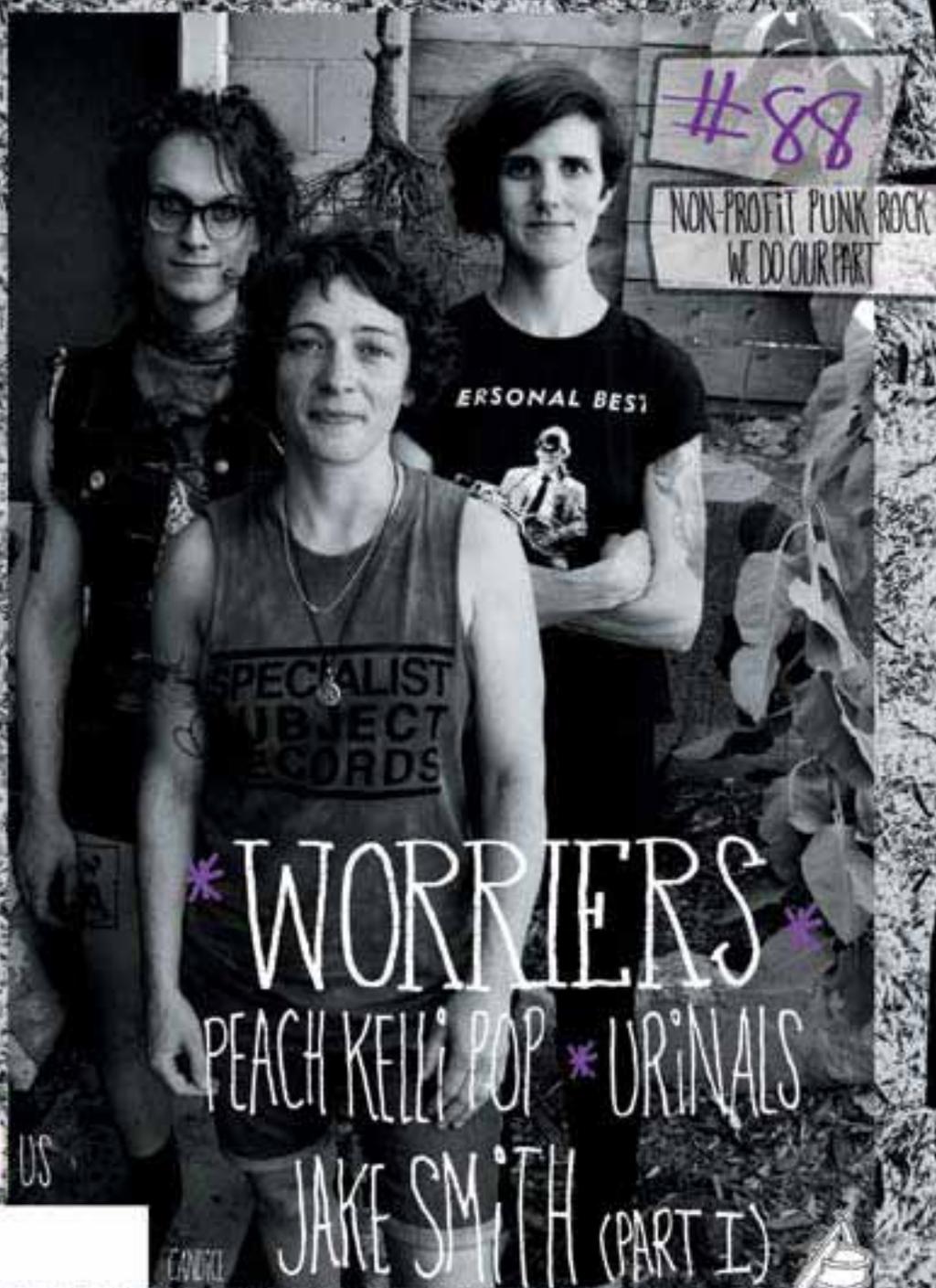


RAZZORCAKE



* WORRIERS *

PEACH KELLI POP * URINALS

JAKE SMITH (PART I)

\$4 US



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Razorcake is a massive group effort based on simple activities. Our 178 volunteers make this zine, put out music, publish razorcake.org, help put on shows, and run podcasts. We are active, daily participants in DIY punk. Making Razorcake helps us feel less isolated.

When we act together, life can be a bit more tolerable.

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Razorcake Records & Friends Present... *Under the Rainbow, A Punk Novella by The Cuntifiers*

My life fades, the vision dims; all that remains are memories. I remember a time of chaos, ruined dreams, and wasted bands. But most of all, I remember the Cuntifiers, the band that nobody liked....

Cursed from its inception by a name that invited scorn from the most ardent lover of freedom of speech and the prodigious lack of talent of its creator, the Cuntifiers were born in 2002 and were well-tolerated for the next decade until they became a burned out, desolate shell of a band.

I was happily retired from punk rockery since 2000, when The Weird Lovemakers, the band I had play with for six years broke up. My girlfriend at the time had read about some knucklehead's submission to the Oxford English Dictionary. His contribution to the English language? "Cuntify." His definition? "To make all cunt-like." The word and its many conjugations soon entered the lexicon of our circle of friends.

She wanted to name her non-existent band "The Cuntifiers," which I thought was such a foul name that I would have to start a real band just to utilize it. And then my troubles began....

Besides being saddled with an unbookable name (I know, I put that saddle on myself), I never had so much trouble keeping a band together. Within the span of eight years, the Cuntifiers cycled through roughly twenty to 478 members, some lasting for only a few weeks (I think Kenny G played with us for a spell). Some moved away, some left to join other, better bands, and some got tired of playing with a frontman who couldn't sing or play guitar very well. At the risk of sounding narcissistic, fate itself did not want the band to survive; and just as I've always done when fate's being an asshole, I wasn't going to give it the satisfaction and lay down without a Herculean struggle (though I guess it was more Sisyphean; Hercules was pretty good at what he did).

Another problem was that I had been writing lyrics for twenty years at this point, and, frankly, I was out of ideas. Whenever I had writer's block, I would recycle ideas from old poems and comics I had written, but that well had run dry. I had this one aborted novel I had conceived as a college student

in the late '80s, but it was way too long to squeeze into a ninety-second punk song. I had been taking a writing course wherein most of the syllabus consisted of poetry dealing with AIDS and the decimation it wrought on the vibrant gay culture that existed in the 1970s. Though I didn't know anyone with the disease until years later, I sympathized with the overwhelming sense of loss; a mourning of not just lives that had been extinguished, but the end of a wonderful, almost magical era.

I think the vast majority of us rarely get to live through a Golden Age and the few who do have it taken away by time and fate (that piece of shit). As a morose motherfucker who never even thought I'd have an aluminum age, the idea that once attained it would eventually dissipate was tragic.

During this time, I happened to re-watch a film beloved by children and gay men throughout the ages. Seeing it for the first time with adult eyes was the peanut butter that blended perfectly with the dark bitter chocolate of my thoughts. The story that you are about to hear, if you listen to the CD that Razorcake may have generously included in this issue (or want to listen to here: <https://razorcake-records.bandcamp.com/album/under-the-rainbow>), is the product of that union. After writing twenty or so pages, I realized I was too lazy to turn it into a novel, so for years I told the plot orally (Homer-like, though probably more Homer Simpson-like).

A few years ago I had the realization that I didn't have to fit this huge story into one song; I could stretch it out over thirteen songs. I know what you're thinking—"that's called a rock opera, dumbass"—but I wanted to forego vague poetry in favor of understandable prose so you wouldn't need a pothead cousin to explain what was going on.

If this "punk novella" doesn't confuse you and succeeds in beaming an unequivocally concrete story into your brain, all of the credit is due to Allah. Only the mistakes have been mine.

And The Cuntifiers? They live now only in my memories.

—Greg Pettix, 2015

This is our first release in a new free CD program. Brought to you compliments of an outside funder. Available in all 1st Class Subs.



RZCR-24

Check out these links for info on how to support people who are still fighting to end the AIDS crisis.

ACT UP: actupny.org

Housing Works: housingworks.org



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Parallel Lives

On Friday, Aug. 7, 2015 Travis Fristoe took his life. Travis was a fellow traveler, on a path with few footsteps. He was a zinester and writer of the highest caliber (check out *America?* and the book *Radon*), a longtime volunteer at the Civic Media Center in Gainesville responsible for helping shape its zine collection, a librarian, and a musician (Moonraker, Reactionary 3, die Hoffnung, True Feedback). To me, Travis's greatest accomplishment was that he was Travis—a rad, thoughtful person engaged in his communities. He put his time in, not for recognition, but because he gave a shit.

I always enjoyed catching up with Travis, in person and online. (One of my favorite memories is talking to him about books and how I thought the punch line to *Infinite Jest* was on the last page because if you made it that far, the joke's on you. Fuck twelve-hundred page books about tennis. He vehemently disagreed. It was funny.) But I always respected Travis. He was a busy guy who I gave an open invitation to write for Razorcake. A month before he committed suicide, we went over several revisions on his memorial to Lance Hahn, a bittersweet paean that takes meaningful time with J. Church's last record *The Horror of Life*. Travis was a compassionate craftsman. A record helped guide him through the life transition and heavy emotional weight of becoming a responsible father and grandson. Not only did Travis put words together artfully, he did it with heart. With light. With hope. With kindness. And those things make Travis's passing hurt even more. He was one of the few holding a torch against often almost unbearable darkness.

Travis suffered from severe alcoholism, a terrible disease that ramped up quickly and consumed him. He did a good job of hiding it from a lot of people who didn't see him that often.

When I first heard the news that he killed himself, I was angry with him. Angry that he left behind his daughter Astrid—born in February—and his stepdaughter Suki. Angry that he left behind Avery, his lifelong soulmate and new wife. Angry that he had to know his body would be found by someone whom he loved and loved him. What a terrible last act. My anger was based in fear. My anger was partially based on the fact that Travis was the second friend in almost as many months to take his life. He joins Chris Pepus.

I did not know the depth of either's pain and suffering.

I hope this doesn't sound selfish. My fear is this: Travis and Chris are versions of *us* living parallel, examined lives. They are people who I could have become if I was born in a slightly different place or time. They are people who I connected deeply with when there are so few people who I connect with at all. They are people who I saw in myself on my best days. They are people who I strove to be in some small measure. And then they killed themselves. What the fuck do I do with that?

I regarded the two fresh graves in my heart and the dark hand I've been dealt this year beyond these deaths. I am severely rattled. Many people checked in on me, to see if I was okay. I accepted my family and friends' kindness and support. It's humbling. It doesn't come easily for me. They made me know I was loved. They provided light and ballast, showed that I was far from being alone. My anger at the dead dissolved into compassion for the living, to all who love Travis and miss him with a deep ache.

Rest in peace, Travis.

—Todd Taylor

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"A person's life may be a lonely thing by nature, but it is not isolated. To that life other lives are linked, and I surely have to bear some responsibility for those as well."

—Haruki Murakami, *1Q84*

This issue is dedicated to the marriage of Molly Robertson and Josh Rosa and to the birth of Cora "CoCo" David Mc Bride



Fact: sticking our you tongue while reading increases concentration.
Margot D. | photo by John D.

THANK YOU: Worriers, come out and play-ay! This is all part of Razorcake's burrito diplomacy initiative. Gabby Gonzalez took the photo of Worriers in the back yard of RCHQ and Candice Tobin wonderfully mulched and triangulated the second-ever purple Razorcake cover. Thanks to them both; Defiance, Ohio, bullfrogs, and endless subdivisions thanks to Brad Beshaw for Sean's illo.; Thick, heavy ink under the clouds thanks to Genesis Bautista for Jim's illo.; You never want to look at your own prom pictures and cry—just your mom—thanks to Steve Thueson for Cassie's illo.; Like flies on corn dogs thanks to Alex Barrett for Nørb's illo.; Teachers of yesteryear—corporal punishment or good, old fashioned tying up kids to teach them a lesson?—thanks to Jackie Rusted for Dale's illo.; It's about time the Hen got repped in the Chicken's column thanks to Codey Richards; From in-your-face to outer space thanks to A. Pijpers for her guest comic; Kate Rambeau thanks Donna Ramone for her inaugural print column; Oh, Bill Stinkel, you've made an entirely new genre—Horror Rock 'n' Roll High School—with a mere illustration; Ack Ack Ack Ack thanks to Ryan Leach, Edward Colver, Don Williams, and Dylan Davis for the John Talley-Jones interview, photographs, and layout; It's not an official slogan for Razorcake, but it works well—[their] life's work as one of the many quiet contributors to the framework of American music is no less integral than those whose names you can rattle of the top of your heads—thanks to Jimmy Alvarado, Jim Brick, Richard Higgs, Andrea Rytönen, Lynn Smith, Vic Smith, Bob Shoemaker, and Becky Bennett for the Jake Smith Part I interview, photos, and layout; "Yes, All Cops" b/w "They/Them/Theirs" thanks to Megan Razzetti, Jake Cunningham, Julie A. Ferguson, Gabby Gonzalez, and Eric Baskauskas for the Worriers interview, photos, layout, and transcription; Skullcone doesn't trust the police either thanks to Shanty Cheryl, Gabby Gonzalez, and Lauren Measure for the Peach Kelli Pop photos and layout.

"What compels these valiant Sons and Daughters of Gutenberg to troop down to the copy shop every few weeks and blow their video game money on printing?" —Rev Nørb reviewing *Gad #4* zine; Our reviewers are eyeball-level to the armpits of DIY punk; Thanks to #88's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Mike Frame, Nicole Madden, Paul J. Comeau, John Mule, Indiana Laub, Rich Cocksedge, Kurt Morris, Kayla Greet, Ryan Nichols, Jimmy Alvarado, Steve Adamyk, Matt Werts, Michael T. Fournier, Mark Twistworthy, Sean Koenenick, Tim Brooks, Kelly O'Death, Camylle Reynolds, Ty Stranglehold, Sean Arenas, MP Johnson, Billups Allen, Chris Terry, Keith Rosson, Matt Average, Simone Carter, Matt Seward, Bryan Static, Jackie Rusted, Juan Espinosa, Jim Joyce, Nørb, Art Ettinger, Kevin Dunn, Garrett Barnwell, Jim Woster, Matthew Hart, Robin Effup, Tricia Ramos, Simon Sotelo, and Jeff Proctor.

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)

RECORD STORE DAY=SCIENTOLOGY



The following records MIGHT come out this year:

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO CANDYLAND

- "The People Are Home" CD,CS,DL...LP?!
- SCREECHING WEASEL**
- "Baby Fat Act 1" CD,CS,DL...DOUBLE LP?!?!
- BIRTHDAY SUITS**
- "Spin The Bottle: Adult Party" DL...is T Shirt a format?
- TREASURE FLEET**
- "The Sun Machine" Film,DL..WTF?!
- CLOSET FAIRIES**
- "No Idea" 12"... Can "12" be a CD?
- DWARVES**
- "Free Cocaine AND Lick It Reissues"?!? Just Plain Greedy!
- FUTURE VIRGINS**
- "Doomsday Raga" Secretly Implanted Microchip Format
- WET NURSE**
- "Album That Will Be Out On Some Sorta Format"

The following records WILL come out this year:

- NAPOLEAN DYNAMITE**
- "180 gram vinyl does not sound better asshole" OST LP (180 GRM)
- ALF**
- "Original TV Series Dialogue" LP Brown Wax!
- ELVIS**
- "Farted On A Toileted" 78RPM
- DANDY WARHOLS/HARLOW**
- "Are We Cool Now?" split 7" Limited!
- FOO FIGHTERS/JACK WHITE**
- "Let's Talk About Analog. Ok guy?"
- Split Interview Picture Disk. In Mono!

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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 "Woke up in Altadena" 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, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Yvonne Drazan, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Nation of Amanda, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Samantha McBride, Christine Arguello, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camylle 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, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Cahnne 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., Jack Fallows, Cathy Hannah, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Jim Kettner, Tracy Stansbury, Travis Fristoe, Ronnie Sullivan, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Gabby Gonzalez, Shereen Dudar, Keith Rosson, Rorey Sotela, Megan Razzetti, Madeline Bridenbaugh, Bill Ebert, Paul Silver, Julie A. Ferguson, John Massel, and Ollie Mikse.

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A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

“I built those houses that ruined my town.”

Oh, Susquehanna

It begins with a muted strum chugging along like a train, a promise of a song but nothing you could quite call a song yet. The strumming turns into chords. The bass and drums and fiddle join in. The party gets rocking when the guitarist sings, “We walk the paths on the banks of the mighty Susquehanna with our feet made muddy by the tributaries that trickle away to the Chesapeake.”

One of the great things about the song “Oh Susquehanna” by Defiance, Ohio is that for a lyrically depressing song, the music is so cheerful and fun. Listen to it once or twice and you’ll try to learn all the words. Once you know them, you’ll sing them to yourself. Get a guitar or ukulele and play the song’s two chords again and again. You can sing all three vocal parts yourself. And once it’s buried itself deep in your brain, then you can really think about it.

The song is stuck in my head for the whole ride up to Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. It doesn’t help that I’m on a motorcycle, with no means of kicking it out of my head when it’s this firmly lodged in, with elements of it all around me. I pass I-83, which, like the song says, heads down to “harbor cities,” and is little more than “strip malls and tarmac.” What once seemed so exciting to me—Pennsylvania, the northeast, the industry and unions and great working class of the mid-twentieth century—truly starts to “seem like such a blight.”

I’m spending a couple of days in Susquehanna, visiting an aunt and an uncle of mine. My father’s with me. A couple of cousins show up. We spend a lot of time hanging out on a front porch and telling stories. In the morning, I help my uncle repair and refill a bird feeder that a bear knocks down nearly every night. I go for long runs on a mountain road, trudging up the hill, hauling ass down. I really do walk the paths on the banks of the mighty Susquehanna River, although my feet aren’t made muddy because the water level is at a historic low. Everyone in town is praying for rain, which will come on the day I ride out of town.

It’s a slow two days. Not boring. I like taking it easy, having so little to do. I spend an hour walking around a pond, looking for bullfrogs. I like being among all this green, especially after living through years of drought in California.

A guy named Peck swings by the front porch. He is my aunt’s best friend’s son. My

aunt assures me that I played with him once, decades ago. I was around six years old, he was three or four. He doesn’t remember me at all. I remember him only through his name and my aunt’s stories. He’s been kayaking down the Susquehanna all morning, but for some reason he doesn’t talk about that. He talks about fracking.

This is the big news around here. Chesapeake Energy has found a shale field underneath the town. They are leasing land from the local homeowners and fracking underneath. During the days while we sit on the porch, Chesapeake water trucks scoop water from the historically low Susquehanna and drive it up the road in front of my uncle and aunt’s place. The road is torn up from all the heavy equipment trucking up and down it.

Peck tells me, “You’re gonna upset a lot of people if you’re against fracking here.” I ask him if he’s a homeowner. My uncle and aunt own their home. I know they’re hoping Chesapeake leases from them. They could use the money. I wonder if Peck is in the same boat. He tells me he’s not. He rents. Now I’m confused.

I don’t know the specifics of the situation in Susquehanna. I know about Chesapeake Energy and all their crimes against man and nature: the state of Maryland sued them for a blowout that devastated the Bradford County countryside; the state of Michigan charged them with fraud and racketeering. If history—even history as recent as what’s happened in North Dakota over the past few years—is any guide, Chesapeake will take all the gas, cause an incredible mess, and leave mostly poor, rural residents to clean it up or walk away from their now-worthless property. Even Peck knows how bad they are. He tells the story about them creating a shell company, promising to lease land off homeowners, then having the shell company declare bankruptcy once the gas was out and the bills were due.

But this doesn’t concern Peck. He instead talks about New York, which is about a hundred yards from where we sit. They won’t allow Chesapeake to frack there. He knows a farmer with three hundred acres who’d love to get that money, but the state of New York won’t allow it. Peck blames Obama.

The second verse of “Oh Susquehanna” tells about living in rural Kentucky with nothing around but a cemetery. The cemetery

was dug up to build a suburb. The verse ends with the bassist singing, “I wonder, what did they do with the bodies?”

My father and I leave Susquehanna and ride a few hours through rain and road construction and company towns to a coal mine. It’s a bit of a tourist trap, but I want to see it. Fifteen years ago, I wrote an article for *Flipside* about the Molly Maguires. The short version of their story is this: In the 1870s, a group of Irish miners in Pennsylvania tried to unionize. The mine owners hired a local newspaperman to write a series of articles about a terrorist organization called the Molly Maguires, who were running the miners. There’s no reason to believe the stories were based on any factual evidence. The owners also hired James McParland, a Pinkerton “detective,” to infiltrate the miners and encourage them to act violently. They blew up a couple of mines. The local police, also in the employ of owners, rounded up the union organizers and sentenced them to death. Nineteen men were hung. They were likely guilty of nothing more than trying to organize a union.

As long as I was riding through coal mining country, I had to see the little bit of the miners’ lives that remains, to see what they did with the bodies of one of the most notable events of American labor history.

The tour would’ve been disappointing if I hadn’t had low expectations going into it. The tour guides were former miners. They cracked jokes about how lazy union workers are. They got mad at a visitor who asked about acid rain. They cursed Chesapeake Energy and fracking, not because of the devastation it’ll wreak on the northern Pennsylvania mountains but because of the money it’ll take from coal miners’ pockets. They complained about communist China getting a better price on Pennsylvania coal than Pennsylvanians get. They ended their talks the same way Peck did: “Thanks, Obama.”

The teacher in me wanted to clarify their conception of power. In Peck’s case, I wanted to point out Obama is neither the governor of New York, nor a ranking member of their legislature. He has almost no power over state laws there. In the case of the miners, I wanted to point out that fracking in northern Pennsylvania had a whole lot more to do with Chesapeake Energy bribing (or lobbying, if you want to use the misleading term) state politicians than it did with any kind of federal energy



BRAD BESHAW

Sometimes, it feels like we're all stuck in those frames, only the money isn't so easy, and most of it doesn't come our way, regardless.

plan authored by Obama. And the reason China gets coal cheaply has nothing to do with them being a “communist” country or Obama being a “socialist.” It has everything to do with the immense, staggering profits companies like Walmart and Apple and Nike make off their Chinese factories, and the share of those profits that they use to bribe politicians (probably including Obama but he is certainly not the only or biggest beneficiary) into facilitating the process. I wanted to tell them they should rethink their conception of power on a global scale and investigate how much power presidents really have and who really has sovereignty over energy issues. Or their lives, for that matter.

I kept my mouth shut though, because these guys didn't care about being right or wrong. They were just venting.

The last verse of “Oh Susquehanna” is the one that really rings through my head as I ride off. The fiddler sings, “I miss the field behind my house where I hiked and climbed and played.” She goes on to tell what happened to it. “MI Homes thought it

could stand to be updated, forced it all into a grid till it looked like the funny pages.” It's this verse that lumps me together with Peck and the coal miners/tour guides. We act in our worst interests so often.

Like Peck with fracking. This guy is a fisherman, a kayaker. He loves the outdoors. Why would he be so enthusiastic about his river and woods being devastated by an energy corporation that won't give him a cut? He'll make no money of the whole deal. In all likelihood, he'll see the town he loves destroyed. He'll eventually have to just walk away from it, leaving it a twenty-first-century ghost town, a toxic no man's land.

And the miners who can't get work mining so they work as tour guides curse unions for making mining unprofitable in this region and taking away their jobs, but they don't acknowledge how shitty those jobs were. Before the unions came in, miners were paid in script only good for the rent on company housing and the food in company stores. Every paycheck saw them go a little deeper in debt. Unions took them out of that type of slavery, but even with things like eight-hour days and healthcare benefits and

payment in U.S. currency, they couldn't change the fact that mining is a terrible job. When it doesn't kill you by a caved-in mine, it kills you through black lung before you reach retirement age. Centralia, the town just over the hill from their mine, had to be evacuated when the mine under it caught fire. The fire is likely to burn for the next four hundred years.

But what the song really takes issue with is the suburbs, building houses to strangle our natural spaces. For years, I was a carpenter. I built those houses that ruined my town. I watched the orange groves that made my town so beautiful when I was growing up get leveled, and I framed the tract houses that stood over the old groves. I feel Peck's pain and the miners' pain because I was stuck in the same kind of untenable position as they are. The fiddler sings about “those trapped in this architecture of easy money.” Sometimes, it feels like we're all stuck in those frames, only the money isn't so easy, and most of it doesn't come our way, regardless.

—Sean Carswell



“As long as I had a job to do I was fine.”

A Death in the Family

When I heard the news my cousin was found dead in a Las Vegas hotel room, my first instinct was to be angry.

My cousin Steve, who was very sick, was predeceased by his brother Mark, who was also very sick but for very different reasons.

In June of 1996, while in the grip of a psychotic episode, my cousin Mark checked into a motel and shot himself in the head. It was a brutal, sudden death that had a destabilizing effect on our entire family.

I tell you this not to shock or sadden you, but to provide context for what everyone in my family was thinking when news of Steve's death began to spread. Steve's death, like so many things in my family, fell under the long shadow of Mark's suicide. Had Steve done it, too? Had he followed in his older brother's footsteps?

That was what I hoped to find out when I drove to Las Vegas to collect my cousin's effects at the Clark County Coroner's Office.

*

Here's what you need to know about my cousin Steve:

He was my late aunt's youngest son. He was affable, good-looking, and gregarious. He loved to argue and treated life like a debate tournament, always looking to score points even when he knew his argument was hopeless. He was a quintessential New Yorker who could be both brash and brusque and was not above a well-timed finger jab. He was a natural born hustler who was convinced that good ideas could win the day, whether it was launching a line of squirt guns called the "Ronald Ray Gun" or running for city council; this was a guy who lived for the main chance. He loved movies and in his youth worked at RKO Theaters in New York where he displayed a knack for promotion. He parlayed this skill all the way to Hollywood where he worked for Paramount Pictures. Shortly before the end of the twentieth century he started working as a secret shopper for high-end hotel chains, a job he conducted with the flair of a secret agent. He racked up a million miles a year flying all over the world. Somewhere in that busy life he found the time to write a novel he was never able to publish and at least a half-dozen screenplays. Around two-and-a-half years ago he got really sick and learned that he had diabetes. And then he died. But did he kill himself?

*

I didn't know what I was going to find in Las Vegas so I asked my friend Justin to make the drive with me. He cleared his schedule, I picked him up first thing in the morning, and we were off.

I had plenty of time to fill Justin in on what I knew. It wasn't much. Steve had gone to Vegas to see about getting back his old job as a secret shopper. The last contact he'd had with his sister Noreen was to tell her that he was extending his stay in Vegas a few days and would be back in New York soon. He was found in his room by hotel staff a few days later. His key card hadn't been used in days.

I didn't feel particularly good about my last interaction with Steve. In November 2013 his father passed away after a long battle with Alzheimer's. I got the news on the way back from another funeral in Mexico. I took a redeye out to New York and Steve picked me up at JFK.

He didn't look good. He'd lost some weight and his skin had a yellowish tint. I already knew Steve was sick, but his appearance was alarming. He told me he wasn't feeling well and on the way home he stopped at a market to get something to eat. He was one of those lifelong New York bachelors who never had any food in his apartment.

Steve didn't want to talk about his dad or his illness but he was very excited about his new business venture: a faux finish company he was running out of his apartment. He explained he'd been experimenting with various materials and had gotten handy at making blocks of foam look like various types of brick and stone. "I think you'll get a kick out of it."

His front door was now the entrance to a medieval castle. The hallway leading into his apartment was a papier-mâché tunnel. There was a tiki bar in the living room alongside a fake fireplace embedded in a fake brick wall. The illusions were not particularly convincing. There were wires everywhere, extension cords rigged and re-rigged. I saw the holidays in the paint and the blocks of stone looked like painted foam. At the end of the hallway he had set up a makeshift workbench and his kitchen was filled with planks of wood, sheets of foam, all manner of bottles and cans. I couldn't see the fantasy. All I saw was a massive fire hazard and evidence of an obsessive insistence on transforming his small Brooklyn apartment into something it wasn't meant to be.

My cousin wanted to know what I thought but all I could manage was something along the lines of, "It's really something" and then pretended to be more tired than I actually felt. As I climbed into bed I wondered about my cousin's mental health. During my next three visits to New York I avoided Steve and his strange apartment.

*

When I first moved to North Hollywood in 1992, my cousin Mark lived a short walk away, on the other side of the freeway. We were both writers though I was just getting started and he'd been a working screenwriter for close to a decade. In addition to the occasional television episode or novel adaptation, he wrote original screenplays, some of which had been made into movies—*Blue Moon* and the horror films *Neon Maniacs* and *Pumpkinhead*. He made a life in letters seem possible. I had an enormous amount of respect for him.

In 1993 I moved to Arizona for three years, and when I moved back to L.A., my cousin had changed. I didn't realize what it meant to be mentally ill until I saw Mark. He was manic-depressive and had been prescribed anti-psychotic medication to curb his suicidal tendencies, but he frequently went off his meds because they interfered with his ability to write.

Steve talked him into going to see a doctor at a psychiatric hospital where he was promptly admitted. Mark felt betrayed. He was seething with rage and borderline catatonic. Here, I thought, is a man at war with himself. We fought to keep Mark alive but within a year after my return to L.A. he was gone.

*

The Clark County Coroner's Office is located in the northern part of the city, not far from downtown Las Vegas. It sits in a small, squat red stone municipal building the likes of which can be found throughout the southwest. The temperature climbed to over 110 degrees Fahrenheit so Justin and I didn't linger in the parking lot for long.

The lobby was like the reception area of a security-minded medical office. A woman sat behind a window inside a small enclosure. I provided my cousin's name and his number and after a short wait we were ushered into a conference room that was utterly



GENESIS BAUTISTA

I came to Las Vegas as a reluctant detective seeking clues that would help me solve the mystery of my cousin's death.

unremarkable, save for a box of tissues on the table.

The clerk came in with my cousin's effects. There wasn't much: a small duffel for clothes, a laptop bag, a plastic bag that held Steve's wallet and phone. The clerk had a checklist provided by the police and she went through each item with me.

I came to Las Vegas as a reluctant detective seeking clues that would help me solve the mystery of my cousin's death. Instead, I was confronted with the dull banality of life. Prescription slips, three pairs of scuffed shoes, a brand new shirt still in its clear plastic wrapper. None of these things pointed to a man who'd come to Vegas to end his life.

I asked the clerk if anything had been recovered in my cousin's hotel room that they couldn't release to me.

"Oooh," she cooed. "Good question!"

She went back into her office to look

something up on the computer but the answer was no. We chatted with the clerk a bit and she told me that Clark County processes more suicides than any other coroner's office in the country. I was relieved that none of the evidence seemed to indicate that my cousin was one of them. Although we wouldn't know for certain until the toxicology report was released, by all appearances my cousin had underestimated the severity of his physical illness and paid the ultimate price.

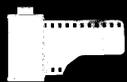
A few weeks later, once his sister had gone through his laptop and his phone, we learned that during his last days on earth my cousin had booked doctors appointments, scheduled meetings with former employers, and was even collaborating on a new screenplay. This wasn't a man who was going on a permanent vacation; this was a man with a great deal of passion making plans for the next phase of his life.

Back in Vegas, Justin and I brought Steve's stuff out to the car and went immediately to a UPS store where I shipped the wallet and phone to his sister in Brooklyn. As long as I had a job to do I was fine but someday I will have to deal with the guilt that has taken the place of my anger, which is really just fear in disguise because I also live in the shadow cast by my family's past.

We'd been in town for less than two hours and had nothing left to do. Justin and I went to a nearby Cajun restaurant I found on Yelp. We drowned ourselves in grits and gumbo, southern comfort food to steel ourselves for the long journey back to California.

—Jim Ruland





Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page
Joyce Manor



“I wanted my mother to look at my prom pictures and cry.”

Bikeage

By the end of my senior year of high school, I resigned myself to taking a blow-up doll to the prom. No one had asked me, and I was shot down by everyone I had a crush on in ways that ranged from “kind and humane” to “my cheeks still burn with regret when I think about it fifteen years later.” A boy named Jason once gave me a Garfield Pez dispenser, which seemed like it could easily be part of a *Sassy* magazine article on how to tell if a boy likes you. I reciprocated by giving him a mix that contained only one song: The Donnas’ “Do You Wanna Go Out with Me?” repeated ten times. In hindsight, that is something you would only do if you are a teenage girl or a serial killer. When he rejected me, I avoided eye contact with him for the rest of the year.

There were no punk rockers in my high school. It was mostly guys in hemp necklaces who wore sandals without shame, a handful of Marilyn Manson fans, and a legion of seventeen-year-olds bleaching their hair to look like the guy from Smashmouth. Every time I drove by a parking lot with my parents and saw teens skateboarding, I threw myself against the window of the car like a bird stuck in a Walmart vestibule. Somewhere out there were cool people doing interesting things, and maybe if I loitered in the punk/alternative section of Sam Goody long enough, I would find them.

In the meantime, I pined hard over the adult men in the bands I loved. Mick Jones had the most beautiful voice. The Bouncing Souls seemed like they would be down for late night drives and diner french fries. Jawbreaker would send me dramatic postcards from the road that said things like, “*I love you so much it’s killing us both.*” And I probably wouldn’t ever need to hold in a fart around Boris The Sprinkler. The way some people say they spiritually identify with unicorns and honey badgers was how I felt about men over the age of thirty.

“Sir, do you have a Waldbaums card?” It was the end of my shift at the grocery store. I had spent the slow time in the last hour looking in the union handbook at what denominations of workman’s comp you could get for horrific injuries. The payout for losing a pinkie in the automated conveyor belt was only fifty dollars.

“No. I’m an Irishman. It’s your company’s policy to discriminate against the Irish and they refuse to give me a card.” I looked up and saw a man who looked to be

in his late twenties, maybe older, with thin, graying hair. I’d seen him around, riding a green BMX to the store and buying vegan food, which was as rare as cannibalism in our small town. He looked at my nametag. “That’s the truth, *Cassie.*”

Any good judgment I would ever have from that moment forward evaporated forever. I laughed, fixed my hair, and wondered if he could tell I had a mustache. Apparently not, because everyday after that, he came in on my shift and asked me about the bands I liked and told women on my line that their baby food was full of antibiotics and arsenic. As an adult, there is no way that I would allow someone that outspoken and contentious to attach themselves to me, but at the time, I could not believe I was worthy of this person’s attention. My life of being seventeen and listening to *Get the Knack* on a tiny record player in my room was nothing compared to that of this adult man who had a neck tattoo, once booked Siouxsie Sioux at his college, and rode a bike.

My mind was set. I was going to ask this man whose name I did not know and who subsided on things like apple cider vinegar and Morningstar Farms nuggets to my senior prom. I wanted my mother to look at my prom pictures and cry. I wanted people who ordered the video yearbook to rewind the part where we stepped out of the limo arm-in-arm over and over again until the tape snapped and their own precious memories were destroyed forever. I wanted Kelvin Flag and anyone I’d ever had a crush on to think, “Cassie looks so hot right now. I totally should have gone out with her while I had the chance, but now she’s dating some old dude, and I only wish I hadn’t laughed at her when she had short, uneven bangs from a five-dollar Lemontree haircut.”

“So what are you doing tonight?” Cool Bike Guy asked, putting meatless bacon onto the conveyor belt. Weeks had passed and I still didn’t know his name.

“Actually, my friend’s band is playing a show.” I handed him a crumpled flyer I was keeping next to the register just in case he came in.

He looked it over. “I’m supposed to D.J. somewhere tonight. But I’ll give you a firm maybe.”

My heart sank. I made about sixteen consecutive jokes to cover up my disappointment and watched from the storefront window as he rode away on his

BMX. Work eventually ended, and I swung by my best friend Kelly’s house to kill time watching reruns of *Saturday Night Live* before the show started.

We got there after the second band was finishing up and stood outside for a while, drinking Slurpees and watching kids smoke cigarettes. When we went inside, I saw someone standing apart from the crowd, waving to me.

It couldn’t be.

It was.

“Uh, hey!” In that moment, it occurred to me how awkward it was that I still did not know his name. It began to dawn on me that every detail of this situation was incredibly awkward, a feeling I would get to know very well as I got older and continued a trajectory of horrible decision making. By now, disturbing romantic encounters are as comfortable as slipping under a set of cool sheets in the summertime, but then, in my nascent sexuality, it was a whole new world. I introduced Kelly but tried to not to look at her because I knew she was judging me.

“Hi, Kelly,” he said, shaking her hand. “I’m Eddie.”

Eddie!

“I really didn’t think you were going to show up, *Eddie.*” I said, avoiding Kelly’s glare. “How long have you been waiting?”

“About an hour, but it’s cool.”

Kelly piped up. “That’s a lot of pedaling.”

“Well, I *have* a car. I *usually* ride my bike for environmental purposes. I was even in a hit and run where I was in a coma for six months, but that didn’t stop me!”

You know when someone just wants you to ask them about their life so they can use you as free therapy? Recognizing when that is happening to you is a learned skill, one that I did not have at this age. Naturally we asked him what he was talking about.

“I was riding my bike home from the train station when a car hit me. I don’t remember any of it, but I woke up six months later. They say there’s no lasting brain damage, so I guess I was pretty lucky. Not like that time I cut off my finger!”

“What?” He flashed us his left hand, and sure enough, his index finger was missing from the knuckle up.

Kelly was raised by good parents and therefore had an intact gut instinct alerting her of danger. She knew when to ask questions and when to look longingly at the exit sign,



STEVE THUESON

The way some people say they spiritually identify with unicorns and honey badgers was how I felt about men over the age of thirty.

hoping I would pick up on it. I, on the other hand, had no idea when to stop poking the wasp nest of Eddie's life experiences. "How the hell did that happen?"

"It's nothing special, really. Industrial accident. One wrong move and *FUH!*" Eddie made the internationally recognizable sign for a finger being ripped off by a machine.

An eternity passed in silence. We watched the bands, but, really, I was too terrified to pay any attention. It wasn't so much that I had unthinkingly put myself in a jailbait situation as that I was now confronted by the

reality of loneliness when you are a middle-aged weirdo. Anything can happen to you—an industrial accident, a hit and run, a series of small disappointments that don't seem big at the time but add up after a while—and suddenly you are trying to impress a seventeen-year-old with your severed finger at a punk show. Eddie was halfway through his journey of bad decisions. Mine had only just begun.

The bands finished up. Eddie asked what we were up to after the show. Did we want to hang out? Listen to records? Go

for a bike ride? Get some fries at the diner? Kelly eagerly and emphatically said "no." I thanked Eddie for coming out to see me, covering up how weirded out I was with sixteen new jokes. We watched him walk to his tan hatchback Celica and drive away.

Kelly broke the silence. "Please don't do that ever again."

"I can't make any promises."

—Cassie J. Sneider

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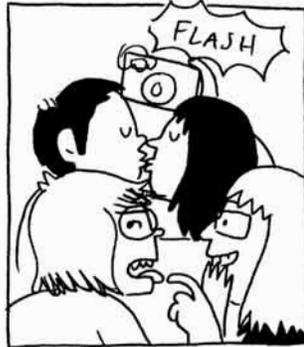
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* also, pretty sure they were older than me.

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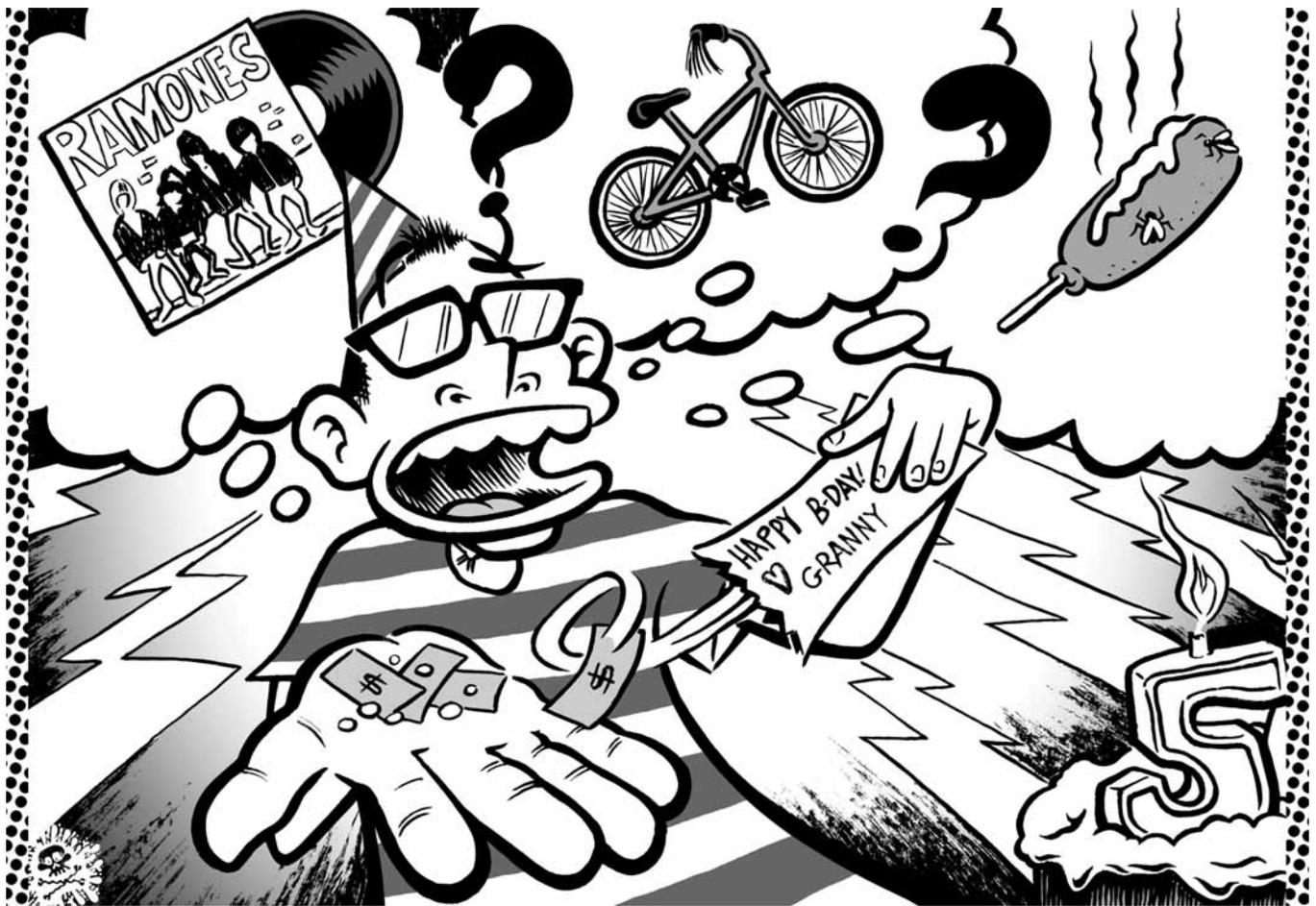
**“DON’T SPEND
THE SHIRT
BUTTON IN
ONE PLACE!!!”**

I Saw Schrödinger’s Cat; It Was Playing an AARP

This is the last column of my forties. I should probably be drinking forties as I write it, but I didn’t plan that far ahead ((not planning sufficiently far ahead being a recurring theme of my past 49.9 years on the planet)). If you’re any good at math ((or, at bare minimum, can count higher than forty-nine)), you know full well what this dread proclamation portends: **BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, I WILL HAVE REACHED AN AGE SO ADVANCED THAT I DARE NOT SPEAK ITS NUMERAL.** That’s right. *The big Jack Lord. The Roman numeral L-word. Alaska or Hawaii, whichever came last. My fortieth birthday was all right; I got thrown out of my own birthday show for stagediving ((off of the second-to-the-last stage Buddy Holly graced, I’ll have you know)). My thirtieth birthday was okay because my co-worker who also worked as a DJ on the local FM rawk station played “Ballroom Blitz” for me, which was, incidentally, released as a single in the U.S. on my tenth birthday, which itself was okay because I picked out a cool pair of blue suede cowboy boots for my present. My twentieth birthday absolutely sucked. I had to work outside in steaming hot temperatures in long pants all day, pulling weeds and spraying weed killer, after a day of breathing in defoliants my head hurt so badly that I spent the entire Friday night sitting in the dark with a damp rag on my head. It was fucking awful. People who spray that shit on their lawns have some serious rocks in their head, but I digress. There are many things that are disagreeable about aging, very few of which are particularly original or interesting gripes. However, the one aspect of my relentless slide towards prunedom that I neither anticipated nor planned for ((op. Cit.)) is that I **DON’T KNOW WHAT THE FUCK ANYTHING COSTS ANY MORE.** I mean, I see numbers on price stickers, and dollars in my wallet, and numbers on the bank statement, but I really have no idea what value is attached to these numbers. Five decades of inflation eventually obliterates one’s sense of what a dollar’s worth. I find, with increasing—and somewhat alarming—frequency, I can only measure cost by going online to an inflation calculator, and converting today’s dollars back into the dollars of times past. Like, there’s this push for a fifteen-dollar minimum wage that all the kids are all hopped up on these days. Fifteen bucks seems like a lot. *Is it a lot?* I have no idea. Thus, I go online, and*

convert that back into 1981 dollars. When I got my first after-school job—gutting chickens at a pizza restaurant, great work if you’re into having a shiny rotten brown layer of chicken fat residue coating your Chucks®, with chicken blood squishing around between your toes—the minimum wage had just been raised to \$3.35 an hour by outgoing President Jimmy Carter, as sort of a final fuck-you to the Republicans. \$3.35 an hour seemed like pretty decent money to a fifteen-year-old at that point—record store and McDonalds® money and a nice chunk in the bank for future abuses. Ergo, I have a hard time rectifying \$15 an hour with \$3.35 an hour. It’s all Monopoly™ money to me these days, albeit less excitingly hued. Converting \$3.35 in 1981 to 2015 dollars indicates that I was earning the equivalent of \$8.79 an hour back then, while \$15 today would have been \$5.71 in 1981 dough. Thus, fifteen bucks an hour is over one-and-two-thirds times what I was making when I was working for minimum wage. That seems a little unfeasible, but it doesn’t hurt to ask, I suppose ((the arguments for and against raising the minimum wage are so boring and predictable that we’re all the stupider for contemplating them. Management will, of course, throw their hands in the air, and explain how, sure, they’d LOVE to pay you more money, but the harsh economic reality of the current business climate with the rebrand and market shareholder competitive lean killer gorilla in the Perspex® hat, if we gave you a raise, we’d have to octuple our prices, we’d go out of business, there’d be layoffs and reduced hours and remember how we had pizza last year??? **IT’S PIE IN THE SKY!!! WE SIMPLY CAN’T AFFORD TO PAY YOU MORE THAN THREE NICKELS AND A SHIRT BUTTON AN HOUR!!! LET’S ALL PITCH IN!!! WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!!! DON’T SPEND THE SHIRT BUTTON IN ONE PLACE!!!** Meanwhile, the workers’ side of the argument is generally “how can I support my wife and four kids with my trainee position at Wendy’s®????” Well, sorry, but you kind of can’t. That’s why I got out of the chicken-gutting business, son!). \$3.35 was a decent enough wage for a teenager in 1981. Fast-forward eight years. The minimum wage moves not one cent upward under the reign of pruned-faced dingbat Ronald Reagan, and I, with both a high school and a college diploma to my credit at this point, am out to seek my fortune. What

am I doing? Glad you asked! I’m back to working FOR \$3.35 A FUCKING HOUR IN A PIZZA RESTAURANT. How much is that 1989 \$3.35 worth in today’s dollars? *\$6.45!* So, over the course of his two terms in office, that fuckhead Reagan managed to cut \$2.34 in today’s dollars off the wages of the poorest workers in the country, just by keeping the minimum wage static. What a jerk! I wish he was dead! ((and you know who, besides the usual rich greedy fucks, probably opposes raising the minimum wage most of all? A big hunk of the people making twelve bucks an hour or something like that. Even granting ye olde Miracle Exception where raising the minimum wage has no deleterious economic effects whatsoever, a lot of these fuckheads would oppose it, just because *it would mean they were no longer earning more than the people currently making eight bucks an hour.* It seems like half the people in this country would rather make \$12 and feel four dollars superior to the people making \$8 than they would making \$15 if it meant that the guy making \$8 was now also making \$15. **THEY WOULD RATHER MAKE LESS MONEY AS LONG AS IT MEANT THEY WERE MAKING MORE MONEY THAN SOMEONE ELSE.** America is a fuckin’ stupid country, man)) ((I remember working at Domino’s™ in the late ‘80s, when the talk of a potential minimum wage increase from \$3.35 was being rumored. Management assured us that this would be utter financial suicide: **DEAR LORD!!! WE’D HAVE TO RAISE OUR PRICES!!!** Predictably, Domino’s™ raised their prices every year, very regularly. The only thing they didn’t raise was what we got paid)) Well, fuckin’-A! What else? *Records!* I have no idea how much records cost these days. I paid six bucks for my first Ramones album in 1979 ((\$5.77 plus the then 4% Wisconsin sales tax, six bucks on the nose, thank you hippie head shop for eschewing the making of change)), what’s \$6.00 now? *Twelve bucks? Fifteen bucks?* No! **\$19.72!!!** That’s fuckin’ crazy!! I paid twenty-eight cents short of twenty bucks for my first Ramones album! ((1972 is also the year Richard Nixon got re-elected. Did you know he enacted a price and wage freeze to combat inflation? If you wanted to raise prices or wages, you had to send a request to a review board. Because, you know, Republicans = less government. I don’t think it lasted too long [[after Nixon resigned in disgrace, his successor, Gerald Ford,



ALEX BARRETT

This is the last column of my forties. I should probably be drinking forties as I write it, but I didn't plan that far ahead.

continued the mighty championing of anti-inflation efforts by manufacturing and distributing zillions of little orange buttons with the acronym "WIN" on them, which stood for "Whip Inflation Now." You could get one for free at a number of places. Wearing one was supposed to, um, indicate that, uh, you... ah... well, fuck, I have no idea what he thought wearing a WIN button was supposed to do, never mind]])). When I was in kindergarten, comic books were fifteen cents and football cards were a dime a pack, which is \$0.88 and \$0.59 in today's dollars, respectively, so why the fuck am I paying \$3.99 for *Silver Surfer* every month??? I mailordered the first Minor Threat EP for \$2.50 postpaid in 1981, which is \$6.56 today. The first issue of *MRR* back in '82 was a dollar, which translates to \$2.47 right now; *Razorcake*'s four-dollar asking price maths out to a luxurious \$1.62 in 1982 money. My first punk show set me back two bucks in 1980, which is \$5.79 today. *Rock stars! Bastards!* When I first started going to Packer

games, tickets were five bucks, which is \$28.55 in Today Dough, but a far cry from the ninety-whatever they're currently asking. For years, the most money I'd ever paid for a single record was twenty bucks for the original pressing of the first Supercharger album, which is thirty-one and change today, but still not as much as I paid for that Late Show *Portable Pop* album last year, which was fifty bucks, which, to me, is a shit-ton of money, but not that much considering that would have only been a fifteen dollar record if I was purchasing it as the same time as my first Ramones album, and if there had been a fifteen-dollar minimum wage back then, heck, I could have bought it after an hour's work ((the Ramones album cost me six hours of babysitting at a dollar an hour, \$3.29 today)). When I first started drinking, cheap beer was \$2.99 a twelve-pack, which is \$7.16 today, but a \$12.99 twelve-pack of today's fancy craft beer would have been \$5.42, which is only eight cents less than a postpaid copy of Suburban Mutilation's *The Opera*

Ain't Over Til The Fat Lady Sings would have run you. My first apartment cost \$260 a month, heat and water included, which is a princely \$576.63 in the present day. Up until I looked that up just now, you could have told me you paid \$575 a month for rent and, having not rented in the last seventeen years, I would have looked at you blankly, having no clue whatsoever if you lived in a cardboard box down by the river, or a dee-luxe apartment in the sky ((given what I recall of my first apartment, i'm guessing a \$575 apartment is closer to "box down by the river" than Norman The Doorman at present)). But, heck, these pecuniary conundrums aside, I'm doing well. My health is great; heck, I've felt like a million bucks since the day I was born! Which I guess means I feel like \$131,699.09. Hey, it's a living.

Love,
-Norb



“You wanna be a bum? Fine! Be a bum!”

Heathen Elementary

I had some rather different types of teachers when I was in elementary school. When I say different, I’m referring to how they carried themselves as people, which I now realize spilled over into their teaching methods. The junior high school in my neighborhood was shut down so that meant little Dale pulled an eight-year stretch at Gardenhill Elementary, from kindergarten through seventh grade. I made a handful of lifelong friends there along the way including our very own Art Fuentes, who started going to Gardenhill during our third grade year. I remember the teachers as much as I remember the friends I made during the years there.

In kindergarten my teacher was Mrs. Webster. She was older and her face reminded me a bit of one of those old Punch and Judy puppets with light blue eyes and a graying Jackie O. hairdo. Kind of a quiet lady, she was always looking around the class with this preoccupied look on her face like she was thinking of something else. Not unpleasant, but not a memorable teacher either, by any means.

During the first grade I had Mrs. Cunningham, a very smiley young lady who looked exactly like the ‘60s model Twiggy, if Twiggy was Japanese. Always decked out like a member of *The Partridge Family*, Mrs. C. kept up on the kids in our class, especially with our writing skills. The other thing she tried to do regularly was have some students’ parents come in during class before holiday breaks to cook something from their corresponding ethnicity, which was a cool way of exposing kids to other cultures (even if some of the parents were pretty bad at cooking).

The next school year was when I started noticing the difference in some of my teachers’ behaviors. I was introduced to the spastic Mrs. Bouck in second grade. (I wrote of her enduring some of our school time shenanigans back in issue #76.) She always reminded me of an older, woolly-headed Mrs. Wilson from that *Dennis the Menace* comic strip, but with Army-issued black frame glasses. On the outside she appeared to dig kids, but on the inside it was a different story. She’d get overwhelmed super quick and start sputtering, turning red, and yelling, *especially* when one of us would deliberately start dicking around during class and everyone started laughing. That was her Achilles heel,

yet she had no expertise of nipping it in the bud besides flipping out. She didn’t return the following year.

In the third grade my teacher was Mrs. Leonard, a surly New Yorker who looked like Mr. Burns from *The Simpsons* with long, stringy bleach-blond hair. Sporting pants suits most of the time, she always had this look on her mug like she just stepped into a steaming dog pile. I’m serious, if the woman happened to be happy at all, no one could ever tell. She was one of those teachers who left you alone if you did your work. When she came around our desks while we were working on something (and it better have been quiet during this time), she’d always lean over your shoulder, just enough to where you’d see her in your peripheral vision. If you happened to miss seeing her do this because you were fucking off, you’d get a monkey bump atop your noggin with a sneering, “Get to work, knucklehead!” accompanying it. Heh, try doing that nowadays if you’re a teacher.

The Biggest Piece of Work Award goes to my fourth grade teacher Mr. Ball, and I use the word “teacher” loosely. He looked like a middle-aged, balding David Berkowitz (Son of Sam) with Jim Jones’ (Jonestown) gold frame glasses. Not only did this goof try to get our class to sing along to folk songs while he played a banjo (!), but he got about zero respect from his classes because of the way he dealt with them.

Totally the type of teacher who was there to minimally do his job and nothing more, he pulled some stunts that would get a teacher fired (if not arrested) these days. One of the biggest boners Ball pulled was after school one afternoon. Our friend Todd (who I dedicated a column to back in issue #16) had to stay after class for detention so my friend Chris and I thought it would be funny to grab our bikes after we got home and ride back by the classroom hallway to mess with Todd, maybe bug Mr. Ball enough to let him leave detention. As we rolled up and stuck our heads in the door, we saw Todd sitting in the classroom all by himself, tied to his chair like the victim of a robbery with one of those super long, braided yellow jump ropes.

“Dude!” we yelled, running in and untying him. “What the hell?!”

“He went to the office, and thought I was gonna bolt,” said Todd.

Wait.
What?

Right as we got done untying Todd, Mr. Ball walked in the door and froze. “Later!” bellowed Todd, throwing the chair across the floor and jamming outside through the other door.

Right as Chris and I scrambled after him to grab our bikes out in the hallway, Ball hopped on my bike and said to me with that stupid smirk on his face, “Look what I got!”

“If you don’t get off,” I yelled, “my dad will make you get off!”

I don’t know if he remembered seeing my old man (who didn’t dig him at *all*) during the school year, but I think he was afraid of us three telling our parents what just happened. As soon as Todd’s ma found out, she was about ready to plant a boot in the balls of Mr. Ball. To this day, almost everyone I tell this story to can’t believe it, with the exception of Chris (who was there) and a few of our friends who had Mr. Ball as a teacher. I’m just glad that chair stunt didn’t happen to Chris or me, as our fathers would’ve literally beaten the piss out of him.

My sixth grade year was with Mrs. LaTraverse. She had the face of a tanned mummy with circular, beady reptile eyes and the hair of a ‘70s woman tennis player (and shirts to match). Although a fairly good teacher, she could be very dismissive if her kids repeatedly gave up or were being lazy about trying to learn. “You wanna be a bum? Fine! Be a bum! But you’re not gonna disrupt my class. Go sit outside!” This worked up to point, but if she stuck you outside and you started wandering around the hallways, then she’d get pissed. “Get inside, sit down and don’t say a word, smart guy!” She said that to both the boys and girls. The weird thing is that she never got mad if I sat there drawing band logos or pictures in class. As long as I got my work finished, she was cool with that. I think she bailed after only a year, too, possibly retiring.

My seventh grade year was spent with Mrs. Merritt, who looked a little like Poly Styrene (X-Ray Spex), carried on with the demeanor of a hippie and the wardrobe of Stevie Nicks. The lasting image I have in my head from her class is of the formaldehyde-filled jars sitting on the shelves, containing various insects and small animals bobbing about, including a baby pig that was about eight inches long. She was heavy into science. As long as there weren’t any loud outbursts or fighting in her class and everyone completed



JACKIE RUSTED

We saw Todd sitting in the classroom all by himself, tied to his chair like the victim of a robbery with one of those super long, braided yellow jump ropes.

their assignments, she was very lax about students doing whatever.

Back to the fifth grade, to the teacher who made a noticeable difference: Mr. Spence. What set Mr. Spence apart from the other teachers at my school—and probably everywhere else—was that not only did he honestly love doing his job, but he loved doing it well, and it showed. He connected with as many kids in his classes as he possibly could and dug into each kid’s potential to really help them succeed, to get them ready for the next steps in high school and beyond. There wasn’t a damn teacher I had the whole time growing up during elementary school and high school who cared about learning the way Mr. Spence did. Not a one.

I specifically remember him talking to us like adults, especially during classroom discussions, always calling us “folks.” To

this day when I use or hear the word “folks” I am often reminded of him. Mr. Spence could totally be a hard ass but he was always fair; if you disrespected him it usually only happened once, not so much out of fear but out of the mutual respect he built with his students. We all grew to appreciate it. Well, almost all of us.

There was a small kid named David who transferred into our class for part of the year, and I remember Mr. Spence and him getting into it in class one afternoon. David looked up at him from his chair and said, “Fuck you,” the same exact way Swan said it to the leader of The Orphans in *The Warriors*. As soon as those words left his lips, Mr. Spence lifted him up by the front collars of his shirt and walked him outside to the opposite wall across the hallway, talking to David nose-to-nose in a very low and serious voice that we

all thought was gonna cause David to piss the front of his jeans. Mr. Spence always reminded me a bit of a taller James Caan, and David was getting a taste of Sonny Corleone that day.

Besides being a stand-up teacher, I vividly remember Mr. Spence and his wife Jane opening up their home to us heathens that summer for a pool party and BBQ. As I finish writing this during the unusually humid summer swelter in Los Angeles, I also sit here thinking about that particular summer, thrashing about with pals and cooling off in that pool.

Cheers, Mr. Spence!

—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

BITE THE CACTUS

DYING PINE TREE INTERVENTION -OR HOW TO HELP A TREE IN DROUGHT

ADRIAN CHI

•MY MOM'S BIG PINE TREE (OR THE TREE IN HER BACKYARD CUZ-WHY OWNERSHIP...?) WAS 'LOOKIN' REAL BAD. BIG CRISPY BROWN SECTIONS AND DROPPING DEAD BRANCHES...NO GOOD! I WAS ABLE TO STEP IN AND MAKE SOME CHANGES THAT I HOPE WILL HELP. NOT EVERY TREE WILL HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS AS THIS ONE, BUT ALMOST EVERY TREE APPRECIATES MULCH. DYING TREES EFFECT MORE THAN JUST THE SHADE ON YOUR HOUSE-CREATURES MAKE HOMES IN THEM TOO! THERE ARE SO MANY REASONS TO KEEP PLANTS AROUND YOU HEALTHY!!!

FIRST I CLEARED AWAY ALL THE GRAVEL AND LANDSCAPING FABRIC FROM THE BASE OF THE TREE. FABRIC WAS STAPLED INTO THE WOOD OF THE TRUNK!



IT TOOK ME A FEW HOURS TO MOVE ALL THE GRAVEL (WITH A SQUARE NOSE SHOVEL)



WHEN I FINALLY CLEARED THE AREA AROUND THE TREE (YOU WANNA GO AS WIDE AS THE CANOPY REACHES) THE SOIL BENEATH WAS BONE DRY AND ROCK HARD! NO WONDER THIS TREE WAS DYING.



THE SOIL HAD BEEN COMPACTED BY THE GRAVEL AND WAS SO HARD THAT EVEN WHEN IT DID RAIN IT COULDN'T ABSORB ANY WATER FOR THE TREE TO DRINK!



I BROKE UP THE SOIL JUST ENOUGH SO THAT WATER WOULDN'T RUN OFF ANY MORE AND I MIXED IN SOME COMPOST TO ADD NUTRIENTS.



DIFFERENT TREES AND PLANTS LIKE DIFFERENT FOODS/COMPOST/NUTRIENTS, SO YOU CAN BE SELECTIVE WHEN BUYING PLANT-FOOD. EVERGREENS LIKE ACIDIC SOILS, SO I GOT ONE FOR "ACID-LOVING PLANTS"



LASTLY, I COVERED THE AREA WITH A LAYER OF WOOD-CHIP MULCH A FEW INCHES THICK TO HELP KEEP IN MOISTURE AND ADD NUTRIENTS TO THE SOIL AS IT BREAKS DOWN.

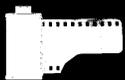


I GAVE IT A GOOD (LIKE REALLY REALLY GOOD) SOAKING WITH THE HOSE...



THEN COVERED IN DIRT, SWEAT, AND A HOSE-SOAKED HEAD, I SAT AND BASKED IN ALL ITS GLORY.





Dan Monick's Photo Page
Tad Kubler, Minneapolis, MN 07/03/15

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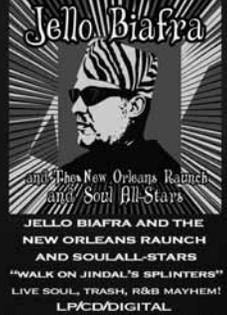
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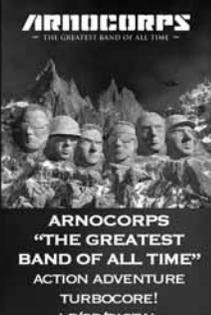
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I'VE LOVED TO DRAW...

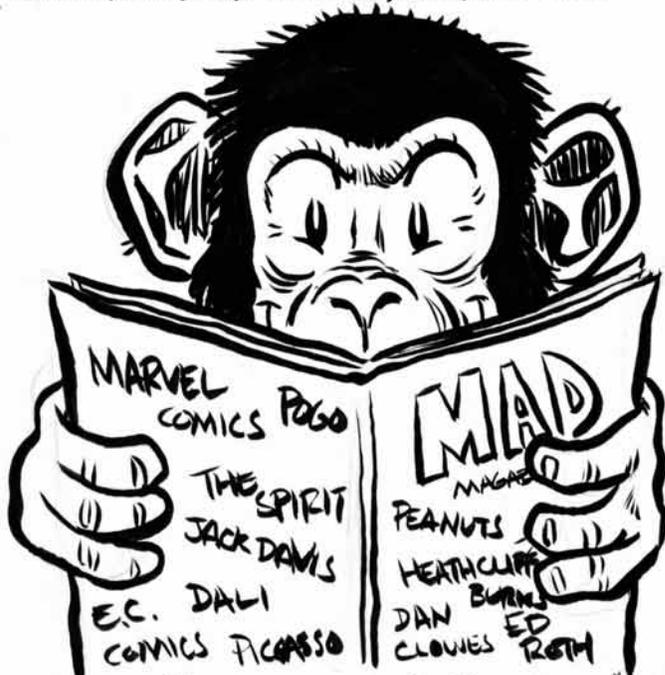
I WOULD LAY ON THE FLOOR FOR HOURS STUDYING THE COMIC STRIPS THAT I LOVED. ABSORBING ANY INFORMATION I COULD.



PEOPLE ALWAYS ASK ME. "HOW DID YOU LEARN TO DRAW LIKE YOU DO?" I TELL THEM IT'S BEEN A LONG PROCESS.



I WOULD PORE OVER ANY ART I COULD GET MY HANDS ON. ANYTHING THAT SPARKED MY MIND, CAUGHT MY EYE ..



COMICS AND CARTOONS WERE MY FAVORITES, AS WELL AS FINE ARTISTS LIKE DALI AND PICASSO.

I NEVER WENT TO ART SCHOOL, I JUST GAVE MYSELF A DIY ART EDUCATION. BY WORKING HARD AND ALWAYS DRAWING, DRAWING, DRAWING, I'VE DONE OK FOR MYSELF.



MY METHOD IS NOT FOR EVERYONE, BUT I AM HAPPY BECAUSE I DID IT ON MY OWN.

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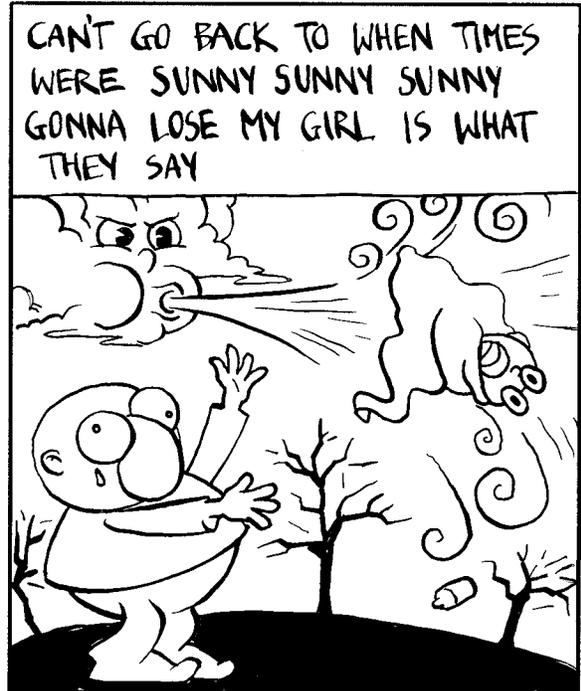
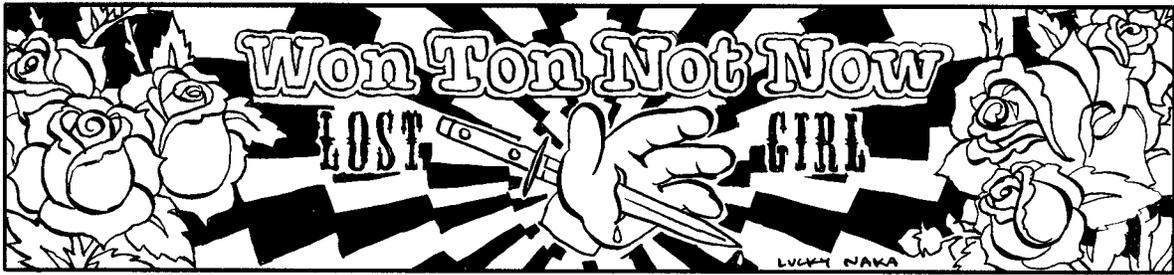
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“The little evil chicken on my shoulder.”

Soup Zombie Ruckus

It was last summer when I really got to know my friend, the Bearded Shane. Shane moved up here a few years ago from the Green Bay area. Shane is about half my age, but thanks to his great taste in music we became friends. I can't help but be impressed by his intense appreciation for Alex Chilton and Big Star. We started trading CDs and sharing various albums we thought the other should have. That's when I first acquired a copy of the *Obsoletes* album. This album really hit me last summer. It rarely left my shop stereo and my regular customers were probably getting sick of it, but who cares?

The only *Obsoletes* material I had previous to this was their Bob Dylan cover album with Rev. Norb. I had never heard their original material. I had seen their previous bands—Yesterday's Kids, the Screwballs, and the Benjamins—but I had never once seen the *Obsoletes* or heard anything but their Bob Dylan covers. It really made me feel like a northwoods recluse hick to finally hear their album and realize what I'd been missing. I declared this my new favorite album. The fact that the band had broken up years before was irrelevant. It may have been years too late, but I declared the *Obsoletes* to be great.

Fast forward to this summer, about one year after finally hearing this great album. I was just getting into the beginning of my busy tourist season when I heard of the San Pedro circus coming to Milwaukee. Toys That Kill and Underground Railroad To Candyland were both playing the same night at two clubs in the same neighborhood. I started wondering if I could possibly make it down for this great night of music. The shows were arranged by my friends in Holy Shit! and they were playing at the late show as well. I really, really wanted to attend this show, but my job and my life almost prevent it this time of year.

Then the Bearded Shane informed me that the late show now included an *Obsoletes* reunion. It really hurt to hear this news for I knew these shows were just not in the cards for me. This particular night of mega rock'n'roll was July 2, two days before the fourth, my busiest time all summer. There was no way I could pull it off. I would be stuck at my northwoods soup shop working late and trying to keep my mind off the incredible night of music

I was missing. I've gotten used to missing many nights of great music due to my business responsibilities, but this particular night was really eating away at me. I just tried to erase it from my mind.

It was around June 30 when my Hen laid the golden egg. She offered to come along and then do the driving so I could sleep during the four-hour ride home. I hemmed and hawed for many hours. Would I make the smart decision and concentrate on my business and the proper execution of my duties, or would I make the irresponsible decision and give my soul to rock'n'roll?

Shane stopped in for soup the next day. I told him there was no way I could go. Even as the words fell out of my mouth I could see the little evil chicken on my shoulder. He was looking me square in the beak and chuckling. Who was I kidding?

I put a Toys That Kill CD into my shop stereo. I caught myself air drumming to the first song when nobody was watching. That settled it. Next I put on my Underground Railroad To Candyland CD. I was whistling along while stirring the soup. I put in my *Obsoletes* CD and fast-forwarded to the seventh track, a pop rock nugget entitled “Goin’ Down to Milwaukee.” It was my favorite song of theirs. It was staring me in the face. The world started making more sense.

Dinghole Report #152: Forbidden Ruckus, Round One! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #697)

My Hen and I rolled into the Riverwest neighborhood and soon found the first show's venue, the Cocoon Room. I noticed the enormous RV across the street with California plates and figured both bands arrived together. My amazing Hen and I walked across the street to the Riverwest Public House for a brew. We walked in and saw the Bearded Shane sitting at a table. I shuffled my way up to him and said, “Yup, there's no way I can make it to these shows.” He grinned and said, “I see that.” Soon we were back across the street, sneaking my Chicken kit in while an opening band finished up.

With little delay, Toys That Kill were set up and ready to rock. I sheepishly squirmed up to the front of the room and took a spot in full view of the rock. It had been six years since I had my socks rocked off by these guys at Baltimore's Insubordination

Fest. They have lost *no* power or intensity in those six years. *They simply rocked.* I stared in awe at their drummer Jimmy. He is a monster, an inspiration. The guy plays at top intensity for *the entire set*. Instantly, the trip was worth it. They finished their set and were then enticed into an encore. They left the room in ruins.

Among the ruins, I quickly threw together my crappy Chicken kit at the back of the room. People were still huddled around the stage when the opening drumroll erupted. I dished out a healthy dose of dumb-sounding poultry beats and raised my wings to the ceiling. The room filled with cheers! I pounded out dose after dose of my time-tested audio chaos. They cheered louder. Then I reached down and pulled out my grossly oversized *ruckus logs!* I pounded harder and harder on my ever-crumbling drums with these percussive battle clubs! My floor tom finally gave out. The tom's drumhead had ruptured under the ruckus log assault. Without hesitation, I stabbed one log down into the floor tom itself through the ripped drumhead. I hoisted the freshly impaled tom up into the air, drum on a stick! The screams were deafening! I collapsed and lay motionless amongst the debris. A Milwaukee friend placed a cool can of Blatz into my wing.

Dinghole Report #153: Forbidden Ruckus, Round Two! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #698)

About two blocks away, my amazing Hen and I scored a parking spot directly across the street from the Bremen Cafe, the night's second venue. Once inside, I was delighted to learn they sell one liter steins of Old Milwaukee. That *Obsoletes* song came back into my head. Everything seems to fall into place at times. The first band was Chicago's Polish Gifts. My Hen and I enjoyed chatting in Polish with their singer a bit before they got the room rocking. Next up were Holy Shit! It was nice to see them in their own neighborhood on a stage twice the size of my kitchen. They were blazing as usual, just explosive. Eric, their drummer, was gracious enough to lend me his floor tom so the ruckus could continue.

I snagged my buddy Chris (half of the duo currently producing a documentary on the Green Bay punk scene called *Green*



CODEY RICHARDS

Fine display of rhythmic embarrassment and lunacy!

Blah!) and recruited him into the Ruckus Roadie Militia. We briskly threw the drums into the center of the room and I pulled on the ragged Chickenhead. For the second time that night, Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood got a taste of truly trashy rhythms. My ruckus shook the house and got the crowd a'yelling! The Old Milwaukee fueled a fine display of rhythmic embarrassment and lunacy! I skipped the ruckus logs this time and just flopped around on the ground until the show felt done. Victory yet again!

Five minutes later, I had a new liter of Old Mil in my paw as the Obsoletes took the stage. I stood on a bleacher seat in the back of the small room to get a perfect view. With little hesitation, they rolled right into their

first number, "Goin' down to Milwaukee," in Milwaukee. The room was packed. The music was perfect. They were just great. The beer was cold. Every eye was on the stage. Again, totally worth the trip.

Last up were Underground Railroad To Candyland, who looked a lot more like Toys That Kill since the last time I saw them! A most noticeable change was seeing Jimmy on drums again, but with a second drummer to his right playing a floor tom. I was perplexed by this new development until they played. I was instantly won over. Despite their incredibly powerful wall of sound, I got drowsy. Before long, my savior Hen was behind the wheel and I reclined in the

passenger seat. I really only slept from Sheboygan to Sturgeon Bay.

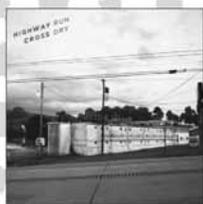
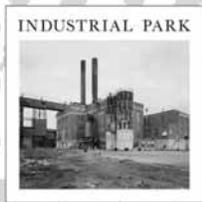
After very, very little sleep, and a tremendous night of rock'n'roll, I worked my busiest day of the summer alone. I was a soup zombie. I was moving solely by twitching nerve impulses. I was stuck making soups until about 10 PM. That's when I pulled my drums in from the car to start repairs.

There was a Fourth of July parade in the morning.

—Rhythm Chicken

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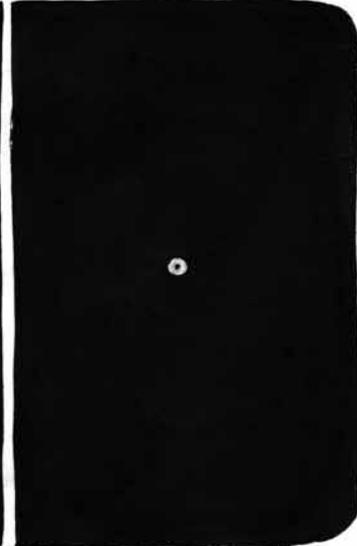
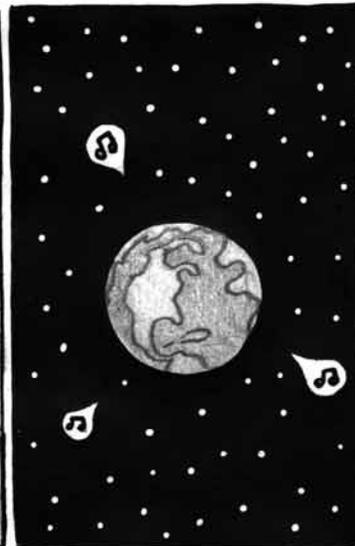
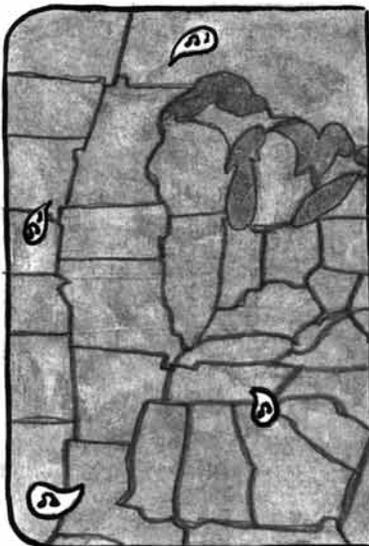
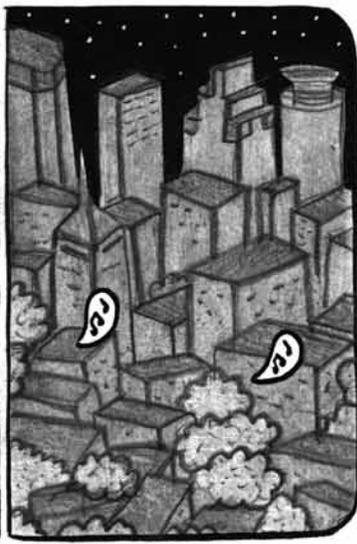
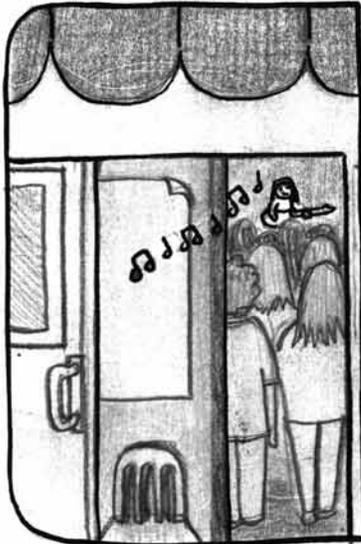
MRR hates us.
(called us drunk dads)
Razorcake likes us.
(two positive reviews in no.87)



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Sivle Si Dog**



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NEVER LET
ME FORGET
DONNA RAMONE

**“It was
exhausting
being so mean
all the time.”**

I'm a Teenage Lobotomy

Rock 'N' Roll High School is the greatest film ever made. It has been since the Big Bang and will continue to be after the universe collapses. This is an objective fact that has been empirically proven and peer reviewed by experts. It also happens to be my favorite movie, and Riff Randall, despite being a fictional character, was my hero and the mold I used to shape myself as I maneuvered through the shit years between age sixteen (when I found a *Rock 'N' Roll High School* VHS) and twenty-eight (when I had completely blossomed into full-fledged punk idiot). Like Riff, I was confident, loud, spontaneous, fun, and obsessed with the Ramones. By the end of my twenties, I had thoroughly crafted a life that, for a short while, had made my dreams into a reality. I fought authority, stopped giving any fucks, and was only casually concerned about any future I might have. I just wanted to live for rock'n'roll and blow up a school while dancing in a fantastic satin jacket. For a short while there, I was naïve enough to believe I actually *was* Riff Randall.

At sixteen, the movie became my bible. Joey Ramone was my Jesus. Dee Dee, Johnny, Marky, and Tommy were the apostles and I was their devoted disciple. By eighteen, I was digging through thrift stores for tight black pants and baseball jackets for the perfect Riff Randall punk look. By twenty-one, I had a very punk (i.e. not very good) Ramones tattoo on my back and a very loud fearlessness of authority (sorry, dad). Luckily, I loved the Ramones and sought out the movie. Were it the other way around, I might have another band from the soundtrack tattooed on me—like Paul McCartney's Wings. Woof.

By my twenties, I had helped create two warehouse venues, and they were like my very own Vince Lombardi High School (major wink-wink to my friends right now). I was attending a show nearly every night and was, as I thought, living the dream. Since it's important to drink copious amounts of cheap beer to show off how carefree and destructive someone is, I had a near unlimited supply of recyclable aluminum cans to fish out of the garbage cans at the venue. I was making about one hundred to two hundred dollars a month on average, which is just enough for gas and a bottle or two of cheap rum. Being unemployed and living at home, I was able to pull it off for a while, but I also really wanted to support the bands that I saw by buying their shirts and records. Riff always

supported her friends and so would I. I also occasionally liked to eat.

So not only did I start to slowly accumulate debt (I once overdrew my account buying season three of *The Muppet Show*, and that was one of my better decisions) but my car and most of my clothing smelled like garbage juice from diving for those cans. But fuck you! I'm a punk rocker, like the fictitious Sheena! Although Riff Randall is in high school, she manages to have money for those Ramones tickets and a cool car and nice clothes and a bag of weed strong enough to make her hallucinate Dee Dee Ramone playing bass in the shower. She manages to not only take control and “rule the school” by starting multiple dance parties, but she looks great and very clean the whole time. I thought I could have used super-senior salesman and life coach Eaglebauer to help get my shit in order, but what I actually should have done was remember movies never depict reality.

My debt kept growing (and I wanted to one day not be woken up by my mom yelling complaints at me) so I worked at getting myself a decent job. I went to college twice and, I thought, “I'm a carefree, incredibly fun asset to any company blessed enough to have me knocking at their doors. Right?” Nope. “Thank you for your interest, but...” began every email I was lucky enough to even get a response to. I spent hours sending out my school-heavy but experience-light resume to every employer that I thought I had some skillset for, but no one wanted me. Was it because all of my clothing had alterations made by kitchen scissors? That I'd rather cut off my toes than wear heels? Maybe it was my haircut that was drunkenly executed by a friend at 1 AM in their bathroom? I embodied the term “hard pass.”

I eventually ended up with an unpaid internship, which turned into a part-time, ten dollars-an-hour job, at a gallery run by an artist regularly creating works with punk themes. The exhibit running when I was hired was of original art for famous punk albums. This modern-day Riff Randall had found her perfect job and was still ruling the school. Only, I wasn't. The gallery manager made disparaging comments about my clothing, hair, and lack of makeup. She told everyone she was concerned about having a punk there since I “must have anger issues.”

I wasn't an asset; I was a liability. I didn't lend the place any punk credit; I devalued its art world standing. Being Riff Randall wasn't working, and goddamn it, it certainly

wasn't making me happy. Because I was seen as this intense, unstable punk, no one even told me I was going to be fired. I ended up discovering my employers had listed my job on Craigslist. When I resigned, I made a big production and mentioned lawyers (knowing they couldn't call my bluff). I was hard, I was mean, and I was unapologetic. I wanted to help them achieve greatness and they had fucked me. I wasn't Riff Randall anymore. I was her exact opposite. If no one wanted to listen to me, I would make them. I had my hair up, I was in a pencil skirt, and I had become the evil villain. Assholes, meet your new enemy: Principal Togar.

Once pushed into becoming the mean, disciplinary Principal Togar, I found myself always being Togar. I was angry and frustrated with the entire world, all the time. Riff Randall's “funemployment” very quickly shifted into a consistently unemployed Togar rage. I was no longer content to just hang out in the same backyard, drinking the same beer that tasted like the refrigerated crocodile tears of a spoiled child. I didn't want to run the door and clean up after another punk show while some well-meaning patron went, “Man, it must be so cool to work here.” I didn't want to fish out beer cans for money, especially when those trashcans were coated in vomit (some of which was mine, admittedly) and broken shards when I couldn't afford to get a tetanus shot. I didn't want to sit around, night after night, pleading with a band consisting of drunk dudes with beards and whiskey bottle tattoos to party elsewhere so I could go home. I was very Togar when those same dudes ignored me, patted my head in vague recognition that I had said something, or responded by asking me if I was married. Everyday, someone made me want to scream, “DETENTION! FOR LIFE!”

When I was twenty-eight, I dressed up as Riff Randall for the annual Halloween show and I suddenly saw all the cracks in my fantasy. When I looked down at my costume, I said to myself, “Donna, remember when you were twelve and gave yourself the last name Ramone? That was such a good, original idea. Use it to write a column in your thirties.” But when I looked in the mirror, I didn't look like Riff at all. I didn't see someone maniacally excited to break all the rules and blow up an institution of learning. I just saw someone who was unfulfilled, frustrated, and angry. “Hey, Donna. Listen, I know you're this free spirit so you can't afford a blonde wig to really



BILL PINKEL

Riff Randall's "funemployment" very quickly shifted into a consistently unemployed Togar rage.

bring this look together, but don't worry, people know that you are Riff Randall." That night, while actually dressed up like Riff Randall, I finally understood I wasn't actually her. No one can live a fantasy all the time. More importantly, I didn't want to. I loved supporting my friends, having fun, and getting everyone dancing to the Ramones but I didn't want to be a loud, devil-may-care destructive kid who skipped all responsibilities for a week just to wait in line for concert tickets.

So, I dropped out.

Before I wound up in a straightjacket and wheelchair being spoon-fed oatmeal, I quit. Being Riff Randall was great while it lasted, but it stopped working in my favor the closer I crept towards thirty. What was once innocently brash and carefree had turned immature, selfish, and obnoxious. I wanted to be fun, but responsible and independent. I wanted to run around and break rules, but I also wanted to have a clean bill of health and an even cleaner bill of debt. And I never wanted to be Principal Togar again. It was exhausting and awful being so mean all the

time. No one wants a Togar around, not even Togar. I just wanted to be happy, responsible, and squeaky clean. And that's all I ever wanted to be from the start. I simply wanted to be content and maybe read a book, put on a record, and split some protons in the basement.

Turns out, I didn't want to be Riff Randall after all. I just wanted to be her best friend, Kate Rambeau.

—Donna Ramone

JOHN TALLEY- JONES

Urinals

100 FLOWERS

RADWASTE

TROTSKY ICEPICK

Urinals, circa '79 (l-r John Talley-Jones,
Kevin Barrett, and Kjehl Johansen)
Photo by EDWARD COLVER

John Talley-Jones has been a constant creative presence in the Los Angeles underground music scene since the late 1970s.

Talley-Jones (bass) formed the Urinals with Kjehl Johansen (guitar) and Kevin Barrett (drums) in 1978 while attending UCLA as an undergraduate. No member of the Urinals played an instrument before. The Urinals, while inspired by punk rock, were also informed by contemporary avant-garde music. Punk liberated music for fans, but it was avant-garde composers such as John Cage who, decades earlier, took it a step further by democratizing all sounds as music.

This methodology was as important to the Urinals as punk rock. While most punk bands strove for technical proficiency, the Urinals opted for something different. They effectively threw music theory out the window and played on intuition. It's a surprisingly simple mission statement—play what sounds good to you, irrespective of musical conventions—few in rock had thought of before, let alone implemented.

Realizing the Urinals had a very limited audience, John Talley-Jones founded Happy Squid Records. The label released three classic Urinals singles. It also put out 7" by likeminded bands and artists. One of Happy Squid's greatest achievements was *Keats Rides a Harley* (1981), a compilation featuring the earliest Gun Club and Meat Puppets tracks.

As the Urinals became more proficient, the band felt a name change was necessary. The Urinals became 100 Flowers, a more refined and musically adventurous project than the Urinals. The group, unfortunately, didn't last long. They broke up a month before the release of their stunning, 1983 self-titled debut.

Talley-Jones went on after 100 Flowers to form Radwaste, a group featuring four drummers. He became the vocalist in the late '80s for Trotsky Icepick, a band founded a few years earlier by former Urinals guitarist Kjehl Johansen and Vitus Matare of the Last.

Amphetamine Reptile released in 1996 *Negative Capability...Check It Out!*, a great Urinals retrospective that compiled the group's late '70s singles and numerous unreleased live tracks. That same year, the Urinals played a well-received, one-off show. The positive feedback inspired the band to reform and work on new material. *What Is Real and What Is Not* the first Urinals full-length of completely new songs came out in 2003.

Talley-Jones is now busier than ever—since retiring as the medical book buyer for the UCLA Health Science store—playing in the Urinals, Radwaste, and Trotsky Icepick. The second Urinals LP, *Next Year at Marienbad*, was released earlier this year.

INTERVIEW - RYAN LEACH
PHOTOGRAPHY - EDWARD COLVER & DON WILLIAMS
LAYOUT - DYLAN DAVIS



"OUR BAND HAD TO BE ABOUT THE MUSIC, BECAUSE WE COULDN'T PLAY OUR INSTRUMENTS."

Urinals, circa '79 (l-r John Talley-Jones, Kevin Barrett, and Kjejl Johansen) | Photo by EDWARD COLVER

Ryan: Can you tell me a little about where you grew up?

John: Sure. I'm a military brat. I grew up in an army environment. My dad was career military. I was born in a Quonset hut at Fort Ord, California. After the age of three months, we moved. My family continued to move until I was in high school. I've lived in a number of different places, in order: California, Georgia, Vermont, Kansas, Germany, Virginia, and Texas. My dad retired in Texas. I came out to California after living in Texas and I've been here ever since. So I've been in California for a long time, but I'm not native. Actually, I am sort of native. I was born in California but my family left for Georgia almost immediately afterwards.

Ryan: You went to the University of Texas at Austin, correct?

John: Yes. For two years.

Ryan: What years did you go there?

John: You're trying to figure out my age, huh?

Ryan: Sorry, man.

John: [laughs] No. It's okay. I enrolled there in the fall of '74. I came out to California in '76. The point was I had to live in California for a year to get my residency so I could go to school. So I moved up to the Bay Area for a year, where I worked and waited to get California residency. After that I went to UCLA.

Ryan: The reason I asked you what years you went to the University of Texas was because I know you were friends with Phil Tolstead of the Huns.

John: Phil and I went to high school together in San Antonio. He lived three doors down from me. We became friends in high school and we roomed together at UT later on.

Ryan: You guys were both enrolled in the communications department at UT?

John: I was in the radio-television-film program at UT. Phil was making films, so I'm fairly certain we were both in the same department. Phil wrote for the school newspaper in high school.

Ryan: Both the Urinals and the Huns seemed informed by Situationist ideas of jolting people out of their daily routines and experiences. Of course, Phil came out of the gate strong by getting arrested and causing a riot at the first Huns show.

John: That's right. Phil made his mark very early on. He was always a splashy character. I think Phil wanted to make a big impact—and he did. Eventually, he changed his mind about all that stuff and embraced Christianity. At a certain point when Phil became born again, he burned all of the films he had made. Everyone told him, "No! Don't do that." Phil made interesting, lively, perverse, and funny films. It seemed like such a loss to have that

stuff destroyed, but Phil wanted nothing to do with his former life.

Phil was a person of extremes. I think he went too far in one direction, freaked out, and then got very conservative about his philosophy of life. This is just my own personal speculation. I don't want to put words in Phil's mouth. He would do a lot of things spontaneously and I think he might have regretted some of those things.

Ryan: I know the Urinals' first show was at UCLA, but didn't you guys drive out to Austin to play a show early on?

John: [laughs] Yes, we did. It's funny. I had the Austin connection. We didn't know how to get shows off campus. We only knew our immediate UCLA environment. Somehow we got an invite from Tom (Huckabee) or Phil from the Huns to come out and play Austin. So before we played Hollywood—before we played off campus—we played out of state. It was weird and unexpected. We played Raul's.

Ryan: That's amazing. Raul's was the epicenter of the Austin punk scene.

John: Yeah. Raul's was where it was happening. We were certainly very green at that point. We didn't have any stage presence to speak of. I think people were a little bit underwhelmed. The punk scene in Austin—and I don't know if this is a totally fair

assessment, but it's how I felt—was all about spectacle and theatricality. The Urinals were the opposite of that. Our band had to be about the music, because we couldn't play our instruments. So that's what we emphasized, over any kind of flash.

Ryan: The Urinals first show at UCLA was as a five-piece. Was there ever any intention of keeping that lineup together?

John: They (Delia Frankel and Steve Willard) were there for one show, our debut. There was really no intention of continuing on with the band after the first show. We wanted to do a live performance and that was it. But Kevin (Barrett), Kjehl (Johansen) and I thought, "Hey, this is kind of interesting."

Delia and Steve were not interested. They wanted to pursue their own thing. Delia, our original singer—she was a theater arts major—she wanted to get back to that. Steve, the guitarist, thought we were too incompetent to continue. He'd get really frustrated—constantly showing us how to tune our instruments and telling us what we could and couldn't do.

Our philosophy was, "As long as the music sounds okay, it doesn't really matter if what we're playing is proper." Steve had this idea about proper musicianship, which is fine. But we were in opposition to that. That's all there was to it. The three of us (Talley-Jones, Barrett, and Johansen) decided, "Well, this is kind of worth pursuing. Let's see where this goes." Over the following summer, Kjehl and I wrote material separately and when we reconvened in the fall we had new material to try out. It just went from there.

Ryan: I know you and Kevin were total novices. Did Kjehl have any background on guitar?

John: No. He was a total novice as well. In the five-piece, he was actually playing a toy keyboard. He switched to guitar when Steve left. We were all starting from zero. I thought that was an important part of our aesthetic. We were all coming in on the ground floor, not knowing what to do.

Ryan: Your concept of playing intuitively with no regard for musical theory is unorthodox, even for punk. I don't want to be too presumptuous, but you guys were covering Soft Machine in '80, so you definitely knew your stuff. Were you aware of bands like the Godz on ESP or Red Krayola?

John: I was aware of the Godz. I knew they were on ESP. I hadn't heard them, though. I recall seeing their records around when I was in Germany. To me, Red Krayola sounded competent.

Ryan: They were pretty loose.

John: They were loose. But they were coming from a place that was informed by some sort of musicianship. We were not. We were fans. We knew what we liked. But we thought, "You know, you can make music without necessarily knowing how to play your instrument." That was the thesis that started the band.

Ryan: That's much more in line with the thinking of avant-garde composers.

John: That's why we got labeled "art punk." We had a concept.

Ryan: And that concept came to life on Halloween '78, when Vitus Matare saw your show at UCLA and offered to record you. Was he studying architecture at UCLA at the time?

John: He was not. Architecture came much later to him. He was studying engineering, I believe. Vitus had recorded some of the early Last singles. We got the benefit of his peculiar sense of appropriate music. His perverse aesthetic. We appealed to Vitus somehow. I think he was really charmed that we were so incompetent yet willing to get on stage and try to wrestle songs out of our instruments.

Ryan: In a previous interview, you mentioned being taken aback by someone approaching you to record.

John: We thought it was surreal. "Really?" We realized that no one was going to be interested in this stuff. Vitus said, "Oh, yeah, don't worry about that. You can put it out yourself." We thought, "Yeah, I guess we can." He showed us how to do that. Vitus was in touch with pressing plants and took us to mastering sessions. He brought us up to speed on how to do this, DIY.

Ryan: Vitus got you guys out of that UCLA bubble you found yourselves stuck in.

John: He did. The first time we played Hollywood—our first show off campus and in state—was at Gazzari's on the Sunset Strip. We played with the Last, the Go-Go's and a very early group Jeffrey Lee Pierce had with Pleasant Gehman.

Ryan: The Cyclones.

John: That's right—the Cyclones. We opened the show.

Ryan: The Cyclones only played one show. And you were on the bill.

John: I didn't realize they had only played one show. It's sort of shocking. Everyone on that stage that night went on to make a mark of some sort.

Ryan: You mentioned self-releasing your own records earlier, which of course you did with your imprint Happy Squid. Did you receive any help with distribution?

John: We were distributed almost instantly by Bomp!, who had been distributing the early Last singles. That was our first exposure to proper distribution. Of course, we did a lot of consignment stuff around town. We'd drive to all the local indie stores on weekends and make them take our single. [laughs]

Ryan: You guys got plugged into the Hong Kong Café scene. Is that where you met Paul Cutler? (Cutler was the Hong Café soundman.)

John: Yeah.

Ryan: Knowing Paul Cutler's taste in music, I imagine you guys fit in well.

John: Paul was very enthusiastic. He actually recorded some of the live material (at the Hong Kong) that appears on *Negative Capability*.

Ryan: The Gun Club was another regular band at the Hong Kong. Did you catch the first lineup of the group, with Brad Dunning on drums and Don Snowden on bass?

John: I don't think I was aware of the Gun Club until the personnel had changed. They had Rob Ritter on bass and Terry Graham on

drums when I first saw them. It was a slightly later incarnation.

Ryan: In Jeffrey Lee Pierce's autobiography, *Go Tell the Mountain*, he mentions playing a UCLA dormitory show early on in the band's career. Did you set that show up?

John: I did not. I'm unaware of that show.

Ryan: How did the *Keats Rides a Harley* (1981) compilation come about?

John: After the third single (on Happy Squid) we did a 7" sampler called the *Happy Squid Sampler* (1980). I think we slowly realized that we were part of a scene. It was a tiny and idiosyncratic scene, but we were all likeminded. This was primarily due to our connections with the Last. Anyway, we wanted to make a bigger statement than a 7". We felt it was time to graduate to an LP. We thought the best chance to make a mark was through a compilation record. Vitus recorded most of those bands, with the exceptions of the Meat Puppets and Human Hands. The rest of the bands were recorded by Vitus on his reel-to-reel Dokorder. *Keats* was the starting point for a concept of doing something bigger.

Ryan: *Keats* is pretty incredible. The first Gun Club track to be released appears on it ("Devil in the Woods") and possibly the earliest Meat Puppets track ("H-Elenore") as well.

John: I think that is the first Meat Puppets release. I believe it predates their first 7" as well as their appearance on the Monitor album.

Ryan: How did you hook up with the Meat Puppets? They were out of Arizona.

John: Shortly after playing with the Last, we started playing with Black Flag. We met the Meat Puppets through Black Flag. We did some shows with the Meat Puppets as well. When we were putting the compilation together, we asked them, "Hey, do you have anything you want to contribute?" They gave us what I think is their best song ever. [laughs] I'm really a fan of that tune. I think it encapsulates everything that was special and unique about those guys. I was sort of disappointed when they went more roots and country. That was not my aesthetic but it worked for them. I played with them recently, about two or three years ago, with Trotsky Icepick—I'm playing with Trotsky again. They were very dynamic. It's great to see them back on their feet, doing stuff.

Ryan: Going back to the Gun Club, although *Fire of Love* is a classic and Chris D. did a great job with the resources at hand, there are problems with that record—notably Rob Ritter's bass is almost inaudible. *Keats* gives us a different perspective on the Gun Club at that time, with Rob's bass mixed properly.

John: I think the session that the Gun Club did for *Keats* represented that band at its very best. We happened to catch them at the right moment with the right crappy equipment.

Ryan: 100 Flowers appear on the *Keats* compilation. I had read that you changed the name of the Urinals to 100 Flowers because the band's musicianship was improving. I also heard that the name change was inspired by a wish to distance yourself from what was becoming hardcore in the early '80s.

John: It was a combination of those two things. We felt uncomfortable when the punk scene started changing to hardcore. We would play on hardcore bills, but we found that more and more people didn't like it. We also felt that there was a truth in advertising. There was an expectation built up about what the Urinals were and we weren't fulfilling that expectation because we weren't as hard as the hardcore bands were, so we felt like we needed to signal a shift in intention. Not even that necessarily. Perhaps it was just to let people know we had progressed beyond the one-chord approach we used at the beginning.

Ryan: The name change makes sense, too, considering the change in sound. "All Sexed Up" and "Funky Kjehl" are stylistically different from early Urinals tracks. Your development also sort of mirrored what was happening in post-punk.

John: It was sort of a white-boy funk. When we were first learning to play, we knew we didn't have any chops. But we did have a sense of rhythm. The 100 Flowers funky material was a reflection of that concept of the beat. But that was always a part of the original DNA of the band.

Ryan: Your approach towards music is interesting. Even as your ability improved on bass, you still kept with the original idea of the Urinals. I know you still don't know where the notes are on your bass.

John: That's right. I play totally by ear.

Ryan: Your progress reminds me of Kleenex/LiLiPut's development. Like you, they started from square one and on each single you can hear them getting better and better. It's not like a full rock band that starts with solid chops and sort of rearranges the formula every now and again on subsequent releases.

John: Yeah. It's a totally different approach.

Ryan: 100 Flowers had broken up before the self-titled (1983) record came out.

John: The record came out a month after our last show. [laughs] We had impeccable timing.

Ryan: I'm guessing the bands on *Keats* were groups the Urinals and 100 Flowers generally played with.

John: Yeah, but we were also playing with a lot of bigger bands. We regularly played with Black Flag, the Circle Jerks, X, the Last—we played a show with Berlin. We played with the Go-Go's a couple of times, once right before they got signed. They were making waves in Hollywood and had gotten much more proficient, obviously. We were sort of peripheral to the Hollywood scene, but we were playing with a lot of those bands.

Ryan: There couldn't have been too much downtime between 100 Flowers and Radwaste.

John: After 100 Flowers broke up and the self-titled album came out, we had these tracks that we had started. We actually finished those up and released them as the *Drawing Fire* EP. So we had continued to record together, even though we weren't playing together. We wanted to close the door on that particular phase of the band.

Almost instantaneously after 100 Flowers broke up, Michael Kory and I got together

and we started writing material for Radwaste. We just wrote in his bedroom for maybe a year until we had a set's worth of material. And then we put the drum corps together. We are also performing again, Radwaste. We've got a show in June. So I am active now in three different bands.

Ryan: I'm assuming your recent retirement has enabled you to pursue music a lot more.

John: [laughs] Yes. It has made life a lot less complicated and opened up some new possibilities.

Ryan: You can't talk about Radwaste without mentioning the band's four drummers.

John: Yes.

Ryan: It's not unheard of for a band to have two drummers—the Fall did for a while. Four is a different story. Although Radwaste had four drummers playing a single kit broken up, it's an unorthodox approach.

John: Yeah. We called it an exploded kit. Everyone was playing a portion of a kit, pretty much. The idea came from Michael. I was against it. I thought it was way too complicated. I also didn't want to get involved in a band that big because of all the egos associated with it. It was a very difficult breakup with 100 Flowers because there were three very strong egos in that band. We butted heads all the time. I didn't want to repeat that with Radwaste. Radwaste turned out to be an entirely different experience.

Michael had seen a show in Hollywood that included a South Central L.A. marching band. He thought the sound was so amazing—big and complex—all these interlocking drum grooves. He wanted to replicate something like that. That's where that idea came from, and, luckily, we had access to four people who were willing to work that out.

Ryan: Knowing Keith Levene's history—in particular his work on Public Image Ltd's *Flowers of Romance* record which was such a drum-intensive record—it makes sense that Radwaste would appeal to him.

John: Yes.

Ryan: Keith is also known for his mercurial personality. Teaming up with Keith ended up not working out too well in the end.

John: I can't say it didn't work out well in the end because he didn't see the project to completion. He was there for the initial few days of recording the backing tracks. We worked with him for about a week recording. And then he disappeared. Keith went back to London. We put the project aside for the moment. We came back one year later and finished it. And Keith wasn't there for that portion of it. It was pretty much Vitus and the band. Keith hasn't heard the end result, but he was certainly there for the inception.

Ryan: How did you end up meeting and working with Keith?

John: Through Michael Kory. Michael had friends in the L.A. club scene, which was really booming at that time. Keith was involved in that scene and they were introduced through mutual friends.

Radwaste did a show in San Francisco and Keith accompanied us up there. We were opening for Gene Loves Jezebel at the

I-Beam. They were pulling the big rock star routine—clearing the room for their sound check for instance—and refusing to move their instruments for the opening bands. So we had a tiny amount of space on the stage. It was a five-foot deep strip in the front. We had to lineup in the row. But Keith went ballistic with the production manager there saying, "No, you're not going to treat this band this way. They deserve respect." And Keith got his way. He was very insistent. He came to our rescue. I'm forever grateful for Keith intervening at that point.

Ryan: Very cool. Putting an end to the headliner's bullshit.

John: Yeah! Keith stood up for us. It was great.

Ryan: I only know Radwaste through your one EP (*Cooking and Nothingness*). Michael Kory is a good guitarist. Keith Levene seems like an influence on his playing.

John: Keith was a big influence on Michael. And that EP was not the one Keith worked with us on. That was a subsequent album that has gone unreleased. I would love to get it out.

Ryan: I know Radwaste played some shows with Savage Republic, which makes total sense.

John: Yeah. Savage Republic was another band 100 Flowers and Radwaste played with on a semi-regular basis.

As Radwaste started to wind down, we had some personnel changes. We lost our four-person drum corps. We brought some new people in. At one point we even had DJ Bonebrake (X) and Cliff Martinez as a dual-drummer version. It was just generally hard to sustain momentum with the constant personnel change. The band just kind of wound down.

I was then asked by Kjehl and Vitus to join Trotsky. They felt they needed a vocalist up front. I was doing that concurrently with Radwaste for a while. When Radwaste finally ended, Debbie Spinelli (from Radwaste) David Nolte (from the Last) and I formed Vena Cava, which was a three-piece.

Ryan: It's interesting how you and the Nolte brothers and Vitus have consistently worked together, from the earliest days of the Urinals.

John: Yeah. And I can't really account for why that happened. David was a big Urinals fan. He got where we were coming from. It was natural to work with him. As a matter of fact, he was the Urinals' guitarist right after Kjehl left, but before Rod Barker joined. We did a tour with Mudhoney and David was the guitarist for that. David is fantastic. He's such a fluid guitarist; the instrument is really an offshoot of his brain.

Ryan: Trotsky Icepick was a different band for you for a number of reasons. It was the first group signed to a label (SST) other than Happy Squid, and the first one where you were just a vocalist and not playing bass.

John: Trotsky was Kjehl and Vitus's band. They had it going before I joined. Playing in Trotsky was challenging because I found myself in a situation where I was contributing to songs that I hadn't written the music for. In some instances, I hadn't even written the lyrics for them. It was difficult for me to sing somebody else's material. I was so used to doing my own

"...WE KNEW WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOPS. BUT WE DID HAVE A SENSE OF RHYTHM."



100 Flowers | circa '82 (l-r Kevin Barrett, Kjejl Johansen, John Talley-Jones) | Photo by EDWARD COLVER

stuff and making it personal. I had to learn how to be an interpreter of somebody else's music. That was very new for me. I think it was a very good thing for me. I also learned how to sing better because I didn't have an instrument in my hand. I was strictly a vocalist and I think I improved quite a bit because of that.

Ryan: Although your approach to music is as valid as any other approach, do you find it difficult to convey your ideas to people well-versed in music theory?

John: Well, with Trotsky they pretty much figured out all the music, and then they'd give me a tape and say, "Hey, write some words."

[laughs] And I would try to figure out how to make that work. My personal preference is for much harder music. Trotsky was much more pop. I had to learn how to adapt to that as well. It was sort of challenging.

Ryan: The one thing that comes to mind, especially with the release of *Negative Capability*, was how fortuitous it was that you retained control of your masters.

John: Well, we always had the sense that the Urinals were a DIY project and that it needed to stay that way. We needed to exercise some control. All of these other bands make it huge in Hollywood and then burn out after two

years. And they didn't control their masters after that period of success.

I always felt that the artist should have control over his or her material. I still feel that's true. Radwaste approached SST at one point with the Keith Levene album. We had a meeting with Greg (Ginn) and someone else from SST. They were interested but they wanted the rights and we weren't willing to do that. So it didn't happen.

Ryan: Knowing what happened with SST—bands taking records back via lawsuits for lack of royalty payments—you demonstrated a lot of foresight.

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"YOU CAN'T STAY IN THE SAME PLACE FOREVER.
YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE FORWARD."

Trotsky Icepick, 2011 (L to R: Kjehl Johansen, John Talley-Jones, guest keyboard player Adam Marsland, Vitus Matare, John Frank, Tom Hofer | Photo by DON WILLIAMS

John: Sadly, yes.

Ryan: Was the '96 Urinals reunion spawned by the Amphetamine Reptile release of *Negative Capability*?

John: I think *Negative Capability* was in the process of being compiled when Kjehl approached me and Kevin about doing a record release party for Dime Box, which was David Nolte and Kristi Callan's sort of roots rock band. We thought it was going to be a one-off, but the place was packed and we got a huge response. For that show, we went back to the earliest material, so we were playing the crudest possible stuff—but with a great deal of enthusiasm.

We said, "Hey, that was a lot of fun. Let's do it again." Before long we were playing regularly. Pretty soon we were opening up for Sonic Youth at the Wadsworth Theatre at UCLA. It was very gratifying to get that show. Kjehl left shortly thereafter. We had been with him again for two years and after that he was done. We also played South by Southwest when *Negative Capability* came out. There was an Amphetamine Reptile night that we were a part of. I was always hoping that we'd play as the Urinals for a couple of years, and then change our name again to 100 Flowers and keep moving forward. It never happened.

Ryan: It's an interesting development in

the Urinals' career, first playing with Rod (Barker) and then Rob (Roberge). They're both more traditional guitarists.

John: They're much more competent than me and Kevin. You can't stay in the same place forever. You've got to move forward. What's more important than their musicianship is their sensibility. Do they get it? If they understand what it is that we're doing, that's the more important thing. As a result, the band has accommodated different approaches. It accommodated Rod's flashier playing—sort of a rock god approach with a little prog in there. But it was still the Urinals. The songs have always been short and to the point.

Ryan: It is. I was listening to *Next Year at Marienbad* (2014) and it's all of about twenty-eight minutes long. Right there with *Pink Flag* in terms of length. Concision is still very much a part of the new record.

John: That's because I have a short attention span. I can't imagine listening to something more than forty-minutes long. "You've worn out your welcome. Next!" I don't get these huge, superstar releases that are over an hour long. That's just too much time to devote to anybody.

Ryan: *Negative Capability* got its first vinyl release recently through In the Red.

John: I was really happy about that. It

looks and sounds great. Larry (Hardy) did a great job.

Ryan: Any chance of *Keats Rides a Harley* getting a vinyl release? I recall it got a CD reissue around 2004.

John: Possibly. I guess I would like someone else to do it. I would like to get the expanded version of (100 Flowers') *Drawing Fire* out on vinyl. That's next on my wish list. *Keats* is definitely something that could benefit from a vinyl reissue. I'd also like to see *What Is Real and What Is Not* on vinyl. We'll see. We only have so many resources.

Ryan: You've got shows lined with Radwaste and Trotsky Icepick, as well as a new Urinals album. You're really going at it full bore again.

John: Yes. That was my goal when I retired from UCLA. I wanted to spend more time being creative. And it's a little bit difficult. I found that I don't have as much free time as I thought I would have. Having to juggle the music stuff—as well as come up with words and music for the bands—is challenging. The Urinals have sort of taken off recently. We're not playing a whole lot, but last year we went to Europe for the first time. I'm hoping we'll go back again soon.

theurinals.com



Jake Smith, Berkeley, CA, 1980 | Photo: Andrea Rytönen



Jake Smith, San Francisco, CA, 1983
Photo: Bob Shoemaker



Arbeits Frei, 1982 | Photo: Lynn Smith

See Through Their Lies: An Interview with Jake Smith, Part I

By Jimmy Alvarado

Photos: Jim Brick, Richard Higgs, Andrea Rytkönen, Bob Shoemaker, Lynn Smith and Vic Smith

Layout: Becky Bennett

Life, if done right, is a convoluted labyrinth of experiences, and no two are exactly alike. For those in the arts, trekking along life's (hopefully) long path may involve fame and, for a very minute few, becoming a household name. For the vast majority of us punters, however, that trek results in a more "meat and potatoes" existence—work as the steady, often zero-name-recognition contributors who are nothing less than the backbone of a larger patchwork of different projects, bands, collectives, scenes, and so on.

Jake Smith has been involved in music for nigh on four decades. To the average punker, his name will likely best register as the one next to the word "guitar" on Crucifix's seminal 1983 LP, *Dehumanization*. It's an oddly fitting title in retrospect considering the band seems to have spent an inordinate amount of energy over the past thirty-two years all but erasing his fourteen-month tenure with the band—roughly a quarter of its existence—as active contributing member, tour funder, and uncredited assistant producer with an alternate version of their tale that relegates him at best as a faceless "hired gun" for a predecessor who played no active part in the creation of that album. He's also had some success as a hip-hop producer, culminating in two top ten hits during the early '90s. This makes him the only cat I've so far been able to identify who's played the stages of both CBGB and *Soul Train*. Feel free to throw that tidbit out next time you find yourself in a punk rock trivia contest. You also don't wanna fuck with homie in a game of Scrabble 'cause, trust me, he handily busts out with those "holy shit, that's a word?!" kinda words that are worth a billion points.

Wrapped around those "résumé high points," however, is an intricate skein of steady, decades-long involvement in the underground as a musician—starting at the tail-end of San Francisco's first wave of punk as a barely teen drummer for The Saucers and winding through ground-floor involvement in the first wave of U.S. hardcore, subterranean reggae, funk, and hip-hop, L.A.'s eastside backyard punk scene of the '00s, and New York's current garage-punk underground, and also includes stints in a few bands you might've heard of—and as a producer on releases by Trial, Kevin K., Tara Kemp, Sky Saxon & The Seeds, Calavera, Thretning Verse, The Snapp, The Takedowns, Wooly Bandits, The Flamethrowers, Bradley Dean & The Terminals, and many others.

His name might not be on the tip of tongues in households across America, but as a recent photo exhibition at La Petite Mort Gallery in New York illustrated, his life's work as one of the many quiet contributors to the framework of American music is no less integral than those whose names you can rattle off the top of your head. It's been a life done right—risk, reward, high and low points, always moving forward and tinged with integrity—and it's had impact.

Jimmy: So let's start with some background.

Jake: I was born in Santa Monica, California and raised in Berkeley, with a few years in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Jimmy: Are your parents also musically or artistically inclined?

Jake: My parents were both musicians, and they met at the Troubadour, where my mom was a cocktail waitress. My dad had come out from New York City and was in the folk music scene in Greenwich Village before heading west. He did some sessions for Sonny Bono in L.A., who was then a music producer and Phil Spector protégé. In the Bay Area, he was in several bands that made some noise, but never quite broke through. He's on at least one Country Joe & The Fish record. Jefferson Starship recorded one of his songs and it was a big hit in the '70s, "With Your Love." You can still hear it in dentist offices across America.

Jimmy: [laughs] Okay, yeah, I definitely know that one. And your mom?

Jake: My mom grew up in Crenshaw Village in L.A., which was then more of a Jewish and Mexican area. She was involved in the L.A. Beat scene in the late '50s and early '60s, and hung out with people like artists Wallace Berman (one of the faces on the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* cover) and Llyn Foulkes, and actors Dean Stockwell and Dennis Hopper. My folks divorced when I was about two-and-a-half, but they both moved up to the Bay Area when I was four. I also have two brothers from my dad and stepmom who are both talented chefs. They're both very musical, too, even if they don't play instruments these days. One is a DJ.

Jimmy: You grew up in the midst of the whole Bay Area hippie/counterculture scene, right?

Jake: I have vivid memories of the National Guard rolling down Sacramento Street after the People's Park riots in 1969. I was a little long-haired, tie-dye-wearing gun nut at that age, and was found by my mother waving to the troops and yelling "Hi Army!" much to her dismay. She was friends with free speech activist Mario Savio (a key member of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, best known for his 1964 *Bodies Upon the Gears* speech) and his wife—I have dim memories of playing with the Savios' son, who was about my age. Even the kids would talk about riots, police tear gassing people, and there was a strong sense of all this social upheaval and conflict with "the man"—Panthers, Hell's Angels, Quakers, hippies were all over the place. It was like a '60s montage from *The Simpsons*—Jimi Hendrix's version of "All Along the Watchtower" plays over shots of flower children, riot police, demonstrations, Vietnam, psychedelic light shows, and love-ins. We didn't eat grapes for an entire decade 'cause of the United Farm Workers' boycott. There was a house not far from mine with the UFW eagle incorporated into the roof shingles. I used to paint houses with a former member of the Symbionese Liberation Army, the group who kidnapped newspaper heiress Patty Hearst.

Jimmy: Do you think being in the middle of all that during your formative years had an effect on your overall worldview?

Jake: Growing up in Berkeley in that era was to be immersed in the whole leftist counterculture scene. In our working-class South Berkeley neighborhood, right on the Oakland border, most of the families were very liberal. Around the corner from my house were the La Pena cultural center, founded by Chileans—where my future mother-in-law coincidentally worked during the '70s before I knew her—and an Irish Republican pub called the Starry Plough. Both were full of rabble-rousers. The Starry Plough was (and still is) a music venue, and my mom's various bands played there often in the '70s. Both her and my dad didn't place much stock in babysitters, so I was often brought along to gigs as a kid. Once, at (famed SF '60s rock venue) Winterland, I went missing during my dad's soundcheck. I was found sleeping inside the bass drum, on stage. Pretty obvious foreshadowing there. I attended predominately black schools like Malcolm X Elementary on Ashby Avenue. If you recall the Indians of All Tribes (IAT) occupation of Alcatraz Island from 1969-1971, I was actually there for that. I had my sixth birthday on Alcatraz.

Jimmy: Wow, how did you end up there?

Jake: My mom's boyfriend at the time was the pedal steel player for Commander Cody And His Lost Planet Airmen. They were big with bikers and other "harder" aspects of the counterculture, including the Indians, who had similar tastes in music to the bikers. We spent the night on the island, and I was even given a tour and put in a dark, dank cell for a few minutes to get the flavor. So yeah, all those things had a huge impact on my worldview—from being surrounded by music and musicians, to the politics of my parents and their peers—it's no wonder I turned out how I did.

Also, the time we spent in Honolulu was very influential. I had no idea where the hell my mom had put us, but we were in a fairly rough 'hood called McCully District. Going from Malcolm X to Prince Lunalilo Elementary was quite a shock. Hawaii in the mid-'70s was looking more to Japan and other Asian countries for cultural and economic ties than mainland America. I was a total fish out of water, one of only two haole (a derogatory term for non-native Hawaiian, particularly white folks) kids from the mainland in my entire school. I used to get beat up constantly, but unlike in Berkeley, I had no idea of the historical context. I just knew haoles sucked.

We studied China the whole year, and no Hawaiian history was taught. I started going to Hebrew school just so I could get away and be around other kids who weren't always trying to mess with me. Of course, the other Jewish kids seemed soft and bland to me, and I never really fit in with any of the groups over there. On the plus side, I was exposed to some really cool stuff: Shaw Brothers Kung Fu movies, amazing food, all the different

Asian cultures, and my favorite, Channel 13. It was the Japanese language TV station, but they subtitled all the shows, so I got to see all the popular '70s kids programs from Japan.

Jimmy: How did you get into playing music?

Jake: My first instrument was actually the flute. It was light and easy to carry. Berkeley schools at that time had one of the best music programs in the country, before Proposition 13 decimated the arts and, eventually, even the school sports programs. (Proposition 13, which amended the California Constitution in 1978, limited the way property taxes were assessed and made it difficult for taxes in general to be increased without a two-thirds majority vote. While still very popular with State residents, it had a devastating effect on local municipalities, city services, libraries, and the public school system—once one of the best in the country, California's public school system now ranks as one of the worst in terms of student achievement.) One really formative experience was being taken along to see *The Harder They Come* (a seminal film starring reggae singer Jimmy Cliff as a gangster in Jamaica. The film, and its soundtrack, helped to popularize reggae music throughout the world) in the theater. I must have been nine, maybe ten, and with no context, my little brain was soaking up all this Jamaican music and rude boy culture. That movie's soundtrack was most people in Berkeley's first exposure to reggae music, and it hit me hard. When I was twelve, my mom hooked me up with drum lessons and a drum kit, and I started to get serious about learning an instrument.

Jimmy: Where did you first hear about punk?

Jake: Through the media. I remember newspaper articles on the Pistols, and this new "shocking" musical phenomenon. Me and a bunch of my friends went to a midnight showing of Don Letts' *Punk Rock Movie* at the UC Theater as a goof in like 1978. I wasn't completely convinced, but I could see there was something there.

I ended up being a hanger-on at this house near mine where there were some older musician guys playing rock'n'roll in the garage. I started jamming with them, but I was like twelve or thirteen and they didn't take me seriously, even if I was playing okay. But I made every jam session I could. At one of them, this guy Dave Velasquez, who went by Dave Yippie at the time, was there. He was about nineteen, and had something else going on musically. He took it upon himself to save me from a future of Foghat cover bands and introduced me to The Clash, Buzzcocks, and the Damned. I was a big Who fan by that point, and I could see the connection between those bands and the Who, especially after seeing *The Kids Are Alright*.

Jimmy: Anything in your back story that might've predisposed you towards punk?

Jake: I think just never fitting in anywhere—I wasn't good enough at school to be a nerd, I wasn't tough enough to be a thug, not athletic enough to be a jock, too poor to be a preppie, and not enough of a burnout to be a stoner. I

could cross over into many of those groups, and I had friends in many of those groups, of all different backgrounds, but I never quite had a “home” in any of the typical teenage social categories.

Jimmy: What was it about punk as a subculture that you found so attractive?

Jake: Part of it was the newness of it, but the energy really captivated me. I saw that I didn’t have to practice for another twenty years to become a virtuoso on my instrument. I could play for and with people right then. Plus, the rebellious vibe appealed to me, and my parents initially hated it. There was just so much going on musically, and I would stay up all night listening to KALX and KUSF. I heard everything from Killing Joke to Magazine to Black Flag. Looking back, my involvement was pretty sudden. In fairly short order, Dave Yippie turned me onto those core bands, I transferred to a new “alternative” school (“alternative school” is synonymous with “continuation school” in some parts of the U.S., but this is not always the case, especially on the West Coast, where some parents and educators created schools

Come on in. So what does punk mean to me? Inclusion. Anti-racism/sexism. Do it now.

Jimmy: You came into the scene pretty young—if the dates are correct, The Saucers formed in 1978, which would’ve meant you were around thirteen, give or take, right?

Jake: Yeah, I was the second drummer in that band. I had just turned fourteen when I joined, but I had cut my hair the year before, so I was already a vet. All-ages shows were not common in the early days, and I often had to wait backstage before and after playing. I got to see the tail end of the first wave scene, which was still going strong from ‘78-’80. It was older, artier, and more new wave-y. It was definitely centered around San Francisco, but Berkeley/Oakland were a big part of it. The bands we played with were people like Crime, Vktms, The Mutants, Flipper, The Jars, and The Offs. You had the whole art-damaged part of the scene too—Tuxedomoon, Survival Research Laboratories and their crazy exploding robots, the RE/Search folks.

The scene was centered around the “Fab Mab,” aka the Mabuhay Gardens, On



Jake Smith, On Broadway, San Francisco, CA, 1984
Photos: Richard Higgs

I wasn’t good enough at school to be a nerd, I wasn’t tough enough to be a thug, not athletic enough to be a jock, too poor to be a preppie, and not enough of a burnout to be a stoner.

based on nontraditional, “alternative” educational methods and curriculum to educate children) and that had some punk kids. Dave recruited me to drum for my first real band, The Saucers. I buzzed off all my hair and the Jimi Hendrix shirts got replaced by Clash shirts. We would also wear an onion on our belts, which was the style at the time [referencing a *Simpsons* gag line].

Jimmy: [laughs] Okay, Grandpa. “Punk” is an ethos that has a different meaning from person to person. What does it mean to you?

Jake: For a young musician, it represented freedom. The musical establishment was about my parent’s music, and that whole Bill Graham Presents, big rock show aesthetic—Eddie Money, Journey, The Dead—it all sucked to me. And all of a sudden, I had access! My restless teenage energy had an outlet. Punk, especially in those early years in Berkeley, was wide open. There were a lot of women and non-white people in the scene—still a minority, but a significant, visible one. Weird fat kid? You’re welcome. Odd-looking black dude with thick glasses?

Broadway in San Francisco. Berkeley had Berkeley Square and the Keystone. The Mab was all-ages, and I saw my first show there—The Plugz, the Zeros, Vktms, and Silvertone with Chris Isaak. The Mab gave out popcorn so they could say they served food, and be a legit all-ages venue, and the audience pelted Silvertone with popcorn until it was all stuck in Chris’s Brylcreemed hair. He was cool with it. Very typical, eclectic bill of the era. You had basic rock’n’roll, retro-’50s culture, the gay/trans/drag folks, and the art students all sharing the scene. Also reggae artists like Earl Zero would be on bills, as well as reggae-influenced bands like The Offs and The Saucers. I would also go to all the reggae shows. So many nights, all the East Bay kids would be running to the main bus terminal in San Francisco to catch the last F bus back to Oakland. If you missed it, you had to hang out all night until 5 AM or so.

Jimmy: What’s the story behind The Saucers? I know they were popular early on, but they seem to have become one of the more obscure bands of that era.



Jake: Joey Michaels started the band. I believe he had another earlier version of the band in another state. Joey and Dave had a lineup with another drummer and bassist. Shelly Wolfe and I joined around the same time. Joey had a radio show on KALX, and he was shamelessly playing our demo, so we had a little momentum behind us. Shelly was also well-connected in the San Francisco scene, and she knew the *Punk Globe* people and that whole scene. We never had a problem getting gigs on either side of the bay. Shelley and

would do the Mab and all the regular clubs, plus they had all these East Bay party gigs and random stuff like opening for Greg Kihn at the height of his popularity. We supported him at a club in Palo Alto in front of several thousand people. That was by far the biggest show I'd ever played.

They worked a lot and actually put money in my pocket. Chuck went on to be a fairly successful alt-country singer/songwriter. He was always super talented. I played with those guys for about a year,

Palace, Tool & Die, and places like that. I also played drums with a post-punk band called Arbeitz Frei with this guy from Liverpool named Alan, and a German bassist, this kid Sebastian. Alan was a contemporary of bands like Echo & The Bunnymen, The Teardrop Explodes, and Wah Heat, and had that icy, Northern English sound.

Jimmy: It's interesting how, as time has kinda slogged on, the first decade of punk seems to have been painted into these monochromatic portraits of narrow hallways where the

Weird fat kid? You're welcome. Odd-looking black dude with thick glasses? Come on in. So what does punk mean to me? Inclusion. Anti-racism/sexism. Do it now.

Dave ended up getting together, eventually getting married.

Jimmy: *Punk Globe* took a shine to you guys, right? Didn't they name you and Romeo Void as "best bands of 1980," or something along those lines?

Jake: They did—I almost forgot about that!

Jimmy: How did the band morph into The Allies?

Jake: The three of us got sick of Joey—he was a bit of a tyrant, and was the oldest member, probably in his mid-thirties by the time we kicked him out—and we broke off to form The Allies. Joey had a cool sound with his Farfisa organ, but we got tired of every song sounding like "96 Tears." [Jimmy laughs] Dave had met this guy Craig Magee (RIP). He was an amazing guitarist and had played in L.A. with Diane Diamond, who was a Runaways-esque singer produced by Kim Fowley. Craig looked like Jerry Nolan from the New York Dolls and was very easy to work with.

Things got a lot happier—for a while, anyway. Dave and Shelley's relationship was fraying, and I also think we focused too much on picking apart Shelly's playing. She was really a fine bass player. Her gear sucked, but listening back, she was plenty good. By the time we made our demo with KALX/KUSF engineer Terry Hammer producing (he also did The Saucers' recordings), the band was on its last legs, and I was starting to field offers from other bands.

Jimmy: Were you in any other bands after Allies' demise?

Jake: Yeah, I was. I met this kid Chuck Prophet at the Mab, and he was in a band called Bad Attitude. They were more pub rock, Graham Parker, power pop. They

but started getting restless for something more challenging. The frat parties were also getting old. I went with a drummer friend of mine when he auditioned for this band called Jayne Doe. They were cool—an all-black punk/new wave band with a really strong drummer, Joe Barboza. Joe was the star pupil of the same drum teacher I studied with, or really the teacher of my teacher. This guy, Chuck Brown, had a particular focus on hand technique. He taught people like Dave Garibaldi of Tower Of Power and Terry Bozzio from Frank Zappa's band and Missing Persons.

Anyways, one of Jayne Doe's songs was built around a beat that was a Chuck Brown drum exercise. My buddy couldn't get it, so I tried to help him out by showing him the beat. I ended up with the gig.

So now I'm sixteen or seventeen, playing with these really advanced older cats in their thirties. It was a big thrill for me, and kinda cemented my reputation as the hot young drummer in town. But I pushed too hard and ended up getting tendinitis in my right shoulder. I had to quit the band and not play drums for almost a year. By this time, the hardcore scene is coming in, and there's a younger, rougher edge to the music and the gigs, which suited me at the time. I had all this pent-up energy from not being able to drum, on top of adolescent angst, so I embraced the hardcore scene.

Jimmy: That must've been a nice change of pace.

Jake: It was great to no longer be the youngest person at the gig. We pretty much tossed the old scene out on its ear, and the focus shifted to venues like The On Broadway, which was upstairs from the Mab, the Elite Club, Rat's

musical colors didn't mix. My recollection is that, though there were no doubt cats who were listening only to hardcore, or only to new wave, it was considerably more eclectic than that.

Jake: Definitely. Even into the hardcore era, the bills were very diverse. My own tastes were all over the map, but I wasn't unusual in that. I liked reggae, early hip-hop, post-punk like Joy Division and the Cure, oi, '77-style punk and, of course, hardcore, which was itself a pretty wide field—Black Flag and the Circle Jerks to Hüsker Dü to Social Distortion to the Misfits, and so on.

Jimmy: It's also interesting to note that a lot of the cats in those early punk bands were fairly proficient with their instruments. I'm not saying that some didn't start a band and figure out how to play as they went along, but it seems that the prevailing "ineptitude was the order of the day" view of punk is also a bit of a myth.

Jake: That's true. I think there are even cases where bands may have played down their proficiency to fit the narrative. We all know now that Joe Strummer was in the 101's and had a whole pre-Clash musical history, but at the time, that was glossed over. Or look at Bad Brains and their pre-punk musical evolution from hard rock and jazz fusion. Early punk wasn't really anti-proficiency, but it was bad form to be a jock about it.

Jimmy: How did Police State come about?

Jake: Police State was basically started so I could have something to do, musically, while my shoulder was healing. I could play guitar enough to write songs, and thought I'd try and sing. I tried out for San Jose band Ribzy around that time too, but I didn't drive yet, and San Jose was just too far away for me.

Jimmy: Who else was in the band?

Jake: Originally the band was me on vocals, Dave from The Allies on guitar, Mike Bordin on drums, and this Basque dude named Esteban Martinez on bass. We never played out with that lineup. Our first gig was a block party in Berkeley and included Billy Gould on bass, with Sebastian from Arbeitz Frei on guitar. Later on, Billy was replaced by Brad Anthony, who also played with Intensified Chaos, another Berkeley band.

Jimmy: Wasn't your mom in the band at one point?

Jake: My mom wasn't *in* the band, but she did play one show, which turned out to be the final Police State gig. I was on drums and vocals for that gig. Mike had replaced me in Bad Attitude and wasn't available anymore.

Jimmy: Police State's sound was a bit more dissonant than The Allies' stuff. Had your influences changed by this point?

Jake: Oh yeah. By 1982 I was way into Discharge, GBH, Crass, Blitz, and all those English bands. I embraced both the sound and the look of those bands—studded leather jackets, charged hair. I liked a lot of the American bands, but the British punks had a stronger influence on me at that point. I thought they looked cooler than the U.S. bands, who were either anti-fashion, like Minor Threat or Circle Jerks, or had that Huntington Beach, engineer-boots-with-bandannas on 'em look, which I hated. The English bands seemed more like they were coming from the streets, not from a sunny cul-de-sac in some suburb.

Police State's best gig was at Tool & Die in '82 —me on vox, Brad on bass, Mike on drums, and Sebastian on guitar. After the show, some friends of Brad's told him, "Your band is cool, but why do you do covers?" Turned out Sebastian had been passing off a Varukers song he had on cassette as one of his songs, from an earlier band he had in Germany. We were all sitting in Brad's room after this revelation, and Brad goes, "I think I have that single." [Jimmy laughs] He puts it on and Sebastian gets all red and spatters something about them "stealing my song" in his hilarious German accent. We laughed him out of the room and out of the band. He played briefly with an early version of DRI after that, then was in the San Francisco lineup of the Dicks. Billy Gould helped me record a 4-track demo of two songs, which got some play on the Maximum Rock'n'Roll radio show, and a nice review in *MRR* fanzine. I played all the instruments and sang on that recording. I was already having trouble keeping a stable lineup, so I just figured, "I'll play all the instruments and it'll sound how I want it to," which it actually did. After I told my mom she didn't pass her audition, she tossed me out of the house and I moved to San Francisco.

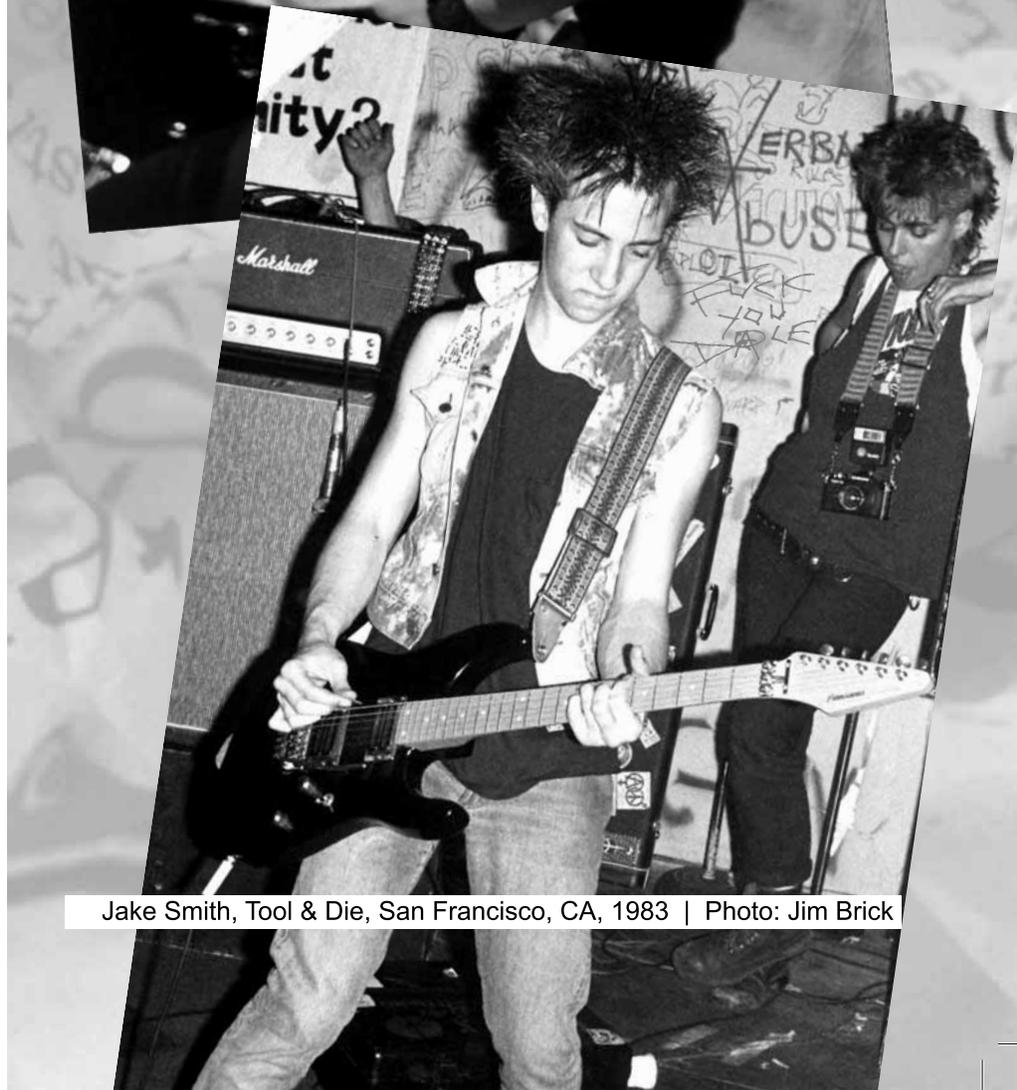
Jimmy: Makes perfect sense. You can't include a punk "anti-parent" anthem in your set, which at the time was as obligatory as an onion on the belt, with mom rockin' stage right.

Jake: No, you cannot.

Jimmy: [Jimmy laughs] The Saucers/The Allies stuff seemed to be politically astute,



Bad Attitude, 1981 | Photo: Andrea Rytönen



Jake Smith, Tool & Die, San Francisco, CA, 1983 | Photo: Jim Brick

but it seems Police State was the point where overt political thought really became part of your musical expression.

Jake: Definitely. I was reading a lot—Herbert Marcuse (a German American political theorist, whose writings about the dehumanizing effects of technology and capitalism were influential on many radical thinkers, including Angela Davis, Abbie Hoffman, and “punk poet” Kathy Acker), stuff like that, plus all the liner notes off Crass records.

Jimmy: Do you think politics are just as integral to punk as the music or the fashion?

Jake: In 1982, I would have given you an unequivocal “yes!” But back then, *any* punk band was making a political/social statement. This stuff was so threatening to people at the time. Just having short hair or looking remotely punk was enough to make people want to confront you. But punk was just as much about nihilism and destruction, especially in the early stages, when shit needed to be knocked down. I now think that politics are a part of the punk spectrum, but so is being apolitical, or offensive, or funny, or any combination of all of those perspectives.

Jimmy: What were some of the subjects you were addressing at the time lyrically?

Jake: I was singing about things I experienced—police brutality and class issues in the scene.

Jimmy: Do you find it a drag that much of what you were railing against back then is still prevalent in American society?

Jake: In many ways, we’ve made progress as a society, but I never anticipated how far we’d slide back, or how quickly people forget.

Jimmy: How long did the band survive?

Jake: About a year total, including the early writing/rehearsing phase. I probably would have continued trying to build a stable lineup, but Crucifix approached me, and Police State officially disbanded when I joined them in early 1983.

Jimmy: How did your involvement with them come about?

Jake: We weren’t friends, but all knew of each other through the scene. Matt and Chris were Berkeley boys, too, but Northside (i.e., nice part of town). Before I knew them, they were the guys you would see on Northside who wouldn’t talk to you. I knew their original bassist, Bryce Kanights, who lived by me. In their revised history of the band, Jimmy Crucifix is the original guitarist, but that isn’t true. Matt started on guitar then switched to bass. They never hung out in that area of Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley near the university, especially the block of Durant above Telegraph, where all the punks congregated. Universal Records and Silver Ball Arcade were spots to hang, or we’d just be on the street. They and their fans were always snobby, even on the late night bus rides back to the East Bay, where you might need backup if someone decided to hassle the punks.

So by early 1983, they had done the EP and the *1984 7*”, and been on a few comps. Jimmy wanted to leave the band—he refused to tour with them—obvious red flag—and they approached me about joining on guitar after hearing Police State on *MRR* radio. Crucifix was the first band I played guitar in.

In every other band up to that point, except Police State, I was a drummer.

Jimmy: That band looked, and sounded, markedly different from the lion’s share of hardcore punks, especially those of us on the West Coast, where you were based.

Jake: As far as the look, we were all obviously taking our cues from the Brits. Earlier on, I think Crucifix looked a bit plastic, maybe too clean. There was eyeliner. By the time I joined, we had all gotten the look dialed in—a little dirtier, better hair, less like kids playing dress-up. One huge revelation was when Garry from Discharge told me about soap. We had been using gelatin, gel, egg whites—you name it, we tried it. But soap makes the best spikes.

Jimmy: They also sounded different prior to your joining the band, didn’t they?

Jake: Sound-wise, the earlier Jimmy Crucifix lineup was slower and more metallic, and reflected Sothira’s Germs obsession. After I joined, the tempos sped up, the rhythm section got tighter, and the band took on the sound you hear on *Dehumanization*. My guitar style at the time was more “punk” compared to Jimmy’s. He was really a metal guy “slumming” in punk rock. I was also quite a bit younger than Jimmy and had that adolescent angst to draw on.

Jimmy: How do you think you contributed to the evolution into what’s now considered the band’s “classic” sound?

Jake: Basically, any band I join, I’m going to influence the sound. As a drummer first, the groove is always going to be my jumping off point. Even double-time hardcore has a



Jake Smith, Mill Valley, CA, 1983 | Photo: Vic Smith



groove, and the drumming is so important for that. Chris was a powerful drummer to begin with, and I was able to help him out with a few things on the drums. Even on guitar, I'm always maintaining the groove and keeping good time. Sothira had a hard time keeping up, and the band had to learn to just keep going, even if he fell behind.

If you watch the Target Video footage of us, he's not just behind the beat, but about five seconds behind the song with his vocals. I ended up developing the dive-bombing whammy bar stuff you hear on the album, and quickly realized I had something unique. I was not a shredder, so I found a way to express myself using sound as much as notes. I've always been focused on tone as a guitarist.

Unfortunately, the band has always downplayed my contributions in any "official" histories. I think the difference in sound between the different eras of the band speaks for itself. I had already been in five or six bands by that time and was always focused on moving the music forward and perfecting it. They had only been in Crucifix, for the most part, and hadn't had the variety of musical experiences you get from playing with lots of different musicians. They certainly would have developed into something cool without me, but it wouldn't have been what they became, and they would have taken longer to get there the way they were going.

Jimmy: I remember them being perceived as one of those political bands that folks expected to be very "hard line" about their

views—lacking in humor; involved in direct action; marching in the streets against war, vivisection, Reagan's presidency, shitty waffles, and so on. Is that an accurate assessment of the band and was it one that was hard to live up to, both as a band and as a person?

Jake: It's accurate in the sense that it was the perception and how they portrayed themselves. But direct action? Marching? No. Humorless? Certainly. Waffles? Rarely. I think it's very easy to portray yourself as a righteous political punk, but without a real understanding of the issues—beyond reading Crass liner notes and Discharge lyrics—it's hard to really back it up. I'd say the politics was mostly posing on their part.

Some of the things they did made no sense to me. Like we'd put together a bill with us and some of our scene mates, bands like Trial and PLH, and Matt would insist on paying all the bands the same amount. Brand new band with no draw gets the same as the established headliner? Silliness. Only people who don't need money can act like it's not important.

Then there was the so-called "commune" at New Method Laundry. New Method was a warehouse space in Emeryville, a small city between Berkeley and Oakland. That was actually The Allies' first practice space two or three years before Crucifix was in there. The Allies ended up sharing a space in San Francisco with The Lewd. But the "commune" period of New Method was when Crucifix got back from our first U.S. tour in summer of 1983 or thereabouts. Crass

had a commune, so naturally, Crucifix needed to have one.

Jimmy: How long did that last?

Jake: I don't remember how long it actually lasted, but I was there for a few days before I called "bullshit" and moved out. It was really just a bunch of rich kids playing at anarchy. Matt was definitely the leader of the band and was the one making things happen most of the time, but he also had a tendency to take those traits too far.

The "commune" was just an excuse for Matt to boss everyone around and set ridiculous "anarchy" standards. We never really discussed politics, and it was obvious they didn't really read or study politics or history. It was all about looking cool and being judgmental. After being in a band with a real political punk like Dave Yippie, I wasn't that impressed. For myself, personally, the politics were something I believed in, because they were basically the same politics I grew up with: question authority, anti-war, anti-racist. I was naïve, like most of us were, but I did try and keep it real. I quietly went vegetarian in 1984 and, thirty years later, my diet hasn't changed.

Jimmy: You were also a bit more hip to the traditional anarchist literary canon than the rest of the band, weren't you?

Jake: Thanks to Dave Yippie, I had read actual books on the political theory of anarchism. There were also things like *Overthrow*, the yippie zine of the day. ("Yippies" were members of the Youth International Party, a counterrevolutionary group founded by Abbie Hoffman, Anita Hoffman, Jerry

Bad Attitude, 1981



In many ways, we've made progress as a society, but I never anticipated how far we'd slide back, or how quickly people forget.

Rubin, Nancy Kurshan, and Paul Krassner. They were known for theatrical and often humorous “pranks,” such as trying to levitate the Pentagon during a protest and dropping money from above the floor of the New York Stock Exchange to stop the flow of trade.)

Jimmy: Your involvement with the band came at the apex of both the band’s popularity and that initial wave of hardcore. That must’ve been a helluva ride, both good and bad.

Jake: It was an exciting time. The shows were rough—people got jumped, the cops and the general public were quite hostile, and although we never had police riots like in L.A., there was always that element of danger. But that was the energy of the scene at that time: the music was aggressive and fast, kids were acting crazy, and there was always some sort of drama. Musically, it was an amazing time. There were great local bands, plus OG hardcore from Black Flag, Circle Jerks, DOA, bands like that who really kicked off that sound.

Jimmy: It was also a pretty scary time, as I recall, especially outside of the comparative

safety of “the scene.” I know down here in L.A. we had packs of “hippies” and other assorted assholes attacking punks, cops attacking punks, the media attacking punks, and even Serena Dank’s Parents of Punkers group trying to “deprogram” kids who’d fallen into the evil clutches of what they apparently viewed as some sort of dangerous cult. Did you kids up north have to deal with similar levels of hysteria? How often were the words “Devo Fag” tossed in your direction?

Jake: It took years to get over that feeling of always being scrutinized for how I looked. Verbal harassment was a constant annoyance, and that often turned into physical confrontations. I had “Devo” screamed at me so many times. Everyone hated punks. Homeless people, frat boys, burnouts, cops, milkmen—they all wanted to get in your face for having weird hair. You couldn’t go anywhere in public without some sort of comment or incident.

Even in Berkeley, you could be refused service in a restaurant. Once, a bunch of us, including Tim Yohannan from *MRR*, my

mom, and some others, got kicked out of Edy’s ice cream parlor in downtown Berkeley. Tim is now this mythologized figure, but I found him to be a friendly, sincere guy who loved punk rock. Bit of a commie, but far from the most annoying RCP/Spartacist type (the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Spartacist League, two hard-line communist organizations) around back then. Some of those people could take arguing about politics to a new level. Worse than born-again Christians.

Jimmy: How had the scene changed, or evolved, by this point from when you first got involved?

Jake: It was a generational thing. The first wave scene was older, with an average age of around thirty. As the hardcore kids came in, the older folks were dropping out or going in different directions. The bridge bands were groups like Flipper, No Alternative, and the Dead Kennedys, who formed earlier but found a home in the hardcore-dominated early ‘80s. But bands like the Mutants or The Offs or the Sleepers didn’t appeal to the hardcore crowd, so the scene diverged and hardcore pretty much supplanted what came before.

Jimmy: Things got a bit hairier, too.

Jake: One event that really illustrated the darker side was the infamous Misfits’ “riot” at the Elite Club in San Francisco. That was the one where Doyle brained some kid with a guitar. I was standing right next to the guy who got clobbered and was sure he was swinging for me. I closed my eyes and felt this impact through the floor. When I realized I wasn’t dead, I opened my eyes and the dude who got bonked was lying in a pool of blood on the floor. You know how scalp wounds bleed. All hell broke loose, but it was definitely Kelly King who had the balls to jump up there first and start attacking Misfits and their gear. We waited all night for them to come out, but they got away somehow. We actually went to the police the next day and made a complaint. They said they couldn’t do anything because Doyle was only seventeen and in his brother Jerry’s (Misfits bassist Jerry Only) care. And they were already gone from San Francisco. We couldn’t believe that this muscle-bound brute was our age.

Jimmy: You did one major U.S. tour with Crucifix, right?

Jake: Yup, six or seven weeks out, from coast to coast. New Orleans and Atlanta fell through, and we didn’t do much in the Midwest besides Detroit, but we still played most of the towns that had viable scenes. The CBGB matinee on the first U.S. tour in ‘83 was a show I remember very well. Kids were going off, my amp blew two speakers, and some scary-looking skinhead, who turned out to be John from Cro-Mags, was skanking on stage the whole set. Austin was also special—we played with the Big Boys, who also put us up. In Phoenix, we played in a venue called Mad Gardens, which was a “professional” wrestling venue. There were pictures of guys like Andre the Giant on the walls. The stage was the ring, and it was very

**I think Crucifix
looked a bit plastic,
maybe too clean.
There was eyeliner.**



Crucifix, Mad Gardens, Phoenix, AZ, 1983

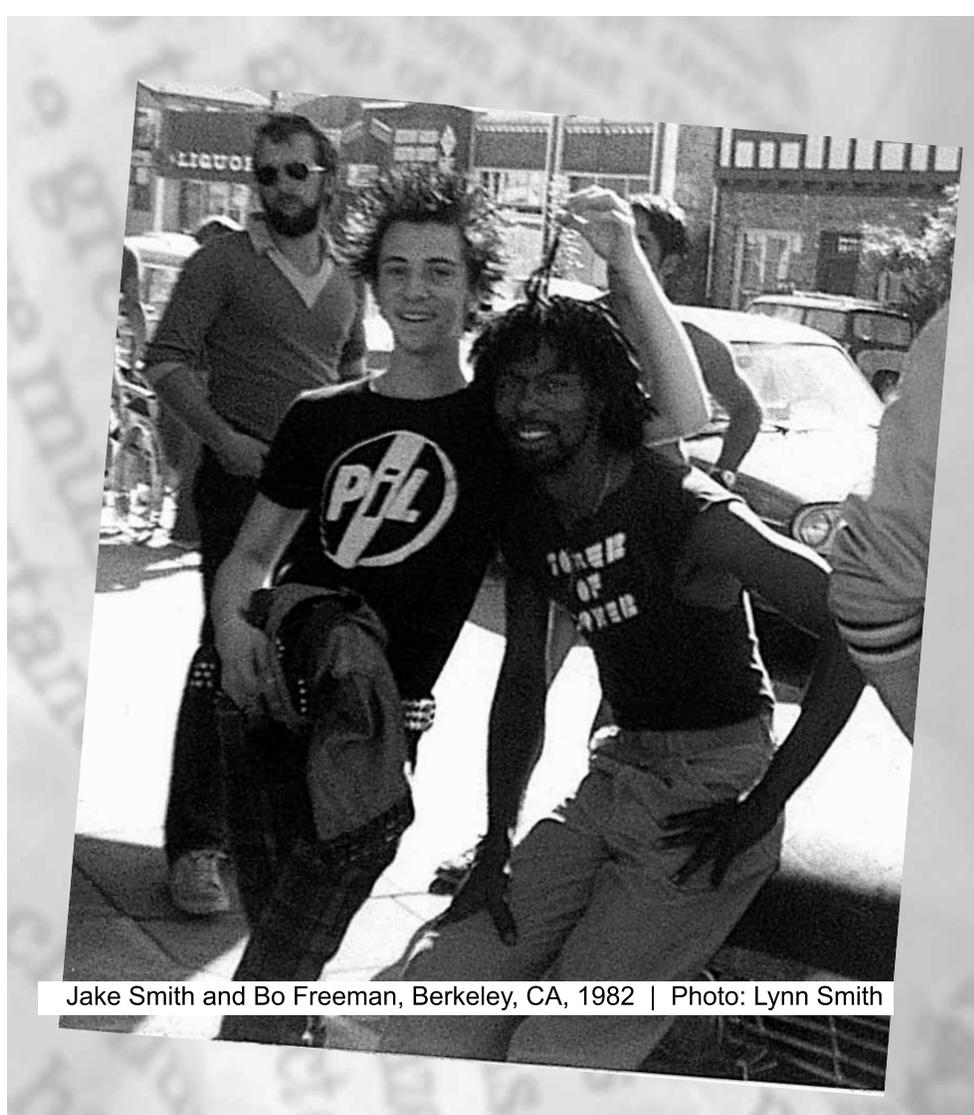
bouncy—pro wrestling rings have springs in the floors. The amps were all threatening to topple over. And the ring was surrounded by cyclone fencing with kids climbing up it while we played. I met Bam Bam from JFA that night. Richmond, Virginia was really fun, too. It was just so exciting in those pre-internet days, to see these other scenes, to connect with the other bands and the people in those cities. Some of them were literally our pen pals.

Jimmy: Tell me a little more about that. It's likely hard for some in an era where anything you wanna know or connect with is literally a click away to fathom just how much work it took to find like-minded individuals, let alone create a network, or "scene," with any real sense of cohesiveness. How were you guys putting together tours, and even finding out about these pockets of scenes going on?

Jake: You literally had to build a network from scratch, starting in your own region, then branching out. There was a West Coast circuit from Seattle down to San Diego, and we would exchange information with bands and people we befriended. If a zine like *MRR* did an article on you, or reviewed a record, people would write you. If an out of town band was playing and you liked them, you would exchange contact info, and they would tell you who the promoters were in their town. Also, long distance calls were ridiculously expensive back then. Bands would trade stolen credit cards or "borrowed" Sprint long distance accounts. Then *MRR* had that issue, "How to Book a Tour," and we took it and ran with it. They had a list of contacts for every scene in the U.S. and Canada. I remember we had these pen pals in Philly, Alison and Robbie who had a band called A State Of Mind. Robbie had a hilariously misspelled tattoo that said "Nagaski' Nightmare—Never Again." Someone missed that second "A" in Nagasaki. Robbie was also a huge fan of the film *Flashdance* and insisted that we all go see it together. Aside from Lee Ving's performance, I'm not sure why he was so big on that flick. I gave it two thumbs down.

Jimmy: How did Crucifix hook up with Crass and Corpus Christi Records?

Jake: John Loder came to our show in Boston and said he'd like to do something with us. He was sincere and we were thrilled, of course. We met up again in San Francisco after the tour and shook hands, and that was it—unlike the story Sothira recently told in the *OC Weekly*, where he has Matt giving us the news. John Loder always dealt with all of us at the same time. The deal was a 70/30 split in the band's favor, and the label never failed to send the checks or provide proper accounting. I've never seen that level of integrity in the music business, before or since. We were still tight from touring, and the sound had developed, so we were definitely ready to record as a band. We re-recorded a few older songs, like "Annihilation," but most of the LP was new material. Writing was usually done in rehearsal—someone would have a riff and we'd just go from there. I definitely wrote some of the new songs, or



Jake Smith and Bo Freeman, Berkeley, CA, 1982 | Photo: Lynn Smith

parts of them, but Matt would always say, "You didn't write that, I did." Sothira pretty much wrote all the lyrics. We found this great studio in San Francisco, with an English guy called Peter Miller. He looked like Roy Orbison, loved American rock'n'roll, and hated Elvis Costello. We loved everything British, so it was somehow a great fit. He had a one-inch 16-track and a great mixing desk—I think it was a Soundcraft Series 2, with that British sound.

Jimmy: How involved were you with regards to the actual production?

Jake: I was involved with every aspect of the recording, from the set-up, to basic tracks, to the guitar overdubs, to vocals and mixing. My first contribution to the sound of the record was to bring my drum kit in—the same old Ludwig set I have now—and tune them right. I worked with Peter Miller on the sound until it had that "thud." Chris's drums were not great, so I'm glad we had a better option. The whole recording was done in a week or less.

Jimmy Crucifix claims that he was involved in pre-production and that he taught me many of the "signature" riffs, but that's total bullshit. He's a great guitar player, and he definitely showed me a few cool diatonic licks when I first joined the band, but he had nothing to do with the recording—or writing

any of my parts that were used—except for some of the pre-existing songs they had released previously, like "Annihilation," where I started from what already existed and added my own interpretation and licks.

I was there with Peter coaching Sothira through his vocals, which came out amazing. He was a bit insecure, but he really came through on the record. Maybe we had to stop and punch in some lines on the faster songs so he could stay in time and hold his hand a bit, but that is pretty much par for the course with singers. We had a local sort of A&R person, Maati Lyon, who actually worked for Rough Trade, who distro'd Corpus Christi. She gave herself a co-production credit, which she didn't really deserve, but she was definitely providing input. She died young, sadly, of some kind of cancer.

Jimmy: Was this the point where your work as a producer began?

Jake: Looking back, yeah. It definitely was the start of my production work. I had been devouring all the info I could get on recording, particularly this one book called *Modern Recording Techniques* that my dad recommended. Having already had some less-than-satisfying experiences in the studio with The Saucers and The Allies, I wanted to have a better understanding of the process so we would have control of the outcome. Right

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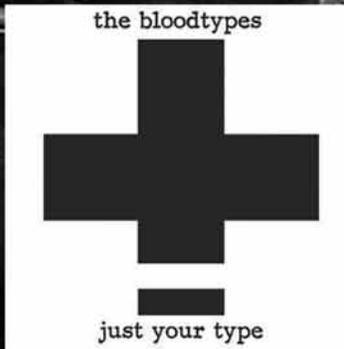
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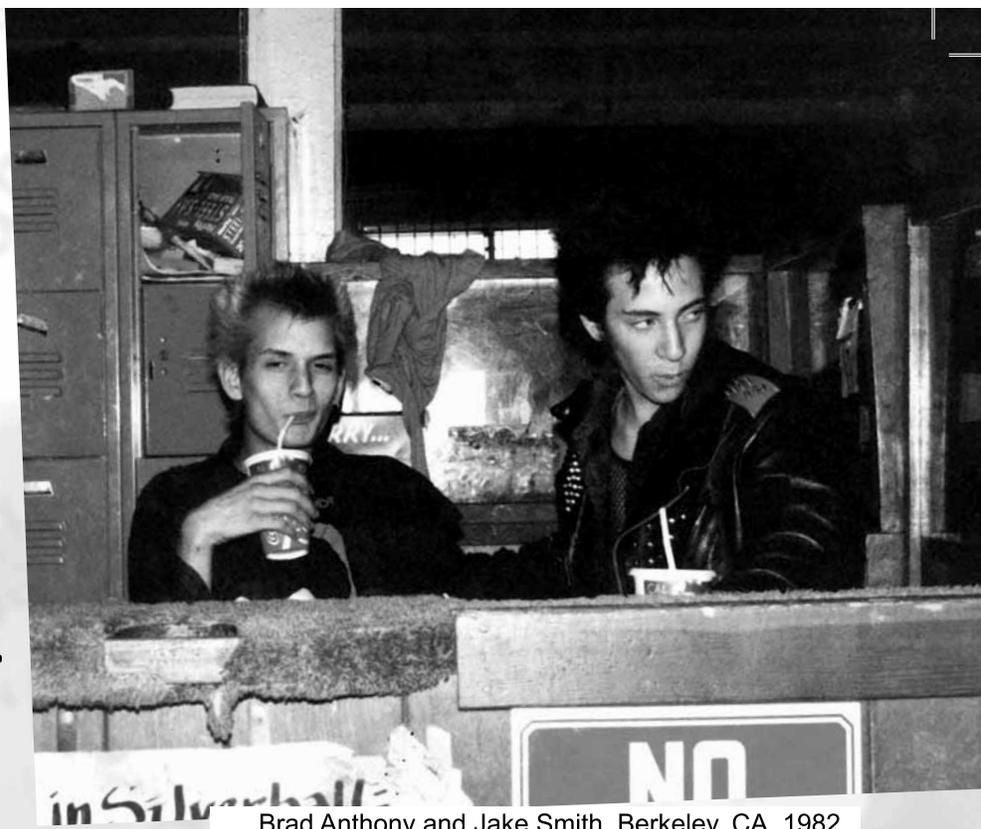
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Brad Anthony and Jake Smith, Berkeley, CA, 1982

after we finished the record, Matt asked me to work with his little brother John's band, Trial. On that one, I did pre-production, working with them in practice on arrangements and execution. Again, I provided and tuned the drums, as well as my guitar and amp, picked the studio, and produced the record. When it came out, they forgot to give me a copy. When I finally saw the finished product, the credits read, "Produced by Trial and Jake." All that work, and I get a half-assed co-production credit. Thanks. Turns out, that is a real problem for record producers. We're always getting jacked for our credits.

Jimmy: Although I imagine you knew from first listen that you guys had come up with a pretty danged good album, are you surprised at all at just how popular it's become and the weird directions its influence has spread over the years?

Jake: We definitely knew we had succeeded in capturing the sound of the band as it was, and were happy with the mixes we sent off. I do have to briefly digress and say that I never liked the initial vinyl mastering. John Loder was an engineer and he mastered every Crass-associated record. He was a great guy—honest and friendly, and may he rest in peace—but he should not have mastered anything, in my opinion. His mastering always emphasized the midrange in a way that did not enhance the music, and this was especially true with *Dehumanization*. The fuzz bass and my guitar got all mushed together and much of the detail was lost. The CD reissue mastering is far superior, and all the details of the guitar and bass are restored.

I am still surprised at the initial reaction, as well as the longevity and influence of the record. It sold something like 12,000 copies

in its first run, and every reissue also did well. There have been some great covers of songs off the album, like the Varukers' cover of "Indochina." The guitarist nails my solo. Loved that. I love when I see someone with a Crucifix shirt or patch, which happens in the most random places, not just at shows. The oddest place I've seen a kid wearing the gear was at my former job at AIDS Healthcare Foundation. I was in the HR department there and did a lot of hiring. We had a computer kiosk where people could apply in the lobby. I walked in one day and this punk girl was wearing the *Dehumanization* shirt that has the collage from the foldout sleeve on it—the collage that I made, by the way. It has my picture on every corner and in the center. I'm like, "You know that's me on your shirt, right?" which must have seemed insane, as I was in a suit and tie. I think I fast-tracked that kid's application—"Hire this one!" I still see kids wearing Crucifix patches in random places, like at my local bodega in Brooklyn.

Jimmy: Are there any preconceptions and/or myths about that era of the band you'd like to clear up?

Jake: Sothira likes everyone to think that he was the refugee kid with dreads on the *Dehumanization* poster. He was not a refugee. He told me that his dad worked with the CIA and they got out of Cambodia before the shit went down, which is, whatever—it was a complex situation and dude saved his family. I always thought the "you" in "Indochina, you destroyed her" was ambiguous—was he talking about his father?

But the image was quite different from the reality I experienced. They weren't the only non-working class kids to play anarchy, but they took it pretty far on the image side.

Sothira lived in a nice house with his parents in Daly City, which was then an upper-middle class, mostly Asian suburb of San Francisco. Matt lived in a beautiful house on the north side of Berkeley. His mom was in healthcare, a doctor or nurse, something like that.

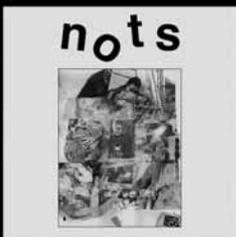
There was the whole vegetarian thing. I was not a vegetarian when I joined the band and this really bothered them. They would pressure me to change my diet. I was actually going in that direction, but held off just because of the pressure. They weren't actually all strict vegetarians. Chris ate veal—not just meat but *veal*—before the second tour. Sothira was happy to eat beef-flavored Top Ramen. Chris Wilson from Fang was my meat buddy on the 1983 tour. We all read the same issue of *MRR* about how to book a tour and we played many shows together on that tour. The other guys in the band acted like Fang was following us, when it was just the *MRR* info that we both used at the same time.

Jimmy: Was your relationship with your bandmates positive at first? Did that change over time?

Jake: Initially, it was positive. Once we got on the road, they began to treat me like the odd man out, to put it nicely. There was this dynamic between the other three members, where they were a clique and I wasn't really part of it. They seemed to be trying to make me feel as isolated and outside of the inner circle as possible.

I began to see why Jimmy had been so eager to have me replace him—they were not fun to tour with, from telling me what to eat or who to hang out with, to criticizing my playing and just generally being dicks. And I'm barely eighteen, away from home for

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Early punk wasn't really anti-proficiency, but it was bad form to be a jock about it.



Jake Smith, 1982 | Photo: Lynn Smith

the first time with these kids I hardly know, and they're totally shutting me out. It was not a pleasant experience at all. If it hadn't been for the guys in Fang, that tour would have been unbearable. It wasn't just me. Our roadie/driver had to invent a fake story about being sued so he could leave the tour halfway through because he couldn't take it anymore.

Jimmy: In retrospect, why do you think they were acting that way towards you? It seems so counterintuitive to subvert the stability of something you'd think they'd care about—their band—not just artistically but especially when they're out in the middle of nowhere and have to rely on the band functioning well enough to earn enough gas money to get from point A to point B.

Jake: I can only speculate, but I would guess that it was a mix of inexperience, insecurity, and class. At the same time, they weren't particularly nice to each other either. I just don't think they had learned at that point, if they ever did, how to function in a band situation.

Jimmy: When did you leave the band? What led to your split?

Jake: I left at the beginning of the second tour, which was due to be a long one—the U.S. and Canada, then over to Europe. I really wanted to tour Europe, and it was a tough decision, but I couldn't take the abuse and isolation for another two months before the good part came. What really precipitated me leaving were three things.

First, they lied to me about money. They told me we were broke and hadn't done well on the previous show in Oxnard with Suicidal Tendencies. We were staying at the house of the previous tour's roadie, the one who bailed halfway through. I asked him to loan me some money so I could eat and get some beer or whatever. He told me that the band was actually holding at least \$500 (in 1984 money; roughly \$1,150 today, when adjusted for inflation) and had all gone out to get hair dye and earrings without me. Not very anarchist. And at this point, the band owed me \$900 that I loaned them to buy a new van after the one that we bought from Jimmy Crucifix's shady friend lost its brakes thirty minutes outside of Berkeley at the very start of the first tour. That came from money my grandfather had left me.

Second, the flyer they made for the L.A. show used an old photo of the band with Jimmy. This is after I'd been in the band for a year and was on the LP, which was about to come out.

The third thing was a typical move by them. They knew I was getting a tattoo from Mark Mahoney in a day or so, so they decided we would go to Vegas, where the next gig was, several days early for no reason. I was like, "You lied to me about money, you're using an old picture of the band, and you're gonna keep me from getting my tattoo? I'm done." I really regret not doing the European tour, but I just felt so unappreciated and downright abused by those guys, I didn't want to do it with them.

Jimmy: Did your split from the band result in a greater disillusionment with punk?

Jake: That was certainly part of it. I saw that quite a few of the other "political" bands were also complete hypocrites. PLH (Peace, Love and Happiness), for example, were just a Crucifix clone band. They copied our style, our songs, and our graphics. The singer kid actually lived in officer housing on the Presidio army base—his mom was a high-ranking officer and an army nurse. So he's singing all the usual anti-war, peace punk lyrics, and living at home on an army base, being fed, housed, and clothed by Uncle Sam. [Jimmy laughs] At least move out! It was disappointing. The scene was also getting more violent and people were succumbing to hard drugs and other stupid stuff. The skinheads were on some straight rat-packing shit, and I saw that the peace punks in particular were not gonna stand up to them.

One event in particular really put it all in focus for me. Right after I left Crucifix, I'm back in San Francisco at a show at the On Broadway, and people are hanging out in front. All the peace punks are being weird to me and kind of shunning me. Out of nowhere, this skin comes up to me saying I gave him a dirty look on Haight Street. He's got a whole crew of ten or so guys with him. So he's wolfing on me, telling me I disrespected him and he's gonna fuck me up. I look around and all the little peace punks (the PLH kids and their little weak-ass crew) are distracted—looking at their shoes, up the street, anywhere but at the imminent beatdown. The kid is now pushing me and getting louder. Keep in mind, I was about 145 lbs. soaking wet back then—all legs and creepers. Not a fighter. This is not looking good. This kid is gonna start trying to beat on me, then his buddies are gonna throw me a boot party. The guy takes a wild swing at me, which I step back from. Not fighting back isn't an option, so if it's gonna go down, let me get mine in.

Next thing I know, I've got him in a headlock and I'm ramming his head repeatedly into a wooden pole that is studded with staples from layers of flyers. It all happened so fast, his crew didn't know what to do. Their boy is getting got by a peace punk. Not respectable. All of a sudden, the peace punks want to be involved—but it's to pull me off the guy, not to jump on the rest of the crew like they should have. They ruin my fun and pull us apart, then follow me around the rest of the night begging me to forgive the kid because, "He's scared you're going to beat him up at every show from now on and he's really sorry." [Jimmy's laughing hysterically] Unbelievable. That may have been the last show I went to for several years.

Stay tuned for Part II of this interview that will run in *Razorcake* #89.

WORRIERS

Lauren Denitzio helms Worriers. You may know their strident voice and guitar work from The Measure [SA], as a graphic artist, or a founding member of the New York feminist collective For The Birds.

I know Lauren as a friend I met because I was a fan of their music. We've always stayed in touch and have collaborated on many projects over the past decade. Lauren recently drew and designed the Trans Punks cover of Razorcake.

Lauren is one of Razorcake's moral compasses. They're a friend who I trust to tell me if something we're doing raises a red flag with them—and then to have a discussion about it, to inspect our behavior. It takes courage to keep questioning, to keep fighting for equality, to keep listening, and to be an active participant—especially when we see so many people and ideals fall by the wayside of the status quo the longer we're living this life.

Band rebirths are usually scary as shit. Not to sound overconfident on Lauren's behalf, but how could I not love Worriers? I've always thought their voice is one of most memorable in modern DIY punk. It reminds me of a bridge that spans Discount, Facials, Waxahatchee, Songs For Moms, RVIVR, Good Luck, Badlands, and Bitchin'. It simultaneously drips of tender vulnerability and conveys obvious strength. Their impeccable songwriting is a crystal clear trap, though. It sure is pleasant and addictive to listen to (and I think unfairly lumped into pop punk), but if you don't watch yourself and start singing along, you'll learn while there are few definitive answers and the world is a complex place, there's never an excuse for shitty behavior often driven by a patriarchal society. Lauren reminds those who need reminding that feminism isn't a side stage to DIY punk. That's a world away from "Bubblegum! Whoah oh! Lost my girlfriend! Sad face!"

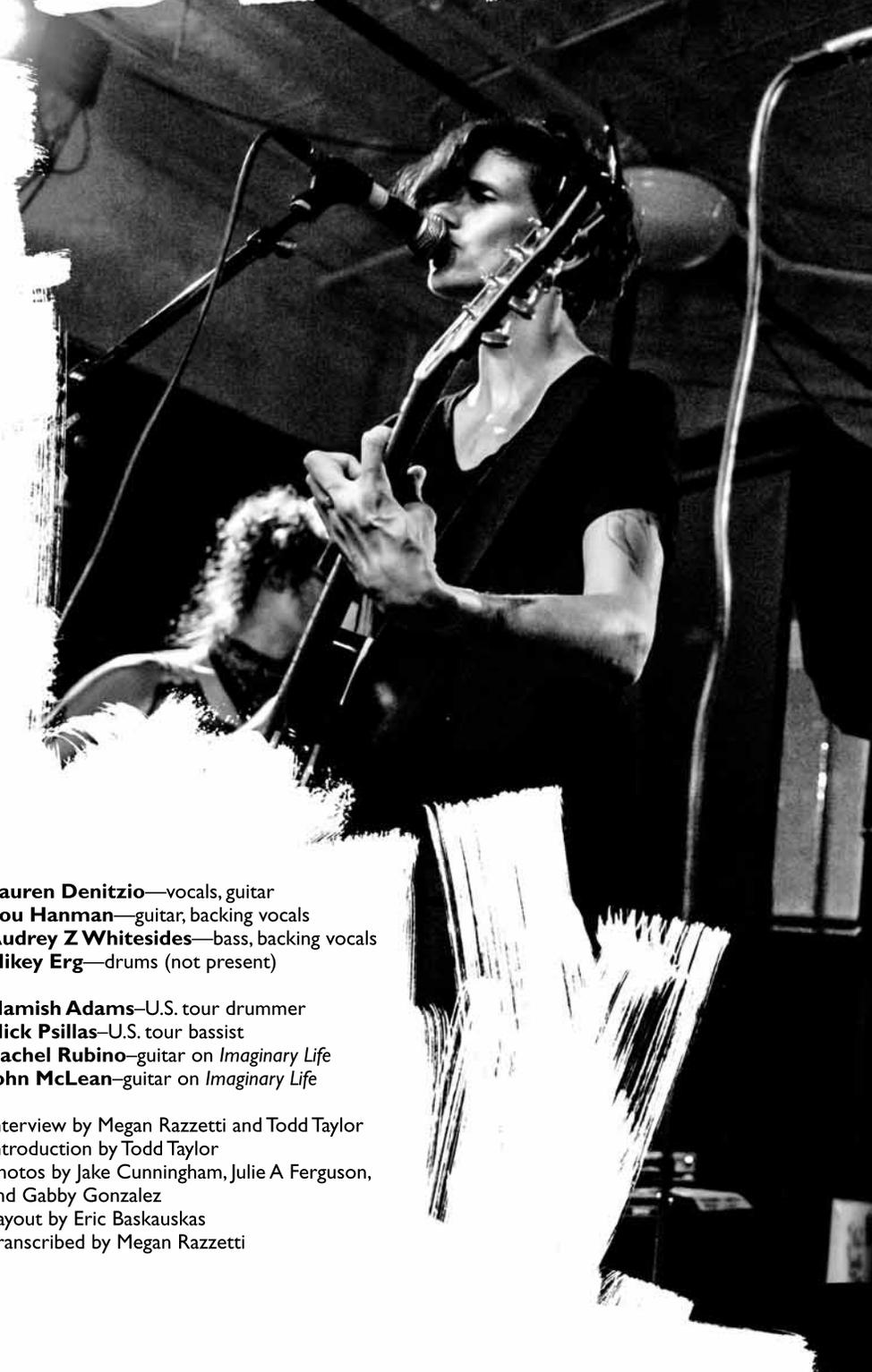
What is DIY if it isn't living one's life as a life of action?

Living a life by example—to show what is possible to others who rarely see and hear their points of view on stage or on record—that gives Worriers undeniable strength. And they make fucking great music.

Lauren Denitzio—vocals, guitar
Lou Hanman—guitar, backing vocals
Audrey Z Whitesides—bass, backing vocals
Mikey Erg—drums (not present)

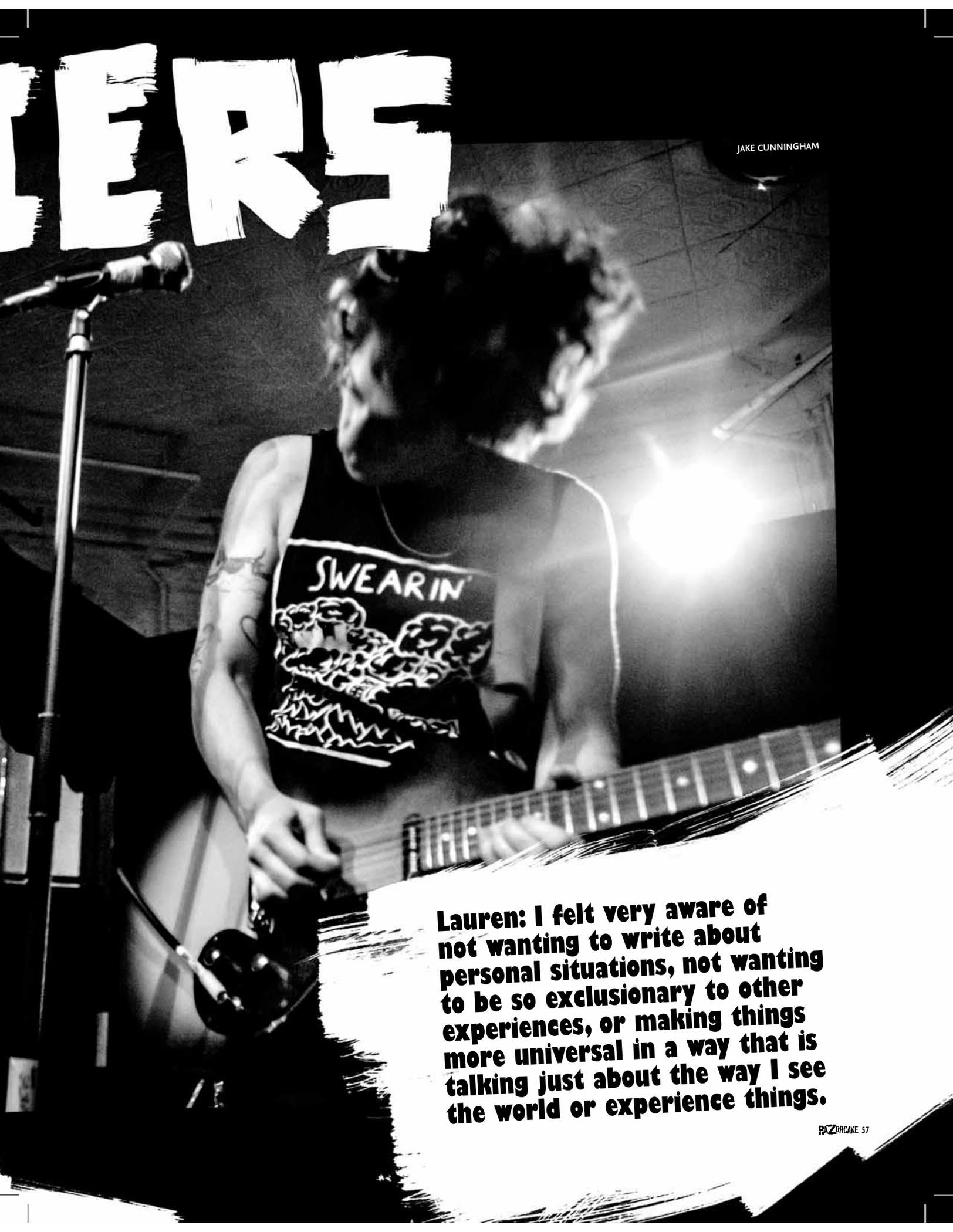
Hamish Adams—U.S. tour drummer
Nick Psillas—U.S. tour bassist
Rachel Rubino—guitar on *Imaginary Life*
John McLean—guitar on *Imaginary Life*

Interview by Megan Razzetti and Todd Taylor
Introduction by Todd Taylor
Photos by Jake Cunningham, Julie A Ferguson,
and Gabby Gonzalez
Layout by Eric Baskauskas
Transcribed by Megan Razzetti



TEARS

JAKE CUNNINGHAM



Lauren: I felt very aware of not wanting to write about personal situations, not wanting to be so exclusionary to other experiences, or making things more universal in a way that is talking just about the way I see the world or experience things.

Megan: Why “Worriers”? What’s in the name?

Lauren: It seemed appropriate at the time. [laughs] I feel like there’s not a crazy backstory other than our method of picking a band name at the time was opening a book and pointing at words because we couldn’t figure it out. So when that word came up, somehow it just fit.

Todd: So, I have a hard time saying “Worriers.” [Everyone laughs] When I tell people, I say I’m going to interview the “Warriors” (the film of the same name, or a Blitz song reference, or an oi band of the same name) and they’re like, “No, no.” That’s sacred ground for some people.

Lauren: Oh, no. That’s the thing. I usually have to say our band name: “Oh, we’re *Worriers*, like ‘to worry.’” We’re not that tough. Don’t let it fool you. [laughs]

Audrey: I usually shake my hands around and say: “We’re so worried about the world! It’s a scary place!” That’s how I describe this band to people.

Todd: I think it’s an appropriate name, though.

Lauren: Yeah. [All laugh] I can’t argue with that. My anxiety is just like, “Yes, yes, this is true.” It’s a tongue twister but I can’t abandon it.

Todd: Were there any secondary band names, Worriers and...

Lauren: Nothing seriously. Joke names, yes. [laughs]

Todd: Like The Angry Narwhal?

[All laughing]

Lauren: I think one was Horn Illusion.

Megan: Lauren, Marfan syndrome and your open heart surgery at twenty-five— what was that like?

Lauren: Well, that was right when the band started writing songs. I was diagnosed with a heart condition when I was a kid and I knew that at some point in my life I might have to have surgery. It just so happened that I went to a doctor’s appointment and they were like, “Yeah, this is probably gonna have to happen.” I went to another doctor appointment and they told me, “Yeah, you wanna do this in the next month. You need to fix this.” It was life-threatening but it wasn’t an emergency situation. I was still in The Measure [SA] at that point and had started Worriers, also. I just had to take a break for a few months and go through some intense stuff.

Todd: What exactly is Marfan syndrome?

Lauren: It’s a connective tissue disorder. I’m pretty tall and lanky and that’s why.

Todd: What does that have to do with your heart?

Lauren: The connective tissue that holds my heart valves together stretches out. If it stretches out too much, it can tear and that’s when it gets really dangerous.

Todd: They actually broke open your chest, is that correct?

Lauren: Oh, yeah. There’s wire happening.

Todd: Wow. What was the recovery like? Was it pretty long or traumatic?

Lauren: It was a really traumatic situation, for sure. But actual recovery, I was on a bike three months later. I was—for the first month

or two—very slow, so I was recovering for about a month and then after that it was very incremental, “Okay, I’m going to take a walk around the block,” or, “Today I can take the bus by myself.” I just had to be eighty-years-old for a few months. It was really intense but, actually, it wasn’t super painful. It was just very disorienting for a little while but then I was back to normal. Sometimes I’m surprised when other people bring it up. “That’s right. That happened.”

Todd: You fully recovered?

Lauren: Yeah. It was definitely a part of my relationship to this band and to music in general.

Todd: What do you think, Lauren specifically, and everyone can answer, what are Worriers doing that is different than the Measure [SA] did in making music, lyrically or headspace wise?

Lauren: Well, I think I bring all the songs to the table, so I’m the only one starting things.

Todd: So both lyrics and songwriting?

Lauren: Yes. In that way, I think it’s much more focused, for me, on what I want to be talking about with the songs, but then having specific other people play on the records and be on tour. I feel like there’s another level of collaboration and involvement that—it’s not that there are multiple songwriters, lyrically—but I feel like everyone has the room to participate and write their own parts. I don’t think the songs sound like I would have thought in the first place.

Todd: It’s collaboration?

Lauren: Yeah, it’s very much collaboration.

Todd: This is for Lou and Audrey—is there something, lyrically or content-wise, that you’ve heard Lauren put into a song that resonated with you?

Audrey: Yeah, for me it feels really positive and cool to be in a band that is talking about gender identity really openly. That is what our lead single is about.

Lauren: “They/Them/Theirs.”

Audrey: Which is so cool. Whenever I was like getting into punk, I was like, “Oh, I’m not going to be in a band that openly talks about non-binary gender identities.” That was something I never thought would come up. I was a fan of The Measure before I was in Worriers.

Todd: That’s funny. So was I.

[Everyone laughs]

Audrey: I feel like I’m kind of living the dream in that way, too. [To Lauren] It’s true. I listened to you when I was in high school. [Everyone laughs] I realized this, but, Lauren, I’ve always appreciated these songs that are really emotionally and intellectually complicated and they always approach from both angles. It’s always a song that I’m like, “Yes!”

I really like “They/Them/Theirs.” It’s a song that I have a lot of really deep personal connection to, but also I think it’s interesting and intellectually challenging to enter into. I really appreciate songs where I feel like—as a musician, when I’m getting to write my parts—there’s already so much to enter into, lyrically and content-wise. I’m not just

playing off of guitar parts, but I’m playing off of how the lyrics build in a song or how, like in “They/Them/Theirs,” I specifically wrote a really lead bass line in the chorus. Basically, because I was like, “Yeah! This is a fucking anthem about gender. I want to make myself heard in the song, too,” so I play this really super melodic bass line that comes out.

Todd: So you’re like, “I want an amazing bass riff right here.” [Everyone laughs]

Audrey: The song demands it.

Todd: How about you, Lou?

Lou: Well, I’m coming at it from a slightly different angle. I’m trying to play Rachel Rubino’s amazing guitar parts and she’s such a shredder. I’m trying my hardest to replicate what she’s made. My band Caves have played with Bridge n’ Tunnel so many times in Europe and she’s such a talented guitar player. So I’m on this tour and I had to learn her parts for this set. I was like, “Oh my god, how am I going to do this?” I think I’ve got something close. I’m not a very versatile guitar player, so I’ll play pretty much what is needed. Yeah, that’s been pretty challenging for me.

Todd: Sometimes it’s nice to go into somebody else’s brain, you know?

Lou: Yeah. I’m used to learning songs. I play drums. I can learn songs on the drums. I’ve played bass in Worriers on the European tour. I’ve learned that and this is the most challenging thing that I’ve done. I think guitar parts—especially Rachel’s parts—are so intricate, and she’s so nuanced, as well. Rachel, I hope I’ve done you proud. [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: [to Lou] You heard, especially on this last record, the songs in progress and you helped us with the backing vocals and stuff.

Lou: Oh yeah, that was fun.

Lauren: So you have your writing mark on things.

Lou: I love thinking up stuff, because you’re like, “Oh, well take a listen. What backup vocals, do you think?” So every single song was, “Do this!” [Everyone laughing] “Do that or do this!” “Far too much?” “It’s okay. I won’t be upset if you take any of this out.”

Todd: “Three-part harmony all the way through.”

Lou: Some of it stuck.

Lauren: In my head I still hear a lot of it even though we didn’t keep them for the record.

Megan: What dialogue do you hope your music invokes?

Lauren: My approach to writing about other topics that aren’t a personal narrative about my life is trying to be political in a more personal way; so not necessarily about democratic politics, but more social situations or how you want to see yourself in the world and how you want to build things and change things in a more individualized way. I’m not always super conscious about that, but I definitely see the songs going into that direction.

I really enjoy the conversations that come up with that; when people talk to me about the songs or when people take other

things from them that aren't necessarily directly about what I had in my head that gets translated into, "I relate to this song for this reason," and the kinds of conversations that come up with that.

Todd: Having been a long-term fan of The Measure [SA], listening to your lyrics carefully, I see it like civil rights, where politics and personal is very corporeal, it's very body-driven. We've gone through several waves of civil rights, through dealing with ethnicity and gender, and it's always changing. I think that you've been on the forefront of a lot of that—just being honest about yourself and coming from your body and explaining your personal situation without being didactic. That's tough, because you want to have something that resonates with people twenty, thirty, forty years down the road and, hopefully, things will get better. Is that correct? I don't want to put words into your mouth.

Lauren: No, definitely. I've been writing songs for, I guess, a decade now, which is kind of intense... [Everyone laughs]

Todd: No, over a decade!

Lauren: Over a decade. So even very early on, I felt very aware of not wanting to write about personal situations, not wanting to be so exclusionary to other experiences, or making things more universal in a way that is talking just about the way I see the world or experience things. I think you're right. [laughs] You put it well.

Todd: Well, if also you frame it—there's pride and there's prejudice. I have pride in who I am, that I'm not pushing that on other people. Also, I'm not a woman but I am an ally to women in the fundamental sense. You [to the band] met my mom this morning. I had two strong female models to follow. My mom and my grandmother. Why wouldn't I be an ally? That's how I frame those things. [To Lauren] You and I are different people but we get along really, really well because there's a dialogue.

Audrey: One thing I like is that so many of the songs are not just about the issues, but the struggles in trying to work towards these issues. There's "Never Were" off the last record—there's just so many songs that are about struggling to get to a place. It's not just, "This is what I'm sure about." There are so many songs that are like, "This is something that's hard to talk about. How do I talk about them?" On our new record, that theme comes up so many times. "Yes All Cops," it's not about "Fuck cops," it's a song about, "Fuck cops. How do we talk about this? How do we open up?"

Lauren: It is about "Fuck cops," but it's a more complicated thing than that, right, and I like being able to use songs to get into that.

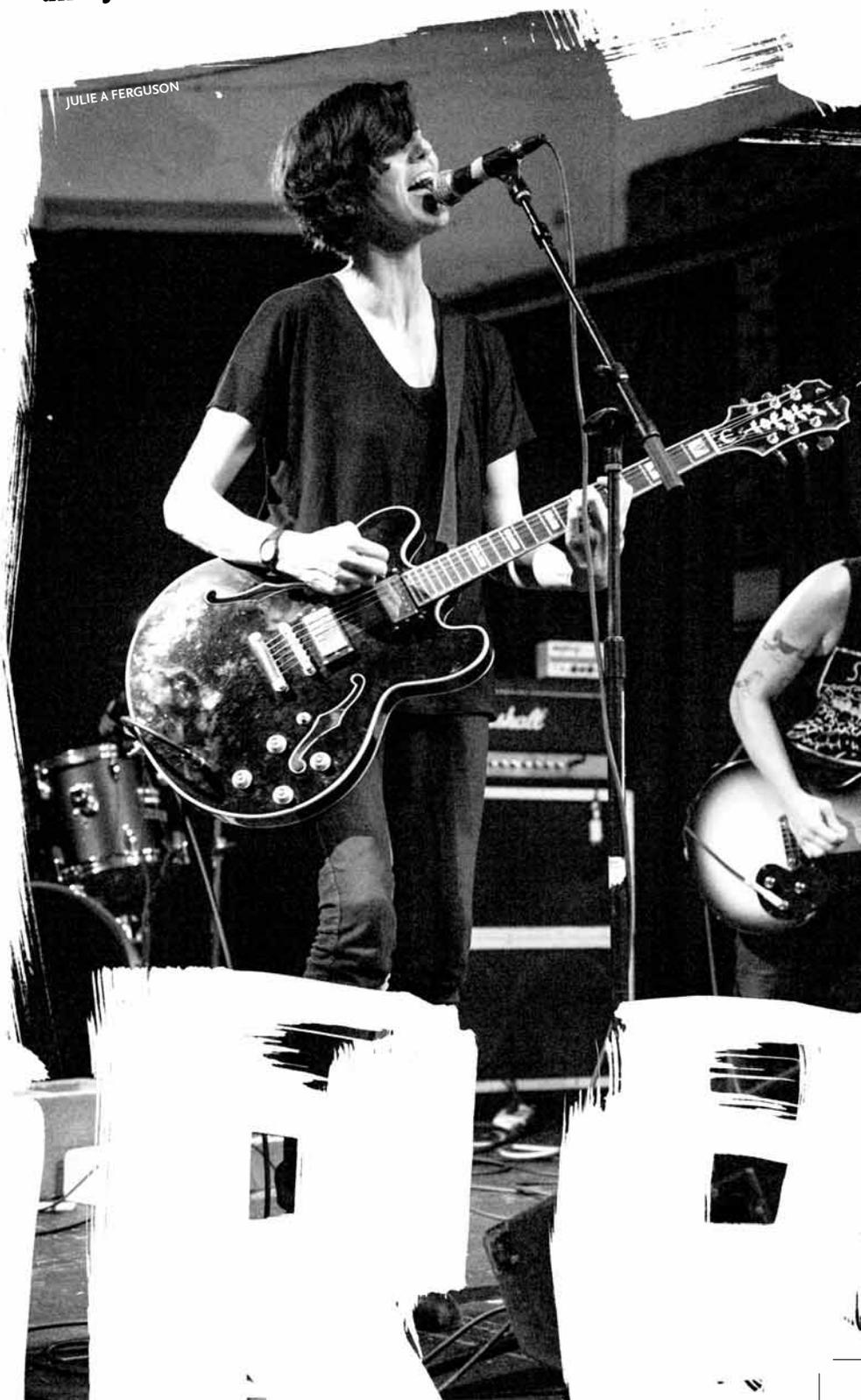
Todd: It's the culture that drives cops to be cops. But I like people stopping at stop signs. [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: [laughs] Right, yeah. The way the country enforces them is...

Lou: You don't drive up to a stop sign and go "Fuck you!"

Todd: [Everyone laughs] Bad idea.

Lauren: I could never see myself on stage or see someone like me on stage, to be playing shows where, a lot, I'll look out and be like, "Yeah, it's not all men in the crowd," and just feeling that is a huge improvement.





JULIE A FERGUSON

Megan: I'm assuming that you've been friends with Laura Jane Grace (Against Me!) for quite awhile. How did you cross paths?

Lauren: Actually, it's funny. I had met Laura a number of times throughout the years, so we have crossed paths before, but she wasn't a close friend of mine when I decided to ask to produce the record.

Todd: Did the Measure [SA] and Against Me! ever play a show together?

Lauren: No!

Todd: Ever?

Lauren: Nope!

Todd: You're kidding. Really?

Megan: Wow.

Lauren: Nope, never. We were in the same city at the same time...

Todd: Yeah, Gainesville.

Lauren: We were on the same label but we never played shows or anything.

Todd: That's crazy to me.

Lauren: I feel like there's a lot of reasons for that, or the level on which we were playing shows, or... We had met each other—I don't know if she knows or even remembers that—but, yeah, it was basically a cold call. I emailed her through friends and asked her out of the blue if she'd be interested in working on the record.

Todd: Why her, specifically?

Lauren: The idea was floated to me to work with a producer for this record and I wasn't necessarily sold on it right off the bat. I didn't think we necessarily had to have one, but I was thinking about if there was anyone I could work with, who I could open up to with the songs and bring into my world a little bit. When her name came up in conversation, I realized that I've been a huge fan of Against Me! forever and she's produced other records recently, so I knew there was something in her wheelhouse that she was open to doing, in general.

It just seemed like it would be a perfect fit. Not that we even necessarily talked about the politics all that much, but I never felt I had to worry about what I was saying and what some random producer was going to talk to me about. It just didn't happen because I don't think it needed to. We didn't have to hash it out over the politics. It was both how I felt like I could relate with her and just the music side of it.

Megan: Awesome. What were some of your expectations for working with her? Were they met or exceeded?

Lauren: I had a wonderful time. I feel like I can't start talking about it. Otherwise, I'm just going to start gushing about it because it was really rad.

Todd: Okay, you get two minutes. Go. [Everyone laughs]

Megan: Go right ahead!

Lauren: I had a wonderful time. I feel like everyone who was working on the recording just had a lot of fun. It was really intense. We worked really hard for twelve-hour days for over two weeks.

Todd: That's a lot of dedication.

Lauren: The recording engineer, Marc Jacob Hudson—he's recorded a ton of bands, but

is also close with Laura and does sound for Against Me!—we went to his house outside of Detroit and just lived there.

Todd: Like you're in a submarine.

Lauren: That's the thing. I've never done that kind of thing before. I never had taken that long to record a record. I feel like we all got along, just had a lot of fun, and stayed up late making weird demos or something.

Audrey: Oh yeah. That was my favorite part.

Lauren: I want to say that it exceeded my expectations but I feel like that's insulting.

Todd: Right, you had high expectations and they were met.

Lauren: Yes, yes.

Audrey: Also, just as a musician, Laura's so incredible—which I knew from listening—but just being in the studio with her and she can pick apart a song and be like, "This is the part that you need to repeat and that will make the song." She was right every time and her ear was just—I would play a part and there would be one note that was slightly out of tune or one note that was a sixty-fourth beat off of the drums and she would just hear it once and be like, "All right, play that three-second loop again," and, "Okay, that one note is very slightly off. You need to accent it more next time," and I was just, "What?"

[laughs] "What are those things on your head? They're not human ears!" [Everyone laughs] It was ridiculous. It was so cool.

Lauren: Well, that was the whole thing, though—there was someone who wasn't so used to hearing the songs all the time. Both her and Marc could be really objective about it, like, "Okay, I'm hearing this," like, being nitpicky, but in a really good way.

Audrey: I just feel, even working with other producers before, she was kind of—amazing. [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: Yeah, she's very talented and we were lucky to work with her.

Megan: Your newest album is called *Imaginary Life*. What's imaginary about it? [Everyone laughs]

Audrey: Well nothing's real...

[Everyone laughs]

Lauren: Now I can't follow it up. I feel like I should have a more concise answer for this by now, but...

Todd: Work it out today.

Lauren: Yeah, here we go.

Todd: You're amongst friends.

Lauren: I think about it like putting myself in a little bit different time and place for all the songs. A lot of it is either in hindsight or putting myself back in a situation that I'm no longer in, thinking about how life could have gone one way, or why I may have wanted things to be a certain way.

The title *Imaginary Life* just comes from this sort of other—I want to say "dimension," but now it's going to sound like we're some kind of psych band or something. [Everyone laughs] No, it's how you might want things to be or how things have been and feeling like there are multiple phases of one's life. I look back on certain times in my life. That was an entirely different universe to me and so I know that will continue to happen. I'll

look back on what's going on right now and be like, "That was a totally different life in certain ways," so I think the title comes from just thinking about time like that.

Todd: Like saying, you're actually a different person than ten years ago, in some ways.

Lauren: Yeah, but it's like definitely being able to think about life in a way that you're outside of it a little bit.

Megan: Are your parents supportive of your punk rock lifestyle?

Todd: Everybody has to answer that.

Audrey: Oh, my mom came and saw us on the tour we did with Against Me! She came to the first show we played, which was in Louisville, Kentucky. I'm from Kentucky and she was so excited. She's never seen me play a show before. She's never listened to any of my bands before.

Lauren: She came up to me and thanked me! [Everyone laughs]

Audrey: Yeah! She was so excited. I saw her after the show and she was just hugging me and was like, "That was so cool. I've never had that much fun!" She was mom-dancing drunkenly to Against Me!

Megan: So cute!

Lauren: She was standing up in the balcony going insane.

Audrey: Yeah! I looked up in the balcony during "Thrash Unreal"—there's a chorus, "No mother ever dreams that her daughter's going to grow up to be a junkie / No mother ever dreams that her daughter is going to grow up to sleep alone." She was just going for it. It was really cute. So, my mom is totally into it now. She used to not be. Now she thinks it's cool. Thanks, Lauren. [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: I feel like my parents are the same way. They might not have been overly enthusiastic about it and now...

Todd: In what way, though? Do they think, "You should have done X, Y, or Z"?

Lauren: Oh, oh absolutely!

Todd: "We need lawyers and doctors!"

Lauren: They're probably going to hear this, but my mom will know that I'm just being honest about her, even today: "Well, can't you just be *this* thing?"

Todd: In moms' defense, they're thinking: "I just want to have security for you. I just want you to be okay."

Lauren: Yeah, and that kind of feedback is coming from a good place—"Why do you have to quit your job to go on tour?" "Why do you have to freelance?" "Why can't you have that sense of security?" Obviously, they aren't going to necessarily understand if they haven't been through it. I think what's really cool is that even as I get older, I feel like it should be even more adamant on their part to be like, "What are you doing?" They've heard more songs and things in the more recent records and are like, "Cool. Where are you playing next? What, are you guys up to?" and are much more supportive.

Todd: I think that's why you should go "Yay!"—ten years is no longer a phase, you know? [Everyone agrees] "It will last two or three years. You'll like the Grateful Dead in a little bit." [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: My mom drove me to an Against Me! show in New Brunswick when she didn't want me to park the car there.

[Everyone laughing]

Megan: That's what my mom would do.

Todd: Did she come pick you up at the end of it?

Lauren: I must've been twenty or something. I was clearly old enough to drive myself. She didn't want me to leave the car in New Brunswick.

Todd: "I want that car back."

[Everyone laughs]

Lauren: She knew of this band for as long as I've been a fan and I feel like they could see us pursuing it. It's not like I'm too lazy to...

Todd: To get a real job!

Lauren: To get a real job. It's like, "No, we're actually working really hard at this and I just want to play music all the time," so I get that now.

Todd: And some of the dividends aren't monetary.

Lauren: Exactly.

Todd: They're *still* dividends.

Lou: Which are monetary?

[Everyone laughs]

Todd: "Lou, you owe us five dollars for doing that." That's the monetary benefit.

Lauren: Lou, I feel like your parents are pretty...

Lou: Oh, my parents are so supportive of everything I do. They've never pushed me to "get a real job" or anything like that. My mom really worries about, you know, "You gotta make sure you're okay." And, basically, they just both want me to be happy—whatever makes me happy, they will back me one hundred percent. I would say my mom's never seen me play in one of my recent bands. My dad has once and you can't rock in front of your parents, really, so... [Everyone laughs] I'm okay with them not coming out to shows, but they're supportive in other ways. My dad, he taught me to play guitar initially, and he's made a couple of guitars for me.

Megan: Awesome.

Todd: Really? Wow.

Audrey: Handmade guitars? That's so cool.

Todd: Electric or acoustic?

Lou: Electric, yeah. Even his friend, Neil, in the village we grew up in, they, between them, made my first guitar which was from a scrap heap, just the shell...

Todd: Best guitar ever.

Lou: Yeah, my dad—he had made a guitar when he was at school when he was sixteen. It had a Vox Tremolo and had humbucking pickups and he took them—ripped them out of his guitar that he had made when he was a nipper—and he put it on this new guitar, pre-painted it the color that I wanted, and put on a new scratch base.

Audrey: Aww!

Lou: There you go. I played for it years in Flamingo 50, my old band, and it's such a screechy, awful-sounding guitar but it's totally unique.

Lauren: I really love that guitar.

Lou: Then maybe five years ago, he's like, "Okay, it's your birthday coming up. What

guitar would you like?" I was like, "Whoa, okay." So I had to think for a bit. I was like, "Well, do I want a Gordon Smith, or do I want...?" Eventually went for a Les Paul junior double cutaway, and—I think two years later—he presented me with this solid mahogany, varnished within an inch of its life, beautiful guitar, a P-90 pickup in the bridge. He was like, "There you go." It's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen.

Todd: "Go forth and conquer."

Lou: [to Lauren] You know both of my parents. So supportive. But I don't think they listen to my stuff on a regular basis [everyone laughs], which I am more than comfortable with.

Megan: That's amazing. Was there a watershed moment where you proudly self-identified as a punk rock feminist? Or was it over time?

Lauren: There wasn't a light bulb moment or something like, "Oh yeah, that makes sense." I went to a very politically active college my freshman year: Wesleyan. Then I transferred and went to art school, which I think made me less intelligent somehow, but [everyone laughs] there was like zero politics.

Todd: "Lawyer!" "Lawyer!" "Lawyer!" [Everyone laughing] It's a bit more amorphous.

Lauren: It wasn't a lot of academics, but then I moved to New York and was involved in a feminist collective called For The Birds for a long time. Before we started that collective, the ladies I was hanging out with and working on some events with were the type of folks to adamantly use those terms and it just made a lot of sense to me and to my general politics that were already there.

Megan: Describe your work with For The Birds.

Lauren: Here we go, perfect segue. We had a zine distro and every year we used to do an all-day event called "The Big She-Bang," which would have tabling and workshops on different themes every year and bands at the end. I put together a couple of CD comps for those events with all female-fronted bands from around the country. That's how I heard of Hop Along and Songs For Moms. This was five or six years ago.

Todd: You helped create the watershed.

Lauren: I think that was a lot of my work with the collective. The collective still exists. I'm just not a part of it any more and they do a lot more ally work. They partner with other organizations to bring awareness to, specifically, the Marissa Alexander case, the stand-your-ground laws. But my participation was a lot more about art and music and using those elements of culture to bring people together and find community, especially in New York where it's so easy to get lost in a million different things going on. It was a really great time with my close friends meeting every week and deciding what zines to stock, going to different events and zine fairs and shows, and just putting those ideas out there.

Megan: Was there ever a specific time where you addressed someone on their sexist behavior during a show?

Lauren: Ooh, I wish. Not while we were playing. I've wanted to. I mean, certainly at shows over the years. I've been in situations where I've had to call people out about stuff, but it's mostly people I don't know, or it's people I know and it's an intensely personal situation. But, yeah, it's certainly happened. Luckily, not all the time. I try not to be like the...

Todd: No one wants to be a cop.

Lauren: Not a cop, not a cop.

Megan: What are some ways you've developed to address issues with people who just don't know or just don't get it about feminism or sexist behavior?

Audrey: That's a tough one.

Lauren: I'm still learning that kind of thing. I think we all just try to get along with everybody and aren't looking to start fights with people or be antagonistic when those sorts of things come up. I think my approach is just based on my own comfort level in the situation and trying to appeal to someone's sense of right and wrong. Even with little things—if I hear something that I know someone doesn't understand the implications of what they're saying, or just isn't thinking about it, or is being really casual about it, I'll just be like, "Hey, ugh—really?" And most of the time it's the way people are like, "Oh, someone was listening to me in a way that I know that's how that sounded, so next time maybe I won't." I feel like a lot of the times it's more low-level terminology.

Todd: And adjustments, too. People just don't know some things—and everybody is learning, too.

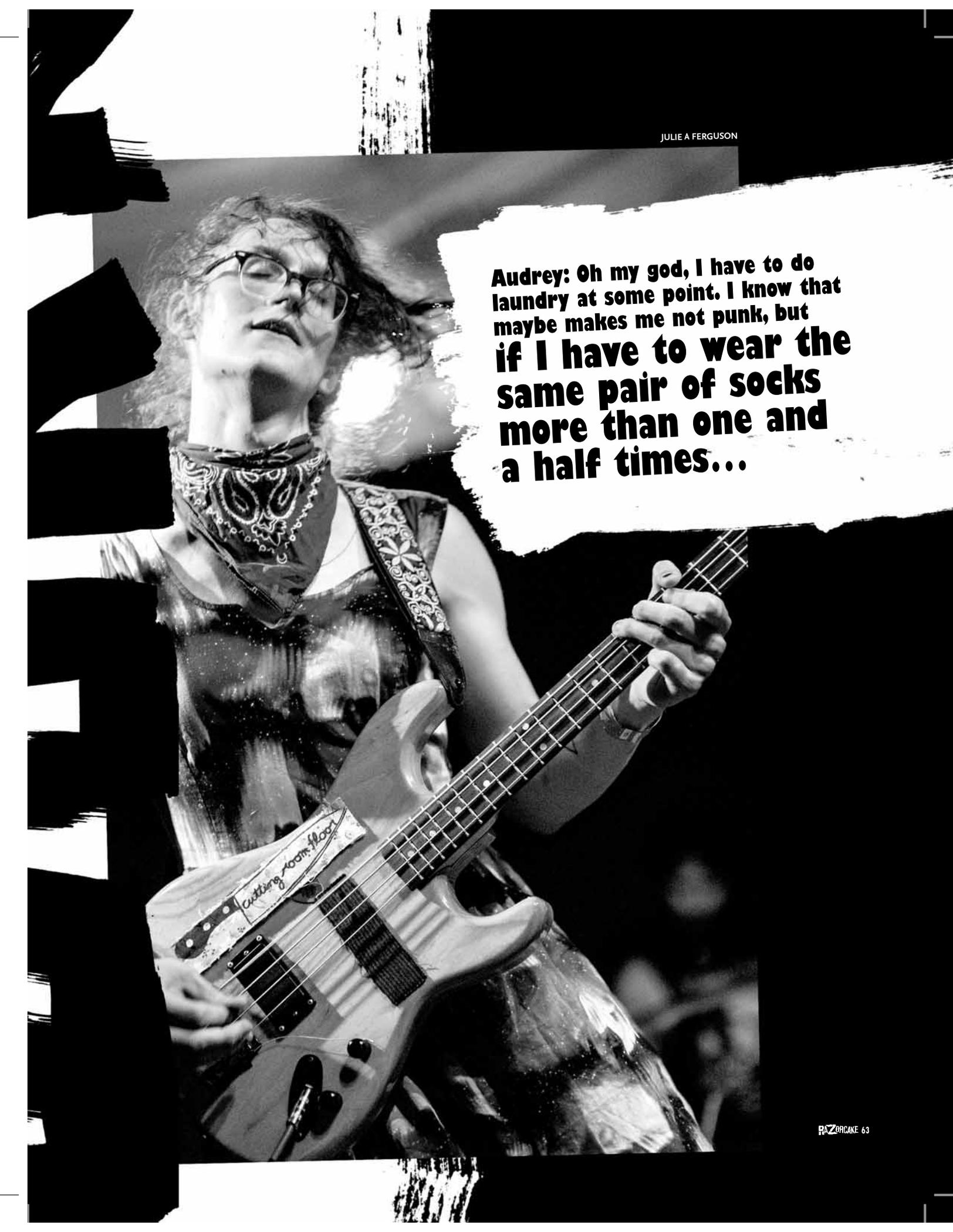
Megan: Overall, have you seen any improvement in the scene towards sexist behavior and anti-feminism?

Lauren: I don't consciously think, "Oh, the scene has improved." [Everyone laughs] It's all better now." But the past few tours we've done, there are very obviously a lot of women and queer-presenting folks in the crowd and up front. It has dawned on me that, consistently, at a lot of shows that's the crowd. I consider myself really lucky, coming from a scene that had none of that growing up, where I could never see myself on stage or see someone like me on stage, to be playing shows where I'll look out and be like, "Yeah, it's not all men in the crowd." Just feeling that is a huge improvement.

Audrey: I think it's cool. I can't speak about how the scene has changed 'cause I'm a baby, but where I came from, I went to high school in Virginia and I never identified as punk. I just knew about punk rock but would never go to shows. I never had any friends who were punk or anything just because it was all hardcore bros. I was like, "I can't go to those shows. There's no place for me there. Punk isn't something that exists for me in any way, shape, or form." I think—at least for me now—that feels very different and I've seen friends in Richmond start up feminist groups.

Todd: There's a spectrum of punk, too.

Audrey: I just think it seems like DIY has really become a part of queer culture for



JULIE A FERGUSON

Audrey: Oh my god, I have to do laundry at some point. I know that maybe makes me not punk, but if I have to wear the same pair of socks more than one and a half times...

Lou: It's so interesting that you can go to a city a day away and there's going to be somebody there who you feel comfortable with, and who you know agrees with your DIY ethic and your outlook.

GABBY GONZALEZ



me and so [Lou's stomach growls]—queer people are creating our spaces and are also hungry! [Everyone laughs] Maybe all the old stuff that felt exclusionary or isolating still exists but there are enough other spaces that are inclusive.

Lauren: [To Lou] I feel like you've seen more scenes than either of us have.

Lou: Well, it's funny because when I was at university in Liverpool, we formed Flamingo 50 because we couldn't see anything that we wanted to see on a stage.

Todd: So you made it yourself?

Lou: Yeah, and then I didn't know necessarily what was out there, but we started this scrappy punk band. We all switched to the instruments we were least comfortable on. We had to get drunk just to practice—which is terrible, but got over that. We just started linking with like-minded people. That spread to other scenes just in Liverpool, which is a strange, tiny city. Then we branched out to the people who were into riot grrrl in Manchester, which is just forty-five minutes down the road. Suddenly, this other stuff started opening up and we got to play in London. Then we were asked to play at Lady Fest in Glasgow and the more we did, the more we found people who were like-minded.

I've just constantly been on that trajectory, I suppose. Then I moved to Bristol and there were so many people who are like-minded as well. It's been quite an interesting ride, whatever city you go in. We've done tours in Europe and there's always the punk crowd you can normally sort of divide —there's that spectrum of punk. It's so interesting that you can go to a city a day away and there's going to be somebody there who you feel comfortable with, and who you know agrees with your DIY ethic and your outlook. It was eye opening for me to find people throughout Europe and into the States who are like, "Oh yeah! We recognize what you're doing and we feel the same." That's been amazing for me to experience.

Todd: There's an underground within the underground. Just trying to dial that in, aligning with allies, keeping things open, and making decisions of, "I want to play with these types of bands." Black Rainbow just played a show down in Tijuana and a bro-core band was put on the bill. They had the song "Handjobs in Heaven."

Lauren: Did Ivy just flip?

Todd: She was severely disappointed.

Lauren: None of them would be into that.

Todd: There's large society, which is your arms stretched that wide, the underground, which is a little box, and inside of it there's a spectrum... but still there are thousands and thousands of punks in that spectrum.

Lou: I find it's not really changed through time. You sort of meet someone, "Oh you're still thinking like *that*? Whoa." You have to have either a dialogue with them, hopefully, or sometimes when you play, you get pulled back to the first time you experienced some sexist behavior—for me like, twenty years ago. I'm like, "Ugh, we're still having these conversations?" "Right, okay."

Todd: I feel really fortunate having the heritage of Los Angeles punk because I think of the first wave as amazingly diverse and they, a lot of the times, feel that it got hijacked by jocks and bros.

Audrey: They do that.

Todd: Let's hijack it back. Let's take it back or just ignore the bros. Fuck them.

Audrey: I found it super easy if I get asked to play a show and there's some band—I'm like, "What the fuck is going on with your name? You have a name that's a joke about vaginas and you're just a bunch of dudes." It's really easy to just not play those shows and it doesn't hurt you at all.

Todd: Not all the rewards are monetary. [Everyone laughs]

Megan: So what are your tour rituals?

Audrey: I always read tarot on tour. I always bring my tarot cards and pull them.

Lou: Swimming. Definitely swimming for me.

Lauren: I don't know. I feel like every tour, especially recently, has been so different. I feel like I want to say I need Waffle House and...

Audrey: Yeah. Waffle House, for sure!

Lauren: That hasn't happened on this tour.

Audrey: Wait until we're in the Southeast.

Lauren: I know, we basically got past the Waffle House zone and haven't gotten back into it yet.

Megan: I think there's one in Colorado.

Lauren: We didn't go through Colorado.

Audrey: No, we will eat there so much. From Texas on, it's going to be Waffle House everyday.

Lauren: I feel like maybe that's my tour comfort.

Audrey: Doing laundry. Oh my god, I have to do laundry at some point. [Everyone laughs] I know that maybe makes me not punk, but if I have to wear the same pair of socks more than one and a half times...

Todd: I'm going to put it on the table: cleanliness never hurt anybody.

Audrey: It hasn't.

Todd: Being on time never hurt anybody. I just want to reclaim that for punk rock.

Audrey: Hell yeah!

Lauren: See, this is my thing—I hate not being on time and we haven't been on time a bunch this run and it's killing me!

Todd: A little grime is fine, but I don't want to get typhus coming to your house. [Everyone laughs] I don't want things crawling in my hair.

Lou: It is amazing when you stay somewhere that's clean and comfortable. I like that.

Lauren: [to Lou] I also felt really bad when you asked me at one house on this tour: "Are we going to be okay?" [Everyone laughs] It was just a particularly punky house that just had not really been vacuumed.

Lou: That makes it sound as if I'd never been on tour before. [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: No! No! It was a situation that I completely...

Todd: We all have limits.

Lauren: It was definitely a level of... [takes a deep breath] We were both kind of looking at the couch, being like, "Is this...? I think it's okay."

Todd: At a house, I once went to go put a tape in a VCR, and there were cockroaches inside the tape.

Audrey: [screaming]

Megan: [to Audrey] Well, we know your limit!

Audrey: No cockroaches!

Lou: Can I tell my first cockroach story?

Todd: Yes, please.

Lou: Okay, it was only a matter of weeks ago. You don't get cockroaches in the U.K.

Lauren: Yeah, they just don't exist. They're not there.

Lou: I was in the apartment, I opened a drawer, and there was a cockroach...

Lauren: Just a little one.

Lou: I was like, "Is that...? Is that...?" And Lauren was like, "You're in New York, come on." [to Lauren] You're like, "Welcome to New York."

Lauren: Yeah, yeah. It's New York!

Audrey: I hide in my room and you [to Lauren] just kill them for me.

Lauren: I'm trying to minimize what's happening.

Todd: Right, it's not a rat.

Lou: It's not a rat. I've lived in places where there have been rats gnawing at my door as some of them do, so I can deal with a cockroach, I think.

Lauren: I knew you could do it.

[Everyone laughs]

Audrey: I can't deal with cockroaches. If we see any on tour, someone has to take care of that for me because I will run the fuck away. [Everyone laughs]

Lauren: I can do it.

Audrey: Cool, thank you.

Lauren: We good?

Todd: Yeah. You feel good about it?

Lauren: Yeah.

Todd: I feel good about it. Worriers, thank you very much for coming in. It was a pleasure.





PHOTO BY SHANTY CHERYL



PEACH KELLI POP

Interview by Todd Taylor

Photos by Shanty Cheryl and Gabby Gonzalez

Layout by Lauren Measure

Peach Kelli Pop is the brainchild of Allie Hanlon. She writes all the music and, until recently, has played all the instruments and recorded it all herself. If that's not the embodiment of DIY, I don't know what is. Peach Kelli Pop also ascribes to the punk yardstick of optimal song length: shorter is better. They play attractive, catchy music. It's evocative of cotton candy sunsets and candy heart necklaces of songs; not hurting puppies and kicking out toilets. What's wrong with songs

being "huggable" and pretty once in a while?

We've all got busy, fractured lives. Knees like getting jerked. Thinking's hard. Some people get off poking digital eyes. The internet's rife with it. Yet, I get a trolly, crude aftertaste with a filmy residue of misogyny from self-proclaimed "punk gatekeepers" who dismiss Peach Kelli Pop as merely empty calorie, high fructose, confectioner's sugar music looking for a commercial to stick to. Peach Kelli Pop's music is a continuation of the legacy of largely overlooked

and dismissed histories of women in punk. It fits nicely in the constellation that swirls and winks with The Rezillos, The Pinkz, Top Ten, The Go-Go's, The Brat, Alleycats, Holly Golightly, God Damn Doo Wop Band, Bombón, and Alicja Trout (especially Mouse Rocket and Alicja Pop). What great company.

I'm happy to confirm my suspicions with this one-on-one interview. Allie is an intelligent, talented, involved, practical musician who hates cops, refuses to capitalize the "g" in "god," and knows how to get shit done.



PHOTO BY SHANTY CHERYL

Todd: Let's start out with the name—you said it's phonetically resonant.

Allie: The band name, Peach Kelli Pop, is based on a song by the band Redd Kross.

Todd: Not Red Cross, who they were named before they got sued (by the Red Cross)

Allie: It's kind of more like their glam rock phase, at least visually. It's still really good rock'n'roll music. Some people identify more with the earlier Red Cross, which I also do. That's actually how I learned to play guitar and bass. Learning the songs off of their first little album.

Todd: The 12" with the weird cover that looks like a party favor?

Allie: Exactly. I like all of their phases, even though they go through a lot of different styles. They've been a band for so long. I don't blame them for mixing things up.

Todd: A friend of mine in college loved Redd Kross. He really thought the girls in the band were attractive.

Allie: [laughs] They are. They're really cute. Really nice hair.

Todd: But they're not girls. But they do have higher register voices.

Allie: They can do those falsetto notes, for sure.

Todd: So this is going to help me to write the introduction. Let me see if you agree

with this—that Peach Kelli Pop is both tough and sweet.

Allie: I feel like that's correct. I try and balance it out. I don't want to be seen as too sweet because you aren't taken seriously and I don't think it's as cool to *just* be sweet. So I feel like I want to be seen as a little bit tough and maybe that doesn't sound sincere. Personally, when I see a band play, when I see a live show, I like a bit of an edge and I like it to be exciting. That's important to me also.

Todd: Great, because a couple of times you've said, "Fuck the police."

Allie: Totally. Every time I see a cop, it really bums me out.

Todd: Was there anything that happened that makes you that way?

Allie: I've personally never been arrested. I don't have a criminal record. [Todd knocks on wood.] But I just hate cops and I feel like if you don't hate cops, it's possible we couldn't be friends. Cops are terrible and they fuck with everyone and they're just such a bummer. There are so many reasons.

Todd: Have you ever had an interaction with a cop on tour?

Allie: In Eugene, we played this crazy house party and the cops came. They were talking to everyone like they were kids. Classic. We

had played and I went to go get our merch. They tried to tell me that I had to stay and that they might confiscate our merch. I was just like, "No. That's not happening. Leave me alone." And I just left. They had other stupid things to do, I guess. I just don't respect their authority. Of course, there's a possibility that'll backfire.

Todd: Have you seen any big differences between Ottawa cops and L.A. cops?

Allie: I'd say it's kind of the same. Because there's such a smaller population in Canada, it's a little less cutthroat there. I think there are the same things that are unfair that happened, but just less of them, as there's less of everything. There've been stories of cops sexually abusing people in Ottawa. Cops being racist. Same shit, just less.

Todd: It's pretty intense in Los Angeles. I think the Los Angeles police force is 30,000 (LAPD: 12,754 / L.A. County Sheriff: 18,000 employees). That's more than my home town. It's double.

Allie: There's a lot of them out there. Watch out.

Todd: For you, where does punk fit in when you're creating songs for Peach Kelli Pop?

Allie: I've never really thought about that. I just kind of do what comes naturally to me and write songs that I would want to listen

to. All of my favorite songs are short. I don't like a lot of different parts. I don't like multiple bridges. I enjoy listening to songs that are to the point. I think that's parallel with punk music. Peach Kelli Pop—the way it's made: electric guitars, distortion, DIY, home-recorded.

But I just hate cops and I feel like if you don't hate cops, it's possible we couldn't be friends.

Todd: I see that as tapping into a longer heritage that people are either, a.) ignorant about or b.) lazy about or c.) should be informed about. From East L.A., there was a great band called The Brat—late '70s, early '80s—who had a lot of melody and people disparaged...

Allie: "It's not tough enough."

Todd: Exactly. You've heard these conversations before. There was a great all-women band in Highland Park, The Pinkz. Same thing. One of the members came from Loli And The Chones. In England: Holly Golightly.

Allie: Who is totally punk.

Todd: If you do stuff with Billy Childish, you get a stamp of approval. So, for me, the heritage goes on and on and on. I see what you're doing as part of lineage.

Allie: Yes. Peach Kelli Pop is punk to me for songs, but also the way it was made and also the things that affect the band members aside from it. I'm choosing my art over my personal comfort. I can't have a job where I always have money to pay for my expenses; the personal sacrifices I make to be in a band. To me, that's kind of punk—not to say that bands that have job security aren't punk. All of my sisters and my family, they all have secure jobs.

Todd: I call them jobby jobs.

Allie: It is kind of tough because I'm twenty-eight. One day, I'd love to own a house. But that's something that I can't do because I don't have a jobby job. Also, Peach Kelli Pop was started by me. I was using borrowed equipment—equipment that was broken or found at thrift stores—and I was recording it myself. It was DIY to the maximum. I'm still using gear that's really beat up. To me that's punk also.

Todd: Totally. Another one. Pretend I'm some random dude. "Oh, I want this really fancy guitar and mom and dad are going to pay for it. It's going to be on a credit card." And they have no concept that there are other ways to make music and put yourself out there.

Allie: It's the product that's more important than the tools you use.

Todd: And the process is very important, too.

Allie: Yes, I agree.

Todd: Going back a bit before we go forward. So I know you from you being the drummer of the White Wires. What kind of punk education did you get from being in that band?

Allie: Most of the education I got was from hanging out with them. So, Ian and Luke. They're a bit older than me and they had a lot of experience putting out records, playing in different bands, putting on shows, going on tour. And that stuff was all new. I'd never done any of that. So, Ian, who's the singer

and guitar player and who writes most of the songs, he's a really, really positive guy and he's a really positive influence. He really inspired me about being in a band for the right reasons. I guess he's a role model for me. Which is weird. I think he inspires lots of people. He actually moved from Calgary to Ottawa, I think in 2008, and that's when Ottawa got exciting again. He made everyone excited to play in bands. It was pretty cool.

Todd: For how small Ottawa is compared to Toronto or Montreal, which are known as music towns, it finally got back on the map.

Allie: It's awesome.

Todd: It's good to know that you didn't come out of a vacuum.

Allie: No.

Todd: There's a heritage. There's a give and a take, too. People who don't understand DIY culture make assumptions. "Oh, you're lucky. Burger put out your record. A personal jet flies you to shows."

Allie: No way. I wish.

Todd: So how did you sit down and teach yourself recording? Instruments—I can kind of get. You can see them visually.

Allie: I was born in 1987. I spent a lot of my youth on the computer. I'm really comfortable with computers. I can learn different programs pretty easily. All of my recording I did was on my computer. I would pirate programs.

Todd: I would say you re-acquisitioned them.

Allie: I re-acquisitioned Cool Edit Pro and that's what I used for my first album. Eventually, I got a Mac and I tried out GarageBand. All of those multi-track programs are pretty similar. And they're all visually easy to figure out. It was easy. It was free. And I could take my time learning them. I could do as many takes of a certain part as I wanted. Also, one thing that's cool—if you don't have money for a million guitar pedals—is you can add different sounds to your tracks, which is cool. Some people think it's a copout, but I don't have money for eight different pedals.

Todd: I think of it this way: You have this skill set. You have these tools in front of you. Great. "Let's go. Let's do this."

Allie: Everyone has their own way of doing things but because of my upbringing I was really comfortable with that and it was

really empowering to be able to experiment without any costs involved—to be able to teach it to myself and figure out how it would work for me.

Todd: What did your parents do? What kind of support system did they provide for you? Stable house environment, I'm assuming.

Allie: They were really supportive. I'm really lucky to have a family that supports me and supports what I do. My whole family is from Ottawa. That's the capital of Canada.

Todd: It's the government seat, like Washington, D.C.

Allie: Both of my parents work for Environment Canada and they both do consulting. My mom and dad have done lots of work with the States dealing with smog control because you guys create smog and it floats over to Canada.

Todd: Doesn't it just dissolve at the border?
Allie: No. So, they would make reports: "You have to control your smog in this part of the States because the wind..." I don't really know the specifics, but it's not as cool as it sounds. But they were working to control the environment, which is cool. I always grew up being aware of not being wasteful, recycling, and all that good stuff, which is still really important to me.

My parents met in the government when they first started working there. I think they were in their mid- to late-twenties. They were both divorced and they met each other and they had my twin sister and me. So, anyways, you can find love again, even if you're divorced. I'd say I had a pretty middle class, nice upbringing. I'm really lucky.

Todd: A little bit of stability never hurt anybody.

Allie: My family's important to me. I'd say a lot of the people I'm surrounded by aren't so lucky. A lot of my friends—they kind of got a bad card with family and parents. It makes me realize I'm lucky to have parents who are nice to me. Supportive. Taught me good things.

Todd: But high school wasn't completely positive.

Allie: No. I didn't like high school. My twin sister, she got accepted to this fancy private school and I went to the local public school. She's very academic. I've never liked school. I don't like focusing on things I'm not interested in. I don't have that kind of self control. Even though, now, I feel like a brat because I'm like, "I'm lucky I even get to go to school." I was a bratty teenager. Anyway, my sister really didn't like it there, so she decided to go to public school and they said, "Do you want to take her spot?" I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was fourteen, so my parents said, "You should do it. It would be good for you."

Todd: No one would know.

Allie: Just swap the twins. I ended up going. It was really good academically because had I gone to public school, I probably wouldn't have finished. No one there would have forced me, pushed me, or cared if I skipped school. It was small classes. It was a really good education, but it was private school and the kids who went there were assholes.

Todd: Didn't they call you "Beaker" (from the Muppets)?

Allie: Oh, yeah. Just the kids who went there, as soon as they were of legal driving age they had convertibles. It was silly. I'd take the bus. The kids weren't very nice. Some of them were nice. The private school kids hung out and the kids who had gone to public school—which was a very small percentage—hung out. It was myself and maybe six other kids. We were the weirdos.

Todd: That sounds classist. Snobs.

Allie: It's totally classist. Same stuff as always.

Todd: So, White Wires was not the first band you were in?

Allie: I was friends with this girl Rekha; she and her boyfriend were starting a band and they wanted a drummer and they asked me. It was definitely a learning experience. I don't know why we were called this, but we were called Captain Foxy. I don't know what it was supposed to mean or what it's supposed to suggest, but I just went along with it. It was fun. It was a good first band, for sure. We didn't play outside of Ottawa. Opened shows. But that's what you do.

As a girl, it's really cool to me seeing a band that consists of all girls because it's rare and it's inspiring. And so I got a few of my friends to start a band called The Felines and that was my second band. Still learning. That was fun. I was playing drums in both those bands, but that's where I started to want to learn to write songs.

Todd: Right, because the drummer very rarely writes the songs.

Allie: Yeah. Just kinda hangs out in the back.

Todd: Are you allergic to cats?

Allie: Depends on the cat and if I've hung out with a cat long enough, then I think I can adjust to it. Maybe. Sometimes.

Todd: So, currently now, living in Los Angeles, does Peach Kelli Pop—when you're not touring—pay for itself, or do you have another job?

Allie: [chuckles] I guess I have another job, but it's only every now and then. I'm a dog walker and a dog sitter. I just finished dog sitting for four days. It doesn't feel like work and it's not a jobby job and I actually enjoy it, so that's why I hesitated when you asked me.

Todd: It's an honorable profession. My good friend Jim did it for several years.

Allie: It's fun, hanging out with dogs instead of people. It's really nice. The dogs are happy to see you.

Todd: And you've worked at a dog rescue.

Allie: I have volunteered at shelters and I also work with rescues. So, currently, the rescue that I've been working with is Angel City Pit Bulls. Pit bulls are my favorite dogs. Because we have a cat, I pretty much only foster puppies because there's no risk of the dog deciding it wants to eat the cat. But puppies are awesome and they're really fun to foster. They're also the most difficult dog to foster because they like to pee inside. Eat your shoes.

Todd: They're pretty strong.

Allie: And they'll decide they want to bite you for fun and stuff. It's cool to get a puppy that has no skill and then teach it to sit and

lie down and wait for its food and potty train it and then know it's going to get adopted a lot easier.

Todd: Because it's behavior is acceptable.

Allie: Exactly. It's a good thing for the rescues. Also, when people foster a dog, it means the rescue can help a different dog because it's in a safe spot until it gets adopted.

Todd: So one of the dog rescues is on the cover of your latest record, *III*.

Allie: That's from a different rescue. Pardon The Pups, out of Eagle Rock. That's a pretty

small rescue but the owner is really cool and that's her dog. We chose that dog because she's very still, which a lot of dogs are not. They'd just be a blur in the photo. And I also like the way she looks. She's a little, adorable beast. Thanks, Gracie.

Todd: We've addressed this a little bit—why is it important that people have shitty jobs?

Allie: It's so important. It builds character. It teaches you to empathize with the people who surround you.

Todd: I think, also, when you're on tour, you



PHOTO BY GABBY GONZALEZ

may be: "This kinda sucks, but at least I'm not working a shitty job right now."

Allie: Oh my gosh, tour is magical. I think it's really important for people to work minimum wage jobs. I think you can't really understand the world around you and relate to people who live different lives than you. I think everyone should do it.

Todd: What has been your absolute worst job?

Allie: The first job I worked was a cashier at a grocery store.

Todd: Very humbling.

Allie: And I think I made \$5.50 an hour.

Todd: And tips! Joking.

Allie: Some people are nice, but a lot of people see it as an opportunity to be rude to you. I was fifteen. I was pretty timid. I wasn't a very self-confident person and I think that's partly why it happened because people are

Allie: Exactly. I totally agree. Also Joan Jett is like that, too. I think people are concerned with the visual aspect a lot. The Ramones look punk. The reputation is punk. And Joan Jett looks punk. But they have super sweet, melodic, slower songs that aren't what people think of as punk.

Todd: That's a good point. I was thinking of punk girl gangs.

Allie: Girl School looks pretty cool.

Todd: And they could be singing the sweetest things, but if you look at them...

Allie: They're a punk band.

Todd: They could stab me. They're gonna break the bottle and put that to my jugular.

Allie: [laughs] Exactly.

Todd: And they could be singing about anything. Cookies, or something. That's good. I didn't think about that... so I feel like

Todd: Peach Kelli Pop—you, as a person, are a lot different than many people's first knee-jerk reaction to your music.

Allie: Yeah, and the reaction that people have and people are vocal about: "Peach Kelli Pop is so sweet." Well, I'm an opinionated person and I have a lot of stances on things that are not just simple. I feel like the reputation we get is a lot simpler than how I feel as a person. It's frustrating sometimes. Everyone is entitled to their own views on what they hear and see, but there's more.

Todd: There's a difference between Allie and Kelli, who doesn't exist, except as a name of a song that your band's named after. They're assuming that you're Kelli. The videos that I saw were very fun, whimsical. There aren't any dead rats or smashing things.

Allie: Not yet.

Todd: Car on fire.

Allie: Yesss! It's to come.

Todd: I love DIY punk, but it's definitely far away from being perfect. Let's talk about Going Gaga. Have they ever paid you for your first record?

Allie: Going Gaga was such a small operation and I don't even know if Ian—who's the singer/guitar player for White Wires—I don't even know if he broke even. So I didn't expect him to pay me, 'cause he's incurring a lot of expenses. He definitely gave me free records. For someone who's touring and playing shows, that's money. It's really important. Ian definitely gave me that, at least.

This is a whole other thing, but people criticize Burger Records a lot, but as someone who's working and touring, they're really supportive. They pay me for the digital aspects.

Todd: Downloads.

Allie: But they also give me as many free copies of records as I ask for for tour, which can support an entire tour if you're selling enough.

Todd: Because I read somewhere that you said, "My first album has been re-pressed three times and I've never seen a cent."

Allie: Infinity Cat Records.

Todd: Oh, I'm sorry. I've always heard good things about Going Gaga.

Allie: Oh, yeah. It's awesome. Infinity Cat Records out of Nashville, they repressed the first album.

Todd: That's where I got confused.

Allie: I signed a contract. I had my mom help me look it over and it looked great.

Todd: How many pages was it?

Allie: It was only one page. It was simple, but I didn't realize that they would own it.

Todd: You don't want to get pounded. Someone may be very nice, but you have to look through it.

Allie: I learned my lesson. I'm not a professional. I'm not a lawyer, so I don't understand the terminology. I think they've repressed my album three times and I've never made any money off of it, off of any iTunes sales, or anything and they've told me that they're just covering their expenses and it hasn't broken even. I guess, when they make enough money to repress it, they just do it.

Todd: [laughs] Seems like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Oh my gosh, tour is magical. I think it's really important for people to work minimum wage jobs. I think you can't really understand the world around you and relate to people who live different lives than you.

comfortable acting like that to you.

Todd: Some people can't process, "I am not your servant." Also, I don't own the fuckin' store. I don't price these fuckin' things.

Allie: "I don't care if you think it's too expensive. Really don't."

Todd: "Don't buy it."

Allie: Actually, a couple years ago, I worked at a daycare for dogs. This is after college. I enjoyed it and it gave me a lot of experience. I'd say I was overqualified for it in some ways. I kind of liked how there wasn't a lot of responsibility, which is nice in some ways. I'd say half of it was cleaning up dog shit all day and sanitizing the yard and scrubbing—which I don't mind—and the other was interacting with the dogs, which I enjoyed. It's good for you.

Todd: So, favorite band?

Allie: Whenever I'm asked that, I say the Ramones.

Todd: You stepped right into my trap. I'm going to venture a guess that you have more than a passing knowledge of the Ramones.

Allie: Yeah, totally.

Todd: Because I don't think people give full benefit of how diverse they are. They have super, super sweet songs.

Allie: They're so many things.

Todd: That's where I'm looping around to. If people are saying, "Peach Kelli Pop's not punk enough." How about "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend"?

my eyes are dirty from reading comments that people leave you on the internet.

Allie: Oh, yeah. [sarcastically] People love it.

Todd: YouTube's comments are the worst.

Allie: I can't engage in them. The White Wires had our first music video. Almost every comment was about me in a really creepy, sexual way so I had to write the guy whose YouTube account it was and say, "Can you monitor the comments?"

Todd: Or deactivate them.

Allie: Exactly. He made it so no one could leave comments. Like, my parents are looking at that. People who are like, "What's Allie's band?" are looking at that. It's all these gross comments. I can handle it. Fun times on the internet. Thumbs down.

Todd: Boo. So totally different topic. Why do you refuse to capitalize "g" in "god"? And I will say as a Razorcake format convention, we do that also.

Allie: Oh, awesome. Kudos. For the simple reason that I don't subscribe to christianity.

Todd: The big "G."

Allie: It's not my responsibility because I'm not associated with all of that. It's cool if you want to, but, to me, it's not grammatically correct.

Todd: And I'm not going to come to your door, dressed up on a Wednesday during the day and then say, "You need to *not* believe in the big 'G' god."

Allie: You do you and I'll do me. Thank you. Mmm-hmm.

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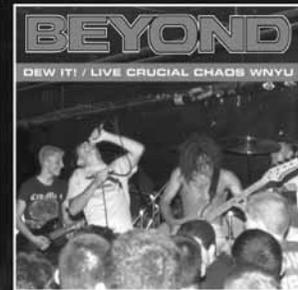
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Allie: I don't know what they're doing. I'm sure that they can justify it in some way. I'm sure they have their own perspective, but I don't know why they think it's a good idea because I'm not happy with it. I've stopped asking for the records to sell on tour, which, also, if it's been repressed three times—which I'm pretty sure, maybe only twice—I only got a number of my share of free copies on the first pressing and I'm charged, I guess, a reasonable amount. I think because it's my

I awake?" My brain won't stop. I guess once I reach a certain point that I was hoping to get at, I don't care anymore. I want the next thing. I'm ambitious in the things I want for the band and what's possible.

Todd: Again, I think ambition gets a bad rep.

Allie: It's not very cool. [laughs]

Todd: I'm ambitious, but I'm

Be really comfortable and confident and be able to have fun. Because if you're not comfortable, you maybe haven't practiced enough. It's hard to have fun on stage when you're worrying.

product and my music—I paid all of the expenses to make the music...

Todd: You're handing over something that's completely finished, mastered, ready to go.

Allie: ...I don't understand why they make all the profit on it. I've had a couple exchanges with them and they've had an explanation. But, to me, it's really simple.

Todd: Also, you have two other working models with your other full-lengths and it's a different situation.

Allie: I should be making some of the money off of it if there's money being made. It's kind of sad because I'm disassociating myself with the first record.

Todd: That sucks.

Allie: I thought about re-recording it. It's really, really—I hate this term—it's lo-fi because I didn't know what I was doing. But I think I could improve the sound. So that's an idea and put it out on Porchcore or something.

Todd: Sorry, I'm not good at jokes. Infinity Cat is like a cat you're allergic to.

Allie: Yeah. I was excited to sign that contract 'cause they were my friends and it was really positive. It just didn't work out the way I wanted to. I don't want to shit talk them, but I'm unhappy with them.

Todd: Genuine disappointment. People sometimes mistake me for being a blind cheerleader for DIY. That's not it at all. Sustainability is huge for me. And if you made just a little bit more money? Great. You put all of this time and energy into it. People like what you do. Fantastic.

Allie: I can keep doing it. Exactly.

Todd: So, why do you care so much about what you do? Why can't you relax and turn things off?

Allie: I wonder that myself. Because this morning, I was like, "I'm still tired. Why am

not going to use another person's back as a ladder to get to the next place. I'm ambitious inside of myself. "I want to do a better zine. I want to do these projects with people and everybody's treated well. And maybe have more exposure that way." That's ambitious, otherwise we'd say, "We're just gonna smoke a bunch of weed and not do anything."

Allie: Totally. Which people need to do sometimes.

Todd: Definitely, like watch *The Bachelorette*. Sometimes you just have to turn off that brain.

Allie: I think that's why I like that show 'cause it really helps you do that. Turn it right off.

Todd: "This is kinda fascinating. It's like an alien race."

Allie: That live amongst us.

Todd: So, what was on your five-year plan that freaked you out?

Allie: So, my dream is to have my own house, 'cause I can have dogs there. I can live with the people who I want to live with and kind of have control. And, also, something about the long-term aspect of it is really nice. I also really want to get a house that needs some work and then work on it. I think that would make me really happy. Do some renovations. New floors. Walls up. But I don't know when I'll be able to buy a house because that's a really tough thing.

Todd: And security gets a bad rep, too. I don't want to struggle every single day. It's exhausting.

Allie: I'm not really thinking of a five-year plan anymore. I don't know what's gonna happen. I think opportunities appear unexpectedly and I think it's hard to plan for specific things.



Todd: I think being out there and open to them is really important.

Allie: I think it's good to be open to different paths and people and even careers. I don't know what I'm gonna do. I would love to own my own business some day, but I'd also like to work for an already existing business that I believe in. Who knows? I have a one-day plan at a time. [laughs]

Todd: I did my research and I think I have a Peach Kelli Pop manifesto list. These are quotes from you. I'll strike out anything that you don't agree with.

Allie: Sounds good.

Todd: "Don't tolerate bullshit from people."

Allie: Yeah, totally.

Todd: "Have fun on stage."

Allie: Yes.

Todd: "Become awesome at your instrument."

Allie: Yes. Become good at it in your own way. Be really comfortable and confident and be able to have fun. Because if you're not comfortable, you maybe haven't practiced enough. It's hard to have fun on stage when you're worrying.

Todd: Concentrating or flubbing or whatever. And there's this thing called classical music and those people are really great at that.

Allie: They're really good.

Todd: And I don't care.

Allie: That's boring.

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Todd: And a bunch of them get together and play the same thing.

Allie: They play songs that other people wrote.

Todd: Whatever.

Allie: Pish posh.

Todd: "Don't act like you're too cool."

Allie: I think that's an epidemic in a lot of places. L.A. gets a bad rep for that, but it's everywhere.

Todd: It comes in waves, too. Crowds can be really different in the same city.

Allie: I think it's good to not care what other people think and do whatever makes you happy and then you'll attract the right people.

Todd: You become a magnet.

Allie: For people who you will get along with.

Todd: This kind of follows in: "Don't become jaded." It's harder to not be jaded.

Allie: It's totally different now. I feel like I'm grasping at the magic sometimes. "Don't let it go." But I'm focused on covering my expenses and, "What's going to happen?" Having a band, especially like mine where the members come and go, is really hard. That's one thing that's making me feel jaded. It kind of makes me want to give up when I have to retrain someone. Everyone who I ask to play in Peach Kelli Pop has their own thing. The people who I look for are mature, able to have their shit

together. And those people, often times, have their own thing or have a job or have job opportunities coming their way. There is turnover and that's one thing that makes me feel jaded.

Todd: But you're trying to find a balance with that. It's one of those catch twenty-twos. If you want something done, you find somebody busy.

Allie: They're busy, but they're also better at it.

Todd: This ties in, too: "Find people you trust who you can ask about learning new music skills, releasing music, setting up shows and tours, et cetera." That's something we've talked about all the way through this.

Allie: For me, that was Ian from the White Wires. When I didn't really have any experience, he wouldn't judge me. He would help me figure out what was the right direction for me.

Todd: Highly important... "Be nice to other girls."

Allie: Yes. I'm lucky because the girls who I'm surrounded by, we all treat each other as we would want to be treated. And in the same ways, we treat guys. But there's definitely weird vibes with girls sometimes. They're threatened and that's just the way our society makes it.

Todd: Competition, too.

Allie: I don't judge those girls. I just hope they figure out we should be on the same team, but it's really nice to be able to be friends with other women and work together and relate to each other.

Todd: One thing I constantly think about is collaboration over competition. It's such a readjustment.

Allie: If a girl is jealous of another girl, probably, they could be friends.

Todd: They probably share a lot in common.

Allie: You probably look up to the other person in some ways. I bet you could be really good friends and you should just try it. You've got nothing to lose.

Todd: So that ties into, "Be yourself," which is the next one. "Life gets better after high school." I am sorry if your best years are in high school.

Allie: Me, too. Yikes.

Todd: And I think we should bring it all back together, to the beginning. "Don't trust the police."

Allie: Don't trust the police! It's true!

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE



Andy Garcia

1. Ausencia, Self-titled 7"
2. The Dark, Self-titled CS
3. Egrets On Ergot, *Serve Us Tender* 7"
4. Golden Pelicans, *Oldest Ride, Longest Line* 12"
5. Destruction Unit, *Sonoran* LP reissue

Aphid Peewit

- Poison Idea, *Confuse and Conquer* CD
- Friends Of Dorothy, *The Man without DNA* LP
- BGK, *A Dutch Treat* CD
- PiL, *Album* CD
- Sunday Morning Einsteins, *Kangnave* CD

Art Ettinger

- *The Decline of Western Civilization Collection*, 4 x Blu-Ray
- Templars / Odio Simple, *Split* 7"
- Danger Signs, *Reset* LP
- Mood Of Defiance, *In a Box* 7"
- Playoff Beard, Self-titled 7"

Bill Pinkel

- Nervosas and robot (re)pair, live at the Redwood
- Swami John Reis And The Blind Shake, *Modern Surf Classics*
- Nervosas, Self-titled
- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
- I/O//sé, *Lower Berth*

Billy Kostka

- Ivy, Self-titled 12"
- Dawn Of Humans, *Slurping at the Cosmos Spine*
- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
- Snooty Garbagemen, Self-titled
- Golden Pelicans, *Oldest Ride, Longest Line*

Candice Tobin

- Top 5 Records Echoing in the New Digs*
1. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
 2. Mind Spiders, Self-titled
 3. The Marked Men, *Fix My Brain*
 4. Radioactivity, Self-titled
 5. White Murder, Self-titled

Chad Williams

1. Adolescents, *La Vendetta* LP
2. Valkyrie, *Shadows* LP
3. Good Riddance, *Peace in Our Time* LP
4. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
5. Vanity, *Vain in Life* LP

Chris Mason

1. Tenement, *Predatory Headlights* 2 x LP
2. Royal Headache, live + *High* LP
3. Daylight Robbery and The Stops, live
4. *Crate Digger* by Bob Suren (book)
5. Vacation, *Non-Person* LP

Chris Terry

1. Dark Ages, *Vapor* LP
2. Brian Costello, *Losing in Gainesville* (novel)
3. Radioactivity, live at Strange Matter in Richmond, 08/02/15
4. *Girl Who Walks Home Alone at Night* (movie)
5. Finished another novel draft. Maybe I'll finish the novel one day.

Craven Rock

1. Activists in kayaks who got arrested in Washington trying to stop Shell's oil drill from going to Alaska
2. *The Depression Book and Making a Change for Good* by Cheri Huber (books, great writing on mental health from Buddhist perspective)
3. Chiho Aoshima: Rebirth of the World exhibit at Seattle Asian Art Museum
4. *Lost at Sea* by Jon Ronson (book)
5. The Mountain Goats, *Beat the Champ*

Daryl Gussin

- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
- Johns, *Grift Marks* LP
- URTC, *The People Are Home* LP, tie with Hex Dispensers, *III* LP
- Germs, *Forming* 7" reissue, tie with new *Spent Flesh* 7"
- Daylight Robbery, live, tie with Worriers and Caves, live

Designated Dale

1. Motörhead, *Bad Magic*; celebrating their fortieth year this past June with a new full-length that continues to keep the music world in check.
2. Los Master Plus at California Plaza, DTLA
3. Nina Diaz at Alex's Bar in Long Beach, CA
4. Yvonne volunteering her translating skills for this year's Special Olympics World Games.
5. Cheers to Mike and Lila Morales tying the knot this past July!

Eric Baskauskas

- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
- Donovan Wolfington, *How to Treat the Ones You Love*
- High On Fire, *Luminiferous*
- Eradicator, *Eradicator*
- Anxiety Hammer, *What Stands between Us* 7"

Jamie Rotante

- Top 5 Albums I'm Looking forward to This Fall*
1. *Mutiny at Muscle Beach*, Night Birds
 2. *Zipper Down*, Eagles Of Death Metal
 3. *Psychic Warfare*, Clutch
 4. *Constructs of the State*, Leftover Crack
 5. *HitNRun*, Prince & 3RDEYEGIRL

Jim Joyce

1. Bigfoot Discovery Museum in Felton, CA
2. Portland Zine Symposium and all those who made it happen
3. Value Aloha Motel in Vancouver, OR, for those fine, fine bedbug kisses
4. Basement Benders, Self-titled 7"
5. *Cretins of Distortion* #6

Jimmy Alvarado

- Rebecca Rodriguez's Eastside Punx, ELA Punk Rock Photography 1988-1991 exhibition
- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
- Toxic Reasons, *Independence* LP reissue
- *A Wailing of a Town: An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More 1978-85*, by Craig Ibarra (book)
- Terveet Kädet, *Lapin Helvetti* LP

Jim Woster

- Top 5 \$2.50 or Under Finds from the Out of the Closet in Glassell Park, All in Good Condition*
1. Charles Bukowski's *Septuagenarian Stew*
 2. John Fante's *West of Rome*
 3. Michael Lewis' 2014 book *Flash Boys*
 4. A Thousand Other Names' Self-titled CD (out-of-print, from Stan Ridgway's Birdcage label, feat. G.E. Stinson and Nels Cline)
 5. Richard Ben Sapir's *The Far Arena* (out-of-print novel, a favorite of Harlan Ellison)

John Miskelly

- Top five U.K. comedies all y'all 'mericans should check out to fill the John Stewart-shaped gap in your lives.*
1. *Brass Eye* (or anything by Chris Morris, especially his early radio work)
 2. Nathan Barley (Chris Morris and Charlie Brooker's prescient evisceration of East London hipsterdom that's definitely not based on *Vice* magazine)
 3. *The Thick of It* (everything you need to know about U.K. politics, swearing, and Glaswegians)
 4. Garth Marenghi's *Darkplace* (can't describe it, just get the fucker watched)
 5. I said "prescient evisceration." I am a cock.

John Mule

1. Los Dos Hermanos, *Bourbon, Blood and Seafood*
2. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
3. The Hex Dispensers, *III*
4. The Plurals, *An Onion Tied to My Belt*
5. Nervosas, Self-titled

Juan Espinosa

- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
- Glue 7", tie with Vexx 7"
- Molly Robertson and Josh Rosa's wedding; congrats you two love birds!
- Generacion Suicida, Marron, Fraude, and Surprise Vacation live at Unikorn Chan
- Razorcake day drinking event with DJs Jimmy Alvarado, Rat Bastard, and Meztli Hernandez

Kayla Greet

1. D4th of July at the Triple Rock
2. Free Mudhoney and Dead Moon show at Charles Smith Winery

Silent Kill

3. Interviewing Ed Robertson of the Barenaked Ladies for my pinball podcast
4. Worriers, Caves, and Dead Bars at The Narwhal
5. Listen Lady at Machine House Brewery, b/w the Morgue (DIY venue) reunion show at The Blue Grouse on the same night

Kevin Dunn

1. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
2. Alice Bag, *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* (book)
3. Pliesticene, *Space Trap* EP
4. *Tear A Cognita #3*: Brisbane, Queensland compilation
5. Michael Stewart Foley, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* (book)

Kurt Morris

1. Chelsea Wolfe, *Abyss*
2. Planes Mistaken For Stars, *Mercy*
3. Jawbreaker, *Dear You*
4. See Through Dresses, Self-titled
5. mewwithoutYou, *Pale Horses*

Lauren Measure

- 5 Things Made by Travis Fristoe That You Should Know
1. The book *Radon* by Aaron Cometbus and Travis Fristoe
 2. The zine *America?*
 3. The band Reactionary 3
 4. The article "In Praise of Lance Hahn" on Razorcake.org
 5. The zine library at the Civic Media Center in Gainesville

Louis Jacinto

- My Top 5 First Wave Punk Videos
1. "Unable" Suburban Lawns
 2. "122 Hours of Fear" The Screamers
 3. "Miscarriage" Nervous Gender
 4. "Too Much Junk" The Alley Cats
 5. "We Don't Need the English" The Bags

Mark Twistworthy

- Royal Headache, *High* LP
- Institute, *Catharsis* LP
- Easter And The Totem, *The Sun Is Greater Than Its Parts* LP reissue
- In Camera, *Era 2* x LP reissue
- Far Out, *Universe* LP

Madeline Bridenbaugh

- Top 5 SoCal Bands Since Becoming a L.A. Local
- Lysolgang
 - Western Settings
 - All Brights
 - Bombpops
 - No Parents

Marty Ploy

- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
- robot (re)pair, *Never Trust a Human*
- Weird Lovemakers, *Electric Chump*
- Fools Rush, *We Have Clementines*
- Detached Objects, Self-titled

Matt Average

- Warhead, Self-titled LP

Meztli Hernandez

1. DJing at Bar 107 I <3 Drinking Beer and Listening to Records on 8/8/15
2. Ausencia, Self-titled EP
3. Generacion Suicida, Future Graves, Oxidizer, Way To Go Genius at 5 Star Bar on 7/17/15
4. Nervosas, Self-titled LP
5. Josh and Molly's wedding on 8/01/15

Michael T. Fournier

- *Anxious and Angry* podcast
- Coastwest Unrest, *Black Desert Sweet Mojave*
- Downtown Boys, *Full Communism*
- Liz Prince, *Tomboy* (book)
- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*

Mike Dumps

- Tommy Stinson, live at Bowery Electric
- Royal Headache, Self-titled
- Witches With Dicks, *Not Just a Passing Season* EP (Soon!)
- Dark Thoughts, *Two More Songs from...*
- Ryan Adams, *Blue Light* EP

Mike Faloon

1. Check Swing Tour with Mike Fournier
2. Jack Grace, *Everything I Say Is a Lie* CD
3. The Jonah Keri Podcast
4. Joe McPhee and John Snyder, *To Be Continued* LP
5. Dot Wiggin Band, *Ready! Get! Go!* LP

Mike Frame

1. Dragons, *Cheers to Me* LP
2. Cayetana, *Nervous Like Me* LP
3. Motörhead, entire catalog
4. *The Newsroom* (television series)
5. No Talents / Head, live in Seattle

DJ Naked Rob

- Radio Valencia | San Francisco
1. Jonny Manak & The Depressives, *Cold Pizza & Warm Beer*
 2. Destination Lonely, *No One Can Save Me*
 3. Wailin' Storms, *Shiver*
 4. In Defence, *Don't Fuck with the Dungeon Master*
 5. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*

Nighthawk

- Live Sets in Saint Louis
- Rush
 - The Meatmen
 - School Damage
 - Braver
 - Radioactivity

Paul Silver

1. D4th of July at the Triple Rock Social Club, Minneapolis, with D4, Against Me!, Scared Of Chaka, Off With Their Heads, Toys That Kill, Tim Barry, Nato Coles, and more
2. Worriers, *Imaginary Life*
3. Boom Boom Kid, DFMK, Calafia Puta, and Santa Ana Knights, at the Hideout, San Diego
4. Detached Objects, Self-titled 12" EP
5. The Stupid Daikini, *Everything Is Fine*

Replay Dave

- Worriers, *Imaginary Life*
- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
- Ceramicats, bandcamp demo
- Underground Railroad To Candyland, *The People Are Home*
- Young Ruins, Demo 2014 CS

Rich Cocksedge

- Dearly Beloved, Worried Shoes, and The Vice live at The Underground, Plymouth
- Gentlemen Prefer Blood, *Used Books and Guns* LP
- The Abs, *A Wop Bop A Loo Bop, A Cough, Wheeze, Fart 2* x CD
- Wonk Unit, *Feel the Wonkness* LP
- Bangers, *Bird* LP

Sean Arenas

- Terrible Feelings, *Tremors* LP
- Big Business, *Battlefields Forever* LP
- Downtown Boys, *Full Communism* LP
- Sonny Vincent And Rocket From The Crypt, *Vintage Piss* LP
- *Baseline BLVD* by Emi Gennis

Sean Koenenick

- Best Black Flag Drummers
1. Bill Stevenson
 2. Chuck Biscuits

3. Robo
4. Anthony Martinez
5. Brian Migdol

Tim Brooks

- Buck Biloxi And The Fucks, *Streets of Rage* LP
- Epyx Shredder, *No Bails* LP
- Hex Dispensers, *III* LP
- Gino And The Goons, *Don't Push Your Luck* EP
- Terror, *The Twenty Fifth Hour* LP

Toby Tober

- Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed
1. *The Seven Years*
 2. *Deep Web*
 3. *Fuku-Chan of Fukufuku Flats*
 4. *Bridgend*
 5. *Lost Soul: The Doomed Journey of Richard Stanley's Island of Dr. Moreau*

Todd Taylor

- Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
- The Billie Idles (formerly Tom Grrrl) *Everything Was Cliché and Nothing Was Original*
- Dark Times, *Give* LP
- Hex Dispensers, *III* LP
- Nervosas, Self-titled LP
- *A Wailing of a Town: An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More 1978-85*, by Craig Ibarra (book)

Tommy Vandervort

1. Hex Dispensers, *III* LP
2. Pegboy, Stiff Little Fingers, Dummy, at The Metro, Chicago
3. D4th of July at The Triple Rock Social Club, MPLS
4. Direct Hit, *More of the Same (Satanic Singles)* LP
5. Fourth Shift Screen Printing, Ryan Young's new venture

Tricia Ramos

1. Think And Die Thinking Fest
2. Peaches Christ Presents: *Showgirls* Live
3. Finally seeing the MRR house
4. Sacred Paws, *6 Songs*
5. Lady Leshurr, "Queen's Speech 4"

Ty Stranglehold

1. Hex Dispensers, *III*
2. Maniac, *Demimonde*
3. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
4. Night Birds, *Mutiny at Muscle Beach*
5. Drakulas, *Owowowowowowow*



ACHTUNGS, THE: *Welcome to Hell: LP*
 KBD-style garage punk in league with the mutant hybrid bands that do it so well such as the Spits, School Jerks, Ratas Del Vaticano, and the Sleaze. No lyrics, band information, or much artwork to behold other than a live shot of the boys in action so that means you'll just have to take a hint from song titles like "I Don't Care about You," "I Wanna Be Mean," and "You're Not My Friend." If you like it raw, snotty, and short then the Achtungs are your cup of warm piss. —Juan Espinosa (Going Underground)

ALEX CHILTON: *Ocean Club '77: CD*
 A live recording of Chilton playing the titular New York club during the titular year. The sound and performance are stripped way down—I can't tell if this is a great sounding audience tape or a barebones board recording—with him and a couple of friends running through some covers, some Big Star tunes, and a "new" song or two. The performance is fairly laid back on the whole, with some moments of potential radiance, such as on "September Gurls," peeking through. Dunno that what's here would convert the casual listener into fan, but fans will no doubt find much here to bask in. —Jimmy Alvarado (Norton)

ALIEN TV / THE JIM TABLOWSKI EXPERIENCE: *Split: LP*
 Plenty of junk in this punk trunk! Alien TV is four cats arguing with each other which direction to take the band—Briefs? Scared Of Chaka? Voidoids?—not realizing they're all right and they're all moving in the same direction. Snotty, fast SoCal punk surfing the gutters of New York. But from Dortmund, Germany. TJTE spits out ten songs, none reaching the two minute mark, with a sound—and I don't use these comparisons lightly—between Sexy and Elmer. Add one of the oddest set of lyrics and song titles and we may just have some sort of German genius punk release. —Matt Seward (Spastic Fantastic, spasticfantastic.de)

ALPARCHIE: *Space Punk Vol. 2: 7" EP*
 Dissonant, spastic thrash stuff. Lots of free jazz influence pumped in, with wild time changes and stops interspersed throughout the songs. —Jimmy Alvarado (Zaxxon, zaxxon.ca)

APPALACHIAN TERROR UNIT: *We Don't Need Them: LP*
 This is Appalachian Terror Unit's second full-length record, though they've released a fair amount of 7"s including a split with Oi Polloi, long time players in the political punk game. If I was in high school, or just getting into punk at any age, this record is a great snapshot of the world we're living in. "Casualties of a Rape Culture" hits on some real heavy subjects that are so fucking important to be talking about. For most of the song the vocals are spoken, covering terrible things that are said to women. The track reminds me of War On Women's "YouTube Comments," with lyrics like, "You were drinking so what did you expect? Maybe not to be treated



like a fucking object." The next track is "Officer Down," which doesn't actually advocate killing cops, just the healthy distrust of the men and women in uniform. A few weeks ago I was walking to work when three cop cars rolled up on me because I matched the description of a prowler in the neighborhood. They found out I carried a box knife and held my arms behind my back for several minutes before telling me what was going on. An SUV pulled up, confirmed I was not the prowler in question, and I was free to go. This track became an instant catharsis for my own personal experience. The cover art of the record is a gorgeous scene of a punk utopia with bonfires, dogs, books, music, and loving punk parents, right next to a bone yard littered with crosses, TVs, skyscrapers, and cash. On side B there is one track that is the entire length of side A's six tracks. It's the titular track that describes every shitty thing in the capitalist society that we live in, as well as the place we should strive to achieve. —Kayla Greet (Profane Existence, profanexistence.com / Ruin Nation, ruination.org / Skuld Releases, skuldreleases.de)

BAD COP/BAD COP: *Not Sorry: LP*
 This band has been making a splash in the past year or two and it is not hard to understand the appeal. Who can really resist this brand of bouncy, take-charge California pop punk? The lyrics cover genre classics like heartache, self-doubt, old friendships, and hometown affection, to name a few. Frontwoman Stacey Dee's snarky vocals, supported by plenty of squeaky clean harmonies, easily take the spotlight. The melodies are tight, energetic, and accessible to a fault. Probably too slick and polished for the purists, but, come on, don't act like you can't get down to some catchy

bubblegum pop punk at the end of the day. —Indiana Laub (Fat)

BAD STROKE: *Dirty Hole: 7"*
 Man, I was so into this before I discovered it's at 33 and not 45. Bummer. Amateurish, thrashy scuzz hardcore from Aarhus, Denmark. It's not bad, but if I have to look at actual pictures of your balls and asshole in your artwork I better fucking love your music. You just can't un-see that shit. —Camille Reynolds (Halshugga, halshuggarecords.tictail)

BANGERS: *Bird: LP*
 There is a palpable sense of despair as Roo Pescod laments, "I don't feel like I'll ever be clean again," in the song of the same name, and it is a trait that prevails throughout Bangers' latest release. Only the final track, "Partial Eclipse," offers a glimpse of positivity—however the band offers a musical counterpoint to the depths plumbed lyrically, resulting in a lively and melodic album. *Bird* is the result of Bangers' first time recording in a "proper" studio and the results are displayed with a more powerful quality than heard before. It is not like the band needed such a boost but it does add something extra to its arsenal. —Rich Cocksedge (Specialist Subject, andrew@specialistsubjectrecords.co.uk, specialistsubjectrecords.co.uk)

BASEMENT BENDERS: *Self-titled: 7"*
 Basement Benders put out a seven-song cassette last year—fuzzy, singable, dirty—and by "dirty" I don't mean nasty—I mean packed earth dirt and backyards, ancient outdoor furniture, sweaty coolers and what not. This current EP redoes four songs, two of which, "Pony Express" and "Train

Song," give an idea of Basement Benders' range. Lyrically, "Pony Express" looks onto a familiar plane crash, pews, washed-out roads, the pony express, and, of course, radios, by which "you gotta be patient" while waiting for your requested Replacements song, which might never come, because how many stations even know who the Replace... Well, anyway, and the other track, "Train Song," narrows the scope to one of the singer's personas who is trying to balance a want for "cool clear water" to drink from as well as water to jump into "with a rock tied to [their] head." So, right, kind of bleak shit. But somehow catchy as hell and uplifting, too. This four piece's sound, which culls from their wide-ranging members' histories—Cleveland Bound Death Sentence, Black Rainbow, Future Virgins, This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb, and the list goes on—is the ideal EP for your Mad Max picnic. Get your copy, pop a cold snack, and start choogling. —Jim Joyce (Dead Broke, deadbrokerecords.com / Drunken Sailor, drunksailorrecords.co.uk)

BEAUTY PILL: *Describes Things As They Are: 2 x LP*
 The big maximalist electronic push and the prioritizing of ornamental sounds like power drills/fireflies/sandy beaches/general bloop and the use of a dog bowl make this album interesting (also the lyrics) and remind me of Juana Molina and Eno and jazz records I haven't heard yet, and also I wish they were more of the rock band they used to be, and also how many bands take more than ten years between releases and come back as a living (emphasis on living) surround-sound experience and have roots in a corner of DC punk and cover Arto Lindsay? How many bands write a song about flirting that's also about complicated racial history, that includes a section meant to reference Ornette Coleman? How many sing a song from the point of view of an aging, failed actor with children? This is more textural/layered than anything they've done before and is maybe more for the older crowd than the young, though the young crowd for this record are the shapers of tomorrow, obviously. That crowd will hopefully take BP's cover of Lungfish's "Ann the Word" and run with it. Or, fuck it, let's hope BP themselves run with it. "Everybody with fingerprints make some noise" is my favorite sentence in years and I want to hear it chopped and screwed into infinity. —Matt Werts (Butterscotch, butterscotchrecords.net)

BENNY THE JET RODRIGUEZ / MARTHA: *Split: EP*
 I have to admit that I'm a dofus. Before this review I had never heard a Benny The Jet Rodriguez song. There is just so much music out there that I can't get to all of it and though they graced the cover of the last issue of *Razorcake*, sadly this beautiful group of musicians is no longer. At least they put out this last split to remember them by, and I sincerely hope they move on to other musical ventures.



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These tracks from BTJR are like sunshine-flavored bubble gum—so saccharine and warm. The first track is about being in love but not with you, and the second is about being in love with someone who doesn't feel the same. Both sides of relationship woes are covered in the sweetest way. I'm kicking myself for sleeping on this band. Todd Congelliere plays keys in this band! How did I miss out? I've got a moment to rectify this situation because Martha is just as awesome, and hopefully not breaking up anytime soon. This incredible, robust, and driving bass breaks the silence of the flip side, and is met by a strong and full northern English accent. Fast guitar riffs join as a second vocalist chimes in and quick-fire lyrics pour out. Martha's second song is a cover of the Swedish band Masshysteri. Looking forward to more from them while also seeking out the rest of BTJR's catalog. —Kayla Greet (Drunken Sailor)

BETTY MACHETE & THE ANGRY COUGARS:
"Guts" b/w "Destroy You": 7"

"I love you inside, I love you inside-out!" Betty Machete sings on "I Love Your Guts." She is fucking angry. She's got the perfect death rattle voice for these grimy, mean-spirited tunes. There are no frills on this record. No wanky guitar solos or self-important instrumental flourishes. This is no-nonsense, negative, knuckle-cracking punk rock'n'roll, and I'm way into it. —MP Johnson (Dull-Fi)

BIG BUSINESS: Battlefields Forever: LP

I would never consider myself a metal fan. My knowledge of the demonic art is next to nil, but Big Business tickle my fancy. Scott Martin's guitar wails, drummer Coady Willis pummels, and singer/bassist Jared Warren conjures apocalyptic, battle-ravaged visions over his low-end gut-punch. Big Business are almost a parody of metal tropes (the cover is a colorful cut-and-paste menagerie of warrior lion men and the lyrics are pure fantasy), while steadfastly forging their unique brand of tongue-in-cheek, face-melting sludge metal epicness. Sonically, the power trio invokes Torche, early Baroness, and Melvins (since two members of Big Business are also members of Melvins' current line up). If you're like me and you've been searching for metal that isn't self-serious or po-faced, then *Battlefields Forever* just might be your golden ticket into satan's army. Also, I highly recommend searching for Big Business' parody press release for their label Gold Metal Records, which features hilarious lines like "Members of the band are calling it their best album yet" and "*Battlefields Forever* was recorded Spring 2013 in the abandoned Beverly Hills mansion currently haunted by Jeff Goldblum." Very funny stuff. —Sean Arenas (Gold Metal, bigbigbusiness.com)

BIG CRUX: We Got a Jam: CS

True story: I got into the Big Boys when I saw Félix Reyes of Los Angeles hardcore revivalists Lifes Halt wearing

the "skate-anarchy" T-shirt. I needed to hear the band with the awesome shirt design and although I certainly wasn't expecting the funk or the horn section, the fast skate punk songs reeled me in and eventually their entire catalog enamored me. After Lifes Halt broke up, I didn't see much of Félix at shows anymore and it wasn't until a few years later that I found out through a mutual acquaintance that he'd moved to Seattle. Even more years went by before Iron Lung records CEO Jensen Ward revealed to the world that he'd spotted Félix and he had some songs he'd been working on with a ragtag group of musicians in grunge city. The project was labeled "futuro," Spanish for future, and now known as Big Crux. *We Got a Jam* compiles the band's earliest material from their debut 7", single-sided 12" EP, split 7" and a few compilation tracks. The Big Boys are certainly a jumping off point but you'll want to dig a little deeper into the seven layer dip that is their sound. Yup, that's some Plugz and Minutemen you're tasting. Once you're done savoring this appetizer you're definitely ready for the Latin American flavors infused into the main course (or debut full length, if you will) that is their opus, the *Ponchito* LP. And yet, Big Crux we hardly knew ye: the band has recently called it quits. Some of us at Razorcake are fucking bummed. It's like the time our favorite local lunch time Chinese food restaurant closed. It didn't mean much to more than a handful of us. There was nothing we could do except

lament and remember the deliciously good moments. B<X we'll miss you! Now go make your own jam! —Juan Espinosa (Not Normal / B<X)

BIRD'S MILE HOME: Here and Now: 7"

Bird's Mile Home play country-fried, folk punk with fast tempos and clean guitars. It's quite catchy, really, and not in a Nine Pound Hammer kind of way (not that I'd have a problem with that...). Not what I expected at all, to be honest; the artwork/layout could easily make you believe it's a nineties-style hardcore/emo record. Thankfully, that's not the case. —Steve Adamyk (Minor Bird)

BLACK HOLE KIDS: Easy Masks: LP

Black Hole Kids play with darkness. Shrieking growls akin to black metal are woven into a mellifluous hardcore tapestry. What sets BHK apart is the ease with which they weave what should be so ugly-sounding into art (lyrically, visually, and sonically). Recorded in a bombed-out old firehouse, *Easy Masks* can be felt from inception to ingestion, like you've been living with it before you even knew it existed. If you like your clothes black and you might spend too much time in dark rooms trapped in introspection, Black Hole Kids are knocking at your door. —Matt Seward (Social Cancer, socialcancer.net)

BLACK TIME: Aerial Gobs of Love: LP

Note to self: turn the volume down before listening to something on headphones. I think I just



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accidentally blew out my midrange hearing spectrum. Anyway, lotta wild garage rockin' here. Shit's very raw sound-wise and, at points, it gets downright psychedelic (check their "Aerial Dub" track). Nothing is really new or inventive here, but they do have a certain level of charm which pushes this a lot further along than others might get. —Jimmy Alvarado (Förbjudna Lund, forbjudnaljud.bandcamp.com)

BLASTMAT: *Broke Life, Working Class*: CD

I was an immediate fan of Blastmat's music. Featuring members of Forced Reality, their songs included plenty of aggressive but catchy riffs, with plenty of parts to make you want to bedroom mosh or circle pit around your living room couch. Some sweet guitar leads and a solid rhythm section completed the musical package. Blastmat have a strong NYHC vibe that I was very into. (Their singer even sounds a tad like Sick Of It All's Lou Koller at times.) With the album title I thought I had a good idea what Blastmat's lyrics were going to be about before I even listened to them. While working class pride and the struggle to survive are themes I can easily get down with, I found the nationalist tones of some of Blastmat's lyrics a bit problematic. I'm no Berkman or Bakunin, but calling out that, "I'm an American, born and raised," in the track "Yup," and saying "America gives too much charity, it's time to take it back," at the end

of the track "Uprising" to make your point, doesn't reflect working class solidarity as I understand it. I hope that Blastmat will develop a more pluralist understanding of working class pride (might I suggest reading *What Is Anarchism?* by Alexander Berkman, or *Anarcho-Syndicalism* by Rudolf Rocker), but, overall, I ended up with some mixed feelings about this. —Paul J. Comeau (United Riot)

BLAXXX: *For No Apparent Reason*: LP

Lo-fi supergroup featuring Lamont Thomas of Obnox and two OBN IIIs. It sounds like a plane taking off over an MC5 concert. The songs run long, but some hooks shine through, and the result is surprisingly cathartic, considering the record is more static than song. —Chris Terry (12XU)

BOBBY PERU: *Double A-Side*: CS

Six songs of mid-tempo punk with a nice garagey feel to it. The music and vocals are pretty together, but, overall, this kinda suffers from the lack of a) anything resembling a standout song, and b) any real differentiation between this and the last third of a century of our planet's punkly output. The pink cassette housing is a nice touch. BEST SONG: "(Now I Wanna Be a) White Collar Criminal" BEST SONG TITLE: "Triple Six" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: My J-card has the number 48 on it, but the cassette itself says "32." Multiples of sixteen represent! —Rev. Nørb (Self-released)

BOY SCOUTS: *Self-titled*: CS

Somewhere between Raincoats post-punk and a more structured no wave (if that's possible?) and '90s indie pop. I literally saw them play earlier today at Girls Rock! Rochester and they seemed like the happiest band in the world playing to girls age eight to sixteen, eating lunch before heading off to band practice. Kind of a short cassette, but it's clear they're one of the better, smarter, realer minimalist punk trios out there. —Matt Werts (Drug Party, drugparty.org)

BRAIN TRAPS: *Teen Trash Series: 7"* EP

Volume three of Alien Snatch Records' *Teen Trash Series* presents four tracks from the early career of Germany's Brain Traps. The mastering is done by Jim Kuckowski of Rip Off Records and did a lot to make the EP listenable, stripping away the mud that often accompanies basement recordings while preserving the grit that gives lo-fi garage punk its charm. Side B was what sold me on Brain Traps. The side B opener "Radical Bongo" tears into the ears with squealing feedback. When the band rips into the track itself, they don't let up. The intensity continues straight into the closing song and leaves you wanting more. —Paul J. Comeau (Alien Snatch)

CANADIAN RIFLE: *"Sexually Fucked" b/w "You Are My Junk": 7"*

A two-track single might not seem like value for money to the cost-conscious punter but these new songs by Canadian

Rifle are the musical equivalent of a pair of gold ingots. The lead song features a gruff male vocal nicely offset by a female voice exhibiting a lighter quality. The flipside surges into life, dropping a huge double verse/chorus ahead of the song's halfway point then just hammers away instrumentally for the remaining one minute and forty seconds. This record will only ever increase in value—making it more predictable than any precious metal—so just buy it. —Rich Cocksedge (Dirt Cult)

CAR CRASH: *Bright Future*: 7"

All right, now we're talking! This is some amazing, fast, power poppy, garagey stuff from a Japanese band on the mighty Mangrove label. Car Crash basically split the difference between Firestarter and Teengenerate (or both eras of the Registrators). It has frantic energy that bands from Japan manage to have that hardly anybody else can capture; the song just jumps off the record. Car Crash reminds me of the mighty Have Nots in spots as well, with the punky energy and untamed madness of the recording. Highest possible recommendation for this single and the other stuff on Secret Mission and Mangrove records. —Mike Frame (Secret Mission / Mangrove)

CHAINSAW: *See-Saw*: 7"

Sticker on the front proclaims this the "first punk 7" from Belgium," originally released on Romantik Records in 1977, and I ain't gonna argue with it. What ye get is—surprise!—über-sloppy,

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bass-outta-tune primal punk rockin', short on technical prowess and long on chutzpah. If this is indeed the first Belgian punk record, things could've started off much, much worse. —Jimmy Alvarado (No Good)

CHARLES ALBRIGHT: "Short Skirt" b/w "Territorial Pissings": 7"

New Charles Albright single with more spurts of raging, noisy punk in the vein of Bl'ast, but with a better sense of humor. A mere three-hundred copies, so you'd better move quick. Wouldn't be surprised at all if members of Mayyors are in Charles' band. So, yeah, it sounds like them, too. Don't sleep on it. —Steve Adamyk (Sacramento)

CHARLES ALBRIGHT: "Short Skirt" b/w "Territorial Pissings": 7"

Juvenile and fun, it's straightforward, no-frills garage with something-something about a short skirt. Works for me. One of the two songs included on this EP is a Nirvana cover, and love it or hate it, you can tell they had a damn good time recording it. One of the best bands out of Sacramento right now. —Camylle Reynolds (Sacramento)

CLOCKED OUT: Self-titled: LP

U.K. über-thrashin' with a big, loud guitar sound and enough adrenaline pumped in to get ye bouncing off the walls in short order. Singer sounds like he is gonna howl up his spleen any second. Fans of Nine Shocks Terror take note. —Jimmy Alvarado (Super Fi, superfirerecords.co.uk)

CLOUD RAT: *Aliphoth*: LP

Fucking hell! Where have Cloud Rat been all my life? Or better yet, how far has my head up been my own ass all this time? There's quite the heap of influences to uncover with each track but the album predominantly shines the spotlight on grind, metalcore, and perhaps even some black metal, though mostly by way of the rapid-fire, non-stop drum blasts. Some of the heavier riffs invoke the stoner sludge tendencies of bands like Eyehategod or Buzzoven. I seriously haven't heard an album so varied in style yet so perfectly balanced since Soilent Green's 1998 juggernaut *Sewn Mouth Secrets*. If there were any justice in this world, Cloud Rat would be sending many a shoegaze-core band running home to change their diapers. All hail *Aliphoth*! —Juan Espinosa (Halo Of Flies / IFB / Moment Of Collapse / React With Protest / 7 Degrees)

CLOUD RAT: *Aliphoth*: LP

Grindy crust? Crusty grind? Hard to decide when your full attention is focused on the fact the singer sounds like the kid from *Bobby's World* in full-tantrum mode. —Jimmy Alvarado (Halo Of Flies)

CONFLICT: *The Final Conflict*: LP

A Czech pressing of this venerable band's 1988 album, originally on Mortarhate. Funny thing about dismissing a band out of hand and revisiting 'em three decades later is that sometimes they turn out to be

more interesting than you originally gave 'em credit for being. Like many of their peace punk brethren, I pretty much wrote Conflict off as just another bombastic bunch of twaddlers pushing an agenda long discarded by the hippies via loud British thrashing. It wasn't that I disagreed with what they were on about, but they just felt so finger-pointy in their execution that being the smug brat I was, I pointed back with a different finger extended. There's much of what initially turned me off in evidence here, and their singular wham-bang style remains in much the same mode as I remember it being on their first album. Somewhere in the middle they start stretching out a bit, first by tossing in some Crass influence here and there, then some new wavy dance, then they're off on a rasta bender, and then their indulging their inner disco bunny. Nice bits, those, which indicate there was/is much more going on here, which likely explains their enduring popularity. Between this and a more recent release I reviewed a decade or so ago, I gotta hang my head a bit and admit that maybe, just maybe, they ain't as bad as I once painted 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (PHR, phr.cz)

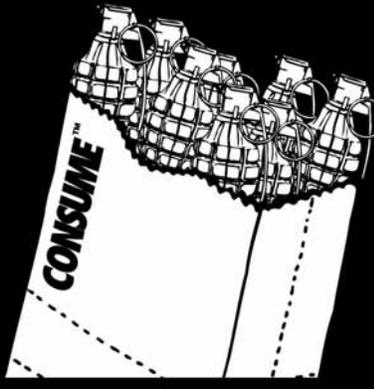
CONNOISSEUR: *Stoner Justice*: CD

Oakland, CA's Connoisseur play some insane, grinding hardcore comparable to the most current Dropdead records but with obvious stoner/sludge elements. To say these guys like smoking pot is like saying that Project X was just a fun group of

guys who respected your recreational choices. I mean, every single song is about fucking weed and the concept gets a little tired after a while, which is why the musical execution is this CD's saving grace for me. In the past, bands like Exit 13 made it perfectly clear that they were pro-marijuana but kept shit interesting while embracing other important topics such as eco-consciousness, anti-vivisection, and Belgian beers. Not being a Judge Judy here, just saying; the last guy I knew of who took a plant so seriously ended up playing the fucking theremin along to some of the most influential punk songs ever (that he actually wrote). As long as Connoisseur keep it brutal, though, I see them stoking out (and smoking out) many, many red-eyed grind freaks the world over. —Juan Espinosa (Tankcrimes)

CONNOISSEUR: *Stoner Justice*: LP

Thrashin' holy hell! Oakland's Connoisseur knows what they want and are totally going for it! Humor and brutality have a way of cancelling themselves out if done poorly. While bands like Brujeria, Blöðdhag, Crom, and others have proven that it is possible, it's a daunting task nonetheless. Connoisseur rises to the task with a shtick that many fans of heavy and fast music can relate to: being a total pothead. The cover art is hilarious and bad ass. The fourteen tracks on the record grind'n'thrash at varying tempos from the sludgy depths of "(Destroy the) Smoke Machines"



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to the twenty-one second, circle pit summoning "Machinegun Grenade." Like In Defence, if you're looking for a current band that rips but isn't necessarily focusing on society's miseries, Connoisseur pulls it off. —Daryl (Tankcrimes)

COUNTDOWN TO ARMAGEDDON / DUESENJAEGER: Split: 7"

Duesenjaeger: Mid-tempo melodic German punk with dual-octave guitar leads and vocals that are more spoken than shouted. Countdown To Armageddon: Gruff vocal punk with the dual-octave leads also in evidence but with a darker undertow at work overall. —Jimmy Alvarado (Aborted Society)

CRUELSTER / PUTRID CAUSE: Split: 7"

This Ohio-born split from Cleveland's Cruelster and short-lived Columbus outfit Putrid Cause is an exercise in classic fuck you hardcore. Pressed on baby shit green wax and wrapped in Cruelster bassist Nathan Ward's distinctly DIY zine-esque packaging, this limited release instantly communicates its aim. Nary a single song on the record passes the two minute mark—including Cruelster's amped-up cover of the Ramones' "Freak of Nature"—but each one is packed with enough misanthropy, rage, and social unrest to leave any fan of old school hardcore aching to run into the pit wielding a pool ball in a sock. —Kelley O'Death (Turbine Piss, turbinepissrecords.bigcartel.com)

DADDY LONG LEGS: Rides Tonight: CD

My first introduction to Daddy Long Legs is this slab of solid, live barroom sloppiness. The music is overdriven blues-punk riffs in the best way. Presented and sounding awesome live. I don't know the band well enough to pick out the songs, but this is a fun listen. That's saying something if you don't know the songs. Live albums are more for the fans. I feel the testimony. I enjoyed this without having to research it. Sometimes fun is enough. Good barroom fury. —Billups Allen (Norton)

DAN MELCHIOR: "A Non Person" b/w "Hesitation Blues": 45

Eccentro-blues expat Melchior emits his zillionth record, featuring an A side about how everyone's a musician or an actor that, if I knew more about frigg'n' Beck, I might say sounded like an older, garagier, Englisher Beck. The real gem is the flip, an old blues number dating back to the nineteen-teens, that starts out nonchalantly enough with just vocals and guitar, but progressively heaps on more and more instruments (is that a farty old Korg 707???) and builds to an impermeable *Metal Machine Music*-sized squall of fuzz, distortion, noise, and general cacophony. This puts "In the Hall of Mountain King" to shame. *For shame, "In the Hall of Mountain King!" For shame!* BEST SONG: "Hesitation Blues" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Hesitation Blues" is cataloged as Roud Folk Song Index number 11765. —Rev. Nørð (Spacecase)

DAN WEBB AND THE SPIDERS: Perfect Problem: LP

Gah! File under: Desperately Wanted To Like It More Than I Did. After three full lengths, a ton of 7"s and splits, an acoustic record, and a bunch of demos, all in a relatively short number of years, it feels like this band—who I still believe is fantastic—might have hit a bit of a stumbling spot with *Perfect Problem*. All the elements are still in place: Webb's careworn vocals, his smart and tough luck lyrics, all set to catchy garage stuff with just enough gloss and bone-simple guitar leads to keep things moving along... but there's just something missing this time around. It's still good, but there's just not that sense of awestruck completion that I'm used to with the band's stuff. The fact that this LP was recorded by three different engineers over the space of a year might have something to do with it. Like I said, it's still good, and there's still a few songs rife with that earlier, assured, and incendiary quality—the title track's a great example—but I'd first introduce new fans to *Oh Sure* or their singles collection, *Now It Can Be Told*, before this one. Sorry, guys. —Keith Rosson (Gunner)

DARK AGES: Vapor: LP

This is hardcore that rocks. I like it a lot. I'm tempted to leave it there, but feel that my enjoyment of this record warrants more explanation. Dark Ages play tuneful hardcore that's evolved past thrashing without losing any bite. The guitars aren't one thousand

percent fuzz and the singer has more of a rock'n'roll yowl than a scream. He sorta sounds like the guy from Voivod. Each song is thoughtfully assembled with a unique flourish like an odd guitar lead, a drum freakout, or a beat that's not quite in 4/4 time. This results in songs that stand on their own, and a ten-song LP that flies by fast. I'm at a loss for references, but it reminded a friend of mid '80s Die Kreuzen or this current band called Leather. So, there you go. —Chris Terry (Sorry State)

DARK CIRCLES: MMXIV: LP

Dark Circles are from Montreal but sound like gnarly Netherlands metal. The vocals are crusty as hell and there are a lot of d-beat drums, but I like that the guitars have more of a punk sound to them, like on "Distress." The guitar gets a bit thin and jagged, leaning towards post-punk. Songs like "Darkness Purveyor" start with a more traditional punk rock drum and bass intro and go into a slower (for them), more driving song. Most of their songs are around the two-minute mark, which is perfect for me. Less leaves you wanting more. Great packaging, great record. —Ryan Nichols (Moment Of Collapse)

DEAD BARS: "Emergency" b/w "Off the Ground": 7"

If smell is seventy-five percent of taste, then what percentage of a band does the vocalist make? I mean, there are only so many chords and notes. How you put those chords and notes is important,



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mind you... there are many bands who fail to write any semblance of a catchy tune. But the noise that escapes the singer's mouth has got to be an even higher make or break percentage. John Maiello's raspy, singing shriek warmed my earbuds the first time I heard it, like a close-talking smoker friend who had one too many at the show and *really* needs to tell you something. Add him to the list of distinctive vocalists like Sam from NMDS or the guy from Ringers who keep me flipping the record over and over. These two tunes are short, sweet, pounding, and anthemic hardcore pop punk. Quit messing around with these 7"s and give us an LP already. —Matt Seward (Eager Beaver, eagerbeaverrecords.bandcamp.com)

DECENT CRIMINAL / SCREAMING MIMIS: Split: 7"

There's been an upsurge of surf-influenced garage punk recently, and I've dug most of the bands that I've come across. With this split 7", Decent Criminal and Screaming Mimis are two more bands dipping their toes in that water. I like surf-influenced stuff when it's jangly and loud, and both of these bands were a bit mellower than what I usually gravitate towards. The recordings sounded washed out, and the effect did little for me. Of the two bands, I was a bigger fan of Decent Criminal because they had the most energy. The Mimis cut loose pretty well on the back half of "Stay Close" but otherwise they felt rather

subdued by comparison. —Paul J. Comeau (Dumpruck / Sweet Lodge, sweetlodgerecordings.bandcamp.com)

DER FADEN: "Best Guess" b/w "Filaments": 7"

I often wonder if Todd and Daryl make little puzzles for me to solve. Trails of breadcrumbs to keep my brain ticking. Pulled this out and thought, "Great, some German emo shit," threw it on... wait a second! This sounds like the Statues, one of my favorite bands, the Statues? Couple of key clicks and I'm on the money. Rob from the Statues with his fiancée Sarah. It's just great songwriting and recording by a dude who knows how to write a jam. The singing is undeniably Rob from the Statues but music is straight up 1980 power pop: Pointed Sticks meets the Outcasts. A look at the label and I realize my mate Chris at Dirt Cult jumped on this. Lovely little two singer! —Tim Brooks (Dirt Cult)

D.O.A.: Hard Rain Falling: CD

Joe Keithley is back with a new lineup (Dirty Dan Sedan, we will miss you) and a new record. It is fast and furious on most of the songs presented, although we get to catch a breath during "Johnny Too Bad." If you are looking to clean your ears without the use of a pesky Q-Tip, just crank "Warmonger" or "Kicked in the Teeth" up to eleven. Another solid outing from the band that will stand strong next to their earliest work. Highly recommended. —Sean Koepenick (Sudden Death)

DOCTOR BISON: Dewhursts: The Musical/Bring It On: 2 x LP/CD

As the second of two Bison reissues, this is the one that really highlights the songwriting skills of Baz Oldfield. He has a great turn of phrase and, as serious as some of the themes might be, he does his level best to inject humor into his lyrics wherever possible. Add to that frequent references to his (and my) hometown of Newport, Wales, and listening to these songs guarantees a sense of belonging and a big grin across my face, with "Ringland Tuxedo" leading the way on both counts. Great melodic punk rock swathed in the meaty guitar sound of Dickie Hammond. —Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage)

DOS HERMANOS, LOS: Bourbon, Blood and Seafood: LP

To start, this is the best cover art I have seen in a while. I can't stop staring at it. Imagine a scene from the French Revolution with the ominous guillotine taking center stage. Only in this scene, everyone has lost their head. Literally. The mob of peasants, the nobility, the general, the general's horse; there are heads, eyes open and in a panic, flying everywhere. Even the dove, a universal symbol of peace, flies over the guillotine sans skull and face. Now imagine a rowdy, reverby, hellish sort of '60s-style garage band from Bordeaux, France coming out of the speakers as you stare at this beautiful nightmare of a scene. Great tunes. Great album. Great job. —John Mule (Howlin' Banana, howlinbananarecords.com)

DOWNTOWN BOYS: Full Communism: LP

When's the last time you've listened to a punk band—ska doesn't count—with dueling saxophones? Can't recall? Well, these Rhode Islanders are here to fill the gaping hole you didn't even know you had. They rage with the ferocity of Generacion Suicida and Libyans, but the saxophones create an uplifting, totally danceable noise-scapes for vocalist Victoria Ruiz's no-holds-barred lyrics. Ruiz sings in both English and Spanish and tackles topics like privileged males at punk shows who ruin the pit ("Touch my hip? / I'll cut your cock off / Fuck you tall boys") and the empowerment of women of color ("We are brown! / We are smart!"). All at once, Downtown Boys sound like punk's past by being youthful, aggressive, and minimal, but are simultaneously forward-thinking, conceptualizing a future where punks live the things they say and strive for the inclusiveness of all people: "I can't hear maybes / Necessity / Not one step back / On the wave of history." *Full Communism* represents a huge step forward. The message etched in the vinyl can't be denied and needs to be heard. —Sean Arenas (Don Giovanni)

DRAKULAS: Owowowowowowow: 7" Sometimes fate just works in your favor. I was about to order this 7" when it arrived in my review pile. You gotta love when that happens. The only thing better is when the record is absolutely amazing, which, in this case, I am going



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two for two! I was trying to come up with a term for what Drakulas sounds like to me. Dirty, catchy, stripped-down punk rock. I think it would fit nicely with the likes of The Spits or Video. Bands that seamlessly keep it simple and complex at the same time yet never let you stop bobbing your head or shaking your ass. The term I came up with was raw wave. Drakulas is definitely a raw wave band. They would have been the coolest gang in The Warriors. They are coming to take you out and take your turf and your girl. Be warned, Drakulas are coming. —Ty Stranglehold (Red Scare)

DUMB LUCK: Tides: CS

I love shit like this. Big-hearted, earnest, thoughtful punk along the lines of New Junk City, Defiance, Ohio, and fellow Oregonians Hi Ho Silver, Away. Ragged melodies, male/female vocals, and smart lyrics that stand firmly within the realm of the personal without being mercilessly obtuse. While the half dozen songs here aren't quite as jaw-dropping as stuff from the previously mentioned folks, it's still *rad*, and they're still, I believe, a youngish band. *Tides* suffers just a bit from Bad Religion Syndrome (many of the songs sounding pretty similar), so I'd love to hear some more discrepancies the next time around. And, yeah, I'm wholly convinced that their next outing is gonna be pretty stellar, because like I said, this is still really good, and deserving of repeated listens. Check it out. —Keith Rosson (Dumb Luck)

EARWORMS: Self-titled: LP

Anthemic, melodic hardcore with great musicianship. They throw in the occasional guitar noodle or odd time signature, but never to the detriment of the rockness. And, rock this does. I'm hearing some Avail chest-pounding, some Kid Dynamite smart-guy-pile-ons at the mic, and maybe even some prime All in the complicated parts. Earworms are a three-piece band from Brooklyn. If I was riding shotgun and this came on, I'd do some crazy dashboard to glove compartment to window roller drumming. —Chris Terry (Dead Broke / Money Fire)

EMPTY PALACE:

The Serpent Between the Stars: CS
Styx was bad enough the first time around. —Michael T. Fournier (Snappy Little Numbers)

EPIC PROBLEM / HOLIDAY: Split: 7"

Let's get right to the meat and potatoes of it all. First up is Epic Problem. Raspy street punk vocals over upbeat music that falls some place between Leatherface and Face To Face. That really looks weird on paper but it sounds great. Two songs weren't enough for me. Holiday is a little more on the Razorcake-y tip with their first song reminiscent of maybe Muhammadali or Canadian Rifle. The second song was a little more sing-songy but was also pretty cool. There is nothing like getting a split 7" where you end up wanting to check out both bands afterwards. Score! —Ty Stranglehold (Brassneck)

EX-CRAW: Extant/Extinct: CD

Okay guys, it's time for a band meeting. You're clearly not on the same page. Judging by your lyrics, you're a crust band ("War, famine, a final solution!"). But then, when you're in the midst of some epic crustitude, in drops a guitar solo straight out of a '90s Epitaph record. Then you get all thrashy and spazzy. I mean, is that thrash or is that some grindcore noise thing at the end of "No Asylum?" "Servants" is a total mosh party. Are you a mosh party band? Can you just decide what you want to be, so I can classify you and file your CD away instead of listening to it repeatedly trying to figure it out and understand why it works so well? —MP Johnson (Cubo De Sangre)

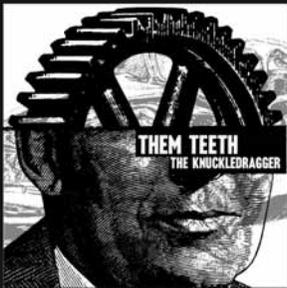
FALL: Sub Lingual Tablet: CD

The Fall is less a band than an experience. A taste to be acquired, loved, and coveted. How do you rate a band led by one Mark E Smith, fifty ex-members, and thirty previous studio albums? On their thirty-first, there has been criticism that Smith has become complacent with his longest-running line up of eight years. Was the Fall's last outing rougher and more acerbic? Sure. Is the new album just as difficult and hypnotizing? Yes. This new LP channels moments of krautrock mixed with African rhythms and sharp post-punk. The Fall is timeless. This could be its tenth or twenty-seventh album. You cannot judge a new Fall album by what has come before. It's another part of the machine; always the same

and yet different. The late, great John Peel once said, "If anyone tells me they know which are the five best Fall albums, I'll tell them they have missed the point. You need to own them all." That's how I feel about the Fall. This is just another testament to the genius Mark E Smith. —Tim Brooks (Cherry Red, cherryred.co.uk)

FAR OUT: Universe: LP

I'm a complete sucker for a hook, and this LP by Houston's Far Out has so many catchy hooks that I don't think I could possibly dislike this if I tried. These guys blend straight-up pop mixed with punk sensibilities in a way most bands don't get right... but Far Out got it right. Any comparison I make will not do this record justice, but imagine a less crooning and slightly more punk Smoking Popes with a depreciated sense of self worth and a worldview so gently dismal and narcissistic that it paints a sugary yet bleak picture of hopelessness for the future without forcefully ramming it down your throat. Not exactly being a ray-of-eternal-sunshine kind of guy myself, I can relate to this, and therefore I immediately connected with this record. Aesthetically inconspicuous in that the record doesn't have the band's name (or any text for that matter) anywhere on the cover, I predict this will be inadvertently overlooked, which is a damn shame because it's really, really fucking good. Recommended. —Mark Twistworthy (Honeygold, faroutuniverse.bandcamp.com)



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FLATLINERS, THE: "Resuscitation of the Year" b/w "Fangs":7"

Listening to The Flatliners recalls memories of music I listened to my freshman year of high school. The two songs on this 7" are just abrasive enough to make parents hate it, but are overloaded with slick production and the kind of poppy hooks that I can imagine hearing it on the local rock radio station. My fourteen-year-old self would have fist-pumped and sang along to this. My present-day self thought this was a bit too slick for my tastes, and it didn't do much to hold my attention. -Paul J. Comeau (Fat)

FLEABITE: T.T.Y.L.:7" EP

What a great little record we have here. Aesthetically speaking, it's the nicest release I've seen in a while. The quality of the packing and the layout choices are second to none. The tunes are awesome grungy, dream pop punk from Boston—that hits the nail right on the head. It's extremely catchy with excellent female vox. My wife loves it, too. Great job, gals (and guy). -Steve Adamyk (Puzzle Pieces)

FLESH WORLD:

The Wild Animals in My Life: LP

A heady mix of dream pop, punk aggression, and a little of the Velvet Underground's dark, deceptive simplicity in evidence here. The guitars chum and grind over vaguely dancey rhythms with everything tied together by soft, occasionally monotone vocals. Good stuff. -Jimmy Alvarado (Iron Lung)

FUCK OFF AND DIES, THE: Dear Liver: CD

I really wanted to hate this. It's got that Fat Wreck pro-punk sound with the obnoxious kick and snare all over it (in point of fact, they have a line that goes "remember when partying used to be fun / we listened to NOFX 'til the night was done," eeesh, the horror!), a paradigm which has never done much for me. With the exception of two short betrayals of their core formula—"Motherfucker" and "Get Fucked"—EVERY SONG IS ABOUT PARTYING (that's not entirely true. When the band is feeling introspective, they just sing about drinking, not partying), like Andrew W.K. fronting Masked Intruder or something. I was like, what the fuck, give review shit like this to someone who's actually been to Warped Tour, not me, ya know? However, about four songs in, I decided I needed to kind of sit the fuck down and shut the fuck up and just tip my cap to these guys, as they have executed their vision to perfection. The sound is flawless, if that's what you're into, and the energy level is top notch. If you really want to hear a twenty-five minute album of perfect Fat Wreck-sounding songs about partying, drinking, and more partying, this is the archetype, now and forever, and may god have mercy on your soul and liver. Amen. BEST SONG: I dunno, I kind of liked the one about partying, myself. BEST SONG TITLE: "Dear Liver" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I really

don't ever remember seeing Busch cans on an album cover before. Ugh. -Rev. Nørb (Encapsulated)

GAS CHAMBER: Stained Hand:7" EP

From the long, haunting instrumental intro to the A side ("Always Coming Home") it is clear these cats are more than proficient with their instruments and are thinking at deeper levels than merely "how fast can we play?" "Epic" is a good adjective to use in relation to what they're doing on the tracks here and, though it doesn't quite fall within my personal tastes, I can say without reservation they're quite adept at their chosen take on the genre. Kudos to 'em. -Jimmy Alvarado (SPHC, sphc.bigcartel.com)

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLOOD:

Used Books and Guns: LP/CD

If I had any kind of religious bone in my body, on first hearing this record I would have thrown myself to the ground, clasped my hands together, and given thanks to whichever deity presided over my chosen faith. Simply put, this brings together all the required elements that I look for in melodic punk rock and doesn't falter from start to finish. The guitar crunches and punches away, the rhythm section is as solid as a rock, and while the lead vocal is distinctive in its own right, at times it reminds me of Trevor Keith and Ben Weasel. As an added bonus there are some sweet harmonies that have a Green Day 39/Smooth quality to them. These songs are so well-written

that even after a single play they're repeating in my head with ease. Sheer genius. -Rich Cocksedge (It's Alive / La Escalera)

GEOFFERY OI!COTT: Sticky Wickets: CD

Who would've thought that the combination of the sedate sport of Cricket and some gritty street punk would have proved so appealing that these punks would get to a third LP without being dismissed as a novelty act? It is certainly an odd concept and is a bit hit or miss for me, with lyrics ranging from downright hilarious to those taking on a more smutty approach. Knowledge of the game does help in appreciating the humor within the songs, which (apart from a few tracks dedicated to the "sport" of darts) are exclusively related to stumps, red balls, and streakers. Unfortunately, this doesn't knock me for six. -Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

GOOD COP: Self-titled: CS

After you solve the puzzle box packaging and get to the cassette inside, you will be rewarded with tunes that alternate between awkward, all-elbows rockers and the sort of indie rock lullabies that make you want to lay down in a field somewhere and stare up at the sky while thinking romantic thoughts for hours and hours. You are not obligated to replace the cassette in the puzzle box when finished. You can listen again. -MP Johnson (Eternal Laser, eternallaser.tumblr.com)

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GRANDMA'S BOYFRIEND:

Let Me Let You Go: CD

Seems to me the dead horse that is power pop has been beaten, liquefied, and molded into something as unique as a Teddy Graham... but wait, what's this? Is it the heat? Is it the gin? Is my tape deck fucking busted? Sickeningly sweet, warbling, and lo-fi-as-fuck tunes of love, loss, and moving on. Typically not my scene, but Grandma's Boyfriend got me there. Turns out ya gotta leave it to some Minnesotans to change my mind. If you hate power pop, you may actually enjoy Grandma's Boyfriend. He's pretty cool and he tells the best stories, but if he asks you to pull his finger... —Jackie Rusted (Dirty Rabbit, dirtyrabbitrecords.tumblr.com)

HEART ATTACK KIDS: Self-titled: 7"

There is something distinctly youthful about Ontario duo Heart Attack Kids. Their self-titled's short songs—only four of which are featured on the 7", though it is packaged with a CD containing all six tracks—feature an imprecise urgency and winningly puerile lyrics, while Owen Marshall's charming monochromatic album art is evocative of the shit you doodled in the margins of your notes from freshman Bio. Vocalist and guitarist Jared Ellul and drummer Nathan Stock may only be two men, but Heart Attack Kids conjure enough heft and speed to crush listeners under the weight of their thrash. Their frenetic brand of punk is a pair of defibrillator paddles pressed against the chest of the increasingly melodic and

mature modern scene. —Kelley O'Death (Speed City, mike@speedcityrecords.com, speedcityrecords.com / It's Trash!, itstrashrecords.bandcamp.com)

HENRY FONDA / GETS WORSE:

Hardcore Is My Life, I'll Carry the Name: LP

Germany's Henry Fonda is up first on this split. The name of the game here is speed, although Henry Fonda does like to mix in some slower breakdown parts when they're not blinding you with whirlwind thrashcore. Gets Worse steps up to the plate and swings wildly. It brutally unleashes song after song of savage grind/thrash with unpredictable stop/start moments. XBrainiaX anyone? The packaging is pretty cool with a photo of a Henry Fonda/Gets Worse tour T-shirt on the front and back cover. The dust sleeve has a photo of the same T-shirt full of holes and stains, presumably resulting from the end of a long tour. I really should mention that this is actually a one-sided split with two separate marked starting points on the record, one of which plays outwardly and the other plays the standard inward way. There are also locked grooves at the end of each band's set of songs. Confused? You will be. —Juan Espinosa (Nerdcore)

HERIDA PROFUNDA: Self-titled: CD

Crustcore similar in style to Phobia and Japan's 324—who both at one point favored the crust more than the grind—which is what I'm mostly hearing on this disc. The band's name translates to "deep wound" from, Spanish although they

bear no resemblance at all to the mighty Deep Wound from Boston. I honestly can't say I favor this CD much, although I don't hate it. I did, however, thoroughly enjoy the song about killing Nazis. —Juan Espinosa (283 Landsberg Hardcore Crew, heridaprofunda.bandcamp.com)

HEX DISPENSERS: III: LP

Is it okay to review friends' bands even if you were a die-hard fan of the band long before you became friends? I hope so. Putting it plainly, Hex Dispensers are not just one of my favorite bands of the last five or ten years, they are one of my favorite bands of all time. Everything about their music works for me. It's been a long time since their last LP *Winchester Mystery House* came out and *III* is well worth the wait. Part of the record takes songs that came out on various (out of print) 7"s in the last few years, and re-records them with the new lineup of the band (long-time bassist Rebecca moving to second guitar and Drew Schmitz stepping in on bass along with, as always, Alex Cuervo on guitar and vocals and Alyse on drums). It took me a few listens to get used to the new versions of some of the songs such as "Parallel" and "Agatha's Antlers" because I listen to the original single versions so often but then the album as a whole clicked in my mind and it became a slice of perfection. Brand new songs such as "Trapped in the Amber" and "I Hope the Sun Explodes Today" are ridiculously good. I guess it's

obvious how much of a super fan I am. Unapologetically, I will add. Just know this: Hex Dispensers are essential listening. I don't care who the band is, I will only say that if I believe it one hundred percent. Go get this record yesterday! —Ty Stranglehold (Alien Snatch)

HI FI NINJA, THE:

Take It to the Grave: CD

The Hi Fi Ninja is undeniably punk in their approach but they are far from being confined to punk's most recognizable traps. The Sabbath-influenced rhythm section drops some serious riffs and grooves, providing the perfect vehicle for their vocalist's screaming siren and the flashing lights of the guitar. The urgency and the emergency that these songs announce really has me feeling that the musicianship here is tops! When I leave the house later today, the Hi Fi Ninja will definitely be travelling with me. —John Mule (Self-released)

HULLMEN, THE: Expensive Taste: LP

Tough one—this has great packaging, beautiful marbled red vinyl, with solid production... but to these ears it sounds like a slow and ass-dragging Flesheaters, or a bit dirtier *Brick By Brick*-era Iggy Pop, not the man's most favored era. I spent most of these six songs wishing they'd just speed it up a bit, or do something to wrench free of the mid-tempo doldrums that most of *Expensive Taste* sits firmly within. —Keith Rosson (Golden Key)

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HURULA: *Betongharn: 12" EP*

Here are four new songs on a 12" and all I can think is, "Man, there's so much more space for more killer songs!" After that initial let down, I'm able to appreciate these new tunes as a continuation of Robert Hurula's infectious songwriting. Like their last LP on Deranged, Hurula crafts haunting pop rock with Robert Smith black mascara. The choruses are more driving and repetitive this time around, imbuing a Buzzcocks power pop vibe. Sadly, synth is noticeably absent, however, the guitars have more room to tremble like a teen's legs at a talent show. This 12" EP is solid (as it's simply more Hurula), but the full price of admission isn't worth the four song tease. Hopefully another full length is around the corner. -Sean Arenas (Deranged)

INSTITUTE: *Catharsis: LP*

Institute have taken large amounts of influence from the late '70s and early '80s U.K. anarcho punk and post-punk bands, and then mastered that sound, resulting in a great ten-song LP that sounds straight out of England, 1980. I wanted to get a different opinion on this record before I wrote this review, so I asked a friend who is very knowledgeable about contemporary bands but has never really listened to any anarcho punk stuff like Crass or Crisis (two bands which seem to have possibly influenced Institute the most) to see what she thought of this record. Her responses were interesting, and really helped me see this record in a

completely different light. "This kinda sounds like Protomartyr with a less confident vocalist," was her response to the first track, referring to the great Detroit band of recent years. Additional comments and comparisons were also interesting, with references made to a wide variety of bands, including longtime L.A. post-punk band Savage Republic, Siouxsie And The Banshees, and even the experimental krautrock band, Can. While I don't necessarily think that Institute sound exactly like any of these bands (although I do admit the Protomartyr comparison was pretty astute), I can see where she was coming from in each instance. This is a record that sounds like something else without sounding like a clone, which is hard to get right. Institute have done this perfectly, creating a modern record with a vintage sound that should be in the collection of every fan of the genre. -Mark Twistworthy (Sacred Bones)

JACKS, LOS: *Toledo Ponkers Vol. 1: CS*

On the cover, a longhaired skeleton in a leather jacket sings along to a boombox on his shoulder. The tunes on this cassette are appropriately rollicking. It's punk en Español with the sort of guitar riffs that wrap around you like vines and force you to dance. You're going to look spazzy while you do it because the rhythms are unpredictable. There's a controlled chaos thing happening here. No, not just controlled chaos. This is orchestrated chaos, and these guys are master conductors. -MP Johnson (Self-released)

JAROMI SABOR & PRECHEUR LOUP: *You Shall Use Your Time... And Your Mama's Too: CS*

All of my friends in the service industry know there's a particular amorphous genre of engaging but not obtrusive music which works best in restaurants—unabashed but not overbearing, varied, with an edge but not edgy, if that makes any sense. This cassette fits the bill: tons of talent evident throughout, poppy arrangements, plenty of drone and vocal harmony. -Michael T. Fournier (Frantic, frantically.free.fr)

JIM TABLOWSKI EXPERIENCE: *Self-titled: 7"*

The Jim Tablowski Experience plays ragged pop punk that labels like Farmhouse, Very Small, and Liquid Meat were releasing in the mid '90s. Fans of bands like Hickey and Krupted Peasant Farmerz would probably like this release a lot. The band is from Wisconsin and I hear a little of that Yesterday's Kids/Obsoletes tunefulness here, though the lo-fi recording style gives the sound a different feel. -Mike Frame (Huge Major Label)

JOHNS: *Grift Marks: LP*

Like Destruction Unit, Buffalo, NY's Johns feel like more of a doomsday cult than a band. Heavy with weaving guitars and layers upon layers of ominous vocals, it's a foreboding sound. It is a sound that mirrors our darkest reflections. Rocket From The Crypt's massive group-effort

sound meets Murder City Devils mischievous caterwauling, with an obsessive preoccupation with the dark days that lay ahead: the wasteland coming, the winding steps to nowhere, and here comes the snake; bleak and adventurous. -Daryl (Peterwalkee)

KENT STATE: *Samsara: 7"*

L.A.'s Kent State self-describes their music as "psychedelic death pop," which reminds me of the long ingredient list on package of processed food—this might be the best candy bar I ever tasted, or it could be Cheez-Its. For me, it's a bit of both. "Samsara" is undeniably catchy. A couple core phrases fight the fuzzing guitar and make the verses sway. The chorus, over which singer Nick Vance croons "waiting for the world to end," with his part oldies radio part K Records or Matador Records groan, will be stuck in my head until I get assailed by my neighbor's radio, which always plays The Doors. The sole other song on this EP, "Planetary Wounds," might be one of those tracks that, on an album, I could grow to love as that cloudy passage between more melody, more purchase, more whatever. By itself—and maybe this is my philistine side talking—"Planetary Wounds" sounds like a guy talking through a two-way radio while his friend hits a couple guitar notes through a flanger pedal. Next time I'm at Subway and I'm ordering The Kent State Samsarsamwich, I'll get extra peppers, oregano, and the usual shredded plastic, but I'll hold

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KING ELEPHANT: Exhaust: LP

One of my favorite records of last year was Hi Ho Silver, Away!'s *Chore*. This record out of Missoula reminds me of *Chore* a lot. With members of Goddamnitboyhowdy and Suicide Victim, the songs are so raw and heartfelt. They are what I would call Peter Pantheims: songs that make you remember your promise to never grow up. "MSLAWEIRD" on the B side of this record does just that—it describes drunken fights amongst friends, with a reprise chant to "keep Missoula weird." Two songs later comes the track "In D" with lyrics like, "My brain is in shambles now / a million things to do and I can't find my way to the bottom of these barrels.... I can't be responsible, I won't be responsible." A part of punk that keeps me reigned in is the freedom of expression. The acceptance of a community of sweethearts. The notion that any moment can turn into a party with your best friends. That love you get from your friends as they sleep off their hangovers on your floor. The comfort in knowing they'd do it all for you at the drop of a hat. King Elephant has all of these moments in musical form. Lyrics from "Getaway Driver" express, "We are more than this place can hold / We are more than what we are told." Their jangly, bright guitar, pounding bass, crashing symbols, and vocals that always sound like they're

on the verge of breaking make up this awesome group from Montana. I feel like we're already buds. Maybe we are. —Kayla Greet (Minor Bird)

KÜKEN: Self-titled: LP

Hot on the heels of a kickass single comes this full-length of swaggering thud-punk sure to warm the cockles of Dirtnap fans the world over. Eleven tracks that gleefully stomp right on through with the subtlety of a rhino at a tea party. Once again: fuck yeah. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bachelor)

KULTURKAMPF: What Remains....: CD

"The Score" leads off *What Remains...* without a hook, just a metallic, plodding street crust track that leans too much on the far superior His Hero Is Gone catalog. Kulturkampf translates to "cultural struggle," and luckily these Watertown, NY cats struggle within their genre and deliver a mean mash up for the other eleven tracks. Equal parts Tragedy, the last three Napalm Death releases, and thrash breakdowns, Kulturkampf will do your denim- and leather-studded soul good. The back cover art, doomed society collage style, makes more of an impression than the overly "metal" front cover art and band logo, so just flip it over and stick with that. —Matt Seward (All We've Got, allwevegat.com)

LAURICE: Best of Laurice, Vol. 2: LP

Cheapo one-color album cover art and semi-ridiculous pedigree ("Canada's number one male dance vocalist for two

years running?") "Conquered the world of smooth jazz?" TOM JONES???) had me initially believing I was participating in an elaborate hoax of some sort. Not so. Laurice—best known in punk circles for that glam-ish song that goes, "When Christine comes around, I'm gonna smash her face in" he recorded as Grudge circa 1973—is a real human who did these very things of which he was accused! He also wrote and recorded a bunch of pop-rock-ish songs in the late '60s and early '70s, usually as a session writer/singer/producer. I'd say it sounds like Marc Bolan fronting the Archies, but that falsetto rightly demands its reference to the pre-RSO Bee Gees (Laurice's "Boston City" as much as admitting this, given the Bee Gees having that song "Massachusetts" and all), who actually weren't that bad. Either way, I'm pretty sure this guy speaks to the pompatoose of love. BEST SONG: "Dark Side of Your Face" BEST SONG TITLE: "Flying Saucers Have Landed" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Includes Laurice's attempt at writing the theme for the *Diamonds Are Forever* movie. —Rev. Norb (Mighty Mouth)

LE ALMEIDA: Paralelplasmos: LP

Cover of the month goes to Le Almeida. A poppy beach collage with two boys in trunks bent over. One looks to be sniffing the other's butt. I love it. The cover had me interested and the music didn't let me down. Le Almeida is from Brazil and sing its songs in Portuguese, which I really appreciate. It sets

bands apart when they sing in their own language and gives them more character. The lyrics are translated in English on the insert, but if you're like me, you will tend to avoid those and make up your own translation. Their sound is fuzzy and sort of melancholy, reminiscent of bands like Sonic Youth and Autolux but more homemade. The vocals stay just above a whisper while the music plays mid-paced with a good degree of pop to it. I'm really enjoying this record. —Ryan Nichols (Pug, contact@pugrecords.com)

LEGENDARY WINGS: Do You See?: LP

Opener "Best Friend" reminds me of Shang-A-Lang's "Summertime." Both distill a moment so perfectly that I'm gifted a sunny disposition every time either song begins. Legendary Wings harness nostalgia without a hint of irony or cynicism: "It's just a beautiful day with my best friend." *Do You See?* is comprised of ten (brief) songs of lo-fi poppy punk (think North Trolls and M.O.T.O.) with enough aching sincerity to fend off saccharine sickness. Legendary Wings sink in their talons and carry you to a wonderful, impermanent place rich with fleeting melodies and choruses. I'm going to shelf this one right next to Shang-A-Lang's *Sad Magic*. —Sean Arenas (Dirtnap)

LEVITATION ROOM: Minds of Our Own: CS

Being outside of a trend sucks a little. There's a ton of this stoned-out beach

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pop and I don't enjoy any of it. It's not the music's fault. It probably just reflects a different mentality. Me, I never learned how to slow down and chill out. That's not how my brain is wired. Slow music can make anxious and bored. That's partially why I gravitate so heavily towards punk rock and it's sonically similar subgenres. That being said, this record is fine. If someone who likes this kind of music told me these guys were the hottest shit this side of the Atlantic Ocean, I guess I could believe them. Grade: C+. —Bryan Static (Burger, burgerrecords.org)

LIME CRUSH: Graveyard: 7"

This here is a three-song 7" from a band from Austria. It basically splits the difference between early Bratmobile and the HoZac records catalog—kind of garage and fairly snotty. The three tunes go by in a flash and are pretty solid, but they seem like the kind of thing that would be much better live. The A side song "Graveyard" is the standout, with the very Bratmobile-like big E string guitar part, which I always love. —Mike Frame (Fettkakao, fettkakao.com)

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS: "Gin Drunk" b/w "Nova SS": 7"

The second release from this southern punk supergroup does not disappoint. A follow-up to their recent five-song CDEP, it's a pleasure to hear them on vinyl, even if only for a two-song single. Featuring members of popular bands including Hellstomper and

The Stovebolts, Lookout Mountain Daredevils play catchy, dirty, garage-infused songs. Both tracks included here rip; in the true sense of the concept of ripping. Yes, there's a serious ripability factor going on here. Expect a full-length soon. I, for one, can't wait! —Art Ettinger (Mystery School, mysteryschoolrecords.bigcartel.com)

LOOKOUTS, THE:

Spy Rock Road (And Other Stories): LP
For those whose lives were changed by East Bay punk in the 1990s, this record marks some interesting moments in time. It is the first music made by drummer Tre Cool of Green Day, and the band that guitarist/singer Larry Livermore would play in before co-founding the now legendary Lookout Records. For me, this double LP release of greatest hits and rarities is more of a history lesson than a must-listen, but I imagine there is an audience out there who will be stoked to hear these tunes. Also included are guest spots by Billie Joe Armstrong and Tim Armstrong. —John Mule (Don Giovanni)

LOUDER: "Tear Me Up"

b/w "So Alone": 7"
Pittsburgh-based international garage punk label Secret Mission presents another killer single, this time from Osaka, Japan's Louder. Both of the two included songs are hook-driven and fun, possibly even more so than the tracks on their excellent LP that Sorry State Records released last year. It's pressed on cool swirled vinyl, with the

first one hundred encased in handmade white jackets. This is the sort of single that ends up coveted amongst record collectors. Japan might be far away, but there's always a turntable nearby. —Art Ettinger (Secret Mission)

LUNGLUST: As Guilt Collects Dust: CS

Competent music that growls, shreds, and just rushes past you. The cassette was over before I finished blinking. While the temporal music exists, the resulting effect is a burst of energy, laser pointed from your stereo directly to your ears. This crust punk as it's meant to be digested, three songs at a time. Grade: B+. —Bryan Static (Tor Johnson)

MAD VIRGINS: I Am a Computer: 7"

If you are familiar with their appearances on the *Killed By Death* records, you already know what to expect from this repress of what is arguably one of the best known releases of Belgium's first punk wave, originally released on Romantik Records in 1978. Chainsaw-buzz guitars, sloppy rhythms, and a snotty vocalist spewing lyrics that vaguely sound like they're in some sorta English dialect, it's all here in its inept glory. Perfect gift to confuse the fuck outta that kid buddy of yours that's hyped up on whatever "punk" band Disney's peddling this week. —Jimmy Alvarado (No Good)

MADCAPS, THE: Self-titled: 7"

The Madcaps (not to be confused with the CA punk band Madcap) are a '60s-

inspired garage rock band from France with a seemingly unhealthy obsession with the old Nuggets garage rock compilations as well as contemporary garage rock'n'roll bands like Natural Child. Their sound is rooted deeply in the '60s but also has a pop edge not completely unlike something found on Burger Records. These Burger style bands seem to be a dime a dozen, and this band does little to separate themselves from the pack. —Mark Twistworthy (Howlin' Banana, howlinbanana.bigcartel.com)

MAKEOUTS: Svarta Läder: 7"

Swedish band Makeouts packs a solid punch with "Svarta Läder" (translates to Black Leather), just a perfect mix of rock'n'roll and post-punk that's got a great hook that's super catchy. Not an easy task. Honestly sounds like a cross between Neon Piss and Sudor. I also dig the spacey looped effects, which makes it weirder. Flip to side B at 33 RPM, there's a live recording of "Svarta Läder" as well as "Hjärndöd," which is recorded a tad grainier, as is to be expected. "Hjärndöd" is slower, with a bit less punch than the previous song, but is still really good. This goes in the permanent collection. —Camillye Reynolds (Förbjudna Ljud, forbjudnaljud.bandcamp)

MALE PATTERNS:

Thinking Too Much EP: 7"

Male Patterns deliver a hearty six-song hardcore EP. They're from Albany and the members were in revered

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bands like After The Fall, Libyans, and Nuclear Family. They have a sort of mid-1990s feel, when old school hardcore's influence was mixing well with newer, catchier vibes. The best song is "Everyone's a Punk," lampooning the notion of punk fashion as individualizing. The vocals advance Male Patterns from good to great, with an edgy snarl just below the surface at all times. It doesn't take much thinking to adore *Thinking Too Much*. Instantly energizing, it's like the hardcore equivalent of Vivarin. It'll wake you the hell up. -Art Ettinger (Shock To The System)

MANIAC: Demimonde: LP

Maniac is a L.A. band that sounds like a Pacific Northwest band. They come by it naturally though since a few members are from the top end of the I-5 and used to play in bands like The Girls and Clorox Girls. I love those bands and others such as The Spits and The Briefs who managed to bring something cool to a land long thought barren in the wake of the mainstream takeover in the early '90s. Anyways, Maniac can't help but sound like these amazing bands, but the magic happens when they take it to a whole new level. Buzzing, jerky guitars and harmonies you can't get out of your head with an icepick are the order of the day. Maniac is a party band and it's a party that I want to be at. I know that this album was delayed with all of the pressing plant issues that are happening in this day and age, but I am here to tell you

that it is more than well worth the wait. I can only hope they head up the Northern Corridor to play some shows. -Ty Stranglehold (La Ti Da)

MANIAC: Demimonde: LP

Taut shit! Raging shit! Taut, raging shit! And that's the best kind! Sounds a little like those tight, angular bands who used to be tangentially popular among the Hozac set in the early Y2K era, with maybe a little of that '90s neo-Brainiac art school disconnection, but mostly this is just a big ol' fast-paced sledgehammer to the xiphoid process. I can usually tell when a band is from Southern California just by listening to them for maybe ten seconds, and was somewhat surprised I couldn't ID this band as such 'til I did some research and found out they're led by that dude from the Girls and Cute Lepers, relocated from Seattle. I remain undefeated in this regard. BEST SONG: "Party City" BEST SONG TITLE: "Wendy, Same Thing?" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I don't know anyone else who spells their name "Zache." -Rev. Nørb (La-Ti-Da)

MEWITHOUTYOU: Pale Horses: CD/LP

The sixth album by Philly's mewithoutYou ranges from quiet, introspective moments to bursts of intense energy. It's a contrast from their folksy, Neutral Milk Hotel-sounding *It's All Crazy! It's All False! It's All a Dream! It's Alright*. Instead, it's more reminiscent of their popular 2004 release, *Catch for Us the Foxes*.

The difference is the contrast of Aaron Weiss's vocals that range from warbly spoken word, to gentle singing, to forceful screams. The music also mirrors the variety of Weiss's singing. The beginning of "Blue Hen" is reminiscent of a Fugazi song, while "Mexican War Streets" has a hypnotic swaying in the sound. The songs are catchy and emotionally charged, which is the perfect mix of what music should be. Is this the best mewithoutYou album? Pretty damn close. One thing is for sure: it's certainly their most mature. -Kurt Morris (Run For Cover, runforcover.com)

MICROBES: Self-titled: 7"

This totally bizarre, semi-creepy five-song EP from Denmark comes with a hilarious comic book detailing the formation of this odd band. Replete with puerile AIDS and rape jokes as social commentary, these guys are using their ESL skills to non-masterful effect. Kind of like a slower version of Spider Babies, this record comes off as a bit contrived, but the mid-tempo melodic tracks are serviceable enough. The beautiful sleeve / comic save the day for this interestingly askance release. -Art Ettinger (Halshugga, halshuggarecords.tictail.com)

MISCHIEF BREW: This Is Not for Children: CD

This album is exactly what I would expect from Mischief Brew, whose 2006 release *Songs from Under the Sink* was a real winner for me and fans of folk-

influenced punk. The songs here are anarcho-leftist anthems and singalongs helmed mightily by frontman Erik Petersen, written for people to sing along and dance to. Come and join in! -John Mule (Alternative Tentacles)

NATURAL CAUSES: Self-titled: 12" EP

My knee-jerk reaction to this was that it was a nice bit of aggressive garage punk with some synth lines thrown in to add color. As I got deeper into it that opinion started to change, as the synth took on a more prominent role in their sound and the songs became a bit more primal and caustic. By the time you get to the droney sway of the closer, "Poppers," it is almost like yer listening to an entirely different band, though one just as kickass. I really, really like when that happens. -Jimmy Alvarado (Snot Releases)

NEEDLECRAFT: Hunk Out: LP

First off, the presentation of this record is absolutely flawless. There's a beautiful pink screen print on the blank side of the clear LP, and it's wrapped up in a jacket with these ingenious cut-outs, kind of like the paper dolls you can dress in little paper clothes. I just realized that there are instructions included that tell you how to use the packaging to construct a beach scene that includes all the band members. Like I said, flawless. Musically, think part tongue-in-cheek melodic queercore, part doo-wop girl band—but can you imagine Tina Belcher from Bob's Burgers fronting it? I don't mean

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the vocals; I mean the lyrical obsession with shirtless muscley hunks (and their butts). This might be incredibly obscure, but, overall, I think it sounds like Songs For Moms slowed down to play at some weirdo '60s prom attended by the cast of *Ghost World*. –Indiana Laub (Minor Bird)

NEW COLONIES: Self-titled: 7"

As a reviewer, I want to throw my arm around Sean Dolan's shoulders and say, "First release? Well done!" Handwritten note with band pedigree (Rumspringer and Seas Will Rise) and physical address means zero internet searching and getting straight to it. The stark black and white Pettibonesque cover art is the first thing to grab traction, new yet familiar. Fold-out insert complete with lyrics mining frequented modern punk territory (being a fuck up, drinking, fear of failure, survival). The four tracks aren't breaking any new ground, sounding like a Leatherface/ HWM/ Iron Chic playlist, but polishing them off with just enough tuneful originality (I think it's the Rumspringer shining through) that I'm already staggering along and memorizing the words to "League of Extraordinary Failures." –Matt Seward (33 Forever, 33foreverrecords.bandcamp.com)

NO COMPLY / SETE STAR SEPT:

Split: 7"

No Comply is grindcore (I think. I never know the subgenres on this side of things) band from Florida. Oddly

more listenable that I was expecting, as this isn't my usual mug of beer. I think it's the fuzzy bass that holds my attention. Sete Star Sept is pure noise. I'm not a fan. I am finding a correlation over the years that the harder it is to read a band's logo, the less I am going to like it. –Ty Stranglehold (Jerkoff, jerkoffrecords.com)

NO IDEA: Jag Hatar Punk: 7" EP

Metallic Swedish thrash recorded in 1986. Sounds like the tracks were pulled from an old cassette demo, which makes sense since the tunes here were originally released on an obscure cassette comp. The band is zippy, tight as hell, and know their way around writing a decent hardcore tune. Record comes with a download code that kicks in an additional thirty tunes recorded between 1985-87 for your green. –Jimmy Alvarado (Just 4 Fun, j4f.dk)

NOISE BY NUMBERS:

High on Drama: 12" EP

Listening to this is bittersweet. They are a great band, not surprising given all the members' past history. With two full lengths under their belt, this seems to be their swansong. It is super-melodic, superbly played, and well written. "Southgate House" and "Make up Your Heart" are my favorites on this too-brief record. We also get a Lemonheads cover for kicks. Is this really the end gentlemen? I, for one, hope not. –Sean Koepenick (Jump Start, rickbynumbers@gmail.com)

NUN: Self-titled: LP

Full-synth punk from the rhythms to the instrumentation, a bit more aggressive than, say, the Units, but nowhere near Screamers or Babyland territory. The vocals are barked rather than sung, and the structures themselves are mostly kept very rudimentary with a dark undertow, with little straying beyond the bass line. Beats are danceable and the overall product is intriguing enough to warrant repeated listenings. It'll be interesting to see how they develop and branch out over time. –Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

OMAHA: Touch 'Em All, Joe: CD

When punk broke into the mainstream in the '90s and '00s, it sometimes felt like there was a giant factory somewhere churning out carbon copied bands of the hot sound of the moment. Toronto, Ontario's Omaha sounds like a band manufactured in the same factory. The riffs are clean and polished, without a hint of grit. The vocals are equally clean-sounding, with just a hint of angst. While some people might be into this kind of sound, I found this record to be a tad homogenous. Without looking at the tracklisting or the number counter on the CD player, it was difficult for me to distinguish one song from another. I think that if Omaha get a bit more varied in their sound they'd have potential, but this release just couldn't hold my attention. –Paul J. Comeau (Morning Wood, info@morningwoodrecords.com, omahapunk.bandcamp.com)

PARANOID VISIONS:

Cryptic Cross Words: CD

These U.K. anarcho punk stalwarts put in some good work on this latest effort. True to form, there is a bit of noodling with conventions and styles while keeping enough "punk" in the mix to keep the kids happy, with intelligent, substantive, and topical lyrics belted out via (mostly) guttural vocals. –Jimmy Alvarado (Overground, overgroundrecords.co.uk)

PETER BLACK: Clearly You

Didn't Like the Show: CD

Peter Black is better known as Blackie, one third of The Hard-Ons. My first impression of his fourth solo record was a positive one due to the vivid and striking artwork featured on the cover. However, once the music started my heart sank. The lightweight songs contained absolutely nothing I could get into. It's not that I don't like one person with a guitar but when both the vocals and guitar are this wishy-washy it leaves me ready to move onto something else—and quickly. Now where's that Tim Barry album? –Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage)

PIERRE & BASTIEN: Greatest Hits: CS

Close your eyes. I want you to think back... back... *allllllll* the way back to that party at that one dude's gross apartment. You remember him. He'd let all the kids come hang out at his place and probably even buy the beer so he wouldn't feel so alone. A few beers in, you are feeling like pure

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magic. But one too many “pussy!”’s in your direction and you give into the peer pressure. Remember specifically the first few breathes you took after the last fateful exhale of that Devil’s Lettuce. Think about how you sank down into that beer-soaked couch all warm and fuzzy. Stale cigarette smoke and BO in the air. Think hard, What is that music playing in the background? Can you hear it? Almost, right? Like it’s in a distant room? Rippling, fading in and out, unintelligible, like it’s in another language—the intensity of the music waxing and waning, super slow in the blink of an eye. Now close your eyes and smile. Sink just a little deeper into that romantic and oh-so-fragrant couch. Then it hits you all at once... *yer gonna barf!* The urgency! No time for a Plan B here. Take immediate action and everyone makes it out of this situation safely. There’s no wounded pride if no one sees you spew! This is the kind of wild ride you are in for if you give these French punkers a chance. These tracks are recorded over some years and range from drum machine to live drummer to just one dude fucking around in his bedroom. I don’t know what they are singing about, but I like it. —Jackie Rusted (Frantic City)

PLAN 37: Space Junk: 7”

These Canadians offer up four tracks of 1990s-esque pop punk with vocals that are at times not dissimilar to Blag Dahlia of The Dwarves. It is all quite upbeat and I was not surprised that Mass Giorgini mixed it, given his

predilection for working with bands of that ilk. The masterstroke for me is the guitar, which reminds me of The Badtown Boys, with a thick, rich quality to it, helping to drive the songs along. Definitely a band I’ll look out for in the future. —Rich Cocksedge (My Fingers! My Brain!, myfingersmybrain.com)

PLASTIC PINKS: “FUI” b/w “Kelly”: 7”

Miami garage five-piece Plastic Pinks play delightfully dirty pop rock’n’roll. The sunny melodies and summery sensibility of side A’s “FUI” clash against the track’s slightly fuzzy production and messy gang vocals like a Hypercolor shirt paired with an acid wash denim fanny pack—they shouldn’t work together, but they totally do. The slightly longer B side, “Kelly,” is heavier, slower, and adds a little psych to Plastic Pinks’ surf aesthetic, but the song stays on message with an extended breakdown that is somehow both chuggy and reminiscent of Dick Dale. The powder blue single’s artwork—courtesy of “party animal” and frequent collaborator Mimi Starr—looks like *Fear and Loathing* had a fever dream acid baby with *Spring Breakers*. All that’s missing is Spuds MacKenzie on a Sea-Doo... —Kelley O’Death (Die Slaughterhaus)

PLAYOFF BEARD: Self-titled: 7”

Playoff Beard isn’t afraid to play pop punk despite the backlash mounted against pop punk since it gained commercial success in the 1990s. Comprised of members of legendary

Pittsburgh-area bands including Tommy Gutless, Reminders, The Radio Beats, and The Shutouts, Playoff Beard borrows from other subgenres, including garage and streetpunk. They play earnest, heartfelt songs about growing up in subculture, doing the right thing, and finding balance in life. Decidedly non-trite, this isn’t “la la” pop punk, despite its catchiness. All five of the tracks on this fantastic 7” are instantly lovable and each deals with relatable themes. “First Day of Summer (Pt. 2),” for example, is about hanging out with friends and listening to Screaching Weasel. The vocals are expressive, with a slight, poignant gruffness, keeping the proceedings from becoming corny. The production perfectly captures how tremendous Playoff Beard sounds live, which isn’t an easy feat given how kick-ass their live shows are. A must-have 7” for anyone into melodic punk, Playoff Beard’s new release is easily one of 2015’s best records so far. Seek it out now! —Art Ettinger (Between The Days)

PLEISTOCENE: Space Trap: 7”

Rochester New York’s Pleistocene provides four dreamy, light, intriguing songs on this 7”. Not prototypical shoegaze, but definitely influenced by that movement, these tracks are best in the faster-paced sections. I appreciate the lo-fi recording, and they’d likely be a blast live. I think some of the weirder instrumentations are actually just

synthesizer versions of other things, but the net effect is a practically orchestral experience at times. This unassuming little record works on all levels. Plus, there’s a goofy band photo on the back of the sleeve, with the members covered in foil and/or saran wrap. Oh, the antics. —Art Ettinger (Cherish, pleistoceneband.bandcamp.com)

PLURALS, THE:

An Onion Tied to My Belt: CD

Nich, Hattie, and Tommy make up The Plurals, bringing really good songwriting and tight musicianship from Lansing, Michigan. They immediately remind me of another Midwest band, The Replacements. The back of the CD announces, “For fans of Hüsker Dü, Pixies, Dinosaur Jr.” Like all those bands, there is no compelling need here to be any genre, anything, any level of cool. This is just sonic pleasure with a teaspoon of dry, center-of-the-country sense of humor thrown in. Standout track: “Fine.” —John Mule (Diet Pop / GTG)

POISON IDEA / RÖSVETT: Split: 7” EP

Poison Idea: The original tune here, “Something Better,” is a seething bit of virulence—slow, yet you can feel the power they’re known for coiled up and waiting to unload. Also included is a live recording of them running through the 13th Floor Elevators’ “You’re Gonna Miss Me.” Rössvett: Two thrashers that showcase the power they’re known for—fast, but weighted with more heft and rage than the usual

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lot who rely on speedy parlor tricks. The cover of P.I.'s "Die on Your Knees" is serviceable, if wholly unnecessary. Good split. —Jimmy Alvarado (Just 4 Fun, j4f.dk)

PSYCHIC BAOS: "Society's Lien on Piece of Mind" b/w "Can't Keep Us Down": 7"

Way too many wild garage party bands trying way too hard out there, which makes Psychic Baos a godsend. They find the exact perfect mid-pace beat, lay some organ on top, have a guy with Mick Farren-level weariness sing some words. He doesn't have Farren's gravelly, "Half Price Drinks" voice or his Brit accent, but he sounds tired and I can relate. Who gives a fuck about energy? Anybody can be young. Try being old. —Matt Werts (Magnetic South, magneticouthrecordings.org)

PURPLE 7: Gulf of the Afterglow: LP

Excellently balanced lo-fi indie punk. Kind of like if Pavement recorded in basements instead of earning money. My favorite kind of DIY music: earnest, recorded cheaply, and brilliantly played. Didn't I just review a record by these guys? Either way, if they keep up this release schedule, I'll gladly review their third record. And I'll love it! And there's nothing any of you can do to stop me! Grade: A- —Bryan Static (Dead Broke)

RADIOACTIVITY: Silent Kill: LP

This has to be one of the most anticipated records of the year (for

me anyway). Radioactivity's self-titled debut left little doubt in the mad genius of Jeff Burke, and almost from the moment I heard that record, I was clamoring for more. *Silent Kill* delivers the goods and then some. The songwriting is on some kind of magical level that few can hope to attain. I have often (usually drunkenly) purported that Jeff Burke and Mark Ryan are America's Lennon and McCartney and I will (mostly soberly) maintain that in writing right now. There is just something there that can be found nowhere else. The hair on the back of my neck stands up from start to finish of this album. Did my eyes water up a couple of times during the first listen? Maybe... I guess what I am getting at is this is an easy contender for album of the year. If you don't have it, please get it. If I had the money, I would buy a copy for everyone I know. —Ty Stranglehold (Dirtnap)

RATS REST: Hedonite: 7" EP

Full-hearted, alternative-sounding gruff punk with thoughtful lyrics. It's a little like Jawbreaker with more straightforward drumming, unsettling gruff vocals, and a dark rock sound. Straight out of Kansas City with that dirty and distorted Midwest sound. I dig it. —Camylle Reynolds (Starcleaner)

RÄTTENS KRATER: Nordvästpassagen: 7" EP

Punky post-punk from Sweden. There is a catchy, danceable quality underneath the attack, and I can hear

the buzz of what sounds suspiciously like a synth buried in the mix. The kinda stuff that makes me wish I had one o' them late-night punk radio shows so's I could play something off this every weekend for the cool, with-it kids. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rättens Krater, rättenskrater.se)

RED DEATH: Permanent Exile: LP

This album is that ultimate crossover you hope you'll hear when you pick up bigger bands' lesser, late-'80s albums. Red Death thrashes with the abandon of *Kill 'Em All* and the urgency of DRI. This album will gratify the discerning metalhead along with the most hardheaded, hardcore punk. It's one everyone in the van can agree on. I can't believe a time in life has arrived where I can say this again, but there are loads of good mosh riffs. A lot of modern "crossover" bands spoof metal without playing metal. There's no spoofing here: these guys get it without dressing it up in a costume. If you've ever had the urge to argue that Motörhead is a punk band, this album is necessary. —Billups Allen (Grave Mistake)

REPAIRS: Decay: 7"

Both tracks of gloomy synth here evince a bit more Suicide influence than one usually finds in this end of the pool these days, with the title track being the more aggressive of the two and "Cycle" being a bit more brooding and hypnotic. Makes me pine for the glory days of labels like Subterranean,

which means this be a cracker of a release. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac)

REPUBLIC OF DREAMS / AUTARKEIA: Split: 7"

Did not realize I still liked Orchid and Usurp Synapse until I listened to Republic Of Dreams (I mean *Chaos Is Me*, Jeromes Dream split Orchid, not awkward Situationist pre-Panthers Orchid). Short, spazzy, overwhelming dread still works, FYI. Autarkeia does one slow-burner with many peaks and valleys, glides between time signatures, and sings about anxiety, which I appreciate. Actually had to google this to see if it came out this year or sometime in the late '90s. Actually travelled back in time and posted on a Skylab board, actually went to a Honeywell show and asked around. —Matt Werts (IFB, ifbrecords.com / Moment Of Collapse, momentofcollapse.com / React With Protest, reactwithprotest.org / Suspended Soul, suspendedsoul.storenv.com / Zegema Beach, zegemabeachrecords.com)

REVOLT REVOLT: Wild Unraveling: CDEP

A pleasant jumble of genre-friendly angles—bits of Velvet Underground, Sonic Youth, a little Sigur Ros ambience and maybe a less desert-damaged Calexico (based solely on my memory of what Calexico sounded like some fifteen years after I last listened to 'em). They also often employ the tension-release song structure making for big, crashing buildups between

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laid-back waves of soporific grooves. Not something I often come across in the review bins, so it was a nice palette cleanser as well as a general listen. —Jimmy Alvarado (20 Sided, 20sidedrecords.com)

**SCARECROW SONIC BOOMBOX:
We Are the (United): LP**

Muddy, fuzzed-out, and wholly threaded with anxiety. Similar, oddly enough, to the Germs for its sense of a spring too tightly wound and constantly about ready to let go, like the whole sonic shebang is about to go careening off some cliff side—and it certainly helps that the dude at times sounds passably like Darby, if his vocals were strained through the gas rag of dirty New Orleans garage punk. Limited to three hundred, nicely die-cut and spray-painted cover, marbled red vinyl. —Keith Rosson (SS Boombox)

**SEASONAL MEN'S WEAR:
9xTOx5xCORE: CS**

Full disclosure: I do not know Seasonal Men's Wear, but this is my third review of one of their releases and I'm beaming like a proud big brother. The anthems and hooks have always been at the core, but the previously reviewed CDs had fluctuating mixes or production that were holding SMW back. This cassette sets it all right. Four new tracks and a re-recording of "Theme Song for a Quarter-Life Crisis" mix Midwest punk with leads that will tickle your Thin Lizzy-loving fancy. Full fruition of the SMW sound that I

fully back and can say again (maybe a bit more loudly), "Put it on vinyl, guys!" —Matt Seward (Brown Bear, seasonalmenswear.bandcamp.com)

**SHAYNA RAIN AND THE PART TIME
MODELS: Aiming for the Sun: CD**

The ten songs on *Aiming for the Sun* feature Shayna Rain, a woman who is obviously influenced by Janis Joplin who refrains from sounding exactly like her. It helps that her music, while bluesy, also can venture into folk territory. None of the songs are rockers, but they're steady and competent. When Rain and her band go really mellow, such as on "You'll Never Leave" and the reprise of that same song, is when they truly shine. It sounds like a woman was doing vocals for an emo pop band when they decided to do the one acoustic song on their album. That's not meant to be a critique; it is actually a welcome change. The reprise of "You'll Never Leave" is the album's finale and the best track. It's got power and emotion and a nice build. It actually made me feel feelings, which is pretty rare for a random album I review for *Razorcake*. Good job, Shayna, this emotional robot is not dried up yet! —Kurt Morris (G.C.)

SHEARING PINX: Poison Hands: LP

Originally released in 2006, this album is now available for the first time in the long player format. *Poison Hands* is a loose, exposed wire of art-damaged skronking—flopping around on the ground, sparks terrifyingly shooting

out in utter unpredictability. Chaos is in charge and she's making up for lost time. If you were feeling like the eight songs on side A were too conventional, get ready for "Whitemud," which takes up the entire span of side B and clocks in at a mere twenty-one minutes. A third of an hour of improvisational noise and about a minute of coordinated music, conveniently contained on a single, encroaching groove. Definitely not a release that everyone is gonna be able to get something meaningful out of, but I guarantee you it's better than a lot of the records you have in your collection. —Daryl (Gilgongo)

SHITTY FRIENDS: Self-titled: EP

Wanna know the way to my heart for record reviews? Cheap novelty toys like Fortune Teller Fish and a personalized message. Oh, and it doesn't hurt when your band totally rips. At first glance, I thought this might be a Masked Intruder release, as the cover is a ski mask with gradients of pink, orange, and blue ink. I'm pretty happy to find out I was wrong. The singer of Shitty Friends spits concentrated venom out with every belted word. It's hardcore with a strong punk lean, backed with provocative and eerie guitar leads. The opening chords ring out in this chilling tone that puts you on edge the same way a shitty horror movie does. Bass and drums hold their own, too. In the majority of the songs they are the binding thread for this ball of chaos, with a classic hardcore breakdown sprinkled here and there. My favorite

lines on this record are: "Did I speak or was it just in my brain? / Because it's getting harder to relate / the words in my brain between the lies that my fucking mouth make." This band is angry, fast, and talented. With limited edition white vinyl and colored silkscreened covers, the record is beautiful. And there is a Nation Of Ulysses reference etched into the trail off. Good stuff. —Kayla Greet (Self-released, akidwhotellsanotherkidisadeadkid.com)

SLOTHS, THE: Back from the Grave: CS

Many people are skeptical of reunion albums. I try to cut them slack, especially if I inexplicably want to like them for no reason. It's natural. Judge not. The Sloths' long lost garage single "Makin' Love" appeared on *Back from the Grave Volume 4*. I assumed the cassette was an unknown album or collection of demos or something, the sort of thing I'm predisposed to like without thinking about it much. But as it turns out, this is a reunion album. Of sorts. The Sloths recorded this album recently: a half century after the single was completed. That information puts a few clicks in the brain of the discerning rock consumer. Fifty years? You'd never know. The opening track, "Never Enough Girls" is Real Kids catchy. And if they say, "There will never be enough girls in the world," they know because the recorded their debut single fifty years ago. This has all the wrench and screws of '60s *Back from the Grave* jangling with interludes

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of thoughtful rocking. It's hard to tell if the album was fifty years in the making or if this was a rollicking swing night with the gang, but these songs are bulletproof. There's a little in this cassette for everyone, including catchy powerpopness, rocking rock riffs, and harmonica. I really like this album, but I'll warn you, I really wanted to like this album. —Billups Allen (Burger)

SNÄGGLETOOTH: Self-titled: 7"

Well, the ümläuts through me off. Snäggletooth hails from Singapore, and their sound is a weird mix of Motörhead, '80s metal and scorching d-beat hardcore. The guitar on this 7" is undeniably '80s Ozzy metal over the crushing slew of raw d-beat insanity. Atonal guttural vocals are tough as nails. It's primal and intense; just an onslaught of sick, weird hardcore. —Camyille Reynolds (4490, 4490records@gmail.com)

SOFT LIONS: Spell Breaker: CDEP

This opens up with a kickin' garage stomper tinged by a dark undertow and laid-back vocals. Things get a bit more subdued tempo-wise from there, but the darkness is laid on a bit thicker and by the end of the last tune they've slipped into Velvet Underground territory. Nice, diverse sound showcased over the four tracks. —Jimmy Alvarado (Velvet Blue, velvetbluemusic.com)

SOFT SHOULDER: "Stair": 7"

The noisy, disjointed no-wave of Tempe, AZ's Soft Shoulder is

deceptively complex: simultaneously experimental and familiar. Side A could just be called "Stair," but instead earns itself the moniker "Stair (YOBS) Junk Interlude (Repeat #2.5) Stair (Gilgongo HQ)" in an effort to differentiate each of its three-tracks-in-one based on where and when it was recorded and by whom. The sounds on display are lo-fi and crunchy as fuck, but production is clearly king for Soft Shoulder, and every discordant moment feels intentional. Side B shrugs off some of the pretense in favor of apparent sentiment. It features a version of the riffy, driving "Wyld Parrots," a song originally written by the band's Gilgongo labelmates Wounded Lion for a 2009 release that was bogged down by drama with their previous label. Soft Shoulder rounds out their Side B love letter with a silly, spacey birthday song for their friend Iggy—who was turning five at the time of recording—and it's just as adorable as it sounds. What *Stair* lacks in cohesion, it more than compensates for with its undeniable depth of approach. —Kelley O'Death (Gilgongo)

SOFT SHOULDER: Von Guts: 7"

Let's start by saying Von Guts is a good name for anything. And that these two tracks from Tempe, AZ's Soft Shoulder, both titled "Von Guts" have jolts, clanks, crunches, rips, splits, and clatters. They are like sounds arranged into song form, or unsongs. And here's an easy in: the lyrics are "borrowed from the late Kurt Vonnegut." But you

can't tell. It's like they maybe locked Vonnegut in a kettle, put that over a high flame, and shook the pot when the water boiled, recorded that. Soft Shoulder has a half-dozen other 7"s, which boosts their weirdo points in my book. For fans of the older stuff, more great wildness is here; for the uninitiated—the shit is strange, but it feels right. —Jim Joyce (Gilgongo)

SONNY VINCENT AND ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT: Vintage Piss: LP

Back in 2003, Swami reissued a discography collection from The Testors, the great '70s power pop rock'n'roll band fronted by Sonny Vincent. To promote this release, Sonny and Rocket From The Crypt went on tour together, and three of the members of Rocket From The Crypt served as Sonny's backup band during the tour. This record was recorded later that same year as a result of that tour. The material consisted of all new songs, largely made up in the studio, and it's all fucking great, smokin' rock'n'roll. At times this almost sounds like a high-octane version of Hot Snakes or Night Marchers (which is to be expected, based on the involvement of John Reis), except with a different vocalist. After the recording session, these master tapes sat unfinished and unmixed until Swami Records decided to get back in the ring and get this released. I'm very glad they did. There had previously been a version of this released in Europe with a different mix and two less songs (one of which Reis sings lead), technically

making this a reissue. One would never know this was recorded over ten years ago, as the songs don't come across as dated at all and, in fact, sound as fresh as ever. Recommended. —Mark Twistworthy (Swami)

SPACE IS HAUNTED: Demo 2015: CS

Basically the same distorto riffs and bang-bang-bang drumbeat played over and over for five tracks. I can't understand a word that's being sung. Not because this is particularly fast, but because there's a layer of gunk over everything that is nearly impenetrable. Either that, or the singer needs to work on her enunciation. —MP Johnson (Bitch-Face, spacehaunted.bandcamp.com)

SPECIAL DUTIES:

'77 One More Time Volume One: LP

A collection of tracks from their first go-round circa 1982, remastered and cut on wax. Fans of that period of British punk know full well what to expect here: oompah-oompah rhythms up the yin-yang, hollered vocals, diatribes on how fucked life on the island was then and, yes, their arguably best known track, "Bullshit Crass," is included. Good, stompin' Brit-punk as feral as it ever was. —Jimmy Alvarado (Jailhouse, jailhouserrecords.com)

SPENT FLESH:

Deviant Burial Customs: 7"

This Philly threesome return with nine tracks of weirdo hardcore noise. Like a tow truck barreling down a windy

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mountain road— it's clumsy, it's reckless, and goddamn if it doesn't feel like it's going really fucking fast. But as proficient as Spent Flesh are at blastbeat hardcore they also slow it down, both with dirgey, culminating intros and cacophatastic interludes of sheer demented indulgence. Coming off like a garagier Guyana Punch Line or a druggier Combatwoundedveteran, Spent Flesh continue to make all the genre bands look like the total duds that they are. —Daryl (Rockstar / P. Trash)

SPIT: Poison in Your Head: LP

Listening to Tel Aviv's Spit scream and rage their way through eighteen blistering tracks, undeniably influenced by the likes of Minor Threat and Circle Jerks, is a liberating experience. The album exudes boundless energy and makes me want to revisit my younger days when I could take my place in the sweating, heaving mass of a pit. This is simple, straightforward, and well-executed. —Rich Cocksedge (Crapoulet, cool@crapoulet.fr, crapoulet.fr / Defiant Hearts, defianthearts@hotmail.de, defiant-hearts.com)

SPLITS, THE: //: MLP

If Kim Shattuck of The Muffs sang for Mrs. Magician, then you'd have Helsinki's The Splits. The songs are moody and somber and mostly forgettable with the exception of "Melody" and "Death Song." Overall, the record is a nearly successful trepanning; the songs pierce my scalp and crack my skull,

but they can't find their way into my head. —Sean Arenas (Dirtnap)

SPRAYNARD: Cut and Paste: LP

"One more night to scream at the top of your lungs." Spraynard's out of print debut LP gets that one more chance via Dead Broke and Square Of Opposition in anticipation of their regrouping and a new LP. Three-piece bands that play this well and sound so emotionally bombastic make the heart swell. There's less room for covering up mistakes as a three-piece and the players really have to be dialed in to each other, technically as well as instinctually. *Cut and Paste* is a great reminder why you loved Latterman and why Iron Chic feels so good to scream along to. Also, "poopy wieners." Get this. —Matt Seward (Dead Broke / Square Of Opposition)

SQUIRES, THE: Going All the Way with The Squires: LP

Being inclined to like anything like this sometimes causes me to feel like I've run out of things to say about the endless parade of reissue albums that receive a blast of praise and then fade away. Not that I'm complaining, I could listen to '60s reissues for a living, like some sort of headphoned Jabba the Hutt absorbing twelve-string guitar licks and turning them into energy. That aside, this one is rock solid. There are extensive liner notes that I'm too stoned to read and regurgitate and pretend I knew that. They likely say something like: this band got big locally and faded

because everyone can't be The Rolling Stones. This is the album someone will snobbily inform you is better than The Rolling Fucking Stones. If you buy one album like this a year, this is a good candidate for 2015, especially if you liked the Chants R&B record, the one that's better than The Rolling Fucking Stones. —Billups Allen (Crypt)

ST. CHRISTOPHER:

Last Chance at Freedom: CD

Dunno a thing about the group, but they're puttin' down simple, straightforward punky rock tunes with the occasional country western twinge thrown in for seasoning. Singer is sometimes reminiscent of both Jimmy Dean and Freddie Blassie. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sxratsh Native, sxratshnative.com)

STRAIGHT CRIMES: Songs Don't Cry: CS

A duo out of Oakland with members of Violence Creeps and Baus, Erin takes the helm with vocals and guitar, while Thomas provides a steady flow of straightforward drums. Song melodies seemingly sway back and forth, sometimes with ease and at other times with pure force. Their sound is a more simplistic, ruckusy, and rough-around-the-edges No Age. What really adds another dimension to what otherwise could sound monotonous is Erin's uneasy falsetto vocals, which are at times shrill and add an overlying melody to each song. Screaming things like, "You look like a wet cigarette" conjures up all kinds of weirdness and

I like it. —Camylle Reynolds (Self-released, straightcrimes.bandcamp)

SUEVES, THE: Liquid Hounds: 7"

Both sides sound like some long-lost gem of Midwestern punk one usually encounters on some *Killed By Death* comp or one of that series' many knockoffs. Much primal stomp and smash going on, with high nasal vocals piercing through the carnage via some reverbed transistor radio. Thee birthday gift of the season for that record snob buddy of yours who says nothing interesting has come out of the underground since 1975. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozarecords.com)

SWEAT SHOP BOYS:

Always Polite Never Happy: EP

Holy shit! A good chef knows how to add just the right ingredients to make a dish sing. One wrong move and the dish is too sweet, too sour, too bland. This band from Israel know how to blend the best parts of bands like the Red Dons, with the quirkiness of Toys That Kill and the pop smarts of any of the Dirtnap crew. Handclaps, organs, sing-a-long choruses? Where do I sign up? Fucking A+. I love this. —Tim Brooks (Crapoulet, crapoulet.fr)

SWEET MADNESS: Made in Spokane 1978-1981, Volume 2: LP

I can't imagine what kind of musical wasteland Tacoma, Washington might have been in the early '80s, but there are little kernels of cultural influence that I'm picking up here, on Sweet

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Madness's second collection of material: David Byrne/Talking Heads. Small town power pop. Wiry synth lines butting up against fever-bright guitars. A few melodies that strongly remind me of, if you can believe it or not, a precursor to Men Without Hats' "Safety Dance." It's fascinating stuff, if at times somewhat aged. There's a few missteps—"Flight Number 77," with its veering, overwrought piano balladry, seems very much a melodramatic product of its time. But then "I'm Not Vicious" is a great, simmering piece of power pop ala Cheap Trick. Seriously might be the heaviest gatefold/vinyl combo I've ever seen; they did not skimp on the packaging here. Probably mostly for fans of the era and/or locale, but a cool listen regardless. —Keith Rosson (Light In The Attic)

SYMBOL SIX: Dirtyland: CD

Sounds like Motörhead and looks like an Affliction T-shirt designed by Captain Spalding. —Jackie Rusted (Jailhouse, jailhouserecords.com)

TAPE REC: Death Friends: LP

I was hanging out with my buddy Dugg the other night and randomly decided to put this record on. Out of nowhere, Dugg said, "What the hell is this? Smashing Pumpkins early demos or something?" This is the perfect description for the first song on this LP, and largely representative of what's to expect from the rest of it. Still listening with Dugg, we both agreed that the next song sounded like the Breeders.

Multiple songs have Sonic Youth-esque "guitar freakout" feedback noise parts where sometimes the placement of these "guitar freakout" parts seem like a natural progression within the song, while other times it just seems forced, awkward, and out of place. Dugg and I discussed their overuse of the "guitar freakout" just as an especially awkward-sounding freakout came from the speakers. The '90s alternative rock influence prevails throughout, as these guys seem to really wear their influences on their sleeves. The distortion is super heavy on every song, and the songs are all quite poppy with simple single string guitar leads. It would be remiss of me if I did not mention that Tape Rec are from Brazil, so the songs are all sung in Portuguese. While I absolutely think this record is highly derivative and not very original, I've found myself listening to it over and over again, which I guess means that I begrudgingly like it. —Mark Twistworthy (Transfusao Noise, transfusaonoiserecords.blogspot.com)

TEENGENERATE: Live at the Shelter: LP

I'm not big on live albums, but if there's a list of essential live albums, this album is solidly near the top. Teengenerate blow through a set of their classics along with a couple of rock'n'roll covers with the reckless abandon expected of them. Besides the rage factor, the recording quality is first-rate. It's a particularly interesting recording with regard to the guitars. Some of the patented chainsaw fury

Teengenerate is famous for is removed, but it only accentuates the guitar playing in a way that brings new light to the band via lowered distortion levels. It goes from chainsaw to lead pipe. It's a full-on rage. Historically, academically, and thrashingly relevant. Essential? Yes! Do not sleep on this one. —Billups Allen (Ugly Pop)

TERRIBLE FEELINGS: Tremors: LP

Terrible Feelings hail from Sweden, which is experiencing a renaissance of dark, disarming melodic punk featuring the likes of Vánna Inget and Hurula. Like Vánna Inget, Terrible Feelings are a bit '80s power pop, a smidge goth, and a dash of first generation California punk like The Bags and Avengers. Manuela Iwansson's vocals are full-bodied apparitions that give Pat Benatar a run for her money. The A side is mostly comprised of aggressive jams that resemble a more rock'n'roll White Lung. "Black Water" and "Demon Tonight" are hard-driving, angst-riddled pop behemoths. A side closer "Down the Road" is a heart-wrenching ballad where Iwansson hypnotically croons over brooding guitar chords and demonstrates her vocal virtuosity. The B side has a few lulls, like the overlong, country-ish tune "Bastard Child" and the instrumental, but the remaining songs remind you how good it feels to head bob to Terrible Feelings' brand of hook-laden melodrama. I eagerly anticipate the next Swedish feel-bad record. —Sean Arenas (Deranged)

TERVEET KADET: Lapinhevetti: LP

Doozy of a full-length here from this venerated Finnish thrash unit. The tunes are ADD-friendly and the beats as frenzied as ever, but in addition to the obligatory Discharge influence, it sounds like they've also been grooving heavy on *South Of Heaven*-era Slayer. The latter figures most prominently in the guitars, which launch into full-on shred mode on occasion. All told, most bands of this ilk will have a fucker of a time coming within tail lights distance of these cats. —Jimmy Alvarado (SPHC, sphc.bigcartel.com)

THIS IS GONNA TICKLE / THE DIXXX: Split: 7"

This split single looks and sounds like something that would have been available from Mutant Pop in the mid-'90s. The bands are both from Wisconsin. This Is Gonna Tickle sound like a band on Fearless Records before the label went all slick emo (think Bickley or 30 Foot Fall). The Dixxx have a bit more of a sub-Dwarves feel and have a song called "Drink, Fuck, Fight" that is just as dull as it sounds. —Mike Frame (Urban Pirate, urbanpiraterecords.storenvy.com)

TOXIC REASONS: Independence: LP

I know I'm not the first to say this, but Jesus wept, "How the fuck does one 'review' a bona fide classic?" To say this is one of those releases that should be in the collection of punks of every stripe is understating things—it should be imbedded in your DNA by this point,

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right along with all the other classics that pollute those “best of” lists folks like to make and then argue about. This is prime pickin’s here, with a sound that melds the “street” of the British of that was making the rounds when this was released back in 1983, the primal thud of early Canadian punk, and the abrasiveness of Midwestern hardcore into something entirely their own—guttural, primitive, raw, yet catchy as all get-out. Mind-boggling thing is they cranked out a few more albums after this that were monsters in their own right. This, though, is the starting point, and to those of you out there who haven’t yet picked it up, lemme beg you to do so. You’ll thank me later. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

TROPICAL TRASH: UFO Rot: 12” EP

Maybe I’m just a masochist, but *UFO Rot* is my favorite album of 2015 so far; listening to it is like being held hostage on a rusty, derailed train steered by a demon conductor chugging straight toward Platform Hell. A loathsome trio of sonic tormentors, Tropical Trash is bent on fucking up your day: monotonous yowls pepper syncopated sandpaper riffs and brash bass, conjuring up traces of Cows, Tweez-era Slint, or David Yow on a hot tin roof. Each song flows perfectly into the next and is more brutal than the last, and when you come to after hemorrhaging out of your ears for thirty-four minutes straight, you find yourself caked in blood and left for dead in a landfill. Take me to your leader, Tropical Trash. —Simone Carter (Load)

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO CANDYLAND: The People Are Home: LP

A fairytale of good versus evil. This album is centered on a shipwrecked boy named Todd. He is eleven years old when he arrives on the island and turns twelve in the episode called “The Birthday Party.” Wait, hold up... I’m thinking of the plot to *H.R. Pufnstuf* not *Underground Railroad To Candyland*. Well, either way, close enough. In the best way possible, this band makes children’s music for adults. It is bouncy and playful, full of whimsy and imagination, while still relatable and rooted in punk; a cracked kaleidoscope of relevancy depicting characters and experiences flowing in and out of each other; birth, tension, resolve, and everything in between. Maybe this isn’t children’s music for adults; maybe it’s just music that people of all ages can enjoy. Either way you want to look at it, this is another fantastic record from an already treasured band. —Daryl (Recess)

UNIFORM: Perfect World: LP

Uniform’s version of a perfect world seems pretty bleak. *Perfect World* is a chaotic record. Some of the songs go on for a while, like when you’re in an argument with someone and they’ve already walked away but you’re still in the doorway yelling obscenities. It is good chaos though, pissed off and institutionalized. Uniform are a two-piece out of Brooklyn, NY but even before I knew that I couldn’t help but be reminded of a modern version of

Suicide. Their songs are very minimal and artistic sounding. When it’s not the intensity of the music building up, it’s mostly the vocals that carry the songs. Fans of noise and minimal stuff will love these guys. —Ryan Nichols (12XU)

UNIFORM CHOICE: 1982 Orange Peel Sessions: 7” EP

Yep, *that* Uniform Choice and nope, it doesn’t really sound like ‘em—which is actually a good thing. Not that their celebrated, if mind-bogglingly derivative “Youth Crew” period was terrible (you wanna hear terrible? Give a listen to Pat Dubar’s post-U.C. band *Mindfunk*), but if you’re looking for a bit of the “We really wish we were *Minor Threat*” sound that made ‘em millionaires, you’re gonna be sorely disappointed. What this is, is a collection of demos originally recorded in 1982 to generate interest from (in)famous punk label *Posh Boy*. The band sports a different lineup than the one that made waves a couple of years later, and a sound slower and snottier in delivery. The four tunes here are a mighty fine testament to the band’s starting point, and one can’t help but wonder where they might’ve ended up had they continued down this particular road. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

UPSILON ACRUX: Sun Square Dialect: LP

This isn’t your dad’s prog record; Upsilon Acrux sound like the future—a chaotic ocean of white noise and (dis)information. Rob Sato’s cover art

is a kaleidoscope of organic elements mutated by a post-industrial society (think H.R. Giger), which emphasizes the prescience of Upsilon Acrux’s cyberpunk sound. Noah Guevara and Paul Lai’s guitars overlap, intertwine, and diverge in the blink of an eye while Patrick Shiroishi’s Fender Rhodes shimmers over the often dark, mathematic noodling. The song arrangements are intricate and head-spinning as Upsilon never falls into repetitive “grooves” or same-y phases that cripple other instrumental bands. Instead, they opt to create lush, frenetic tapestries that constantly unravel. Having seen these folks live a handful of times, I’m always struck by the flawless timing of the two drummers, Mark Kimbrell and Dylan Fujioka. Kimbrell and Fujioka gel the disparate elements together and somehow find the sonic space for rhythmic attacks. Much like the way *Blade Runner* and *The Fifth Element* stimulate your eyes with scenes overloaded with futuristic, dystopian details, your ears will be similarly titillated (and perplexed) by *Sun Square Dialect*. Highly recommended. —Sean Arenas (New Atlantis)

VAASKA: Todos Contra Todos: LP

Wicked brutal hardcore en español from Austin here. They grab you by the boo-boo from go and flail your scrawny body around like a ragdoll, thrashing in wild abandon one minute, then slowing it down to savor the beatdown the next. This is gonna get played lots. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment)

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VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Frequency of the Truewave: CS

Oakland darlings Street Eaters have put this comp together to showcase some of their favorite current bands, and it's a winner. The track list is studded with well-known DIY stalwarts like Dogjaw, Arctic Flowers, and Martha, with plenty of new-to-me bands to round things out (damn, Babe Quest is good). These nineteen songs span across a few styles of punk and its sister genres, with a tendency toward dark, melodic, post-punky stuff. Lots of American bands, especially from the curators' native Bay Area, but a good helping of German and other European bands make an appearance as well. Most or all of these bands are fronted by women, and it is awesome to be able to check out so much of what's going on in DIY punk right now on one cassette. This is one of those rare compilations that can boast both variety and cohesion. It never gets repetitive, but if you dig one track, you're likely to dig most of them. The cool silvery color scheme makes this feel like a retro-futuristic artifact, maybe some sort of capsule that includes coded instructions for a secret punk mission. —Indiana Laub (Nervous Intent, nervousintent.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Hardcore Gimme Some More: 7" EP

Used to be a time I didn't wince when I put on something with "hardcore" in the title. That, of course, was years before that term became synonymous

with (mostly) crappy metal subgenres, meathead assholes trying to "rule" the pit, and morons inexplicably trying to rewrite history by extricating hardcore from punk. Turns out that wincing was unnecessary 'cause the tunes here—courtesy of S.H.I.T., Impalers, Peacebreakers, Violent End, Mercenary, and Ajax—are fuckin' aces, each one a gem of thrashin' hardcore (fuck you, dirthead term-stealers!) with not even a wisp of metal to be found. Though my personal pick to click here is Mercenary's "Dreams Reality," a particularly vicious piece of caustic noise that'll make you gleefully trash your room, there seriously isn't a shitty tune in the bunch. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Puke & Destroy Vol. 2: 7"

Snuffy Smile Records out of Japan has consistently been putting out the best melodic punk that Japan (and the rest of the world) has to offer for what seems to be the last twenty years. This compilation pairs two of Japan's finest melodic punk bands against two equally great bands from the U.S., with two songs from each band; all songs clocking in under a minute. Japan's Glean Garden and What-A-Nights are paired on side A against the U.S. bands Tenement and Holy Shit! on side B, all pumping out thirty-to forty-five-second long songs, resulting in a release that is quite varied yet still a lot of fun. —Mark Twistworthy (Snuffy Smiles)

VHS: Choking on the Fruit: 7"

I just saw these guys play recently and they killed it live. I bought the record and I think I've already worn it out. This is my favorite record right now. The stand out is the song on the B side. "Behind the Wall" is post-punk at its finest. Catchy lyrics, driving and moody bass, great guitar arrangements, and tight drums that all complement each other perfectly. The members of VHS have been in a handful of amazing bands—Big Eyes, Criminal Code, and Thee Indoors to name a few. But it's this band that you need to focus on, because this record will not disappoint you. Buy this record. See this band. —Ryan Nichols (Casino Trash, casinotrashrecords@gmail.com)

VIOLENCE CREEPS: On My Turf: 7"

Violence Creeps are obnoxious and gleefully so, in the very best ways imaginable. Outputting absolutely fabulous, noisy, in-your-face, creative madness with female vocals, they're slowly gaining the reputation they deserve. A fair musical comparison musically is early Crucifucks, but with screamed female vocals. Simultaneously good humored and brutal, this is for fans of aggressive, yet quirky, punk. Hailing from Oakland, they're known for on-stage silliness. There's a music video for one of these songs already, and it's as wonderfully weird as the record. The best creeps everywhere need to find Violence Creeps.

They're fucking brilliant. —Art Ettinger (Veecee, violencecreeps.bandcamp.com)

VOLAGE: Heart Healing: LP

This French band offers a batch of hippy-influenced poppy garage rock songs with psyche influences that comes off not unlike a French version of Ty Segall. Actually, you'd never really know this band was from France at all since all of the songs are sung in English with no noticeable accents. Much like a good portion of the contemporary garage of the last few years, this record lacks a certain something and never really grabs my attention. It definitely has come cool fuzzed-out moments, and it's certainly not bad, but I keep on waiting and hoping that it would knock me off my feet. Unfortunately, I'm still waiting. —Mark Twistworthy (Howlin' Banana, howlinbanana.bigcartel.com)

VVHILE: More: LP

This Serbian duo offers up some hazy, shoegazing indie on their first full-length. The vocals in the opener "Nobody Knows" are so buried and washed out that it is easy at times to mistake them for another soaring layer of guitar noise; shimmery and almost syllable-less. However, "VVhile Things" follows up with a relatively straightforward jangly power pop jam. For the rest of its duration, *More* continues to dive easily back and forth between the atmospheric and poppy areas of the shoegaze spectrum,



EVERYONE YOU KNOW IS FUCKING
I N S A N E



MEAT WAVE - DELUSION MOON - COMING SEPT. 18TH

channeling Joy Division, Cloud Nothings, and Broken Social Scene as often as Ride. Whatever comparisons I saddle them with, VVhile aim to pile layer upon layer of blissful noise deep enough to sink into, and the results are supremely chill. —Indiana Laub (Dirt Cult, dirtcultrecords@gmail.com, dirtcultrecords.com / Pop Depresija, popdepresija@gmail.com, popdepression.com / Numavi, numavi@gmx.at, numavi@bandcamp.com / Twintoe, twintoerecords@gmail.com, twintoe.blogspot.com / Jazz Chairs, vvhile@gmail.com, vvhile.net)

WARHEAD: Self-titled: LP

Ohmergawwd! This is so insanely great that I am speechless. Bear with me as I stumble around for the elusive words to convince you that you need this over that one record you really thought you just had to have. Nope, you don't need that one. You need this Warhead record first and foremost. Warhead gets a lot of respect and accolades, and listening to this scorcher of a record it's easy to understand why. They crank it up to twelve and go for it non-stop like this is their last few minutes on earth. They don't just play music; they attack it with a vengeance. Their fast and crazy tempos and hammering percussion sound like they're about to topple over at any second. Their bass and guitar assault churns and grinds with no quarter. The vocalist sounds like his vocal chords are roasted. As soon as you hear the bass

at the beginning of the opener "What Is You Should Believe?" you know you're in for a cranker of an album. Each of these nine songs is like an explosion and everyone within earshot is running amok. The closer, "Don't Give'n to Any Pressure!" is chaos personified, especially the harsh noisy ending. Classic hardcore punk from Japan today. An absolute must. —Matt Average (540, fivefourzerorecords@gmail.com, chaosintejas.com/540)

WARWOUND: A Huge Black Cloud (The Demos 1983): CD

Ripping d-beat, UK82 from the region and era that started it all. These "demos" are of surprisingly superior quality, considering they're rough takes from over thirty years ago. I'm not sure I'd heard of them before getting my hands on this, but it's top-notch stuff. Fans of Discharge and The Varukers should take note. —Steve Adamyk (Boss Tuneage, bosstunage.com)

WILD RACCOON: Mount Break: CS

Clearly the steaming seed of Mark Sultan has been spread far and wide across the PQ, as Wild Raccoon is another Quebecois one-man band with which the world must contend. More poppy than bluesy, Mr. Raton Sauvage is not above jamming with himself, which can occasionally lead to odd mental glimpses of the Bare Wires trying to play the fast part in "Iron Man" and other such exercises. Mr. Sauvage also has a charming French Canadian accent, best enjoyed in his spoken lines

such as "they're taking all the rocks, 'cause we act like fucking cocks." If I told you that this was the best cassette I've heard all year, I would not be lying. **BEST SONG:** "Next Summer" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Pfuck Fuck the Bankers" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Includes a cover of "True Love Will Find You in the End" by Daniel Johnston. —Rev. Nørb (Howlin' Banana)

WULFEN RAG: L.A. River: CD

Stompin' down-stroke punk. Their bassist is a hippie. Nice racket, boys. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wulfen Rag, facebook.com/WulfenRag)

YHTEISKUNNAN MUTANTIT: Self-titled: CD

Could swear I reviewed something by these cats a good while back, but can't seem to find any evidence to back that up. No matter. Ye get spazzed-out Finnish punk here, short on the almost requisite Discharge template and long on injecting a shit-ton o' weird into the hardcore. It doesn't groove so much as clamor along, more Butthole Surfers than Appendix. Dunno if the black-clad back patch crew will dig it, but it's aces nonetheless. —Jimmy Alvarado (YhteiskunnanMutantit, facebook.com/YhteiskunnanMutantit)

YOUR PEST BAND / INVISIBLE TEARDROPS, THE: Split 7"

Another winner of a split 7" has appeared in my reviewables. This time around we have Tokyo's Your Pest

Band and The Invisible Teardrops from Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Your Pest Band plays some impeccably catchy garage pop and The Teardrops... well, they do too, but a different style. It's got some organ thrown in the mix that has me thinking of *End of the Century* but with haunted, '50s crooning. Killer! Both sides of this record made me smile and sway back and forth. —Ty Stranglehold (Snuffy Smiles, facebook.com/theinvisibleteardrops)

YOUR PEST BAND: Time to Go: LP

I have no idea what I was expecting given this band's name and packaging, but it sure the hell wasn't a heavier version of the friggin' Tweezers, for cripes sake! Japanese power pop occasionally straying into Japanese pop punk—at their best they're a bit reminiscent of *Sixteen Wires*-era Registrators; at their worst they just sound like they're trying to play "Crocodile Rock" too slowly. I stand baffled and corrected. **BEST SONG:** "You Were the Rebel" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Don't Leave Me Alone," because it's also the name of a Teenygenerate song (which it isn't). **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Sung in English, with lyrics provided in English and Japanese. I think just Japanese lyrics would have worked just fine. —Rev. Nørb (Snuffy Smiles)

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- **33 Forever**, 69 Kathryn Ln., Spring City, PA 19475
- **Aborted Society**, 1122 E. Pike St. #1377, Seattle, WA 98122-3934
- **Alien Snatch**, Rodenbergstraße 31, 10439 Berlin, Germany
- **Alternative Tentacles**, PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141
- **Bachelor**, 5421 Adnet 186, Austria
- **Beach Impediment**, PO Box 8335, Virginia Beach, VA 23450
- **Beer City**, PO Box 1759, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1759
- **Between The Days**, 2328 Eccles St., Pittsburgh, PA 15210
- **Boss Tuneage**, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, United Kingdom
- **Burger**, 645 S. State College Blvd. #A, Fullerton, CA 92831
- **Casino Trash**, 1139 17th Ave. #7, Seattle, WA 98122
- **Cubo De Sangre**, PO Box 4451, Kamuela, HI 96743
- **Dead Broke**, 139 Huber Ave., Holbrook, NY 11741
- **Deranged**, 700 Lower Rd., Roberts Creek, BC V0N 2W4, Canada
- **Die Slaughterhaus**, PO Box 160168, Atlanta, GA 30316
- **Dirt Cult**, 7930 NE Prescott St., Portland, OR 97218
- **Dirtnap**, 5857 SE Foster Rd., Portland, OR 97206
- **Don Giovanni**, PO Box 628, Kingston, NJ 08528

- **Dr. Strange**, 7136 Amethyst Ave., Alta Loma, CA 91701
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- **Dumb Luck** c/o Justin Groft, 962 SW Adams Ave., Corvallis, OR 97333
- **East Grand**, 213 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing, MI 48823
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- **Equinox**, 201 W Stassney Ln. #510, Austin, TX 78745
- **Fat**, 2196 Palou Ave., SF, CA 94124
- **Frantic City**, 799 Queen St. West, Toronto, ON M6J 1G1, Canada
- **G.C.**, PO Box 93324, Las Vegas, NV 89193
- **Gilgongo**, PO Box 7455, Tempe, AZ 85281
- **Going Underground**, 1312 19th St., Bakersfield, CA 93301
- **Golden Key** c/o Jason Gettemy, 3624 S. 1st Pl., Milwaukee, WI 53207
- **Gunner**, PO Box 105824, 28058 Bremen, Germany
- **Halo Of Flies**, c/o Cory von Bohlen, 3444 N. Bremen St., Milwaukee, WI 53212
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- **Mighty Mouth Music**, 313 President St. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11231
- **Minor Bird**, 624 S. Higgins, Missoula, MT 59801
- **Moment Of Collapse**, Bei Der Apostelkirche 26, 20257 Hamburg, Germany
- **Morning Wood**, Draversdyk 10, 8641WT Rien, The Netherlands
- **Norton**, Box 646 Cooper Station, NY, NY 70276
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- **Profane Existence**, PO Box 647, Huntington, WV 25711
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- **Rockstar**, Viktoriastraße 51, 52066 Aachen, Germany
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- **Sacred Bones**, 144 N 7th St. #413, Brooklyn, NY 11211
- **Self Aware**, 4901 Cedar Forest Dr., Charlotte, NC 28226
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“Huzzah, mighty
Gadsden!
Also please
make T-shirts.”

—Rev. Norb
GAD! #4

ADVENTURES OF TAD MARTIN, THE #6, \$6.66, 6½" x 10¼", offset, 66 pgs. Casanova Frankenstein, formerly known as Al Frank, returns to his comic avatar Tad Martin after over a decade. While reading, I was struck by the artistic similarities to Bill Sienkiewicz and Gary Panter, as well as the confessional, autobiographical format of Harvey Pekar. Frankenstein admits in the closing remarks that those artists were “thrown into the blender.” This comic is not for the faint of heart as it graphically exploits the mental and physical decline of Tad Martin, resulting in the confrontational explosion of his marriage to a deranged drug-addicted party animal. Martin’s paranoia, workplace misery, and crippling fear of abandonment are explicit and unnerving, yet compelling in a grotesque, voyeuristic sort of way. There is no hero, no happy ending, and no resolution, except possibly Martin’s recognition of his aloneness. *Tad Martin* is raw, unfiltered, and confrontational, just as underground comics should be. —Sean Arenas (Teenage Dinosaur / Profanity Hill, no address listed)

ARTCORE #33, £2.50, 8½" x 12", 36 pgs. Welly continues to set the bar high with the latest issue of this long-running zine. Crammed into this all-U.K. themed installment (minus a rebuttal to last issue’s interview with a couple of Crucifix members penned by their former guitarist Jake Smith) are interviews with Discharge, Die, Violent Reaction, Thirty Six Strategies, Stay Clean Jolene, The No Marks, Bloodbuzz, Broken Cogs, Arms Race, and Tadpole Records, plus some reportage on some U.K. events of recent history. One of the things I love most about this mag is that, as in days of yore when one had to cram as much info as possible into sometimes very limited resources, the interviews and articles convey their intended information succinctly and economically, cutting off the fat so that resulting read is quick but thorough. Not to diss long-form pieces (says the guy notorious for turning in two-part mammoth interviews), but here is compelling evidence that less doesn’t also have to mean *less*. Also included is a download code for a corker of a “(virtual) vinyl fanzine” featuring many of the bands interviewed in the mag. Badass from cover to cover. —Jimmy Alvarado (Artcore, c/o 27 Llantarnam Rd., Cardiff, CF14 3EF, Wales, United Kingdom, artcorefanzine.co.uk)

BASELINE BLVD, \$8, 5½" x 8½", copied, 64 pgs. Emi Gennis is one of my favorite creators in self-published comics. Her latest comic *Baseline Blvd* reveals her personal side. Her art is scratchier and more visceral than in her other non-fiction comics like *Trepanation* and *Unfortunate Mishaps in Aviation History*. Gennis’s journalistic, fact-spouting voice is replaced by mostly wordless panels and an autobiographical narrative about suicide. The stretching acres of farmland scarred by train tracks create a lonesome atmosphere for Gennis’s journey to an ex-lover’s grave. She deconstructs her personal trauma through the juxtaposition of crows feasting on roadkill on an empty highway and the heart-wrenching memories of a crumbling relationship. White space and blacked out panels emphasize the overwhelming grief and desolation. It all culminates in a climax that is both powerful and understated. Although *Baseline Blvd* is a departure from Gennis’s tragically comedic comics, she emotes with her art in a way that is refreshing and inspiring. The result is her finest comic yet. —Sean Arenas (Emi Gennis, emigennis.com)

CHEER UP SEERUP! #1, \$7, glossy cover, bound, 28 pgs. A cheerfully gross adult coloring book that will make you want to pull out your broken crayons and dry sharpies and start coloring! Don’t worry about staying in the lines, though. *Cheer Up Seerup!* is the best kind of sloppy. Seerup is an over-sexed ragdoll rat, who rolls with the punches (literally) and doesn’t mind getting dirty. Twenty-eight full pages of spanking,

partying, setting shit on fire, shitting, puking, and the mixture of any of the above. —Camyille Reynolds (wazaloo@rocketmail.com)

DEAD SAILIN #1, \$4 or trade, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs. If *Maximum Rock n’ roll* was a BMX zine, *Dead Sailin* would be the West Virginia scene report. The whole zine is about BMX culture in the wild and wonderful state. The content is primarily interviews; these include a local biker Steven Hamilton, the BMX clothing company Shug Inc., Menstrual Cycles bike club, and the band High Fives & Hell Yeahs. There are also a lot of pictures of guys doing tricks on their BMX bikes. I was pleasantly surprised at how interesting the interviews were to someone like myself who would theoretically have little interest in West Virginia (I have no connection to that state) or BMX. I grew up with kids who rode BMX seriously, though, so this brought back some good memories. This is real solid for a first issue. Keep up the good work, dudes! —Kurt Morris (415 Hillcrest Dr., Ravenswood, WV 26164, 1150bmx.storenvy.com)

DUDES MAGAZINE #22, \$5, 8½" x 11", printed, 52 pgs. *Dudes Magazine* can’t get out of its own way. The articles in this St. Louis zine written on Ferguson—one earnestly titled “Ferguson and the Festering Wounds of Structural Inequality”— would be easier to swallow if its content didn’t feature, among other things, repeated referrals to women as whores and an article rating the looks of woman sports sideline reporters titled “Fresh Tits.” Hate to break it to you fellas, but you are perpetuating structural inequality with your casual misogyny, whether you’re trying to be “edgy” or not. —Michael T. Fournier (6819 Minnesota Ave., St. Louis, MO 63111)

EARTH FIRST!, June/July 2015, \$6.50, 8½" x 11", offset, 72 pgs. This issue of *Earth First* has a theme about incarceration and the prison system. Apparently, *Earth First* has some kind of an outreach program towards people incarcerated because they always include at least one letter from a prisoner. The article by Panagioti Tsolkas titled “The Ecology of a Prison Nation” outlines the ecological impact of the prison system. In this well-researched article, the author points out the disproportionate amount of prisoners who are almost entirely poor, and the “extreme disproportion of black and recent-immigrant communities locked up.” For most of us, this injustice is not new and has hit many of our communities. The author looks at the use of large amounts of water and energy, “generating massive amounts of sewage and toxic pollution.” Some prisons sit on top of an abandoned toxic mine or next to an EPA Superfund site, exposing the prisoners to horrific amounts of pollution. Lastly, the article looks at the FBI’s Green Scare, where the FBI targets the ecological resistance movement fighting back against a police state and rampant corporate pollution. In a separate article Tsolkas interviews Paul Wright, the founder of the Human Rights Defense Center and the editor of the *Prison Legal News*. Wright has an interesting story and details how he became an advocate for prisoner’s rights. His political journey begins with a box of Cap’n Crunch dumped out on the floor of his cell, realizing that “not all wrongs necessarily have a legal recourse in this country.” Wright continues advocating for the environment and for prisoners. There are many more articles on the Tar Sands blockades, the loss of Border Wild Lands due to the U.S. policy of “Prevention by Deterrence,” book reviews, puzzles, and letters to the editor. I would like to see some articles on Mauna Kea in Hawaii someday soon. —Steve Hart (Earth First, PO Box 964, Lake Worth, FL 33460)

FIXER/ERASER, \$3, 5½" x 8½", copied, 60 pgs. You’re an interesting person, someone who has spent a lifetime unwillingly creating your own personality and lifestyle with help from everyone and

everything around you. I can't count the number of interesting people who have affected my life because I can't remember who they were or what happened. One of the biggest takeaways I get from *Fixer/Eraser* is the impression that Jonas takes the time to remember as many of them as possible. I don't even think I'm gushing when I say that everything I've seen from him reads like poetry. Each sentence and interaction is thoughtful, has purpose, and leaves you with an overwhelming adoration of humanity, the value of human interactions, and the friendships those interactions can start. From his kooky first boss, to road trips with acquaintances, to falling asleep in the same room as a knife-wielding maniac, these anecdotes have a lot of rich character. —Simon Sotelo (Jonas PO Box 633, Chicago, IL 60690)

FLUKE #12, \$5, 5½" x 8½", offset, 76 pgs.

New York City—the sleazy, punk rock, dirty cesspool—always captured my imagination. My mom made me read a book by a Christian evangelist preacher who went into the bowels of the Lower East Side and met gang members and drug addicts. I loved that book, until they became “born again.” I stopped reading at that point. Later on, I read every punk rock book that detailed the days of early punk rock in NYC. It seemed like a dangerous, desolate place and far away from the pimple-faced jocks who tormented me in high school. *Fluke #12* is a comic zine, detailing the life of an artist named Bobby Madness, who lived in the Lower East Side of Manhattan when he was fourteen and fifteen years old. After reading these stories of hard drugs, violence, and girls, I remembered I was too soft to handle NYC back then and would have gotten my ass kicked. Stories of a music-obsessed, young, nerdy punk rocker are always interesting. I've been

the Mangaka Spotlight. I suppose the whole point of the continued existence of the local zine as a species is to periodically freeze a snapshot of one's local scene, fossil-like, that others may stumble upon it in ways unknown. Huzzah, mighty Gadsden! Forever will the state of your union at this exact juncture be burned into my memory! Also please make T-shirts. —Rev. Nørþ (PO Box 394, Gadsden, AL 35902, gadpunk@gmail.com)

GAD! #6, stamps or donation, 8½" x 11", copied, 20 pgs.

It's nice to see regionalism is alive and well: the folks who do this zine are from Alabama and cover their state about as extensively as I've seen anywhere as of late. The interviews here with local bands (Southern Withdrawal, Scary Cherry And The Bang Bangs) are engaging throughout, and the smaller not-interview pieces focus on Alabama bands and albums. If none of this floats your boat, the list of bands that concludes the issue is a ridiculously thorough resource any touring band should check out. —Michael T. Fournier (PO Box 394, Gadsden, AL 35902)

GINGER BINGE, \$4, 4¼" x 5½", copied, 44 pgs.

This cute little quarter-size zine begins with an introduction to author Annie Soga's personal relationship with ginger, segues into a brief rundown of ginger's history and medicinal properties, and then gets into the real content: a couple dozen thorough reviews of some of the varieties of ginger beer and ginger ale that can be found in New York City. A niche endeavor, to be sure, but Soga's enthusiasm is infectious. If we're being totally honest, I hadn't fully mentally committed to reading every word of every review before doing my

“His political journey begins with a box of Cap'n Crunch dumped out on the floor of his cell, realizing that ‘not all wrongs necessarily have a legal recourse in this country.’”

—Steve Hart | **EARTH FIRST!**

thinking about the first time I saw the Ramones in New Orleans—even though I had seen countless other punk rock bands in the '80s—seeing the Ramones for the first time was incredible. They were bigger than I thought they would be and talked in an accent I didn't understand. I was too scared to meet them. Likewise, Bobby meets one of the Ramones and realizes he has nothing to say—meeting your heroes is never as good as what the imagination leads you to believe. Bobby meets an older friend who has strong opinions on everything and this guy acts as an older brother—one who isn't afraid to get into trouble or mouth off. Often Bobby has to pay for his buddy's big mouth. Bobby's story is difficult to read sometimes, especially as a dad of a fourteen-year-old. I can't imagine my son living a crazy life on the streets of New York. The city might be different, but the ghosts of Chris and the Ramones live on—even if they don't recognize the place. —Steve Hart (Mathew Thompson, PO Box 1547, Phoenix, AZ 85001)

GAD! #4, stamps or donation, 8½" x 11", copied, 18 pgs.

I put out the first issue of my fanzine in February 1982 (if you do the math you'll find that that predates the first issue of *MRR* by a good eight months), so, understandably, I have a soft spot in my heart for ambitious teenage types (whether they're actually in their teen years or not is irrelevant) who dutifully truck on down to the copy shop every other month to have their manifestos, rants, pleas, and miscellaneous verbal detritus printed up for public consumption. That said, I often wonder, if I were born, say, thirty years later, into this madcap world where the public rantin' is free and easy courtesy of the world wide web, would I have bothered to publish a zine at all? I tend to think probably not; I'd probably be fine with just going online and bitching about shit like a goon. Why, then, does *GAD!*—despite a name that sounds like a Billy Childish project and/or trans-Atlantic *MAD* parody, it's actually devoted to the breezy comings and goings of the Gadsden, AL scene—even exist these days? Couldn't they just start a Gadsden Punk group on Facebook and be done with it? What compels these valiant Sons and Daughters of Gutenberg to troop down to the copy shop every few weeks and blow their video game money on printing? Nostalgia for the format, I figured. Same as these people who keep making these stupid cassettes, or collecting 8-tracks. I was quickly set straight: The bottom of page two—right after the mailing information and the call for contributions—was emblazoned with the declaration “THIS IS NOT NOSTALGIA.” I beg pardon. The zine contains the usual knocks, boosts, reviews, screeds, and pep talks (“We shouldn't measure ourselves against places like Huntsville or Birmingham”), plus interviews with Random Conflict, Carridale, and independent filmmaker Daniel Emery Taylor. My favorite part was

meta-review. No one would have been the wiser. But this drew me in, and now I know so many things about ginger ale, which I don't even think I've ever actually had. This woman is a bona fide ginger ale connoisseur. I don't know what kind of person actually seeks out a zine about ginger ale, but I feel unexpectedly satisfied about the time I spent reading this one. —Indiana Laub (Stadium/Punctum, etsy.com/shop/stadiumpunctum)

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL #384, \$4.99, 8 ½" x 11", newsprint, 128 pgs.

I've been reading *MRR* since the early '80s and although there are times when I have to put it aside for awhile, whenever I pick one up it is like seeing an old friend. In this issue, George Tabb submits his final column for *MRR*. He includes correspondence with the new zine coordinator, who is letting him go as a columnist. I suppose everyone likes to see a little dirt, but it's uncomfortable to see anyone get fired. The zine coordinator responds to his column in a rebuttal of her own and, again, this is interesting and scandalous, but it's uncomfortable. That being said, I stopped reading his column many years ago because it seemed like it was the same topic every month. This issue also includes an interview with Wu Wei, the front man for SMZB, a band from China. It's always interesting to read about punk rock from countries other than Western Europe and the USA and that is one thing that *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* has done extremely well since their inception and the *Welcome to 1984* compilation record. I also enjoyed the conversation with Sean Gray, who started a collective website titled “Is this Venue Accessible?” The website collects information on venues from all over the world determining whether or not the venue is accessible for the disabled. This isn't something I've considered before, and the conversation is in-depth and focuses on ableism, the American Disabilities Act, and punk rock. —Steve Hart (Maximum Rock N Roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146-0760)

MY DAD WENT TO SEE SOME WEIRD MUSIC AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY ZINE, \$?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 16 pgs.

There's something genius about this book demo—a completely random set of excerpts from his forthcoming book range from a couple of sentences to almost a full page. Everything was incredibly enjoyable and hooks you in even though you're not going to get anything past those few sentences. It's almost frustrating how the zine perfectly teases the book you're going to want sooner than later. His new book is called *The Other Night at Quinn's*. Put that on your radar. —Simon Sotelo (Mike Faloon, PO Box 469, Patterson, NY 12563)

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PHANTOM POWER, \$2 or trade, 5½" x 8½", copied, 68 pgs.

Personally, favorite zine I have ever read... ever. BreAna of Tensor and Trivial Pursuit interviews musicians who fall into the "non mainstream" category; female-assigned people, queer folk, people of color, and trans folk on their personal struggles, introductions to playing music, dealing with jerks, overcoming self-doubt and other obstructions, and learning to love themselves. The questions and answers are honest, powerful, and truly fucking inspiring. This is an excellent new resource for connecting to and supporting one another in regards to mental health, addiction/sobriety, identity, self-worth and self-care. I can't recommend this zine enough and am so thankful it was made. Fuck society; As long as we got each other we'll be all right. -Robin Effup (Phantom Power, 4934 N. Vancouver Ave., Portland, OR 97217, hypnophobiaradio@gmail.com)

RESIST #48, \$7, 4" x 4", printed, 80 pgs.

A cyclist's journal of biking Minneapolis, mostly to and from work, through the bleak winter months. Made me kind of sad thinking about how much it is going to suck doing food delivery on my bike in the piss-yellow, shit-brown frozen streets once it starts getting cold again. Winter sucks. Biking in the winter *really* sucks. If you've never done it, this zine offers a detailed account of what it's like. -Robin Effup (Mat Resist, PO Box 582345, MPLS, MN 55458, resistinstrumentworks.com)

SRVIV, \$?, 8½" x 5½", copied, 52 pgs.

Every author in this zine is presented with the question, "What allows you to get out of bed?" The answers vary, as does the level of frankness or literary aspirations to the pieces themselves. Some are raw diatribes from people who at times have just been hanging onto the skin of the earth by their fingernails, others shoot for humor. A few folks tackle the question in poetry. Many folks—and I don't mean to belittle it or anything, but it was a definite thread throughout—named their cats as a reason. The layout is cut-and-paste, no visuals at all, save for one single panel comic—this was the one big weakness of *SRVIV*. It was still a good read, but goddamn, a little visual help here would go along way, huh? For me personally, standout contributors were Ariel Gore, Dave Roche, and Cindy Crabb, but there is enough scope and breadth here for everyone. -Keith Rosson (SRVIV c/o Jonas, no address listed)

SUBMERGING WRITERS Volume 5, \$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 40 pgs.

Four short stories and pieces of fiction/non-fiction from four different writers. The first story is a piece on memories, nostalgia, books, and lost crushes. The second, a man tells a story of the first man he ever killed. The third, an author listens to (for ten days straight) and reviews *Chickenfoot III*, an album from a band consisting of members from Van Halen and Red Hot Chili Peppers. The final story in this zine is the most interesting to me—an essay about a record found in a basement, and a missing person flyer found inside of it. The author writes about trying to make a connection between the flyer and the band, as well as intertwining the band's history with the missing person's. -Tricia (Submerging Writers, submergingwriters@gmail.com)

ZISK #26, \$3, 7" x 8½", copied, 26 pgs.

I think *Zisk* was made for me. Or at least that's what the subtitle suggests: "The Baseball Magazine For People Who Hate Baseball Magazines." Except I don't just hate baseball magazines, I kind of hate baseball. It's ironic, too, because in elementary school I was a *huge* baseball fan. Even into middle school I loved it. Then I got into punk rock, hated the jocks who hated the punkers, and gave up enjoying most sports. Now I live in Boston where baseball is a religion, and I've had bad experiences with religion so it makes me like baseball even less. All of this means it's especially amazing that I like *Zisk* at all, but I do. I reviewed *Fan Interference*, a book comprised of past issues of the zine and enjoyed that, and the latest issue (#26) isn't too shabby either. A large reason I enjoy it is that most of the writers are my age (mid-thirties or older) and thus their baseball interests generally steer towards historical subjects in the sport that I remember from my childhood. One of the stories involved Johnny Bench while another looked at baseball cards in the '80s. (I used to be a collector during that time period, so this was especially appropriate for me.) There is also an interview with the punk band Vista Blue and a number of other features including a (too lengthy) piece about who does and doesn't deserve to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame. I'm sure if I didn't have a past in baseball from the time of my youth I'd probably hate *Zisk*. But this zine just so happened to catch the right reviewer this time around. -Kurt Morris (Zisk, PO Box 469, Patterson, NY 12563, ziskmagazine.com)



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BOOK REVIEWS



Amazing Punk Stories

By David Agranoff, 263 pgs.

Punk rock and weird fiction collide perfectly in the thirteen short stories collected in this book. It is clear that Agranoff has done his time in the pit. His characters are not the typical, one-dimensional walking mohawks that appear so often in books. Instead, he imbues his characters with depth. Punk is part of who they are, sometimes a big part of who they are, but it's not their sole defining characteristic. This allows him show so many varieties of punks, from the naïve young band on their first tour to the idealistic anti-sellout to the scenester trying to climb the punk social ladder to the grizzled vet who has left punk behind.

Cattle Cult! Kill! Kill!

By MP Johnson, 152 pgs.

First things first: this ain't your grandpappy's love story. In a small Wisconsin town, something strange is afoot. The story follows Remmy, a man in love and unwittingly in over his head. He and his girlfriend Sera are in a car crash on Highway Twenty-Nine. Bare-chested men wearing severed cow heads emerge from the snow and take them prisoner. The floodgates open and Remmy's world, our world, will never be the same. Bovikraaga, an old god, has been awoken.

This is yet another book that makes me love bizarro fiction. It's a genre that seems tailored to my love of B-movies, dark humor, and concision. It's amazing how quickly MP can develop and deliver a story. Sure, there's blood, cults, spiked pig head flails, and otherworldly corn stocks. However, underneath the gore and guts is a story. A romance. It keeps the character real and moving forward. That is one of my favorite things about bizarro fiction and MP's storytelling; it's his ability to build characters quickly and non-trivially, to utilize the absence of rules to showcase the timeless ones, and to keep the stress on the latter half of shock value.

The story is fantastically over-the-top but so well-crafted and paced that the absurdity doesn't prevent you from immersing yourself as it unfolds. It's like a Tiki drink—lurid and potentially dangerous—but delivered with such a sincere intent on having a good time that you willingly imbibe its devil-may-care debauchery. Its pages almost stick together from all the blood and viscera throughout.

I often have a hard time watching or reading depictions of violence against women. I also unflinchingly love any movie with more squib packs than actors and any book with a glossy, embossed cover and an adjective in the title. It's important for me to be able to try to understand the director/author's intent. Are they going for titillation, exploitation, realism, eroticism? If it's not obvious at first blush, then I'm usually onboard. As a reader I want to be engaged with those types of questions. MP is able to be sensitive to a feminist perspective and yet stay true to the amorality inherent in a tale of the bizarre. *Cattle Cult! Kill! Kill!* is both unapologetic and thoughtful. I can see that MP is making decisions and going on instinct. Bizarro is like

“It's like a Tiki drink—lurid and potentially dangerous—but delivered with such a sincere intent on having a good time that you willingly imbibe its devil-may-care debauchery...Lit-rah-chur!”

—Matthew Hart, *Cattle Cult! Kill! Kill!*

Agranoff knows his weird fiction, too. He drags familiar tropes (zombies, time travel, aliens, demons, spies) into the pit, giving them new, sweaty, fist-shaking life. The variety is such that when one story wraps up it's almost necessary to dig into the next one right away, if only to see what Agranoff's going to do next with this punk rock/pulp fiction mashup.

In “Book Your Own Fucking Life,” an idealistic band steals mom's van and darts off on a weekend tour of the Midwest. Things get weird when they arrive for a show in the middle of nowhere and there doesn't seem to be much of a crowd. Then things get brutal. Really brutal. Backwoods punk rock cannibals brutal.

After Agranoff proves that he can do bleak, he proves that he can do funny. “Punk beyond the Red Line” posits a future where bands travel via spacecraft to distant corners of the universe, playing shows in front of all types of aliens, often with little reward. In the case of Transmitted Infections, they're more likely to get chased off the planet than get paid. With little left to lose, bandleader Greeg decides to accept an invite to cross the Red Line and play a blowout with the ultra destructive Planet-Fucking-Beasts. Turns out they weren't invited for their ragers.

Another standout is “Punkupine Moshers of the Apocalypse,” which was previously included in the *Best Bizarro Fiction of the Decade* anthology. It's a dystopian tale of a future world where punks alter their bodies with sharp spikes and go to battle in mosh pits. But one punkupine decides to look for a different way.

Story after story, Agranoff's approach to combining punk rock and weird fiction never grows stale. *Amazing Punk Stories* should be on every book-loving punk's shelf. —MP Johnson (Eraserhead Press, PO Box 10065, Portland, OR 97269, eraserheadpress.com)

pornography; it's hard to define but you know it when you see it. But unlike the vanilla allusions to anal sex in *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, MP alludes to a man fellingating two of his captors who have severed eyeballs affixed to the tips of their erections. Lit-rah-chur! Highly recommended. —Matthew Hart (Strange House Books, roosterrepublicpress.com)

Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables

By Michael Stewart Foley, 177 pgs.

Michael Stewart Foley's *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* is one of the newest releases in the “33 1/3” book series, an on-going series of short works each focusing on an iconic record. It is sort of the pantheon of music-geekdom, where the books range from sophisticated analysis to rambling personal recollections. There have been a handful of punk albums covered in the series—such as the excellent *Double Nickels on the Dime* by Michael Fournier—and they tend to be stand-outs. That remains true with this release, which may now be my favorite in the entire series. There are three factors that make this short book about the Dead Kennedys debut album such a gem. The first is the subject matter itself. In case you've somehow forgotten, the DKs' 1978 debut contains such fantastic songs as “Kill the Poor,” “Let's Lynch the Landlord,” “Stealing People's Mail,” “California Über Alles,” and “Holiday in Cambodia,” to name just a few. You know that even a half-assed book about this album is going to be a great read, especially when much of the material is based on interviews with Jello Biafra, East Bay Ray, Klaus Fluoride and other significant players such as Mike Watt and V. Vale. As Foley argues, “*Fresh Fruit* was the most important, articulate, and accessible document of dissent to come from American youth in an age when it is generally assumed that American youth had given up. It is a political document for a generation, even if most

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of the generation missed it because they were still listening to fucking *Hotel California*.”

As you may have concluded from that quote, the second strength of the book is Foley’s writing style. His tone is pitch-perfect, reflecting both his academic training and his punk rock roots, producing the equivalent of a scholarly spit-ball that complements the pissy intelligence of the DKs’ masterpiece. His writing is effortless, even when he is flexing his intellectual muscles. I’ve never met Foley, but as I read the book I got the strong feeling here was a guy I wanted to drink beer and talk about music with. There aren’t a lot of academics I can say that about.

And that gets me to the third strength: Foley is fucking insightful. That is readily apparent from the way he structures the book. He begins broadly, talking about the context of national politics in the late 1970s, and then narrows the scope with each subsequent chapter, shifting from the national, state, local, and down to the San Francisco punk scene. Each chapter is rich in historic detail and analysis, with the discussions around the intricacies of San Francisco politics—from the tragic assassination of Mayor George Moscone and city supervisor Harvey Milk to the rise of Diane Feinstein and

her life later) and “Upon Reflection” (where she critically reflects upon her entries from her current perspective). When I read *Violence Girl*, I was entranced by Bag as a writer. She is open, honest, and engaging in that book, and in this one as well. My sole complaint is that I really wanted there to be more contemporary reflection from her on her entries from thirty years ago. The book might have been even more powerful if it were twice as long with many more thoughtful “Upon Reflection” interventions throughout. But Bag follows the logic of “leaving them wanting more.” Ultimately, this is a wonderful book and Alice Bag is a fucking gem. I look forward to reading whatever she writes next. —Kevin Dunn (Alice Bag Publishing, PO Box 41812, LA, CA 90041)

Please Bee Nice: My Life Up ‘Til Now

By Gary Floyd with David Ensminger, 69 pgs.

Gary Floyd was the singer for The Dicks, one of Texas’ most infamous and revered punk bands. His autobiography *Please Bee Nice: My Life Up ‘Til Now* documents Floyd’s upbringing, the formation of The Dicks (and the “new” Dicks” in San Francisco), his employment at a runaway shelter,

“It is a political document for a generation, even if most of the generation missed it because they were still listening to fucking *Hotel California*.”

—Kevin Dunn, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*

her unsavory allegiance with landlords and real estate developers—being particularly insightful.

I grew up on the East Coast and while I’ve always liked *Fresh Fruit*, I realize now I never fully recognized what was going on with the album. As I read Foley’s book, I found myself constantly re-listening to the album with fresh ears, my appreciation and admiration of it growing every time. As he concludes: “*Fresh Fruit* brought outrage and caustic analysis in equal measure, anger, insult, and gallows humor, all wrapped up in a distinctive sonic attack... an honest assessment of the state of the union, free of the bullshit and lies that defined mainstream American political culture.” Foley’s excellent little book has more than convinced me that *Fresh Fruit* was a vital act of rebellion and a fucking masterpiece. —Kevin Dunn (Bloomsbury, 1385 Broadway, NY, NY 10018, bloomsbury.com)

Pipe Bomb for the Soul

By Alice Bag, 112 pgs.

Pipe Bomb for the Soul is a collection of Alice Bag’s memoirs from her time spent in Nicaragua in 1986. If you are a fan of Bag’s 2011 memoir *Violence Girl*, as I am, then this slim volume is a welcome sequel of sorts. When discussing her immediate post-Bags life in *Violence Girl*, Bag mentions going back to college and the month she spent in Nicaragua that changed her life. I remember wishing she wrote more about that experience (especially because I spent time in Nicaragua two years after her). Lucky me, almost the entire *Pipe Bomb* is composed of her journal entries during this time, as she travels to Nicaragua as part of an internationalist group to help peasants in the northern part of the country. Less than a decade before, the Sandinistas overthrew the U.S.-backed dictator and established a revolutionary socialist society. Ronald Reagan’s administration sought to undermine and destroy the revolution, in part by establishing and funding the Contras. If this isn’t a familiar history to you, go pick up a few American punk albums from the 1980s and there will undoubtedly be plenty of references to it.

While most political punks in the ‘80s were content to sing about what a dickhead Reagan was, Bag actually traveled to Nicaragua to help out, first in the fields and then in the classroom (on a literacy campaign that was hugely successful and had profound implications). The diary entries cover her cultural shock at being in an impoverished rural community, to her awakening to the feminist aspects within the Sandinista struggle, to a self-awareness of revolution as a political and personal process. As she repeatedly observes, “the revolution starts within.”

Bag sprinkles her diary entries with historical facts to provide context, as well as a number of thematic box inserts, such as “Fuck This!” (when she recognizes bad thinking in her own journal writing), “Seeds for Germination” (to identify ideas that entered her subconscious and impacted

and his journey to spiritual awakening. The writing is matter-of-fact and concise. Floyd wastes no words and is never self-indulgent. The rare photos and fliers enhance a sense of time and place.

The anecdotes are engrossing, particularly his miserable accounts of the Rock Against Reagan Tour. Hippies and turkey dogs for breakfast, lunch, and dinner hampered his ability to enjoy the countrywide trek. Cameos such as MDC, Black Flag, Soundgarden, and Nirvana illustrate Floyd’s diverse musical trajectory from abrasive, in-your-face punk to blues-rock (he became frontman of Sister Double Happiness in the ‘80s, who eventually released a record through Warner Bros).

Floyd is forgiving in his recollections. He is rarely critical of bandmates or friends, instead he openly expresses his regrets and mistakes. He admits that reforming The Dicks in San Francisco without any original band members besides himself was a selfish move. He recognizes that his attempt to become a monk was foolish because of his inability to refrain from sex. His humility is admirable: “I was hardheaded and wanted to do it anyway.”

Ultimately, *Please Bee Nice* is written by man who has learned from his experiences. He wants nothing but kindness and companionship from here on out: “Getting my hand bit a lot has caused me to be cautious and think ahead before doing it... my road has led me from ‘me saving the world’ to just ‘me trying to save me’ as I get really old.” If Gary Floyd, the cannonball frontman of The Dicks, can find inner peace—then there is hope for us all. —Sean Arenas (Self-published, \$10, thedicksfromtexas.com)

What Is Punk?

By Eric Morse, 32 pgs.

This is a fun little book intended to serve as (rhyming) curriculum for little punks learning their Punk History 101, or whatever the pre-K equivalent class would be. You know the narrative: Stooges, CBGB, Ramones, all the Brits, all the women, California hardcore, so on and so forth. The real standout in this book is the illustration—artist Anny Yi crafted, posed, and photographed detailed clay models of punks of all kinds (and their guitars, and their studded jackets, and the goddamn Houses of Parliament somehow). It’s basically Sid, Glenn, and Milo meet *Wallace and Gromit*. There’s some really impressive craftsmanship on display, which adds a lot of whimsical charm to what is otherwise pretty standard fare in the kid-friendly punk market. Very cute, but—like Ramones onesies and baby Doc Martens—it is still probably more for the parents than for the kids. Except the little clay guys; everyone has gotta love those! —Indiana Laub (Akashic Books, 232 3rd Street, Suite A115, Brooklyn, NY 11215, akashicbooks.com)



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It's Gonna Blow: San Diego's Music Underground 1986-1986: DVD

It's Gonna Blow, directed by San Diego documentarian Bill Perrine, is an exceptionally entertaining and insightful look back on the San Diego music

scene of the late '80s and early '90s, when San Diego was coming into its own and touted as being "the next Seattle" by much of the music press. The film's title is taken from the Trumans Water song "Aroma of Gina Arnold," which is in reference to a former *San Diego Union-Tribune* music journalist who was seen as a cheerleader of the newly mainstream-cool, corporate-commoditized version of alternative youth culture and its corresponding bands. (Lyrics: "Your plastic culture sucks; It's gonna blow!")

The documentary was of particular interest to me as a former San Diegan who has had some form of involvement in the San Diego music scene for a little over fifteen years. As a person just a touch too young to witness firsthand the bands and surrounding cast of characters documented in this film during their heyday, seeing the footage of bands like Trumans Water, Fishwife, Pitchfork, Inch, Tanner, Sub Society, Drive Like Jehu, Amenity, Heroin, and many others that had broken up (or withered into obscurity) by the time I was of an age to enjoy them, is something that I found incredibly valuable. The movie is lovingly put together and each of the interviewees exudes a warmth and reverence for the scene and the era.

The documentary is presented less as an authoritative history and more as a group of friends casually reminiscing over a bygone era. This helps give the movie a familiar feeling; we're invited to sit and chat with Ryn Foxe (Fishwife) while he works the door at (now defunct) Bar 11, with Matt Reese (Funeral March) and Mitch Wilson (No Knife) from Matt's backyard tiki bar.

The film is told mostly in a linear, chronological fashion, beginning with the violent, "punchy" hardcore scene of the early '80s. This section includes an anecdote where skinheads attack the Vandals in the middle of their set, ending the show and (for a time) the San Diego hardcore scene. Simply trying to get away from the violence of the San Diego's '80s scene is largely what drove the slightly younger generation of punks to create their own scenes, in new venues like the Ché Café and the Casbah. In these

new spaces, free from violence and the stagnating shackles of standard-fare punk and hardcore, the kids became free to start bands as wild and weird as they wanted.

There is tons of footage and discussion of how radical the bands were and how loved they were, but it was never explicitly mentioned that these bands gave birth to all manner of hardcore, indie, and noise subgenres. And while the nature of the interviews helps keep the movie flowing and friendly, more exposition might help people understand how and why the San Diego scene was so unique, rather than just highlighting the fact that it was.

For example, there's a brief conversation with Milo Aukerman (Descendents) about UCSD's long-running, on-campus punk collective the Ché Café, without mentioning that UCSD was the college that Milo went to (as in, *Milo Goes to College*) and that he played in local bands while a UCSD student. In another instance there is footage of Drip Tank playing at a 7-11 in the back of a rented moving truck. It wasn't mentioned that Drip Tank had planned a "tour"—where they played dozens of 7-11 parking lots across San Diego on July 11, 1990 (7-11 day)—dubbed the "7-11 Freedom in Your Face Tour." A brilliantly ridiculous undertaking, it loses out on the full weight of its lunacy.

All told, these are minor quibbles. There is so much to enjoy in this movie—like George Anthony (Battalion Of Saints) in a graveyard giving an animated, though mostly rambling story about breaking Henry Rollins' nose, or the home footage of Fishwife recording *Ritalin* (naked, in a Hollywood studio) with John Reis at the helm continually commenting that the band is in the same hallowed ground as "the Def Leppards."

The DVD also includes a whole mess of really cool extras, including a flyer gallery of old shows and live footage. The DVD artwork was done by Rick Froberg (Pitchfork, Drive Like Jehu). *It's Gonna Blow* shines a long-awaited light on a group of bands and labels that were exceptionally innovative and influential, and also exceptionally fun. If this scene is new to you, I think you will see that our bands were among the best, weirdest, and smartest that you could find in punk and hardcore. —Jeff Proctor (Billingsgate Media, 4580 Hamilton St., San Diego, CA 92116, billingsgate.org)



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