDs, they will reunite. Dare to dream, kids! Deadnecks calls themselves a country punk band. Some of the songs here actually feature some banjo played at breakneck speeds. I'm not hearing too much of the country influence in the lyrics, but the title of the last song is "Whiskey, Loose Women & Gambler." Tales' side starts with "Welcome to Montana" and then there is a live song which is raw but entertaining. The last song is an unlisted medley where the two acts play together. Foot-stompin'. —Sean Koepenick (Sxratx Native, [talesfromghosttown@gmail.com](mailto:talesfromghosttown@gmail.com))

**DEARLY DIVIDED: Self-titled: CD**

This four-piece East Bay punk band apes all their local predecessors along with MXPX and some old Fat Wreck acts. The eleven-song, thirty-three minutes of music on this self-titled album is all too reminiscent of the melodic pop punk the BMX kids were listening to in my high school in the mid-'90s. I thought the vast majority of those bands were boring. I wanted to

listen to punk and hardcore bands from the late 1970s and early '80s—give me something with some aggression and power, or, barring that, something with a little emotion. I still feel that way when I listen to Dearly Divided. —Kurt Morris (Morning Wood)

**DEATH EYES: Self-titled: 12" EP**

This San Diego hardcore supergroup formed following the dissolution of two of San Diego's best, Death Crisis and Rats Eyes, both of whom had fairly storied pedigrees, themselves. Following the breakup of Death Crisis and Gabe Serbian's exit from Rats Eyes, Death Eyes very nicely picks up where the two left off, marrying Death Crisis' former wild-eyed, maniacal front man Alberto Jurado with the remaining members of Rats Eyes. It's a wonderful fit for all parties involved. Death Eyes stretches their musical boundaries just a touch more than Death Crisis did, offering up a complex score of tempo and rhythm changes, slow dirges, and powerful blasts of pummeling hardcore, all of which gives Alberto a platform to show off some vocal and lyrical range. Lyrics alternate seamlessly from English to Spanish, with vocal styles alternating between an insidious, raspy, nearly spoken style, to lupine yelps and howls, to hauntingly curdling screeches and screams. Vinyl plays at 45 RPM and comes on a clear blue slab o'wax. Cover art by Mike Boston Mike depicts a demonic-looking, disemboweled Pope Benedict with upside down crosses pouring out

of his eyes. The whole package, from the tunes to vinyl and the cover, are all put together quite well. This is a really solid debut effort. Looking forward to much more output from these fellas in the future. —Jeff Proctor (Route 44)

**DEATHWISH: Out for Blood: LP**

*Out for Blood* was one of Beer City's many Record Store Day releases in 2015, showcasing a stellar, current Wisconsin outfit in a semi-high profile way. Deathwish is heavily reminiscent of other popular metal-friendly hardcore bands of today, with Midnight being a prime example. The production is tight, the lyrics are fierce, and one of the band members hilariously goes by the name Guinea Pig Champion. It's a taut full-length, clocking in at well under a half-hour, which is the way hardcore full-lengths should be. It's definitely worth seeking out, and Deathwish is sure to make quite a dent in their scene if this great record is any indication of their capabilities. —Art Ettinger (Beer City)

**DECLINE, THE: Radio Revolution: 7"**

The author of the liner notes for this 7" from Long Beach's The Decline praises "how damn refreshing it is to hear a dirty punk rock 45." I get it. We all want to relive the first time we heard Television or saw a picture of Johnny Thunders. Inside, the singer wears a T-shirt made to look like Joe Strummer's now iconic "Brigade Rosse" T-shirt. It's unfair that Joe is dead and Blink-182 continues on, despite one member

surviving a plane crash and another leaving the band. The title track here reminisces about the days of punk past, and claims that a "radio revolution" is coming "cause the troops are comin' home" so "you better cut your hair and your disco flairs." This is where the band loses me. It feels forced, shoved in my face and—sorry to say—I'm full already. As for disco flairs, I've never even seen a pair. —John Mule (Hostage, [hostagerecords.com](http://hostagerecords.com))

**DETACHED OBJECTS: Self-titled: 12" EP**

Six tracks of nervy, anxiety-ridden garage punk. In my opinion, the last Baseball Furies LP is an incredibly well executed and awesome-sounding record. It also feels like a band that is about to break. Detached Objects resurrects that sound. The sound of standing at the very edge, hanging ten above the oblivion. Walking the Tempe streets amongst the heat-stricken, bath salt wingnuts, armed only with your guitar (there're three guitarists in this band, two of them played in bands called Hotdog! and Rumspringer) like a six string samurai. This record is badass. —Daryl (Gilgongo)

**DFMK: TV & Dirty Trash (EP, Demos and Crap 2010-2013): Cassette**

A cassette collection by DFMK from Tijuana, MX compiling its earliest material. These cats have been a Razorcake HQ favorite for a few years now but have recently gained the respect and admiration of like-

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minded punks all over the West Coast, having built quite the reputation with their over-the-top live shows and constant touring. Musically, it's on track with some of the bands who don't fit the typical hardcore mold (think Neighborhood Brats). There aren't any speed limits being broken and the guitar hooks are catchier than most. The vocals are mostly sung as opposed to being shouted, which is certainly not very typical in punk these days but is still as effective. As previously stated, these guys are native to Mexico and thus all the lyrics are in Spanish, but you don't need to understand the words to speak the international language of friendship through DIY punk. Pick this up at one of their shows, and while you're at it, ask them about one of their Don't Fuck My Kids T-shirts which are perfect for Sunday church with the fam. —Juan Espinosa (Get Better, dfmk.bandcamp.com)

**DINGUS: Who Cares?: LP**

This is an LP of pretty slick '90s-influenced pop punk, but also contains gross modern-era twee emo/pop punk leanings that simply just make me cringe. If they could stick to the songs that remind me of NOFX or even the other songs that remind me of later-era Mr. T Experience and leave all of that Warped Tour emo influence behind, then I could probably really get behind this. The musicianship is on point and the aesthetics of the packaging are seriously straight out of the '90s with the silkscreened LP cover, but it's pretty

hard to find the majority of these songs to be, you know, listenable. —Mark Twistworthy (Bloated Cat, bloatedkat.storenvy.com)

**DIRT BOX DISCO: Only in It for the Money: CD**

Okay, first listen I'm hearing some straight-up British street rock with some ripping guitar and some humorous lyrics. Very catchy. The second song on the disc is called "The Art of Conversation" and it is one of the best new songs in weeks. I love it. The rest of the disc is good, but that one song stands waaaaay out from the pack. Now here is where it gets weird. I looked them up online. It seems they are a hilarious performance punk band with each member sporting a costume and a persona. They have a lot of records out so I assume they've been around for a while. In the end it's all pretty entertaining, but that one song is THE BEST! I want more like that. —Ty Stranglehold (STP, stprecords.co.uk)

**DIRTY FENCES: Full Tramp: LP**

Dirty Fences is a New York City-based band taking cues from the '70s part of the Big Apple's dirty rock'n'roll past. There's plenty of Dictators and Ramones influence here without ever sounding anything like either. You can tell that the band decidedly pull the most influence from the "rock" sides of those bands' discographies (as opposed to the "punk" sides), and it really works well for them—the songs sound fresh and exciting without

sounding derivative. Every song has an undeniable hook, often rammed home with the use of a crafty vocal harmony that I'm an absolute sucker for every time. —Mark Twistworthy (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

**DISCARD: Death from Above: 7" EP**

A Czech repress of the 1990 EP from a band featuring members of Mob 47 and Protes Bengt. As the band name implies, Discharge is a heavy influence here, but like its sibling bands—not to mention the bulk of Scandinavian hardcore—that band's heavy shadow is cast more on the verse/chorus formatting than the so-called d-beat, resulting in a sound less aping, more zippy and caustic in delivery, and one of the better releases in the genre. This repress comes in a nice screened cover, to boot. —Jimmy Alvarado (Insane Society, insanesociety.net)

**DIS-TANK: Hardcore D-Beat Bruisers Volume One: 7" EP**

As the band name and title hint, you're getting hardcore with a heavy dollop of Discharge. Songs are short and fast, and they're plenty rabid in their attack, but in the end it all pretty much sounds like tons of other bands and releases doing the same exact thing in exactly the same way. —Jimmy Alvarado (Kibou, kibourecords.bigcartel.com)

**DIS-TANK: Hardcore D-Beat Bruisers Volume One: 7"**

Just once I'd like to put a record by a dis band on the turntable and be surprised.

Shock me with some ultra chill reggae or maybe a bunch of intense violin solos. Then again, it wouldn't be a dis band then, would it? Dis-Tank stay true to their d-beat forefathers while taking the energy level up a notch higher than many of their dis-brethren. The speed of the songs is not a substitute for lack of ideas. Split second guitar solos bristle with electricity. The echo effects on the vocals give an aftershock to the message: Stop pollution. Stop war. Stop hate. Don't stop playing this record. —MP Johnson (Desorden, discosdesorden.bigcartel.com)

**DIVERS: Hello Hello: Cassette**

There are a lot of things people tell you when you move to the Pacific Northwest from down south, mostly having to do with rain and "hipsters." They do not tell you that every single punk you meet from here on out is going to be prostrated at the altar of Portland's Divers. I found out pretty immediately that there was some big deal about them up here but avoided every opportunity to find out what it was. I'm gonna skip the self-flagellation and get to the part that matters: Divers fucking rules, Hello Hello fucking rules. If Gaslight Anthem never really lived up to what you thought "Springsteen punk" had the potential to be—or even if they did, honestly—Divers are the guys you want. But it'd be a mistake to distill Hello Hello down to that most obvious comparison, as soulful and Boss-like as frontman Harrison Rapp's whispery rasp may be. Slow burners like "Listen,

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Teller" and "Last Dance" dig up layers of '80s influence that don't surface nearly as often as Springsteen and Westerberg do in modern punk—I'm hearing strains of U2, Simple Minds, Human League, all these little scraps and strands of nostalgia pieced together in strangely wonderful ways. Of their contemporaries, Restorations is the most comparable, unsurprisingly. But despite the long list of unmistakable influences, this band is anything but derivative. They pull off every angle: pensive, plaintive, anthemic, dreamy... it all just works in this many-layered, unpredictable way. This is a special band. —Indiana Laub (Stay Punk, staypunktapes.blogspot.com)

**DOCTOR AND THE CRIPPENS:**  
**Singles Unreleased Live: CD**

The title pretty much puts a bow on it—a collection of singles, live tracks, and unreleased demo recordings made between 1990-93. Though I was well aware of the name, I'd never actually heard much from these guys back when they were active, so this was a nice introduction. They take a hyper-thrash base and expand into all sorts of wild directions—sludgy Flipper-like dirges, zippy hardcore, Stoogey quasi-psychedelic workouts (compare "Fish" here to the Stooges' "Penetration") over thirty-two tracks. Also included are lyrics, liner notes contextualizing everything, and photos to keep you occupied while the disc spins. —Jimmy Alvarado (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

**DOCTOR BISON: The Bloated Vegas Years: LP/CD**

Yet another quality reissue from Boss Tuneage and one which I am more than familiar with, having owned the original tracks since the mid 1990s—plus I have known half of the band for the best part of thirty years. Born out of the ashes of The Abs and H.D.Q., the criminally underrated Doctor Bison was responsible for some excellent anthemic, melodic punk rock, which, to this day, lifts my soul in ways that most other bands can't compete with. The union of Dickie Hammond's distinctive guitar and Baz Oldfield's vocals has always been a joy to behold. However, the remastered version results in a cleaner and more powerful production, adding new vigor to the songs. I'm still slightly flummoxed how the digital wizardry works, but I don't really care as a great record has been improved and it sounds, for all intents and purposes, like a brand new album from the present day. —Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

**ELEPHANT RIFLE: Ivory: LP**

This record opens up with a dark instrumental piece and goes straight into ripping your face off. To me, Elephant Rifle plays art music—call it punk or whatever-core—it's smart and never boring, like Wire or Devo. "Frank, Black" takes a different direction than some of the other songs. It's a bit quieter with a sort of Black Sabbath style party riff that goes into a spacey solo. "Gold Standard" and

"Dogs, Wolves, Wolverines" are short, no-bullshit, pummeling rippers. There's a new creepier, chaotic version of "Rasputin" on here. You have to see this band live; you have to. The song title award goes to "Bone Voyage." —Ryan Nichols (Humanterrorist, humanterrorist@gmail.com)

**ELMERHASSEL:**  
**Entertainment Value Part 2: CD**

Yet another tremendous U.K. retrospective from Aston at Boss Tuneage, this time heading into more introspective territory. Elmerhassel was one of the U.K. bands that took influence from later DC hardcore bands like Ignition and Embrace and fused it with the almost indie pop of Mega City Four and the Senseless Things. The band went on to influence many U.K. bands like Blocko and K Line with that definitive U.K. pop punk style. As with so much of this stuff, it's all time and place, difficult for me to get a measure of how crucial this is to the casual listener. To me, it's London in the summer working at my first "real" job, all-night raves, E's, and sunny Sundays listening to bands like this. If you fuck with No Idea bands, then this might be up your alley. If you were around in the early- to mid-'90s in the U.K., I'm sure you already have this! Crackin'. —Tim Brooks (Boss Tuneage)

**ELMERHASSEL: Self Analysis: CD**

I have to admit that I missed out on Elmerhassel during its existence in the first half of the 1990s. I was aware of

them but never managed to see or hear the band. However, thanks to a two-part discography I'm now able to easily catch up on a plethora of tunes that I'd love to have seen performed live twenty years ago. This is the second CD, featuring the *John Wark* album and a slew of additional tracks, including some remarkably good demos from the band's earliest days. This is guitar music which intermittently sounds like The Doughboys, Ted Leo, and 3 amongst others—there's a decent cover of "Swann Street" by the latter included here—giving some hints as to where the band's influences were coming from. I just need a time machine now to head back to catch the band live. —Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage)

**ENDLESS COLUMN: Summer: 7"**

Attention Red Dons and Daylight Robbery fans/friends! In case you were unaware, Endless Column features the unique and exquisite vocal and guitar stylings of both David Wolf and Doug Burns. The sound is reminiscent of their other projects, but with a more light-hearted approach. There's some bounce and some straight '60s rock-inspired riffing. It definitely stands on its own. These tracks will have you wishing summer would never end, before it even began. —Daryl (Twin Toe, twintoerecords@gmail.com / Taken By Surprise)

**EXACERBACION: Desastre Humano: 7"**

I was playing this record, thinking about how absolutely guttural it is.

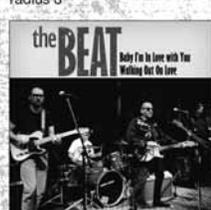
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some pretty wild, instrumental and "free-thinking" music. It's all over the goddamn place. From free jazz to mid-period Bad Brains, The Cows, or Faith No More. Some real nineties shit. Insanely well recorded and performed. Would be a great movie soundtrack. —Steve Adamyk (Double Good, doubleplusgoodrecords.com)

**HELL CITY KINGS: "One Night Stand Ego" b/w "Two Grams All for Me": 7"**

I feel like going the "blank-city-noun" route for a band name is kinda weak, and done to death. That being said, these dudes are from Houston, TX. I've been to Houston. I spent the time it takes to ride the bus all the way across town, sprint to the nearest interstate onramp, and catch a ride the hell outta there. I totally dig cat-fist-fish cover art by Rae Ahn, and time-lapse comic insert by Jason Karns. Super cool stuff. As for the music, think Turbonegro-style, testosterone-driven rock'n'roll, and they do it very well. —Jackie Rusted (Artificial Head, artinstitute.bandcamp.com)

**HUNGRY TIGER: Self-titled: LP**

Hell yeah! This is good. Hungry Tiger is two men and two women who play hard-driving, sharp-as-a-switchblade punk rock out of Portland, Oregon. Their Bandcamp page claims that a "hungry tiger" is one who longs for an obese child to eat, but refuses to eat it based on principle. On a more personal note, doctors have been telling me that I am fifty pounds overweight since

I was a freshman in high school, and this record has certainly consumed me. (Zing!) Seriously though, this shit rocks. Another point scored for the independent Northwest. —John Mule (Sex Sheet, sexsheetrecords.com)

**HYSTERESE: Self-titled: LP**

You could have fooled me if you told me that Germany's Hysterese hailed from either the rust belt or whatever catacombs in Canada the members of Crusades worship Satan in. Amazingly catchy punk with dark undertones and irresistible dude/lady vocals. There's no need for breakneck speed or unnecessary guitar solos when your songwriting is on point, which is what Hysterese has effortlessly accomplished on one hell of a full length. —Juan Espinosa (Dirt Cult)

**IAMDISEASE: Praznina: CD**

SlovenianhardcorebandIAMDISEASE unleashes a blast of noise in the vein of Catharsis or Cobra Noir. My taste in crust doesn't stray far from d-beat, so I can't entirely comment in true form, but it's extremely well played and performed. A few great stoner riffs in the there, as well. If you're a fan of the Converge style of HC, this may well be up your alley. —Steve Adamyk (Moonlee, moonleerecords.com)

**JELLO BIAFRA AND THE NEW ORLEANS RAUNCH AND SOUL ALL-STARS: Walk on Jindal's Splinters: CD**

Biafra and some friends wreck all your favorite Southern-tinged

standards before what sounds like a live audience. Have always been fond of his "jam a finger in some fucker's eye and let the fun begin" style of music-as-performance-art-as-political-action hellraising, but I gotta say, this one ain't really doin' it for me. Sure, he's in fine vocal form and the band serves up the tunes with a nice bayou-punk savor, but when all's said and done, it feels like little more than documentation of a gig that would've been a helluva lot more fun actually being at than listening to later. Still, of you have a hankering to listen to 'em hatchet away at "Land of a Thousand Dances" or Ernie K-Doe's "Mother-In-Law," this'll suit ye swell. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

**JINXES, THE: Mosquitos: 7"**

This violent aural pasting of one of nature's most maligned and misunderstood creatures given here is so beyond reproach, so odious—nay, nefarious!—that one's ears wither at its calls for the listener to join in the hate-fest. To add insult to injury, they've insidiously built this abomination on the two most evil chords in music's history so that every time the record needle winds its way through the "song's" minute-seventeen length, a direct passage is opened to sub-sub-basements of hell that allows for Asmodeus himself to venture forth, charge outrageous sums for lawn piping and Q-Tips on the unwitting listener's Walmart

account, dance the Pookie on the grave of Soupy Sales, slip GMO-laden mushrooms into the sandwiches of every vegan on the planet, and update his Facebook status before again being forced back home. And then there's the matter of the B side, which, frankly, is gonna cost me a truckload of money and years in therapy to recover. There seriously needs to be some sort of amendment to the Constitution that prevents openly malicious releases like these from proliferating through polite society. —Jimmy Alvarado (Manglor)

**KHMER: Nubes Que Anuncian Tormenta: LP**

This is that style of music that I have a hard time explaining because I don't follow too many of these types of bands. I hear metal. Badass Spanish metal sung in Spanish. The vocals are evil and aggressive over relentless, pummeling drums. There's heavy guitar and bass played by guys who have long attention spans and are willing to go further to get more out of a riff. One thing that's really cool is they give you the lyrics in three languages: Spanish, English, and what I'm guessing is Japanese. Great packaging on this record; the cover art is a really dark and abstract landscape and the vinyl is black and brown splatter. Fans of crust, Mexican punk bands, Rudimentary Peni, and Discharge should definitely check this band out. —Ryan Nichols (Halo Of Flies, halooffliesrcds@hotmail.com)

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**KING AUTOMATIC:****Lorraine Exotica: CD**

King Automatic is an ingenious one-man band from France who borrows from tons of musical styles to create catchy, beautiful poppy songs about pertinent topics like Lee Marvin and adopting lap dancers. Kitsch soundtrack-esque packaging can't adequately prepare the listener for the extreme goofiness contained therein. It's all so endearing, though. Lounge, salsa, rockabilly, punk, and many other forms are represented in this outlandish blend. *Lorraine Exotica* is exotic, that's for sure, but it's also captivating. It's not for everyone, but it's an interesting release nonetheless. Supposedly *Lorraine Exotica* is his fourth full-length, so there must already be a fanbase waiting for this ridiculousness to land. —Art Ettinger (Voodoo Rhythm)

**KING LOLLIPOP: Woodland Whoopee Songs of Ol' Callowhee!: LP**

King Lollipop is the one-man band/alter ego of Shannon And The Clams singer and guitarist Cody Blanchard. Cody wrote, sang, played, and recorded all of the songs on this here record. Thirteen tunes of playful irreverence with Cody's signature vocals and intricate guitar work, with stomp box percussion. The songs are nice, but I can't but help compare it to how full and rich I imagine these would sound as proper Shannon And The Clams jams. —Jeff Proctor (1-2-3-4-Go!)

**LADYBANANA:****Wall of Cheese: Cassette**

Crazy, lo-fi, reverb-drenched garage stuff. Swaggering and over in a flash. I feel about stuff like this the way my mom feels about rap: I just can't tell one group from another. It all sounds like a hundred very similar bands all covering the same goddamn song. These French dudes have songs called "Robot Man" and "Shake the Ass." Quite possible there isn't a lady or a banana in the bunch. —Keith Rosson (Frantic City)

**LAME, THE: Shall Enter First: LP**

On *Shall Enter First*, Torino, Italy's The Lame channels the dark and stormy atmosphere of the Lost Sounds' *Memphis Is Dead* album and then brilliantly laces it with the rockabilly swagger of The Cramps. Co-ed vocalists bring to mind the blues-inspired madness of Boss Hog, especially on the song "Down in the Valley." Tim Kerr's always amazing cover art, as well as a beautifully printed dust sleeve, deserve mention and help round out an already enjoyable record. Grazie, The Lame! —Juan Espinosa (Alien Snatch, aliensnatch.com)

**LAST SONS OF KRYPTON:****Teenage Trash: LP**

Last Sons Of Krypton was small town Wisconsin's teenaged version of the infamous garage punkers The Rip Offs—the highly influential, unpretentious, raw, and snotty California punk band that spawned

many imitators. Both bands existed in the early/mid '90s, and both put out one really great record and a handful of other releases. This LP collects songs from splits, their first demo, and a few unreleased tunes, totaling twenty tracks that fans of Supercharger, The Motards, Teengenerate, or the above-mentioned Rip Offs will certainly be really into. Much like most of the '90s garage scene, politically correctness isn't a concern, and the hateful vitriol from that scene and era is very much present within the songs and packaging. This may ruffle some feathers, as it's something that bands could get away with in the '90s without repercussion, but certainly could not do now. —Mark Twistworthy (Certified PR, certifiedprerecords.com)

**LAST THROES, THE: Get Me Wrong: LP**

Punk rock, emphasis on the rock. Something like Hot Snakes or Drive Like Jehu. There's some goddamn power behind these power chords. The hammer slamming down on the cover is a perfect metaphor for the workman quality of the record. The beats are pounding, smashing a framework into shape that propels the sonic qualities throughout the whole disc. It's simple, it's heavy, it's the noise of industry filtered into a punk record. Grade: B+ —Bryan Static (Money Fire)

**LINE TRAPS: Self-titled: LP**

A mixed-gender garage punk band that can cram a dozen or so songs onto a one-sided LP can't help but make me

think of the Okmoniks, but this is much less party-oriented scuzz than that. By about the time "Static Shock" rolled in, I figured out that the no-frills garagey squall evoked the heady taste of Rip Off Records circa the Cryin' Out Louds and Motards 45s, so then I got stoned and listened to it about three times in a row, just to see if I missed anything. Results inconclusive. Short, good songs, firing off one after the other to minimize downtime. That must have been one hell of a Kaizen event! I applaud their ruthless efficiency. BEST SONG: "Static Shock" BEST SONG TITLE: "In Print" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Concludes with an Angry Samoans cover but i'm not saying which song. —Rev. Nørb (Screen Test, linetraps.bandcamp.com)

**LIPPIES, THE: Self-titled: Cassette**

The Lippies formed as a vehicle for front-person Tonia Broucek's previously ukulele-driven, feminist singer-songwriting, and her insane vocal control and witty musings differentiate the capable Michigan four piece's debut EP. Neither the promises of "pop punk," nor the fun, childlike packaging of the cassette prepared me for "Drop Off," an opening track rife with battle-cry vocals, aggressive riffs, and an epic, swelling breakdown. Lyrically, these six songs rest comfortably in riot grrrl territory, but, musically, they feel informed by a broader definition of punk. "302" has all of the cutesy bounce of Tsunami Bomb without going off message, while "Sidewalk Talk" pairs the bass and

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guitar lines of an early Fat Wreck band with lyrics indicting street harassment. The Lippies is bringing some welcome diversity to a reemerging genre. Plus, sandwich connoisseur Brendan Kelly likes them, and he doesn't like anything! —Kelley O'Death (Independent Fries, independentfries.bigcartel.com)

**MAD PARADE: *The Fool: 7"***

Over a career that spans across four decades, these San Gabriel Valley punk stalwarts have stuffed six full-lengths and numerous singles and EPs with consistently tasty tunes that meld the best of early U.K. punk with the melodic sensibilities of the best of early L.A. punk. This single, one of two Mad Parade singles Hostage released this year, adds no shame to their game: two monster tunes rife with the kind of hooks they seem to toss out with an ease that one can't help but envy, served up with that kind of fist-pumping, bounce-off-the-walls abandon that'll get even old fucks like me singing along in wild abandon. A double-hit slab o' gold if ever there was one, and if that ain't enough, they've included a download card that adds a bunch of unreleased, career-spanning demos to sweeten an already generous deal. As with most of Hostage's catalogue, the pressing is muy limited, but best believe the search is well worth the effort. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hostage)

**MARVELOUS MARK: *Bite Me: 7"***

Marvelous Mark is Mark Fosco, most recently involved in Marvelous

Darlings with Fucked Up's Ben Cook. This is fuzz-laden power pop which, on the first two tracks, resembles a languid coming together of Sloan, The Charlatans, and The Stone Roses—an odd combination, I grant you, but a winning one in this instance. The final track, "I'm Freaking Out," steps things up a bit, racing along at a fair clip for its all-too-brief existence and is a great counterpoint to what proceeds it. The single comes and goes like a hit and run, but, in this case, I'm left desperately wanting more. —Rich Cockledge (Drunken Sailor)

**MAU MAUS: *Fear No Evil: LP***

Truth be told, snobby teenaged me never gave these cats a fair shake 'cause (in said teenaged mind) they'd had the temerity to jack their name from one of L.A.'s more infamous bands. As a result, my previous experience with them is limited to an odd thrashy track heard here or there and little else. According to the sparse liner notes on this Czech pressing of their first studio full-length originally released 1985 on Rebellion Records, they decided to mix things up a bit adding slower tempos, poppy elements, and even some odd cover songs (Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and the Ronettes' "Be My Baby" figure here) to their otherwise solid U.K. punk sound. Although I remain decidedly in the L.A. Mau Maus camp, I gotta admit I missed out on these cats the first time 'round. Glad that this has given me the

chance to rectify that previous short-sighted error in judgment. —Jimmy Alvarado (PHR, phr.cz)

**MDC: *Millions of Dead Cops – Millennium Edition: CD***

Seeing as I'm fairly confident in the conceit that this is the linchpin album for this highly influential act—and if a potential listener has any interest in the hardcore punk genre they're already in the process of wearing out their fifth or sixth copy of this—I'll save the fawning and cooing about how fuggin' great it is. Suffice to say it's fast, it's loud, and it's pissed off. What I will fawn and coo over are the extras. In addition to the original full length, Beer City has tacked on the cuts from the *Multi-Death Corporations* EP; the *Millions of Dead Children* EP; the *John Wayne Was A Nazi* single released before the band conceded their original name, Stains, to the East Los Angeles powerhouse that had already been using said moniker; a 1983 live set from CBGB, the two tracks included on the *Rat Music for Rat People Volume 2* compilation; and a gaggle of previously unreleased tracks, including two recorded during the session that resulted in the aforementioned Stains single. If this were 1985, you'd be pretty much caught up to their oeuvre up to that point with one purchase and waiting impatiently to throw your lunch money at the local record shop owner for their *Smoke Signals* LP. You'd probably have to wait a few years before you could play this in 1985, though, 'cause unless you

were rich, CD players weren't quite yet a "thing" then. Thank Mahfū we live in the modern age! —Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

**MELTED: *Ziptripper: Cassette***

Melted hasn't reinvented the wheel, instead it has oiled and inflated the sucker with these six gnarled tunes. This is snot-fueled punk powered by attitude and angst. Although Angelenos have been inundated by this sound lately, Melted attacks like Audacity's *Power Drowning* LP and regurgitate the melodic highlights of FIDLAR and Pangea. The lyrics are equal parts dumb and fatalistic: "I'm a dog and no one wants me / I'm a mess and I can't get clean." I hope Melted never "matures" and it keeps on assaulting my ears with sneering vocals and blown-out guitars. —Sean Arenas (Burger, burgerrecords.org / Lolipop, lolipoprecords.com)

**MODERN ACTION / SWINGIN' UTTERS: *Split: 7"***

Modern Action: This tune leans a bit more towards the Bodies portion of its DNA—a solid bit of driving, pogo-inducing punk that leaves you wishing there were more served up here than one tune. Swingin' Utters: Gotta say, these cats have never really turned my head, but this is a really good tune—straightforward, driving delivery along the lines of their split-mates here, with some weaving guitar leads wielded to good effect. Gotta say, I think this bad boy ends in a draw, which is a win/win for the listener. —Jimmy Alvarado (Modern Action)

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**MOON BANDITS:**

**Property Damage: A Love Story: CD**

A couple years back, I reviewed Moon Bandit's last full-length release, *Action Changes Thinking*, and wrote, "This album is, in the most wonderful way, apocalyptic. The end is here. A new beginning is upon us." *Property Damage: A Love Story* continues that vision only—if this is possible—in a much more poignant, time-sensitive way. Take, for example, the song "Joe." It is easily my favorite track on the record and possibly the most personal to Tommy, banjo player and singer. It tells the story of a young man who starts an ACLU-influenced, students' rights organization on his high school campus and is eventually the victim of physical abuse by the campus police officer. As the song says, the officer loses his job but the speaker's life is ruined by resentment, anger, drugs, and alcohol as a result of the stress of the incident and the court hearings that follow. Tommy and Astrid, the dynamic duo behind Moon Bandits, would be the first to point out that, being white, they do not know the full extent of police oppression in the United States. But, in a year when there seems to be another example of police abuse in the news on a daily basis, songs like "Joe," "It's Gonna Roll," and "We Ain't Lazy" are important and need to be written, sung, screamed, sung along to, and taken into the streets, living rooms, venues, bars, city halls, churches, schools, public spaces, and occupied territories of the world. —John Mule

(Diet Pop, dietpoprecords.limiteddrum.com, Mountains Of Yucca)

**MUMZEES: Heavy Desert: Cassette**

Sometimes I'm just so jaded. Just wasn't expecting to like this tape for whatever cynical reason, but, damn, this put me in such a good mood. First off, it has a bratty Blur sound—yes, I said Blur—with a heavy dose of Coachwhips. Mumzees recorded its thrashy drums and bass just tragically fuzzed out, but this effect works to their advantage. It brings the sweet, melodic surf guitar and spacey, distorted, super bratty Damon Albarn vocals to the forefront, which seems to float on the fluffy fuzz of bass and drums with a dreamlike effect. Fresh take on the tried and true lo-fi garage formula. —Camyllie Reynolds (Broken Hip, themumzees.bandcamp)

**MY FICTIONS: I Want Nothing: 10"**

Emotive hardcore from Massachusetts, with some early-aughts screamo proclivities. —Jeff Proctor (Flannel Gurl)

**NASTY RUMOURS: "Girls in Love" b/w "Barbwire Heart": 7" Single**

Foot-tapping, head-bopping, steady-as-she-goes Swiss power pop punk rock. Think the brighter side of The Wipers. This is good... this is *really* good. A stellar two-song tease. Not much more to say about it; just go get it already! Oh yeah, one more thing to mention—the cover art. The band name is printed on the plastic sleeve. Pretty neat-o. —Jackie Rusted (Wanda)

**NATURE BOYS: "Pissy Wind" b/w "Coast to Coast": 7"**

Aesthetically, these folks might be punk as fuck, but the sound is more a driving rock'n'roll on "Pissy Wind," with echoey production and some surf twang here and there. It's an ode to someone who's full of shit, their mouth just stirring up a pissy wind. "Coast to Coast" is about running around living life, trying to find answers and figure shit out. It's written as if the singer is talking to a friend about "all the time we waste/ all the thrills we chase." A solid couple of rock songs. I'd like to hear a full-length. —Craven Rock (Replay)

**NEEDS: Needs: LP/CD**

These Vancouver punks come across like if Single Mothers veered slightly off its demented rock/hardcore path to include a chunk of angular post-punk in its attack. Needs combines both of these aspects with aplomb, leading to a rage-fuelled explosion with Sean Orr shredding his throat as he demands—and gets—my attention. The one curio on the album comes in the form of "Nag Champion (Smoke Break)", a two minute piece of ambient music with the noise of someone smoking, which provides a brief contrast to the fury before returning to the more prevalent frenzied offerings. —Rich Cocksedge (File Under: Music)

**NO HANDS: "Conquerors" / "Dirty Water": Cassette**

I was really disappointed to be graced by only two songs from

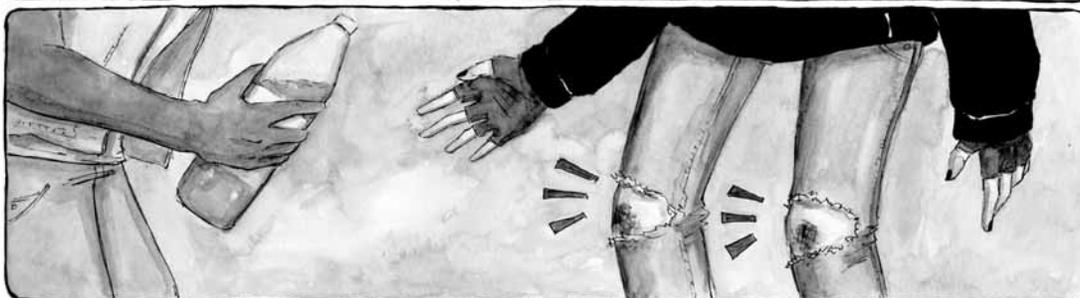
No Hands—they play modern hardcore that leaves me wanting more. "Conquerors" is an up-tempo leg-breaker in the vein of the Bad Vibes, and "Dirty Water" is slower, more sonically chaotic, and more desperate in its affect, kind of like some of Born Against's less immediately accessible songs. This is a solid one-two punch. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Urban Scandal)

**NO OMEGA: Occupants: 12" EP**

For lack of a better term, I would call this millennial-core: the type of hardcore that makes the kids go bananas despite the music itself being relatively non-threatening and watered down with sky high production, triggered drums, and down-tuned octaves galore. Someone book these guys at Chain Reaction, posthaste. The kids with the Xs on their hands are waiting to buy a beanie. —Juan Espinosa (Dog Knights, Protagonist, dogknightsproductions.com)

**NO PARENTS: Self-titled: Cassette**

No Parents plays class-less, slimy garage pop punk in the vein of Cum Stain and Pookie & The Poodlez. With song titles like "I'm a Dildo," "Dick City," and "Piss for Lube," their tongue is planted firmly in cheek—among other places. This is addictive trash, like Del Taco after 1 AM. After multiple listens, I need to sanitize my ears. Recommended for the masochist in you. —Sean Arenas (Burger, burgerrecords.org)



Lauren Monger • terribleterribleterrible.tumblr.com • store.silversprocket.net/clementine

**NO TOMORROW BOYS:  
Who Killed Johnny? 7"**

Another single of rock'n'roll punk from this Portland, OR band featuring Matt Mayhem of Young People With Faces. There is a pretty good Junk Records style tune on the A side. Sounds a bit like the Weaklings or maybe the more amped-up Dragons stuff. B side is a way too fast cover of the Bob Seger classic "Get out of Denver," which shaves all the edges off and rocks less because of it. —Mike Frame (Hound Dawg!)

**NO//SÈ: Lower Berth: LP**

Oakland's No//sè has crafted the most refreshing genre-warping punk LP I've heard in ages. Each song departs from the previous tone and engages a different facet of punk, lighting up synapses in my brain and making me numb with joy. Everything is inspired, curating familiar sounds without repackaging nostalgia. "One Step Behind" opens with a raging Spits-like chant of the song title, then detours into "The Little Things You Love to Hate," which recalls melodic punk like Libyans and No Problem. The haggard vocals are positioned equally alongside the razor sharp guitars, masking—but not burying—the infectious melodies behind a wall of distortion. But surprises abound. "Buried Alive" is pure power pop with enunciated singing and a driving bassline that plunges into "Neglect," one of *Lower Berth's* harshest songs. These tonal shifts demonstrate that listeners don't need to

be repeatedly spoon-fed the same song in new clothing. On "Wiped Out," the chorus repeats "no point / no cure" as a nihilist mantra, followed by "Given Up," a solo song that's less fatalistic and more empowering: "I've given up on your stupid lie... because it's always wrong." No//sè reassures me that the rusty frame of punk and hardcore can be constantly spit-shined and polished into a pedaling beast. Bonus: If you listen to the LP on its Bandcamp, No//sè also shares a tasty, sped-up cover of Tom Waits's "Dirt in the Ground" and a stripped-down version of "Buried Alive." —Sean Arenas (Man In Decline, [manindeclinerecords.com](http://manindeclinerecords.com) / 1859, [1859records.bandcamp.com](http://1859records.bandcamp.com))

**Ouais / SECRET PAPER MOON:**

**Split: Cassette**

On the one side, Ouais has sweet, warm guitars, soft drumming, '90s indie rock feel with moody, and drone vocals that build into a crescendo of shouts. It's a two piece from Pittsburgh whose name means "yeah" in French and is pronounced like "way." I was definitely more interested in the Ouais' side of this split, as Secret Paper Moon's is lead by rather warbled vocal stylings that are often off key, and that is not my jam. The vocals actually make it pretty unlistenable for me, which is unfortunate since the rest of the band has this cool shoegaze-y, indie vibe going on. I'd say that the two tracks from Ouais, versus three from Secret Paper Moon, more than make up for my feelings of the latter. Tapes are a limited

run and spooled on lavender cassettes with a rather brief insert. —Kayla Greet (Dot Dot Dash / Richard Magnelli)

**OUTCASTS, THE:**

**Frustration (The Best of 1977-85): LP**

As the title implies, this is a "best of" collection of tunes from one of Belfast's earliest punk bands. Much of their finest work is here—although it is a bit odd that the track for which the album is named is not here—for the punters to pogo to their hearts' content, including "Justa Nother Teenage Rebel," "Love Is for Sops," "You're a Disease," and so on. Included are extensive liner notes to keep inquisitive bastards like me happy. If you ain't got this shit elsewhere, it's essential listening, natch. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wanda)

**PETER PAN SPEEDROCK:**

**Buckle Up and Shove It: CD**

Zeke without the meth flameout being a constant threat? Motörhead with a bit more AC/DC wiggle in the tail? Yes to both, actually. These Dutch demolitionists deliver over-the-top rock that swaggers, snarls, and howls with the best of 'em across the thirteen scorchers—including covers of the Damned's "New Rose" and Yardbirds' "Heart Full of Soul,"—contained herein. Plop it on, point the speakers outward, and watch it scorch your lawn. —Jimmy Alvarado (Self Destructo)

**PITY: The Struggle II: 7"**

Six songs of frantic garage stuff that leans pretty heavily towards hardcore,

if that makes sense. I'd be surprised if each side makes it to the two-minute mark. Pretty minimal packaging—I'd like to know the lyrics to songs like "How to Be a Better Ally" and "No God Can Judge Me"—but they smoke pretty good. File somewhere between Cut The Shit and Go Sell Drugs, yes? —Keith Rosson (Pity)

**PLATINUM BOYS: Future Hits: LP**

*Future Hits* opens up with a fiery little power pop number about smoking, drinking, cocaine, and cars and trucks. That is essentially the extent of Platinum Boys' subject matter and interests, making for a rather redundant-sounding record. I do detect a Southern-fried influence in the guitar hooks and overall attitude (the words "punk sucks" printed on the album insert) which explains the disconnect I have with the record. I wish I could say that I relate to a rock'n'roll lifestyle of boozin', cruisin', and one night stands, but I have enough problems as it is. The truth is that while this brand of Southern-influenced power pop is lost on me, I do see these guys appealing to the Goner Fest type of crowd of handle bar mustachioed, tattooed, jean vest-wearing anti-punk rockers. —Juan Espinosa (Dusty Medical)

**PLOW UNITED: Self-titled: LP**

This is a loving reissue of Plow United's 1994 debut LP. I can understand why this was a formative record for a lot of people who heard it when it first came out—it's personal, fun, fast as shit, and



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indicative of the great stuff they would go on to do later. That said, I think their best work was years in the future—their most recent full length, *Marching Band*, was phenomenal. This? This is just okay. Quick, endearingly awkward pop punk songs that rely less on melody and more on a stuttering, veering kind of song structuring, frequent blitzkrieg lyrical passages, vocal interplay, and the occasional stroke of musical brilliance. I don't think it's held up amazingly well twenty years later, but it's irrefutably better than the shit I was making in 1994, so there's that. —Keith Rosson (It's Alive)

**PORN STARS OF HORROR, THE: Sex, Drugs, Violence and Sodomy: 7"**

The Porn Stars Of Horror continues to perplex me. I hate them and I love them. Thematically, they have two sides. The side I love is the rad, anthemic songs about horror flicks. On this particular record, they do a super fast jam about the movie *Child's Play*. The combo of throat-ripping female vocals and deeper, more sing-songy dude voice is used to perfect effect. I'm way into this kind of thing. But then there's the thematic side of this band that I hate: the puerile, porn side. I'm not against sex songs, I just require that they either make me laugh or arouse me or outrage me or something, not just make me groan, which is what the song "Touch" did. It's about butt-hole touching. To make matters more complicated, the band also has two sides musically: the straight-up punk rock side and the

acoustic side. I really wish someone would steal their acoustic guitar. —MP Johnson (1332)

**PRETTY FLOWERS, THE: My Alchemist: 7"**

The first seconds of the title track lay it all out there: this is some jangly, post-punky, lighthearted indie rock, the kind of thing you might start calling a summer jam but end up keeping in rotation through the colder, duller seasons. This lands somewhere between Grandaddy and The Thermals, with a little more shimmery guitar. Noah Green's vocals are clear and clean in front of everything. That kind of production doesn't always work, but Green has just the right kind of voice for it, open and earnest and artless. The record concludes with a pleasantly laid-back cover of J Church's "Panama," something you may not have known you wanted but can almost certainly find a place for in your heart. Just three quick songs, but a pretty promising debut. *My Alchemist* does what indie rock should—it's thoughtful, it's punchy, it's poppy, and then it's over. —Indiana Laub (Clear As Mud)

**PROGRAMMERS: Boring: LP**

German garage punk'n'roll that unfortunately lives up to the expectations put forward by the album title as often as it doesn't. At their best (e.g., "I Just Wanna Do It"), they sound more or less like a next-country-over version of the Kids, with slightly more on-the-nose lyrics ("I just wanna

do it with my baby!") Yeah, well, join the club, pal!); other times you wonder if they could pull off more of a 999-sounding thing if they radically upped the production budget. It's decent, but face it: If your album cover is just the word "boring" typed over and over and over again and you're not throwing knockout punches straight out of the gate then you're just looking for trouble. BEST SONG: "Friends in a Box" BEST SONG TITLE: "Alles ist Kaputt" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I was going to count how many times the word "boring" appears on the album cover but then decided that was too stupid, even for me. —Rev. Nørb (Wanda)

**PUP: Self-titled: LP**

PUP brandishes rock-infused punk à la The Bronx and Titus Andronicus. The opener, "Guilt Trip," fooled me into thinking that these Torontonians would be both angular and driving, articulating the frenzied riffs and percussion of At The Drive-In bridged by anthemic Menzingers-ish vocal melodies. Although some songs boast hooks that sink deep, especially "Mabu" and "Dark Days," tunes like "Back Against the Wall (with the stadium-sized "woah oh" chorus) and ballad "Yukon" are sterile. Ultimately, there's too much polish on a record that screams to be raw and exposed. There's a teenager somewhere whose mind will be blown by these ten songs, who will hopefully discover punk outside of the white noise of internet

hype. I'm optimistic like that. —Sean Arenas (Side One Dummy)

**RAPIDS: Traction: 10"**

Rapids descends from some pretty highly esteemed Chicago punk lineage, including Smoking Popes, Colossal, and Tuesday, so it's no wonder that *Traction* hits so many pop punk sweet spots: right between clean-cut and rough-around-the-edges, bouncy and contemplative, straightforward and intricate. I'm a sucker for that second when noodly emo riffing gives way to driving power chords, so I'm clearly part of the target audience here. Take the straight-up punk energy of a band like Dear Landlord, mix in some of the careful introspection of The Jealous Sound or The Weakerthans, and make it Midwestern through and through. This is about what you'd get, and I hope to see more of it. —Indiana Laub (Artistic Integrity, artisticintegrityrecords@gmail.com, artisticintegrityrecords.bandcamp.com)

**RAT HAMMER: Baby Carrots: 7" EP**

Mix of hardcore and catchy, over-the-top punk stuff that is a lot smarter than it lets on through its mix of serious and silly subject matter. They keep things interesting by mixing in chanty choruses, odd time signatures, stop-on-a-dime fireworks, and an overall sense of fun. Betting these cats are a hoot live. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rat Hammer, rathammer.net)

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John Galm - sky of no stars LP

White Pisces - weather LP

The Rentiers - here is a list 12" EP

Literature/Expert Alterations - 7"

Glitter - glittering gold LP

Casual - LP . Crybaby - LP

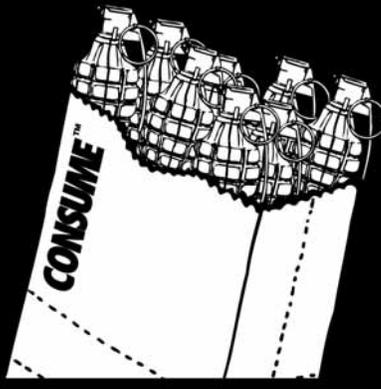
Gunk - gradual shove LP

Colossal Wrecks - waste the moment LP

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**REAL MCKENZIES, THE:**

***Rats in the Burlap*: CD**

Despite having endured for twenty-three years, these Celtic punks still possess more energy and heart than any of the young neds and moshers coming up today. Often lumped in with Irish-identified punks such as The Pogues, Dropkick Murphys, and Flogging Molly, The Real McKenzies are actually Scottish... and Canadian... and I'm sure there are those who possess a sonic palate sensitive enough to discern the difference. To a troglodyte such as myself, it all just sounds like the same boot-stomping, fist-pumping fun. It's hard to deny the folksy bagpiping on "Wha Saw the 42nd" or the emotional resonance of the more straightforward pop punk "Catch Me." The strangely jazzy, lo-fi addition of "Bootsy the Haggis-Eating Cat"—an homage to a real, now dearly departed feline—is an endearing break from the raucous, drunken party that makes up the bulk of the album. Whether you know their every lyric, or are likely to confuse The McKenzies with one of their brethren, prepare to be charmed. Both diehards and dabblers will find something to love about *Rats in the Burlap*. —Kelley O'Death (Fat Wreck Chords)

**RED DEATH: *Permanent Exile*: LP**

This is feverish metallic hardcore that gets me reaching for a bandana and makes me think of bands such as Corrosion Of Conformity and Suicidal Tendencies. *Permanent Exile* is almost all about the guitars and the speed—the

repetitive riffs within the songs are easy to get into whilst the majority of the tracks are played at a breakneck pace. With only a couple of exceptions that is the modus operandi of Red Death, but the saving grace is that it avoids sounding like one long track with enough light and shade distinguishing the songs from each other. I'm not the biggest fan of the crossover genre but I'm enjoying this. —Rich Cocksedge (Grave Mistake)

**RULETA RUSA: *Me Dan Asco*: 7"**

These venerable punk malcontents deliver three more rip-roarin' tracks of angry, anthemic, stompin' punk rock. Taking on topics such as the government's fear-mongering, the media working as a tool to disseminate propaganda, and humanity's persistent attempts to destroy itself and everything on the planet, they back their righteous outrage with the kind of tunes that make you wanna pump that fist and sing along. That these cats aren't a household name yet is a crime; that they've seen fit to kick down with three more scorchers is a gift. —Jimmy Alvarado (Modern Action)

**SARAH BETHE NELSON:**

***Fast-Moving Clouds*: Cassette**

Hmm. Feel pretty out of my depth here, ladies and germs. To this untrained ear, *Fast-Moving Clouds* is very reminiscent of stuff like Mary Lou Lord or the Cowboy Junkies or something; mid-tempo, mostly quiet stuff that toes the line between folk and

rock. It's calm, searching, and more than a little sad. Even when things get revved up a bit (such as the title track with its propulsive percussion and almost '60s-sounding chorus), there's still such a sense of solemnity about it all. Pleasantly surprised that Burger put this out. It resonates strongly, to me, with older 4AD and Matador catalogs. —Keith Rosson (Burger)

**SEAN GOSPEL & THE NIGHT STALKERS: *Good Times with Bad Acid*: Cassette**

It's like they tapped straight into the jugular of Ty Segall and just let all the thrash and scuzz squirt out to the heavy bass thump of his sleazy, soulful heart. With many a tambourine slap, bass drum thump, rolling, wandering melodies, and heavy-graveled, distorted vocals, Sean Gospel stays true to a lo-fi garage sound. Castle Face loyalists take notice. —Camylle Reynolds (Ghoulhouse, ghoulhouserecords.com)

**SHEER MAG: *II*: 7"**

This is music you can get lost in. Blue collar catharsis, like a people's history of raw rock'n'roll filtered down by the punx, for the punx. Next time you come home from work and are too exhausted to even begin to consider how you might spend your precious, supposed "free time," do a quick, ol' internet search and track down the first song on this EP: "Fan the Flames." If you're not feeling it, save it for a later date when things have gotten worse. *And they will*. The day will come; dead on your feet, wrought with worry, desperate

for passion. And then you'll know, you've got to "Fan the Flames." —Daryl (Katorga Works, katorgaworks@gmail.com / Wilsuns, wilsunsrc@gmail.com)

**SHIT HITS THE FAN: *Unstuck in Time*: CDEP**

Four-song record from this gang of rabble rousers from The Netherlands. Strong influence of '90s punk here. Shades of Pennywise and Offspring are definitely sprinkled into the mix. The music is energetic and played well. Only time will tell if these guys will find their own voice with their next offering. —Sean Koepnick (Morning Wood, info@shithitsthefanpunkrock.com)

**SILVER SHADOWS: *Self-titled*: 12" EP**

One side's worth of post-punk, heavy with shoegaze and '90s dream pop influence. "By My Vampire's Side" may actually be one of the finest moments of that increasingly resurgent mix of genres. It's just so goddamned catchy. Somewhat like the distorted text that melts over the front of the jacket, the guitar tone flutters and flanges, never quite disintegrating all the way into pure noise. Somehow it sounds exactly like a heat reflection looks. It's the vocals that really make this—ethereal, almost sweet, but deceptively eerie. If you can imagine the vengeful ghost of The Cranberries, something that might descend on you when you're broken down on the side of a desert highway, you're more than halfway there. —Indiana Laub (Gilgongo)



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**SIVLE SI DOG: *Concussion*: CDEP**

Man, these guys are total dads and totally old. Kidding! I'm a big Kevin Dunn fan and it's good to hear him being an angry misanthrope instead of a responsible man constantly making Geneva, NY a cooler place to live and work. Sivle Si Dog are dirty hardcore rock'n'rollers, like a cross between The Jesus Lizard and something from the Crass universe, and their songs are so filled with understandable hate and misery that I honestly don't care about the technical missteps (slightly weak production, clicking bass tone). This EP is like twelve minutes of "Fuck. This. Shit." I want Sivle to keep making music even when they're total granddads and embarrassingly, horrifically old. —Matt Werts (Girth, girthrecords.com)

**SLUGGA: *Parasite*: 7"**

This would be the best kind of record to get me out of bed in the morning, if it weren't so angry and ugly. Maybe it's more a midday record, hours after you've woken up to your Gorilla Biscuits record and Patti Smith's "High on Rebellion" life brings home the point—it can really suck and you're miserable. Then it's Slugga time for a release of rage and nihilism that's built up. The singer has some of the snidest and most venomous vocals I've heard in a long fucking time. In two quick blasts of energy and ire, Slugga nails hardcore's rawest essence without mimicking old shit. "Parasite" seems to be about bullshit junkie business

and the B-side, "Shaved Heads," gives a boot to skinheads. How fitting. —Craven Rock (Total Punk)

**SOFT MOON, THE: *Deeper*: CD**

Some interesting gains and losses here. On the one hand, the production is markedly clearer—the gray noise, echo loops, and feedback usually pumped in their sound are employed more judiciously, and the vocals are clean enough that actual lyrics are frequently discernible. On the other, there is more employment of trad synthpop sensibilities than may have been in evidence on previous efforts, such as on the song "Wasting." There's no shortage of machine-like repetition and the structural character remains reliant on sheets of sound layered upon a simple foundation, but the beats are downright danceable in places, and sometimes what's coming at you sounds more akin to Depeche Mode—Meets-Nine-Inch-Nails than the Joy Division—Goes-Batshit-For-Industrial of previous efforts. This is not meant as a dismissal, merely to point out main-Moon Luis Vazquez is stretching even further out and exploring other areas while still maintaining a foreboding paranoia, which simultaneously nurtures and infects throughout. All told, the dipping of digits into other puddles works well here, adding even more depth to an already impressive discography. It'll be interesting to see how things develop over the course of future releases. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captured Tracks)

**SOFT SHOULDER: *Fabric*: 7"**

Why are you singing so loud if your vocals are going to be so low in the mix? Why are the drums so fucking loud and clattery? And are they even drums? It kind of sounds like you're banging on some rusty sheet metal you found in the woods. I also don't understand what you're doing with the guitar and bass. Were they covered in mud when you were recording them? I'm having mini syncopated spasms in all of my joints because of your herky jerky madness. Was that what you wanted, Soft Shoulder? —MP Johnson (Gilgongo)

**SPEARS, THE: *Live at the Emerald*: CDEP**

A new record that is hotter than two fried eggs in a skillet! Not sure why that description fits; maybe it is time to chow down. While I'm on my second cup of black coffee, you should roll down your car windows and blast "Nothing's Funny Anymore" at full volume. Like a bastard son of Black Flag and Gang Green, this baby burns each cigarette down to the filter. —Sean Koepenick (Floricare, facebook.com/thespearsrule)

**SPOILERS: *Stay Afloat*: CD**

Since the early 1990s, when bearded Floridians and Californians co-opted the Leatherface sound and based an entire American punk genre on it, I've been waiting for the Brits to re-appropriate something from our shores and turn it around on us.

Twenty-five years later and that time has come. Spoilers join the ranks of Bear Trade (who unsurprisingly make the Spoilers "Thank You" list) and the Murderburgers showing us Yanks how it's done. If you're digging on currents like Success! and Western Settings, but also have a huge affection for pints from the pub, soccer, and Snuff, the six songs on *Stay Afloat* will not be nearly enough. Highly recommended. —Matt Seward (Boss Tuneage)

**STALIN VIDEO: *Animalistik*: LP**

Members of the Gaggers and Now In 3D go full-on garage-wave on this full-length. Both root bands can be heard in the mix, along with echoes of Servotron, Le Shok and a few others that have in the past plied similar wares. Sound is raw, aggressive, primal, and suffused with woozy organ. Purty red-splattered yellow vinyl, to boot. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

**STITCHES: *D-: 7" EP***

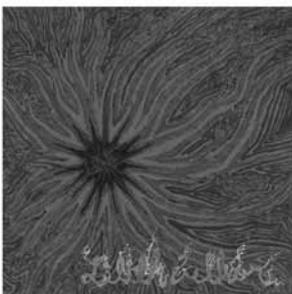
This is apparently the first in a new series of releases Modern Action's planning, "Raw Inadequate Practice Tapes—Only for Fans." According to the liner notes, this was "recorded on Mike's birthday Sept. 8, 1993 at Freeway Entertainment on a shitty ghetto blaster with a T-shirt draped over it to muffle the cymbal ring." That, and the title, pretty much covers what this sounds like. Just shy of three hundred copies pressed. —Jimmy Alvarado (Modern Action)



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**STOVEBOLTS: *Over the Limit*: LP**

Dirty southern punk. Sounds like Zeke but shaved and cleaned up just enough to get inside a normal people's bar. It's released on Blahlh Records, which is pretty much the exact onomatopoeia for my reaction to this record. Grade: C. —Bryan Static (Blahlh, blahlhrecs.com)

**STRAIGHTLINE: *Final Redemption*: CD**

Twelve tracks of German, metal-tinged fastcore, American West Coast style. Think Pennywise with a heshier guitarist (That's not an oxymoron, is it?). Really nothing to either complain or rave about. Well played though, and I am certain they whip up quite a pit when playing live. —Garrett Barnwell (Morning Wood)

**STRUNG OUT:**

***Transmission.Alpha.Delta*: CD**

We've reached a new era in the life of punk music: a band who has reached a career span of twenty years or more isn't necessarily one of the founding (or pioneering) groups from the late seventies or early eighties anymore. This is uncharted territory. Point being, it's difficult to speculate what music will be like in fifty years or so. Will people still look to the Beatles and Led Zeppelin and consider them timeless classics? Or, in the case of punk rock, will kids still be looking back through the Ramones discography, as many of us did so vigorously? Strung Out is most definitely a pioneer—skatepunk wouldn't be the same without them—

but they go along with the rarely mentioned subgenre of just that: skatepunk. Not to be confused with skate "rock," either. Same place (and state) of origin, but for a different world and, more importantly, a different generation of kids. And, one would argue, that it's their mutual relationship with Fat that's kept both the bands and the label alive, due to neither of them ever quitting. They owe that to each other. If either Fat or the core groups (Lagwagon as another example) had called it a day, neither may have carried on. Coincidentally, modern skatepunk turning twenty also marks the anniversary of my life as a punk enthusiast. Strung Out's first album, *Another Day in Paradise*, was one of my earliest favorites. When I first heard *Mad Mad World*, my brain exploded. There literally couldn't have been a better song at that time for me. Then, in came *Suburban Teenage Wasteland Blues*, which didn't leave my walkman for months. You could imagine my excitement when I first heard through the grapevine that they were coming to my town—shitty little Ottawa—playing Spodee Odee's, that summer of '95. Shows of that era taught me that the scene was a safe, fun place. Punk wasn't dangerous anymore. If you fell at an all-ages show, someone was there to pick you up. These gigs were integral to my upbringing. Fast-forward twenty years and times have changed, but not that significantly. Nineties nostalgia is in full swing, but not that it matters; Strung Out has always drawn good

crowds, and from what I gather, it never really fluctuated. Not all bands have been so lucky. I'll be truthful and admit I haven't heard any of the records the band has released in years, at least until *Transmission.Alpha.Delta* landed in my lap. It's great, too—not to mention exactly what'd you expect (and desire) from such a consistent band. It's not impossible for them to still be winning over new fans, either. While the sound's typical, it's still fresh, in the sense that wouldn't be hard for someone who listens to, say, From First To Last or something similar to be into this. But let's back up here and clarify that they don't sound anything alike. At all. That said, the production and overall youthful sound of this new album could win over fans of all walks of life, which is the crux of the issue. With all that in mind, it's still the same Strung Out. There may be a few NWOBHM nods in there than I would have imagined, but the band hasn't been shy about their fondness of metal. Take in all that, and add that Jason Cruz's voice is still as sharp as it ever was—not something a lot of bands/vocalists can say. Tracks like "The Animal and the Machine" are ragers, while "Modern Drugs" could be a borderline ballad/hit. Comforting to know some things... don't always change. —Steve Adamyk (Fat)

**SUCCESS: *Radio Recovery*: CD**

Success has its boat docked in the same pond of pop punk that a lot of other bands do, but somehow

manages to stand out. Is it the bright blue paint on the hull? Is this analogy going nowhere? In some cases, I am reminded of what Less Than Jake might sound like if it dropped the horns and pseudo ska. That's no slight. I've always thought—on the right day—LTJ can dish out a pretty tasty pop punk nugget and this CD has them aplenty. Perhaps I do a disservice by the comparison, though, as these guys are not merely aping a known entity. *Radio Recovery* is filled with a working class lyrical sensibility and genuine emotion that places this album well in front of those of their peers. —Garrett Barnwell (Red Scare, redscare.net)

**SUPERCRUSH:**

***I Don't Wanna Be Sad Anymore*: 7"**

Some fairly catchy, melodic, '90s alternative/nearly power pop from a band from Vancouver, BC with members of hardcore bands. Members come from known HC bands like Go It Alone and Lights Out. The record comes off like a less strong Lemonheads or Teenage Fanclub, but the songs are considerably more sophisticated than most who try this sound these days. This single sounds a whole lot like the slew of singles that came out on labels like Summershine and Bus Stop in the early '90s. I would be inclined to check out a full length by Supercrush, which could be excellent if they fine tune the songwriting just a bit. —Mike Frame (Debt Offensive, debtoffensiverecs.bigcartel.com)

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**SURVIVAL: Shayda: Cassette**

Real heavy metal guitar leads all throughout this record. The first track really threw me and I wasn't sure whether I should take it seriously. After a few listens, "Living with Depression" is just a little off from the tone of the rest of this tape, but still finds a way to mix in. In retrospect, I think that song would be a better fit later on in the album. From the looks of the band's bandcamp page, they have put out a wealth of material and have been in the game a long time. After a few listens, I started to really get into it, though I'm just not a big metal fan in general. If you are though, these guys shred. Check it out. -Kayla Greet (NBRD)

**SWEET COBRA / GET RAD: Split: 7"**

It's easy to forget what a record represents, especially if you listen to a lot of them. There's much more than screams and chords and drumbeats packed into that wax. There's the moment of inspiration in which the song was conceived, along with whatever triumph or turmoil the songwriter might have been going through at the time. There's the hours of practice, building an idea for a song into something that works. There's the friendship. There're the arguments. There's the sweat put into the recording process. There's life itself. It's all there, etched into the grooves. And it will always be there. While both sides of this split are killer, the songs on the Sweet Cobra side of this split are particularly packed with

life, with energy. It's inescapable and it's amazing to listen to. The first two songs were the last conceived by Sweet Cobra's old guitar player, Matthew Arluck. He died before the songs were recorded. But here they are, together with a third track, a raw guitar piece, the last thing he ever recorded. He may be gone, but he left a bit of his life on this record. Here's hoping for many, many spins. -MP Johnson (Hawthorne Street)

**SWORDWIELDER:**

**Grim Visions of Battle: CD**  
Amebix, anyone? These Swedes have knocked off the first couple of Amebix 7"s, even down to the back cover writing. Musically, it's even a tad darker, heading into the first Deviated Instinct album territory. It's a downtuned, crusty mess of cheap homebrew and hashish. I hope to god this lot look like the stinky bag of rags the aforementioned bands did. If stenchcore is in your vocab and/or you have a studded denim vest, you may want to dig in. -Tim Brooks (Cubo De Sangre, cubodesangre.com)

**SYSTEMATIK: Bondage: LP**

Some choice hardcore, courtesy of a band hailing from Bremen, Germany. Tunes have a nice feel of influences—old and new, European and U.S.—not too fast or slow, and they have enough sense to keep it simple while suffusing everything with just the right amount of grandeur. Nice work. -Jimmy Alvarado (Sabotage)

**TENDENCIA: La Trampa: CDEP**

It might be easy to dismiss this as just another metal record, which I almost did on the first listen. But the more I listened, the more this three-songer revealed its charms to me. Tendencia plays metal out of the *Master of Puppets*-era Metallica escuela de metaleros but with growly grindcore vocals. It gets punky at times with some three-chord progressions thrown in with the guitar noodling. Wait, did I hear conga drums? These guys are from Pinar del Rio, Cuba, where the mere act of having long hair or being in a rock band can land you in constant trouble with the law, so they already have my admiration. They add in echoes of traditional Cuban music like guaguanco beats and the chorus of "Hasta Siempre Comandante" (an elegy to Che Guevara). Sometimes it works and sometimes it sounds like being between floors of a house where the rebellious teen is headbanging upstairs and the parents are downstairs listening to the music of their youth. I am looking forward to their next record. -Lisa Weiss (Rigid)

**TENEMENT:**

**Predatory Headlights: 2 x LP**  
Appleton, WI's Tenement unveils at long last (three years without a release) its magnum opus *Predatory Headlights* in the form of a twenty-five song double album. Carefully constructed and sequenced, we are treated to the sounds of a genius band at its pinnacle, utilizing its perfected approach to pop

punk songwriting without a throwaway track to be heard. I'm not a fan of the word "accessible," if only because it's often misused in describing a band when they've attained a certain level of mainstream attention or acceptability. Being mentioned and acknowledged by quasi-mainstream outlets the way Tenement recently has makes me suspect of the intentions of "alternative" music sources. However, *Predatory Headlights* has the sort of instant appeal found only in certain records such as Descendents' *Everything Sucks*: a classic album so masterful that working your way backwards through the band's back catalog only makes you appreciate their prior works all that much more—and believe me when I say that *Napalm Dream* and *The Blind Wink* are masterpieces in their own right. The dream for most bands is to live comfortably from their art but then, sometimes, you have a band like Tenement who also appears to spend their free time super gluing cigarette butts and empty tall boys to their porch. Knowing that about them puts my mind at ease of the thought of them possibly ever betraying any of my expectations, and so I wish continued success for them. -Juan Espinosa (Don Giovanni, dongiovannirecords.com)

**TERROR AMOR: Beibi: Cassette**

AJ Davilla from the much-heralded band Davilla 666 returns here with a new band and a new record on Burger Records. From Puerto Rico, the songs are (still) primarily in Spanish, rocking

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dutifully, and drenched in fuzz, not unlike many other bands on the label. Anyone familiar with Davilla 666 will notice a slightly poppier garage sound, but this isn't such a departure that old fans won't be excited to get their hands on this one. —Mark Twistworthy (Burger, burgerrecords.org)

**THESE CREEPS:**

**Sinning in These Suburbs: CD**

A motley crew of punks from Plymouth (U.K.) have taken their inspiration from a bunch of bands favoring the crack rock steady sound—Choking Victim, Leftover Crack etc.—and have thrown in a hint of Operation Ivy for good measure. Hence, the result is a combination of punk, ska, hardcore, and a smidgeon of reggae all played out with rough and ready quality. The lyrical content addresses many of the negative aspects of the daily grind, yet the music is generally upbeat and catchy, creating a number of earworms that are more than welcome to burrow into my head and pop up at will. —Rich Cocksedge (AWOL, awolrecords.bandcamp.com)

**THEY LIVE: The Satanic Verses: CD**

Gotta admit, between the black-on-black cover lettering, song titles like “Pentagram” and “Prince of Darkness” and an album title like that, I fully expected something a bit sillier than this actually is. What you get is their interpretation of “death punk,” which sounds like it's culled from influences ranging from hardcore to metal to

mid-period DC proto-emo to Samhain-inspired death rock. The songs can get a bit on the long side from time to time, but they do sound like they're striving for their own patch of dirt in a very crowded underground, which is wholly commendable in these days when too many bands are prone to ape instead of draw influence. Not to imply that what's here is shit, but I can easily see them growing from here into serious contenders if they keep pushing at the edges. —Jimmy Alvarado (Drink Blood)

**THOMAS JEFFERSON SLAVE APARTMENTS: Straight to Video: LP**

I've long been curious about this Columbus, Ohio band because of its name, but never bothered to search it out prior to this re-release (mostly due to laziness, and my always forgetting to write out a list of bands/records I want to find.) Apparently, TJSA got mixed up in the early '90s major label indie rock fooferal, releasing their debut (*Bait and Switch*) on an American Records subsidiary. These guys are too good and (probably) too drunk for that clown town. So, how to describe TJSA? The guitars are big and noisy, the vocals are discordant and wobbly (drunk?), but plenty powerful. Songs about fucked up parties we've all been to (“Secret Museum”), culture done wrong (“When the Entertainment Ends”), and something called a “Rump Government” (don't know what that is, other than a fucking catchy song). If someone told me TJSA sounded like it was a Midwestern band, I would

somehow know pretty much what it sounds like. Now that I've listened to more TJSA, I find myself wondering: here's a band that wrote a song called “The Internet Is Bad Pot” back in the late '90s. What would they call the internet now, a K-hole? Or is that reference too '90s? What do I know? I never did Special K. —Sal Lucci (Straight To Video, straighttovideo.org)

**THURNEMAN: De Råknar Vara Dagar + The Early Years: CD**

Describing Thurneman as a “hardcore” band is about as inadequate as calling gumbo a “soup.” All the usual ingredients are there—frenetic beats, flailing chords, angry vocals, and heaps of aggression—and they make it quite clear they can fuck shit up with the best of 'em, but what they do with all the above within the confines of the forty-three ADD-length tracks here (the disc's opus, “U.A.R.,” clocks in at an epic two minutes and thirty seconds) is what gives the meal its savor. Just when you think you've got 'em pegged, the often guitars veer off into single-note, ringing leads, or they start off on an oddly melodic churning and grinding tangent, the bass lines start loping, and you suddenly realize you're in some tastier territory than you'd initially bargained on, something that vacillates between the gritty Midwestern and the melodic wings of the hardcore genre. This does serve as a (more or less) discography for the band, featuring tracks from a full-length, assorted EPs, and some comp tracks, so you get the

one-stop convenience of picking up some great tunes from one of the more interesting hardcore bands that have come along in recent years, and serious value for your buck. Recommended. —Jimmy Alvarado (Gaphals, gaphals.se)

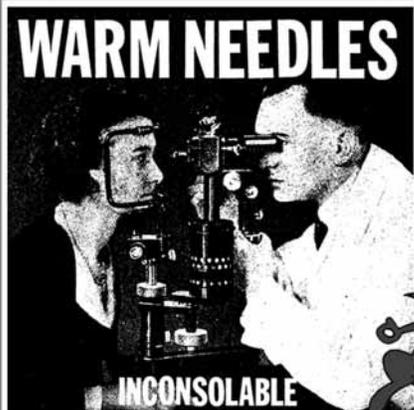
**TIMESHARES: Already Dead: LP/CD**

Timeshares' 2011 debut album *Bearable* is one of my favorite records of the past ten years, resulting in high expectations for this, the follow up. It was pleasing to immediately hear that the key components found on the debut were all still in place with well-structured arrangements being matched by lyrics capable of drawing me in with ease. The songwriting also retained the same sense of no stone being left unturned to ensure tracks contained exactly the right hook, riff, key change, and/or drum fill to make the final result as complete as it could be. The one main difference being that the band has allowed the influences of Lucero and The Replacements into its music, mixing Southern and Midwestern rock in with its more established pop punk style. This change brings in a slightly more mature aspect to the music, and one that I am wholeheartedly down with. *Bearable* is a stone cold classic and early indications are that *Already Dead* is in the same ballpark. —Rich Cocksedge (Side One Dummy)

**Tsunami, Thee: Saturday Night Sweetheart: LP**

Upon seeing the cover of this album—three ladies in leather jackets with

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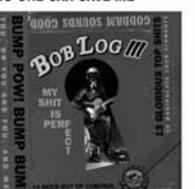
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is frustration" and "Will there not come a day when the pain will dull?" I often wonder if lyricists who navigate such hopeless facets of everyday existence are in fact that crippled by pain and anger. If so, how do they even get out of bed in the morning? Regardless, War Emblem is equally familiar and awe-inspiring and further proof that rage has no limit. —Sean Arenas (Protagonist, protagonistmusic.tumblr.com / Narshardaa, narshardaa.com)

**WESTERN PLAZA: Self-titled: Cassette**  
Fair or not, bands on Burger Records have a specific "sound," and Western Plaza fits in amongst that sound perfectly. Pop/garage tunes, drenched in reverb, with little to absolutely no punk influence is what you get with this release. The songs almost have a Beach Boys type pop sensibility about them. While this Amarillo, TX five piece does what they do admirably, this eight-song cassette ultimately doesn't have enough dirty rock'n'roll bite to it to keep me interested. —Mark Twistworthy (Burger)

**WHITMAN: Restoring Darkness: CD**  
The dark bedroom pop Bob Pollard would produce if he joined Defiance, OH. Cellos, violas, upright bass, piano keys, and splashes of noise behind secrets whispered into the dark of a closet recording booth. Picture Plan-it-X fest afterparty grouped around an Indiana bonfire and all the friends bursting out into song captured on tape. Intimate and potentially

heartbreaking, *Restoring Darkness* is going to mean a lot to someone somewhere. —Matt Seward (Folklate)

**WILDHONEY: Sleep Through It: LP**  
Shoegaze is a slippery slope. The vocals are meant to bleed into the crashing waves of fuzzed-out guitars. The hope is to create a unified melody that is both haunting and texturally rich. However, many bands meander and drift into reverb-saturated noise that leaves you staring at the inside of your eyelids. Wildhoney has swirling guitars and sedated female vocals (read: Lush), but forgoes indulgence in exchange for pithy songwriting. Sadly, there are few pop gems. I was really hoping to fall into this record. I wanted these songs to follow me around, but I only recall "Owe You Nothing" and "Boys from Out of Town" because of their twee pop uptempo. Although Wildhoney have refined the sonic aesthetic of dream pop and shoegaze, they have stumbled into the pitfall of monotony. —Sean Arenas (Deranged)

**WOAHNOS: Understanding and Everything Else: CD**  
British indie pop with enough punch to still call itself punk. Nasally Ted Leo-style vocals with some gang vocal singalongs thrown in for maximum impact. Unrelenting energy and pop hooks to appease the hardcore Jam or Lemuria fan. Press your best Ben Sherman, crank the scooter, and zip on down the Woahnos' show... you'll have quite the time bopping

and sweating and screaming along. Extra points for T-shirts featuring Kurt Vonnegut. —Matt Seward (Big Scary Monsters, bsmrocks.com)

**WOODEN WAVES: Wilder Dreams: LP**  
Playful indie rock with smooth basslines and lyrics of the quirky and slightly psychedelic variety: "I believe, I believe, I believe / You are real and soon they will see / I believe, I believe, I believe." "Ooh"s and "ahh"s and assorted easygoing harmonies in abundance. This sounds more or less like most other playful indie rock bands, but if it's your thing, it's your thing—they keep it sweet and fun, and who can really argue with that? —Indiana Laub (One Percent, onepercentpress.com)

**XAXAXA: Sami mazi i ženi: CD**  
Leatherface doppelgänger from Macedonia. As anyone who reads this zine knows, this is pretty hallowed territory for a band to attempt and XAXAXA succeeds for the most part, though the lyrics (not in English) simply cannot approach those of Frankie Stubbs, in any language. It's a universal axiom, kind of like staring at the sun—you are probably better off not attempting it. —Garrett Barnwell (Moonlee, moonleerecords.com)

**YOUNG ROCHELLES, THE: Know the Code: 7"**  
Syrupy, downright sticky-sweet, and positively neutered is the tone set by the first song, "Stay-at-Home Man."

It's a pipedream about winning the lottery and giving up the rat race to stay home, throw dinner parties, and master the art of decorative paper folding; the gelded tone totally makes sense. Following that is a gruffer ode to some junkie dude; once again the perfect energy for the subject matter. The Young Rochelles rounds out this 7" with "Meltdown," a lovesick, awkward, introverted, and danceable little pop punk gem that brings The Ergs! to mind. Each of these songs is thoughtfully constructed and it really shows. The Young Rochelles is not one to disappoint! —Jackie Rusted (Greenway, greenwayrecords.com, storenvy.com)

**ZOLTARS: Self-titled: LP**  
The Zoltars doesn't have any urgency. It's music for hot Texas summer evenings as the sun sets and the refraction of the heat moves the air about like waves in the ocean. There's a slow, sedated quality that would make or break this music for whomever attempts to enjoy it. Sonically, think early 1960s garage rock and early psych with pop melodies. The record almost sounds like a Nuggets disc with the diversity of song flows. It's a good record, not quite my speed, but a good record nonetheless. The Zoltars knows very clearly who it's trying to be and it shows. Grade: B. —Bryan Static (Happenin, happeninrecords.com)

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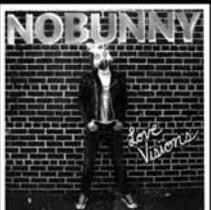
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“Oral Roberts,  
a man whose  
name I never  
thought I’d see  
in a poem.”

—Kurt Morris  
CABILDO QUARTERLY #7

**ANIMAL KINGDOM #2**, \$12, 8" x 7", 88 pgs.

Esoteric prose and unique comic strips. Some of these comics are unlike anything I've ever seen. There are obviously pieces that are better than others, but the selection and presentation of this zine is top notch. I couldn't pinpoint what the exact philosophy behind the selection process is, but whatever they're doing to get into the printed form is quite clearly working. Grade: A. —Bryan Static (animalkingdompublishing.wordpress.com)

**ASSWIPE #6**, \$2, 5½" x 8", copied, 40 pgs.

*Asswipe* is an ongoing zine from Oakland local, Vanessa X. In this issue, Vanessa reviews *SCAM* magazine and shows us a few ways to scam and get free stuff her own way. There are tips on stealing from the grocery store, where to get free toilet paper, free clothes, and free rides around town. Also included are record reviews, an Oakland scene report, reviews of local libraries, and short stories about getting into Black Flag, a twerking woman in a theater, tour diaries, and lyrics to the author's band, Pink Pile. As an Oakland resident, I thoroughly enjoyed it and can't wait to read the next issue (which I hear is out now)! —Tricia (Asswipe, asswipemagazine.blogspot.com)

**BACON IN THE BEANS #4**, \$3 U.S., \$6 Int'l, 5½" x 8½", copied, 60 pgs.

I'm enjoying this weird zine because of its diversity of subject matter. One essay about a Killed by Death band entitled, "Unnatural Axe" shines light on a band that I've never heard of—a raw, Stooges-style punk rock band that I then checked out on Youtube. There are so many cool bands like this that I have yet to discover. Another feature is "Crap Jobs," which is about a horrible farm job that a lot of us Midwestern punk rockers had to do. I don't miss cleaning out shitty horse stalls. Lastly, there is a touching article about a couple of friends and their exploits together. I swear, there must have been a guy like this in every scene—someone who leads the pack, disappears, shows up later all messed up, and then is lost forever. *Bacon in the Beans* is one of those cool zines that has a lot to offer and one that gets better with each issue. —Steve Hart (PO Box 4912, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359)

**CABILDO QUARTERLY #7**, \$1, 11" x 17", copied, 2 pgs.

Oh, *Cabildo Quarterly*. I want to love you wholeheartedly, but there's always one or two things in each issue that rub me the wrong way. However, positives here include poems by Sara Emily Kuntz, whose work about a mom fighting suicidal thoughts was heart-breaking, and Angele Ellis, who mentioned televangelist Oral Roberts, a man whose name I never thought I'd see in a poem. Constance Renfrow's short story "Manager's Door" was taut with tension and action; I'd love to read a novel with those characters. The big negative with this issue was Joe Mayers' story "From the Snapshot of the Global Marathon Man," which I didn't understand whatsoever and made me feel as though my ability to comprehend literature had perhaps deteriorated to the point of losing my mind. To paraphrase Lisa Simpson: I know those words, but that story makes no sense. In spite of that, this is still one of the better issues, and for a buck you can't beat the return on investment. —Kurt Morris (CQHQ, PO Box 784, Belchertown, MA 01007, cabildoquarterly.tumblr.com)

**CATCHER'S HAND: PARLOR CITY YEARS #2**, 5½" x 8½", 14 pgs.

A punk writes about his younger days in the Bingham, New York scene from 1998 to 2006. As dull as that might sound, Tom's a good writer. He keeps it simple and short. He has pieces on a few bands that were super important to him: The Macaulay Culprits and I Farm. He also talks about how sexist his scene was, realizing in hindsight that women were marginalized and objectified. When

a longtime female figure in the scene was sexually assaulted, she called out her attacker, a male member of the scene. She was laughed at and called crazy instead of getting support. Rather than pass the buck or chalk it up to the folly of youth, he attempts to analyze what laid the ground for this kind of rape culture in the scene he grew up in and loved. —Craven Rock (Tom, 205 Garden Ln. 2W, Vestal, NY 13850)

**EARTH FIRST! The Journal of Ecological Resistance Fall 2014**,

\$6.50, printed, 8½" x 11", 48 pgs.

I'll be the first to admit that I agree with much of Earth First's ideas. I'm one hundred percent behind resisting ecological destruction and look forward to reading *Earth First* whenever it is sent to me. One interesting article is about genetically engineered trees created companies like Monsanto and DuPont. This article serves more of a warning on what *could* happen. The article itself doesn't refute GMO-science; instead, it relies upon an emotional argument and an anti-corporate message. There is one poignant section about the use of eucalyptus trees for pulp and I highly recommend reading this article just for the points made regarding eucalyptus trees. For instance, they state that the planting of GE (genetically engineered trees) only increases the efficiency and economic return of production, which does nothing to ensure conservation. "Managed plantations" have actually increased the rate of conversion of native forests and grasslands to industrial tree factories. In Hawaii, where I live, eucalyptus trees are an invasive species and are crowding out native trees. An especially well-written book review of Stephanie McMillan's *Capitalism Must Die*, makes many well-reasoned arguments about the problems of communism, which, apparently, is the crux of McMillan's book. I share similar concerns, especially with communism's focus on the group rather than the individual. If you're interested in reading about ecological resistance, *Earth First* magazine is a great place to begin. —Steve Hart (PO Box 964, Lake Worth, FL 33460)

**FEMINISM MEANS EQUALITY**, \$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 16 pgs.

I love submission zines by and for women and this one is especially badass! An excellent compilation of essays, rad art, *good* poetry, a movie guide, and some choice reading suggestions. Awesome information, writing, and layout. This is an on-going extension of Adrian Chi's comic/zine *Bite the Cactus* focusing on gender equality, politics, and feminism. The last page is an open call for submissions so grab a copy of *F.M.E.* and "get the rage out!" —Robin Effup (Adrian Chi, Bitethecactus@gmail.com)

**FRANKIE COMICS #3**, \$3, 5" x 8", copied, 26 pgs.

This zine immediately grabbed my attention. Bound with a hot pink cover, a cartoon cat stretches out her leg for a lick while diamonds lay at its paws. *Frankie Comics #3* is a cute slice-of-life style comic about a cat named Frankie and her everyday adventures. Cats are ridiculous creatures and I'm a sucker for animals, so this was right up my alley. Written by Rachel Dukes, the comics inside are similar to gag strips featuring her adorable cat. After several shorts, the end of the zine features fan art from eight different artists. This comic is a surefire hit for cat lovers. Dukes has a prolific online presence, with the inside back cover of the zine featuring links to merchandise for *Frankie Comics*, and online shops where you can purchase this and previous issues. —Tricia (Frankie Comics, Mixtapecomics.com)

**GOOFBOOK #7**, \$2 or trade, 4" x 5½", copied, 22 pgs.

Super *goofy* comics from Gonk Publishing out of Chico, CA. A cutesy rectangular bear-like creature delivers one nerdy punch line after another. Kind

of reminded me of a more innocent Ren and Stimpy. Send one Forever stamp to the address below for a list of all *Goofbooks* and comics available! —Robin Effup (RL Wallace at Gonk Publishing, 2700 White Ave #3, Chico, CA 95973)

**GRAVITY POWERED POCKETS**, \$6 ppd, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", printed, 36 pgs. It's rare to pick up a random zine and feel an instant connection with the author, but Robert Earl Sutter III made me feel right at home with his awesome new zine. First off, when flipped open I saw that the card stock cover had been printed on the back of a café menu. Ahh, a fellow scrounge! *Gravity Powered Pockets* is "short writings about wild childhood adventures, real wisdom from elders, funny family stories, science articles, and contemplations on music and morality." I particularly enjoyed the beautiful story about one of his moms being the only transgendered person to have ever escaped Alcatraz. A lot of great information on climate change and what we can do to help, as well as some humorous ways to free yourself from wage slavery. Not only do I want to read more of Rob's zines, I want to hang out with this guy! —Robin Effup (Robert Earl Sutter III, 628 North 10<sup>th</sup> Ave E., Duluth, MN 55805)

**HOLY AUTOMATIC, THE**, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 44 pgs. This is an assemblage of poetry supposedly inspired by the bible. The person who edited this describes it as "a compilation of cutups, redacted poetry, and automatic writing all culled from the bible." Much of it appears legitimately sincere and reminiscent of the psalms. It's well-written and at times beautiful, but there is a part of me that wonders how this all came together and if it is entirely serious. There is an infomercial for *The Holy Automatic* I found on YouTube and it is cheesy, as though they are poking fun at the bible and christianity. I can't decide if it is really

provoking narrative and interesting characters. *Masculinities* features a series of interviews from members in the DIY community who were asked how masculinity was perceived and presented in their journey growing up, and how it has effected them in hindsight. The discussion gravitates towards how and why it is important to redefine traditional expectations and learn that masculinity is a characteristic that shouldn't belong or be assigned to any one gender.—Simon Sotelo (Doris Press, PO Box 29, Athens, OH 45701)

**MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #383**, \$4.99, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 128 pgs. Here's something different from Old Faithful. Well, the regular columns, reviews, and smudgy record label ads are still here, but the interviews have been replaced in this issue with comics and illustrations by an impressive range of international artists. This zine prides itself on being diverse to a fault, and the art issue is no different. Collage, scratchy line drawings, intricately beautiful portraits, absolute smut—there's something for everyone. Content ranges from snarky punk commentary to surreal symbology to horrifying sci-fi. This is sure to be a hit for anyone who ever trawls those comic anthologies for new artists, even those who haven't kept up with this newsprint pillar of DIY culture. Honestly, this is worth seeking out for Jeff Mahannah's fucking hilarious strip alone. Also comes with a fold-out poster of an illustration that quite accurately captures the feeling of a certain kind of house show every band has played at one point or another: "Should we play another song?" "Does it even matter?" Spot on. I kind of appreciate this issue more than I thought I ever would appreciate a new *MRR* issue again. No offense to my punk-as-fuck, Borders-shoplifting former self, circa ninth grade.—Indiana Laub (Maximum Rock'n'roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146-0760)

**"I particularly enjoyed the beautiful story about one of his moms being the only transgendered person to have ever escaped Alcatraz."**

—Robin Effup | *GRAVITY POWERED POCKETS*

"holy" or not. But just to be on the safe side, to counteract any religious sincerity, I'm listening to Slayer as I write this review. —Kurt Morris (luka-fisher.com)

**INHUMAN CONDITION**, \$2, 6 1/2" x 10 1/4", 24 pgs. A post-apocalyptic sci-fi meditation of loss and paranoia. The story is the descendant of Lynch and Kafka. Though a main plot exists, the real meat of the story is the one or two page vignettes told as the nameless main character trudges through the radioactive wastelands on a job, delivering a package to a faraway location. The problems of this future closely reflect the present: racism, religious extremism, the divide in power between the rich and the poor. The art is in a minimalist but imaginative style. Few backgrounds are greatly detailed, but the world feels as fleshed-out as a twenty-four page comic story could do. Recommended if you can find a copy, hopefully as you sit in some punk bar, waiting for the next band to start playing. Grade: B+. —Bryan Static (andrew-scully.com)

**KEEP TRACK OF THE TIME 2014 Collection**, \$2, copied, 46 pgs. *Keep Track of the Time 2014 Collection* is exactly as the title says. A forty-six page zine compiled of record reviews, interviews, and an all-around best-of collection of the author's blog of the same name. Interviews and reviews stay on the theme of punk rock and punk culture. A first-ever annual zine collection, the content inside can be found on the author's Wordpress or Facebook. —Tricia (Keep Track of the Time, selenographie.com)

**LINDBLOM BROS. COMIX**, \$2, 5 1/2" x 4 3/4", 84 pgs. I would debate whether you would actually call the contents of this zine "comics." Is it illustrated? Absolutely, but one panel a page, one illustration per "thought." There aren't speech bubbles in most of the strips. It feels more like you're reading a series of short stories with the occasional art break every page or so. Sorry guys, but I can't give this a pass just because it features a mini-documentary comic on the Rhythm Chicken. (Also, fact checking note: they refer to Rhythm Chicken having an "oversized bunny mask" when it's clearly a chicken head.) Grade: C-. —Bryan Static (lindolmbros.com)

**MASCULINITIES**, \$4, 8 1/2" x 7", copied, 28 pgs. When I opened my review packet, I immediately got excited when I got something from the likes of Cindy Crabb. I knew that I was in for a thought-

**NOT MY SMALL DIARY #18**, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 152 pgs. This issue's theme: Pets. Pieces ranging from lifestyle poetry, to accounts of past family pets, to incidents where animals brought out a conversation that would never happen otherwise. Small, brief flashes of the lives of others. Moments etched into the stones of time for others to connect to and discover. But, honestly, most of the stories are about pet's dying, so prepare to cry. Grade: A. —Bryan Static (mysmallwebpage.com)

**PENIS HIDER**, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 12 pgs. A groundbreaking new zine from Denis Chavez of Magnets and Dads in Brooklyn, NY! What is a *penis hider*, you may ask? *Penis Hider* is a term that was coined by Denis to describe a particular "kind of guy, who comes off as being Mr. Politically Correct, loves Kathleen Hanna and calls himself a feminist. In reality, though, this guy is really a creep trying to make out with you while his girlfriend is in the next room and hides his sleaze beneath a veil of bullshit." Sound familiar? These hilarious and amazingly illustrated comics depict various run-ins Denis has had with Penis Hiders and the like. This is a must-read for anyone who has ever experienced the verbal punishment and time-suck of the detestable, fake-feminist, slime-oozing, mouth-breathing, pimple-squeezing, chunk-spewing, shit-drooling, *PENIS HIDER*. —Robin Effup (author Denis Chavez devouryenz@gmail.com, illustrator Evan Wolff evanthewolff.tumblr.com or evanthewolff@gmail.com)

**PHASES OF THE MOON #5**, \$10, copied, 120 pgs. *Phases of the Moon* is probably one of the most heartbreaking and familiar zines I've come to read this year. This particular issue is a recount of the true story of author Stacey-Marie's five-year-long abusive relationship to an alcoholic. From her writing, you can tell that this woman is incredibly articulate and smart; self-aware of the fact that she is in a relationship with an alcoholic, but unable to see a way out of it. Her partner manipulates, lies, and threatens her to keep her in the relationship—tactics that any person who has experienced, or knows someone who has experienced abuse, will be familiar with. At times it was hard to read, being familiar with alcoholics and abusers. I just wanted to save her and get her out of it. Smart writing, 120 pages of truth and struggle; this is an issue for anyone who feels trapped in an abusive relationship, or if you want to read how this strong author eventually got out. —Tricia (Phases of the Moon, selenographie.com)

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**PORTLAND UNDERGROUND PUNK ART ZINE #1,**

\$0, 18" x 11", newsprint, 16 pgs.

This is an awesome *free* new paper featuring non-music related art from the DIY Portland punk scene. "P.U. aims to rep those that make flyers, shirts, patches, adornments, tattoos, record covers, comics, calendars, protest posters, and take the pictures, book the shows, build the spaces, heal the ailments, and print it all." Hell yeah, get it Portland! —Robin Effup (portlandundergroundpaz@gmail.com)

**RUM LAD #7, \$2, 4" x 5 3/4", 18 pgs.**

Cute, charming diary comics from Steven of the band Moloch. Now, I'm not familiar with his band, but the comic is whimsical and doesn't try too hard at detail while still finding a specific style to dole out its brand of lighthearted autobiographical tales. Grade: B+. —Bryan Static (Steve Larder, 13 Percival Rd, Sherwood, Notts, NG5 2FA, UK)

**SENTINEL, THE #3, \$1 or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 18 pgs.**

*The Sentinel* is a zine focusing on Seattle's metal scene. It's totally interview-based. In its third issue, it could really use some development in that area. Bands are asked questions about their band names and how they got together or questions that lead into long-in-the-tooth rambling about their sound and how they make it. Sure, getting all techy is a big part of metal culture, so maybe it would interest a metalhead reader, but I slipped into autopilot reading mode. Each band was also asked about their feelings on the Seattle Pacific Northwest metal scene. This got a little repetitive. I see missed opportunities, for instance, asking *why* Odin Thompson of Moribund Records is well-versed in white supremacy, might-is-right Ragnar Redbeard or perhaps taking an interest in why he has a problem living in a "red-ass communist state/city who deems McDonald's employees worth a minimum wage of \$15/hr. + benefits." I'd like to know why he thinks

dollar bills inserted sporadically throughout these pieces. Reminds me a bit of painter Heidi Elise Wirz's stuff. This guy can draw. Metal bands should hit this guy up for sure, he'd kill. Really nice work. —Keith Rosson (Nick Wortham, 972 Stanford Ave., Oakland, CA 94608)

**THIS IS NOT A CAMERA, \$0.99, 8" x 5", newsprint, 75 pgs.**

Fucking great zine. Brought to you by Razorcake veteran Jim Ruland, he chronicles the ins and outs of what it is like working at an Indian casino for five years. He relates his experience and knowledge to working at Disneyland and how it can destroy or enhance the magic. Answering your burning questions such as: "How much of the experience is authentic?" "How much to the owners care?" "What kind of people are you surrounded by?" But arguably the most important question is "When will jackpots payout?" My favorite part is the deconstruction of the people. Who goes to a casino and why? There are hundreds of thousands of answers to that question but it's fascinating to see so many people attracted to gambling and to witness a mental compulsion in action. —Simon Sotelo (Vermin Enterprises, vermin.bigcartel.com/product/this-is-not-a-camera)

**TOTAL BLAST, \$3, 8 1/2" x 11 1/2", copied, 16 pgs.**

The first published in 1987 these series of comics are revived after being on hiatus for some twenty-five years. I kept my chin up in optimism and every once in a while I needed the reassurance. It's never been my place to comment on someone else's drawings; the quality of a drawing in a zine usually doesn't affect the story or subject. However these comic panels are indeed as crude as the believability of the characters. They reminded me of material I would write about my imaginary friends in the fourth grade. By no means am I saying that this is cringe-worthy; I was smiling through most of it. —Simon Sotelo (Tblastzine@gmail.com)

**"A must-read for anyone who has ever experienced the verbal punishment and time-suck of the detestable, fake-feminist, slime-oozing, mouth-breathing, pimple-squeezing, chunk-spewing, shit-drooling, PENIS HIDER."**

—Robin Effup | *PENIS HIDER*

laborers shouldn't be paid what still isn't a living wage in a city where rent has literally gone up fifty percent in the last year. But the interview just trucks along with the original questions. Maybe it's because some of these are email interviews, but if you're doing a zine on a local scene, there's no reason not to do live interviews. Their feature on One God Or An Other broke the mold a bit, getting into the band's environmentalism and connection to the beauty of the Northwest landscape, their spirituality around it, and how the destruction of the earth influences their sound. As a result of such insight, I downloaded OGOAO's album from Bandcamp. I'm not a big metalhead, but I do live in Seattle, so I hope to see *The Sentinel* around. —Craven Rock (The Sentinel, 3020 27th Ave. W, Seattle, WA 98199, thesentinelseattle@gmail.com)

**SPARE CHANGE #30, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", \$4 ppd., copied, 88 pgs.**

Thirty issues in twenty years is nothing to sneeze at, as they say. This issue compiles selections from every single issue, and what's interesting is that he threw chronology out the window, so you've got material dating back to the nineties butting up against more current stuff. What's also interesting is just how interchangeable it all is—the layout and writing style runs pretty common through the decades. Vignettes about life, family, friendship, drinking, and religion are scattered between poems, drawings, collages and stories by a few other contributors. Cut and paste, typewritten. I think some of the writing left a little to be desired—but again, we're talking about twenty years worth of material here—and in spite of these shortcomings, the author's earnestness is endearing. —Keith Rosson (Spare Change, PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401)

**THIS DARKNESS IS ONLY THE SHADOW OF OUR LIGHT,**

6 3/4" x 8 1/4", \$4.50 ppd., copied, 18 pgs.

Impressive collection of illustrations from a guy named Nick Wortham. Dark, black-heavy, detailed, loaded images with a flair for the what? Occult? Spiritual? Weird? I don't know, but there are lots of runes and mystical-looking shit flying out of various eyes and hands and stuff. There's also an occasional, super-interesting fusion of collaged textures here—I see car fresheners and

**TRUST #170, \$2, 8" x 11 1/2", offset, 68 pgs.**

*Trust* has been around forever, I think second to *Maximum Rockroll* in the field of longevity. I still don't know enough German to read it through, but I do like looking at the clean, minimal layouts, and the incredibly clear and sharp photographs within its pages. Along with the columns, reviews, news, and show dates, there are interviews with Twisted Chords Records, New Direction Festival, Tiger Pussy, Marc Gartner, Wolfen, and the top notch photography I mentioned earlier. —Matt Average (Trust, Postfach 11 07 62, 28087 Bremen, Germany, trust-zine.de)

**WASTED OPPORTUNITIES #9, \$4, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 29 pgs.**

*Wasted Opportunities #9* is a great voyeuristic look into a foreign nation's growing social dysfunctional tendencies. Written by a native Australian, we are given a glimpse into a country that has a natural progression of following in the United States' trail of gloom and doom otherwise referred to as expectationism. That's just a portion of the commentary packed into this modest zine. There is also an impressive selection of record reviews, a great interview with Needles/Pins, and—what I find to be the most interesting—is a critical review of Fest 13. Being a fellow organizer of a large annual DIY fest, hearing about another fest's good/bad qualities is like porn to me. It's not cheap to ship anything from Australia, but this one is worth it. Maybe order in bulk or something. —Simon Sotelo (Justin W.O., GPO Box 2712, Brisbane QLD 4001, Australia)

**YOU ARE DESTINED FOR DARKER THINGS, \$3, 6 1/2" x 8", copied, 20 pgs.**

Entrancingly cryptic and punk as fuck, *You Are Destined for Darker Things* is a reissue of Nick Wortham's hypnotic and severely beautiful pen and ink illustrations. If you like the visuals then I bet you will also dig the dark wave psyche punk sounds of Human Baggage and Healers. I highly recommend checking it out! —Robin Effup (Nickwortham.tumblr.com, Humanbaggage@gmail.com, 972 Stanford Ave., Oakland, CA 94608)



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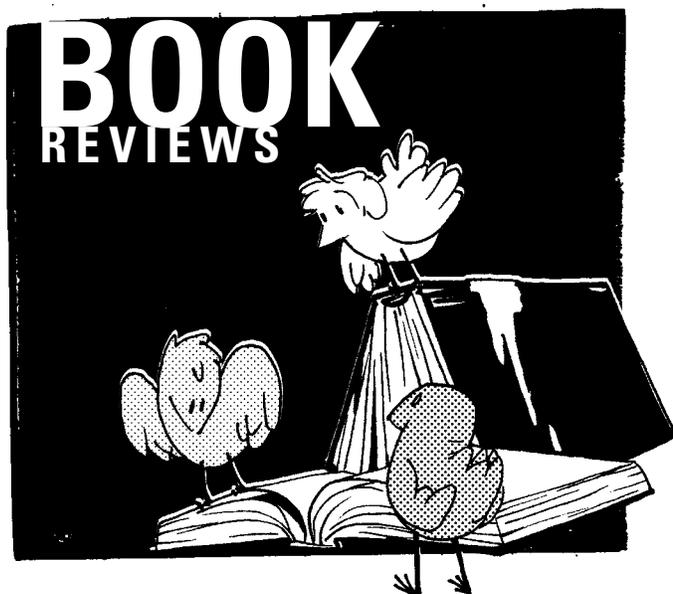
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### Collected Poems & Stories

By Mallory Whitten, 101 pgs.

Mallory Whitten's poems range from vulgar haiku to surreal dream recaps to transcripts of emotional phone calls. They are hyper-confessional, painfully, casually intimate to a degree that may only come this naturally to those generations that grew up—are growing up—with unlimited access to social media. There's an expectation of constant oversharing at the same time as there's this anxiety over constructing and maintaining the ideal internet persona. Just funny enough, just nonchalant enough, self-deprecating but not *too* vulnerable. Whitten's writing feels most likely to

**“Mallory Whitten’s poems range from vulgar haiku to surreal dream recaps to transcripts of emotional phone calls. They are hyper-confessional and painfully, casually intimate.”**

—Indiana Laub, *Collected Poems & Stories*

resonate with the kind of people who have been navigating this balance since maybe middle school—the kind of people who might write multiple drafts of tweets about farting. Ironically, one doesn't get the sense that most of these pieces have been subjected to a particularly fussy editing process (except, I suppose, the actual curated selection of tweets that makes an appearance). I don't mean that as a criticism; Whitten seems to thrive in candid and mundane moments. Stories of anxiety, addiction, retail drudgery, and adolescent misadventure are steeped in her droll, offhand tone. Even the type, sans-serif and lowercase, lends itself to that feeling of reading a 3 AM email from an impulsive friend. But there's genuine thoughtfulness in Whitten's voice. “Why You Shouldn't Be a High School Algebra One Teacher” and “Knife Girl” are two of the collection's more narrative pieces, and probably the strongest. They bring back heartbreaking and startlingly familiar memories of public school, pushed down so far they're like weird dreams you didn't think you could still piece together. Whether you were a kid on the bus decades or months ago, it's hard not to recognize some kind of truth in those stories. —Indiana Laub (Monster House Press, monsterhousepress.com)

### A Fictional Tale of Things

By Gary Llama, 119 pgs.

I've reviewed another book by Gary Llama in a past issue of *Razorcake*. And just like the last book, *An Index of Around Me*, there's a lot of promise here, but it doesn't quite deliver. The story seeks to be one of redemption and focuses on the main character's attempt to find some purpose in spite of a job he hates. He ends up finding it in his wife and daughter, and contrasts this search with tales from his past experiences with depression.

While Llama claims this book is fictional, from what I remember of his past work, I can't help but think much of this is autobiographical. That being the case, why not just make this a memoir? And if it's a memoir, there needs to be a lot of expansion. There are so many teases in *A Fictional Tale of Things* that Llama never fully explores: suicide, gender identity, and his wife's bi-polar disorder, for example. These subjects are thrown out to the reader for a few pages here or there and then never addressed as themes throughout the narrative. Even if this truly is fictional, there should be more character development in regard to these issues. Otherwise they should be dropped entirely.

One subject Llama does cover in *A Fictional Tale of Things* is the issue of depression. I understand what depression is like and respect that this is coming from a place of personal experience for the author, but I couldn't agree with some of his views on the issue. One point in particular really struck me: “. . .the one thing us with ‘mental illness’ have in common is that we've all been to psychologists, while those deemed as sane, have not.” Not all people with mental illness have been to psychologists and some people deemed as sane (by whom?) have been to psychologists. If the author is going to make claims about depression, it's important to be able to back them up with either fact or experience.

As is often the case with self-published material, there is a lot of copyediting work that needs to be performed. There is poor grammar and a fair amount of misspellings. There are incomplete sentences and the general flow of the narrative is often jerky and abrupt. This can work in some cases (see Michael Fournier's *Swing State*), but with *A Fictional Tale of Things* it is distracting and doesn't help to create a voice for the character. As I've stated in other book reviews, I can't emphasize enough the importance of having someone with writing experience review a manuscript. To not do so is unfair; not only to the reader but to the material in which the author has invested so much time.

Regardless of whether this is fiction or memoir, what Llama needs to be asking himself is: Why is he writing this? There are so many fascinating aspects to his character's story and I wanted to know more. But the lack of editing and a well-thought out narrative really killed this for me. —Kurt Morris (Gary Llama, PO Box 7019, Richmond, VA 23221)

### Forty Watt Flowers, The

By C.M. Subasic, 244 pgs.

Putting together a band is difficult. There are the awkward first rehearsals, the fights about what direction the band should take, and what kind of music they should play. Starting a band is unnerving and frustrating. *The Forty Watt Flowers* is a novel that documents the beginning of an “all-girl” band in Athens, Georgia in the early '90s.

A budding bass player named Trisha is one of the main characters in the novel. She is frustrated with her bandmates, who either expect her to match their musical prowess, or are shy and unsure of their musical abilities. Trisha is somewhere in the middle with her talents, but is determined to become a better musician and keep the band together and functional. The band starts out slowly in rehearsals but gathers steam and generates a rapid crowd. The author tracks the success of the band by using receipts of money earned and keeping track of how many people attended each show.

Bands and songs are name checked throughout the book; references to The Cramps, Iggy Pop, and Hole are sprinkled all over the novel to provide an idea what the fledging band sounds like. Like the big whale in *Moby Dick*, the leviathan of R.E.M. swims elusively in Athens, and a few members eventually make an appearance.

The characters in *The Forty Watt Flowers* are described from an omniscient perspective and with passion. It seems like we could know each one of them, or someone like them, fairly well. The novel is clearly written and captures the gestation period of a band, with the long talks about music and each other, the factions within the band, and the truncated practices where everyone storms off. This is an enjoyable book, especially for those

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who are thinking of starting a band. —Steve Hart (Winking Owl Publications, 1209 Queen St. East, Suite 41, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4M3H4)

### Snakepit Gets Old

By Ben Snakepit, 285 pgs.

It probably shows my age, but one of my favorite web sites is Apartmenttherapy.com. Within, the curious can find tips about how to combine ridiculously overpriced furniture with ironic thrift store finds. I find myself hating the happy couples and their pugs but wanting to move into their exquisitely curated “small spaces.” You know, the ones where lights are made out of cheese graters and there’s no TV but there is a vintage movie projector. The Macbook is hidden but the manual typewriter is in plain sight. However, there is one facet of domesticity that is overlooked amongst all these hints for the happy household: bathroom reading. Sure, a few back issues of *MaximumRocknRoll* or that other newspaperly zine will show your guests how cool you are, but let’s face it: reading those articles takes a bit of time and newsprint is yucky if it gets too close to the shower. And not everybody is fascinated by a Kosovo scene report.

*Sunshine Crust* succeeds most in the big picture, showing mid-’90s New York as it begins to gentrify. The city is a major character, and the reader can feel the cold through broken windows and see golden sunsets from local basketball courts. Plus, it’s fun to consider the changes that the squatters are unwittingly setting in motion. In 2015, how much would it cost to rent a luxury apartment in Sid’s old squat? Does the drug front bodega on Lorimer St. sell craft beer now?

While *Sunshine Crust* soundly evokes a city and a scene, it isn’t as strong on a character level, and it can be hard to discern between the minor players. This may serve the novel’s point. As squatmate and romantic interest Mitch points out, “They’re not squatters, they’re scenesters.” Mitch is well-drawn as the founder of the Brooklyn squat whose ethics can make him aloof and judgmental. As is Lorenzo, the comically self-absorbed Mexican punk legend who tries to cheer up a sick Sid with a copy of his band’s new demo.

During an argument over messy houseguests, Lorenzo insults Sid’s weight. While *Sunshine Crust* is the perfect place to criticize the punk scene’s sexism, the novel’s Latin-American characters shoulder all of the

## “It took thirty pages for *Please Kill Me* to show its ass, but it only took fifteen for *A Wailing of a Town* to show its heart.

—Kelley O’Death, *A Wailing of a Town: An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More 1977–1985*

This is where *Snakepit Gets Old* comes in. As one of the first pages says, “Snakepit is, was, and ever shall be intended to be read on the toilet.” It is the perfect size to fit on top of the tank. The cover and paper can survive humid conditions. It is exactly what the cover says: a daily diary. The material expands to fit the time available. You can relive one day in the life of Snakepit during a quick pee or devour a week or two’s worth of happenings if things get complicated after you tried that new burrito shop. This book is especially relevant for those of us who sit down to do all of our business.

And what a life it is! It’s all about doing grown-up stuff like going to work in the morning, getting married, and passing kidney stones. Going to shows and playing shows, apparently, also fall into the category of stuff people do when they get old. It’s not as well-thought out as the full-length comics that appear in these here pages but it gives a clue as to the artist’s process. As with anything, the more you do it, the better you are. There is a comic for every day of the year from 2010 to 2012. Every day. That takes discipline. I remember all those times I tried to make myself write every day, even if it was awful. Some of it is like watching paint dry but there are some gems in there. Each day’s comic also mentions what the artist was listening to, so you might discover some new music along the way. —Lisa Weiss (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

### The Sunshine Crust Baking Factory

By Stacy Wakefield, 228 pgs.

After high school, Sid arrives in New York City hoping to move into a Lower East Side squat. When she finds the buildings full of cliques, she squats an abandoned Brooklyn bakery, grows up a bit, and manages to create community.

One of author Stacy Wakefield’s previous credits is *Not for Rent*, a collection of interviews with European squatters. Wakefield puts her knowledge of activist punk culture to great use in *The Sunshine Crust Baking Factory*, setting the story against a backdrop of Born Against patches and ABC No Rio matinees, building tension through contentious house meetings and showing how the scene’s realities can put idealism to the test. Endearing, naive Sid follows the tidy “Ditches friends for cool kids, realizes cool kids aren’t her friends, appreciates true friends” plot with enthusiasm.

blame. Furthering the “macho Latino” stereotype, squatmate Eddie only exists to leer and make sexually suggestive comments. Meanwhile, when Sid begins working on a new space on Lorimer St., one of her main concerns is the gangs of Latino teenagers looking for trouble near Broadway.

The punks’ privilege is dealt with on Lorimer St., where they’re reminded that squatters only succeed when they get along with their neighbors, and, in this case, the neighbors are drug dealers and junkies. It’s a much-needed bit of self-awareness for the collection of dreamers in *Sunshine Crust* and, like most of this novel, it will inspire a knowing smile from anyone who’s survived the flakey roommates, unwanted houseguests and self-righteous slobs that fill out so many group living situations. —Chris Terry (Akashic Books, 232 Third St., Suite A115, Brooklyn, NY 11215, akashicbooks.com)

### This Must Be the Place

By Sean H. Doyle, 94 pgs.

The “My-Fucked-Up-Life” share is its own genre now, and has moved past the critique of “*We’ve read this already*,” which would be like panning a detective novel for featuring another private investigator as narrator.

*This Must Be the Place* is a scrapbook of prose snapshots, arranged in seemingly random chronological order—from 1988 to 2005 to 1993 and forward and back. Doyle is the voice of a patient in therapy who’s asked to lie down, close his eyes, and free-associate:

“I am in the car with my mother and little sister when a tornado cuts across our block and throws us into the backyard...”

“I come here after my shift at the record store... waiting for my girlfriend Velvet to get off work so we can go get high...”

“There is another family in the ICU who has someone they love also in a coma ...”

Doyle was a punk rock kid who did a lot of drugs, joined the Navy, did more drugs, was homeless for awhile, was in a cult for awhile, did a lot of stupid shit, and endured both parents’ deaths—in other words, it’s a contemporary memoir. If that summary strikes a chord, and maybe you’ve been spending too much time alone lately. Read it and stir up your isolation. —Jim Woster (Civil Coping Mechanisms, copingmechanisms.net)

**A Wailing of a Town: An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More 1977-1985**

By Craig Ibarra, 344 pgs.

I once spent four gloriously unemployed months living nearly rent-free in my bandmate's basement and going to shows almost every day. In honor of my living the punk rock dream, a friend loaned me a well-loved copy of his favorite book, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*. He was thoroughly disgusted that I would deign to call myself "punk" despite having never read it. He was even more disgusted when I handed it back to him mostly unread a year later. The junkie pride, gossipy pettiness, and arty narcissism contained therein is the stuff of East Coast punk legend, but while the desire to burn it all down is seductive, my personal punk rock ethos has always been rooted in the desire to build something better.

This experience is why I began punk rock polymath Craig Ibarra's *A Wailing of a Town* with great trepidation. An oral history inspired by the likes of *Please Kill Me*, the book is a collection of interviews with heavy hitters from the rarely scrutinized late '70s, early '80s San Pedro scene. It took thirty pages for *Please Kill Me* to show its ass, but it only took fifteen for *A Wailing of a Town* to show its heart. Toward the end of the third chapter, entitled "Joy," Andy Tuck—described in the helpful name glossary as "a gig-goer"—says, "As naïve as it seems, punk rock was very hopeful to me as a kid. I really believed that we could make change." This positivity pervades the rest of the book, even in its darker moments, as it celebrates the scene's inclusiveness, inventiveness, blue-collar work ethic, and emphasis on friendship.

Despite being relatable and approachable, *A Wailing of a Town* is not without its legendary stories. Remember when Black Flag played your high school? Uh, no you don't. But the San Pedro High School class of 1982 sure does! Ibarra includes a genius excerpt from the school's yearbook, *Black and Gold*: "The surprise band was a real surprise to everyone. Black Flag, a well-known punk group drew a large crowd during lunchtime. [...] 'This was my first taste of real punk—and my last,' added Spence Stafford." Ibarra also includes thirty-six pages of black and white photography, flyers, and handwritten lyrics to help transport you back in time.

While the book centers around San Pedro's most famous exports, the beloved Minutemen, it also recalls some of its lesser-known offerings such as Saccharine Trust and The Wigs!, and prominently features the invaluable

insight and poetic nostalgia of Gary Jacobelly, formerly of Peer Group and The Plebs. Unsatisfied to focus only on bands, *A Wailing of a Town* leaves no stone left unturned, outlining the scene's most iconic labels, zines, artists, and hangouts. The proceedings—though mostly being related over twenty years later—sing with youthful insubordination and exuberance in equal measure. Several early chapters speak on the harassment and abuse loud and proud Pedro punks faced from community members and local cops in the pre-hardcore era, while "Shit You Hear at Parties" captures the timeless energetic anarchy of a house show in any era, (although *these* house shows just so happened to feature *D. fucking Boon* manning the barbeque!).

Though painstakingly thorough, richly detailed, and impeccably researched, this oral history is really all about D. Boon, the beating heart of the San Pedro scene. One particularly endearing story comes—naturally—from Minutemen bassist Mike Watt, who celebrates his bandmate's lesser-known talents. "We had a 'Dance Contest' when we played at Club Lingerie (March 31, 1983)," he recalls. "The prize was a pizza. D. Boon ended up eating all the pizza and the winner never got any. D. Boon danced like a motherfucker!" Ibarra wisely incorporates snippets of past interviews with the iconic frontman, allowing him to tell the story of the scene he helped build alongside the surviving comrades with whom he built it. The book's final chapter is dedicated to D. Boon's passing, which marked the end of the San Pedro scene as its denizens knew it. The late Lisa Roeland explains, "Once D. Boon died, everybody went their separate ways. He was the guy that kept us all together. He changed all of our lives."

Punk means many different things to many different people, and no one definition is any better or more accurate than the next. There's no denying the talent, importance, or cultural impact of the larger-than-life New York punks shooting up and checking out in *Please Kill Me*. However, based on the current trend of bands standing for inclusion, collective action, and hope for a better world, perhaps San Pedro's sustainable positivity was an equally powerful force. *A Wailing of a Town* is required reading for anyone who believes that, as Jacobelly puts it in the book's prologue, "Punk Rock is what you make it." —Kelley O'Death (End Fwy Press, endfwy, bigcartel.com)



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