

NON-PROFIT PUNK ROCK

RAZZORCAKE

WE DO OUR PART
#91

IRON CHIC

THE BOMBPOPS
ALL DOGS

SCOTT MCCAUGHEY
(YOUNG FRESH FELLOWS, MINUS5)

EXPLORING THE DIY STATE OF MIND
WITH DANIEL MAKAGON

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U.S.

SMALL PUNY PUNK
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Razorcake started as a magazine. Since then it has grown to be so much more. We've been described as a "vital scene organ" and we take that as a compliment, and we take it very seriously. Stuck between a brutal popularity contest that has been ravaging the scene for decades, and the forgotten forest of obscurity, we're dedicated to covering bands and artists that we feel are interested in helping foster their community. Those looking for another stepping stone can keep moving.

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We are active, daily participants in DIY punk. Making *Razorcake* helps us feel less isolated.

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AND GILMAN

ALL AGES

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A Wet Patch

I wiped the back of my hand against my lips and looked at it. It was red with blood. My glasses were speckled. I braked and look behind me.

I had imagined for months sliding all over the floors in my socks and underpants. I set up the record player in the front room, pulled out the entire Future Virgins discography, and cranked it. The divorce was official, months quicker than planned. I paid off my ex-wife and kept the house where Razorcake is run out of the basement. It wouldn't have been the end if we lost Razorcake HQ but it would have been painful. My ex-wife had fully moved out. Her note on the back of an organic breakfast menu ended with "Have a nice life asshole." It was a clean break. We never have to deal with one another again. I moved back upstairs, off of the futon, out from the basement.

I've been regularly riding bikes in Los Angeles for the past decade. My dad salvaged a bike from going to the dump when he passed a neighbor tossing it on top of garbage in the back of his pickup. My dad gave me the bike because there's no freewheel—it doesn't coast. The bike's a fixie. First thing I did was install a front brake because on two separate occasions I've seen kids in my neighborhood smack into busses because they couldn't stop in time. The bike is dangerous, but fun.

A void opened. Nothing's supposed to exist in a vacuum, but this one is filled with sadness. It may sound callus, but I don't miss my ex-wife and have no regrets asking for a divorce. Our relationship had become unhealthy for both of us. Yet I was caught off guard by the waves of grief and mourning that radiated out of that big, dark hole. An eight-and-a-half-year relationship failed. It's a span of time we shared, dotted with friends' suicides. I have failed on a large

scale. The void took the place of my heart. It started taking over my brain. I had to file taxes. I sorted our joint paperwork—through couch drops, wedding photos, and tampons stuffed in manila folders with the mortgage papers and utility bills. Innumerable triggers of, "Todd, you're a fuckup" repeated, repeated, repeated. I'm unlovable. Incapable. Worthless.

It hadn't been the first squirrel to run out in front of me. My baseless theory is that the bike's spokes make a sound that intrigues them. Previous squirrels had stopped short of the bike and turned back to the curb or darted safely in front of me.

I became a void. My right hand is currently numb. The meat on my face—between my skull and my skin—is numb. I haven't had a good night's sleep in over a month; and sleep is one of my favorite things to do.

This squirrel didn't stop. It thunked on my front wheel. I looked back, expecting it to be dazed or scampering off. Two squirrel parts were separated by about a foot of black pavement and a wet patch. I slowed down and looped back. No doubt about it. Its small head was separated from the rest of its body. Squirrel blood was tracked in a line on my face, squirrel fur tufted in my spokes. I'm glad my mouth had been closed.

Some pieces will never fit back together. Some damage can't be undone.

Some days, it's an accomplishment to just maintain, to do the smallest thing that makes some sort of sense in the hope that time will start healing these deep, bloodless wounds.

—Todd Taylor

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The thing that makes you weak is the thing that makes you real.

—Derrick C. Brown,
"A Kick in the Chest,"
Born in the Year of the Butterfly

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Lemmy Kilmister and Robert McAllister.

THANK YOU: My exposure to comics is limited, so please give me a little slack. The cover reminds me if the Silver Surfer had a beard, was fueled by disappointment, and smoked weed to cool out after a long day of saving the galaxy thanks to Eric Baskauskas and Patrick Houdek for the cover design and photo; Gone is the glowing smugness. In is the vicious, unacceptable yank thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Donna's column; (Said in the cadence of "tamales, tamales, champurrado") Merciful Fate, Merciful Fate, King Diamond thanks to Becky Rodriguez for her illo. in Jim's column; It's tasteful that she's not washing a spoon or a teacup thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo. in Cassie's column; Mash those baked potatoes the fuck up thanks to Alex Barrett for his illo. in Nørh's column; I secretly think that the moles kept Lemmy alive that long thanks to Codey Richards for his illo. in Dale's column; A more adolescent version of the Chicken thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo.; DIY punk's legacy will be defined by chipped lead paint, asbestos insulation, and mold spores thanks to David Ensminger, Patrick Houdek, Dave Zukauskas, and Madeline Bridenbaugh for their interview, photos, and layout of Exploring the DIY State of Mind with Daniel Makagon; Fuck France, long live Flunkyball, and keep them away from your Mom's throat thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh, Silva Diez, Gabby Gonzalez, and Dylan Davis for The Bombpops interview, photos, and layout; What you're feeling isn't bullshit, and air hockey trauma is real thanks to Dylan Kordani and Adam Pfahler for the All Dogs interview and photos; Probably the first full-length interview we've run where not one band member has their eyes obviously open in any picture thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh, Julie A. Ferguson, Patrick Houdek, Eric Baskauskas, and Matthew Hart for the Iron Chic interview, photos, layout, and transcription; Neither here nor there, but I saw Scott McCaughey at the Burbank Airport thanks to Mike Faloon, Niffer Calderwood, Kelly Sullivan, Matthew Hart, and Becky Bennett for the Young Fresh Fellows interview, photos, transcription, and layout.

"I hate guitar solos. They are tedious exercises in vanity. They are the equivalent of a singer taking thirty seconds mid-song to do some scatting." —MP Johnson reviewing Brudte Lofter's Kobenhavn 7—he goes on to enjoy the record. Thanks to 91's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Mark Twistworthy, Jackie Rusted, MP Johnson, Sal Lucci, Art Ettinger, Keith Rosson, Kurt Morris, Mike Frame, Sean Arenas, Jon Mule, Indiana Laub, Juan Espinosa, Ty Stranglehold, Nørh, Ryan Nichols, Chris Terry, Jeff Proctor, Lyle Sux, Matt Werts, Steve Adamyk, Sean Koepenick, Camille Reynolds, Chad Williams, Kelley O'Death, Billups Allen, Matt Average, Craven Rock, Aphid Peewit, The Lord Kveldulfr, Rich Cocksedge, Ian Wise, Jimmy Alvarado, Matt Seward, Madeline Bridenbaugh, Paul J. Comeau, Jim Woster, Adrian Salas, Tricia Ramos, Jim Joyce, and Kayla Greet.

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. Even with a moratorium on adding any new male reviewers to our roster for almost two years, that section is far from gender parity. Please help us out. (razorcake.org/contact-us)



The McAllister Family Memorial Fund aims to provide long-term support to the loved ones Robert McAllister (Iron Chic/Capital) left behind when he passed away on January 9, 2016. www.youcaring.com/marisa-pulchin-502523. See page 67 for full details.

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COLUMNS

- 6 Donna Ramone *Never Let Me Forget*
- 8 Jim Ruland *Lazy Mick*
- 10 Ben Snakepit *Snakepit*
- 11 Shanty Cheryl *Photo Page*
- 12 Cassie J. Sneider *Here Comes Success!*
- 15 Liz Prince *I Don't Want to Grow Up*
- 16 Rev. Nørb *American Grilled Cheese Review*
- 18 Designated Dale *I'm Against It*
- 20 Adrian Chi *Bite the Cactus*
- 21 Dan Monick *Photo Page*
- 23 Art Fuentes *Chico Simio*
- 25 Kiyoshi Nakazawa *Won Ton Not Now*
- 26 Rhythm Chicken *Dinghole Reports*
- 28 Razorcake Flashback *Shellshag*
- 30 Steve Thueson *Knife and a Bike Chain*
- 31 Rachel Murray Framingheddu *Photo Page*
- 33 Lubrano *Astonishing Tales of Righteous Indignation*



FEATURES

- 34 *Exploring the DIY State of Mind: An Interview with Daniel Makagon* by David Ensminger
- 40 *The Bombpops* by Madeline Bridenbaugh and Todd Taylor
- 50 *All Dogs* by Dylan Kordani
- 56 *Iron Chic* by Todd Taylor and Madeline Bridenbaugh
- 68 *Scott McCaughey* by Mike Faloon



FAVORITES // REVIEWS

- 76 **Top 5s** *Basement Bender's Lydiad Rules Everything Around Me*
- 78 **Record** *Shitty in all the right ways.*
- 104 **Zine** *Dirty dishes, bedbugs, house shows, and a really good time.*
- 109 **Book** *Fabulo's abs don't want fame and fortune. They want freedom!*
- 112 **DVD** *What the hell is wrong with the crowd?*

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:

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NEVER LET
ME FORGET
DONNA RAMONE

Words are
my weapons
against
oppression.

Anarchists Don't Wear Braces

“What even brought you to this point, Donna?” I asked myself, staring at the blinking cursor. “Why exactly am I writing right now?” “How the hell did I get here?” These simple questions caused my brain’s floodgates to open, and the subsequent downward spiral became a whirlpool.

I suddenly saw my entire life and the events that led me to this point; at this moment, I’m writing this column. One step back and I’m helping edit the webcomics on the Razorcake website. Another step back and I’m volunteering at Razorcake HQ. Another and I’m helping host a reading, populated by Razorcakeers. I’m helping start a punk venue. I’m part of a punk scene. I’m discovering the Ramones. I’m....

My time traveling suddenly hit a very precise memory—a day filled with a series of events that shaped me into the person who is writing this column.

I was in the sixth grade, in an afterschool program called G.A.T.E. (Gifted and Talented Education). Kids doing well enough at school could be enrolled in G.A.T.E., where they would work on projects that supposedly challenged them more. Our class had been working on a movie for a while now, and I was particularly invested. I had adapted a book I loved into our screenplay and played my favorite character from it. The sophisticated literature I had forced on everyone was titled *Aliens Don't Wear Braces*. It was a hilarious romp where the Bailey School kids think their new art teacher is an alien and in the end she might be—or she’s just very artistic and weird. We never know for sure. The whole reason I even read the book was because the woman on the cover—a witchy art teacher with silver hair and a huge grin with braces—was the gorgeous kind of woman I hoped to one day be. In the meantime, I was more than happy to play her in a movie.

The G.A.T.E. kids had to do everything: make-up, directing, filming, editing, and acting. A feat, since the entire program at my school consisted of about fifteen children. I played Mrs. Zork, the maybe-alien art teacher, because I was the oldest and tallest, and I also wanted to actually be her. We were several weeks in and near the end of production. I was talking to a friend at the end of the hall, laughing about something, and playing with the paper clip in my mouth that I had crafted into braces. Unbeknownst to me, Blonde Dickbag (a boy whose name I forgot but face

I still remember) snuck up behind me, took as much of my hair into his hand as he could, and fucking *yanked*.

This wasn’t new to me. Back then I had hair clear down to my butt that I usually wore in a large braid, perfect for pulling. But on this day my silver-colored hair was down, and so was my guard. I wasn’t at recess with the other peons; this was afterschool education for the gifted and talented! I wheeled around, furious, and looked at Blonde Dickbag with the burning anger of a thousand suns.

Seeing how mad I was, he bolted, giggling. I wasn’t going to let this go unpunished. I chased him down the hall, probably screaming about punching him in the face, which I absolutely planned to do. As I got close behind him, he swiftly dropped to his knees and slid, throwing one leg out in an effort to trip me. Luckily, I saw the move in time and jumped over his leg. He leapt up and took off back the way we came. I followed, my temper well beyond lost at this point. I caught up to him quickly and reached out to grab him when he dropped down, using the same leg slide move he had tried earlier. This time I was too close and didn’t react fast enough to stop the inevitable. My foot caught his leg and I fell forward on to the concrete. My chin hit the floor so hard that the force caused my lower teeth to smash into my top teeth, breaking my front tooth. Being eleven, and in a lot a pain, I started to cry.

I don’t remember what happened next. I know Blonde Dickbag claimed it was an accident, and they believed him despite my incoherent crying protests. I know my mom picked me up. I know I tried to eat a bowl of Frosted Cheerios, but my jaw hurt so badly I couldn’t chew and started crying again into the milk. When I could finally manage talking properly, I told my mom everything that had happened. My rage at getting my hair pulled was a campfire compared to the volcanic fury that erupted from my mother. She made an appointment with our principal immediately.

Inside a tiny, poorly lit office, I realized this was the closest I had ever been to our mythical principal Mrs. Maryann Burke. I was tense and taking in every detail. I remember thinking she didn’t look as kind as I had previously thought. I also noticed her acting very dismissive of my mom, and that bothered me.

“This boy tripped her and broke her teeth. Look!”

“Mm-hmm.”

“He needs to be punished. My daughter is hurt!”

“Hmm.”

I thought she was having trouble understanding my mom’s accent, but it became clear she didn’t care enough to hear what my mom was saying. Mrs. Burke asked me to recount my story. I did. I even showed her my cracked tooth despite the intense pain of opening my jaw. Shockingly, she began lecturing me. “When I was in school, kids made fun of me, too, and called me Maryanna-Banana. And it made me so mad. But I understood I couldn’t go around all day attacking people who....”

I stopped listening to her, the same way she stopped listening to my mom. She told me it was my fault. I had brought it upon myself. By going after someone who had pulled my hair (“because boys will be boys”), I was asking for a broken tooth and busted jaw. She had labeled me as troubled, mean, and apparently deserving of injury. To this day, I have never felt as dejected as I did in that moment. I was devastated.

My mother’s rage was only made worse by Maryanna-Banana’s reasoning. She yelled, telling the principal how wrong she was, then grabbed my arm and stormed out of the office. In the parking lot, my mom got down and looked into my incredibly sad and confused face. The lesson she taught me that day has shaped my entire future.

She told me my principal was wrong. She was very wrong, and she would always be wrong. She wasn’t looking out for me today, and she never would. People in power aren’t in the business of looking out for little Arab girls with big noses. What they care about the most is their power. And they will do anything to make sure they always have that power. I’m going to have teachers who will be wrong, bosses who will be wrong, and even friends who will be wrong. And no matter who they might be, I need to be strong. I need to fight back and never back down. Never be scared of authority. From Blonde Dickbag to world leaders, I need to always fight injustice when I see it. “Always stand up for yourself.”

My mother is an anarchist (though she doesn’t actually know the English word for her beliefs). She is the daughter of a man jailed and exiled for fighting English



JACKIE RUSTED

People in power aren't in the business of looking out for little Arab girls with big noses. What they care about the most is their power.

colonists. She gave me the knowledge I needed to understand why life wasn't fair sometimes and what I should do about it.

Within a year, I was fighting against all tyranny (including my parents, whoops). I have never stopped. Today, I'm an activist and outspoken advocate for equality. Though I sometimes feel like I'm up

against an undefeatable monster, I shake off the fear and refuse to back down. That's why I'm a part of this beautiful punk scene. That's why I write for *Razorcake*. These words are my weapons against oppression. I don't just want to write this column, I have to. The Blonde Dickbags that pull girls' hair have to be punished. The

Maryanna-Bananas of the world will not win. They must answer for their actions. I will fucking make sure of it.

My tooth is still broken, though.

—Donna Ramone



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

Mexico City
kicked my ass.

Lost in El Chopo

Searching for Punk in the Sinking City

We went on a whim. Flights were cheap, hotel points covered the cost of the room, and the dollar was strong. When a new border crossing opened between San Diego and Tijuana—a bridge that deposits travelers *inside* the airport—it felt like the hand of fate was pushing my wife and me toward Mexico City. So off we went.

I've always been afraid of Mexico City. With a population of twenty-one million souls, it's the largest city in the Western Hemisphere. It wasn't the stories of corruption and crime that had me scared. It wasn't my poor Spanish and worse sense of direction that made me nervous; it was the vastness of the place. I'd been to Mexico City once before on a layover to Oaxaca. I'd taken Dramamine to prepare for our terrifying bus ride over the mountains. When our plane approached the city I was disoriented and out of it. Looking out the window, I was overwhelmed by the scale of the city, its red and orange lights flickering through the smog-like primitive fires. I drifted off to sleep and when I woke up we were *still flying over the city*. I felt like I'd entered some dream state, silently floating over a city with no end.

In Mexico City I had three guides: my wife Nuvia, who had been to Mexico City many times and speaks fluent Spanish; our friend Pepe, who lives in Cuauhtémoc, just a few blocks from our hotel; and *Down and Out in Mexico City* by Daniel Hernandez, a book of essays about the "Aztec metropolis in the 21st century."

Daniel had participated in Vermin on the Mount, my reading series, so I was familiar with his work. Last year in San Diego, I got a tattoo from Daniel's brother Sergio. Daniel was working for Vice Mexico City and has done amazing stories about the forty-three teachers from Iguala who were disappeared and El Chopo's exploits in the drug trade. When I reached out to him, he had just relocated to Los Angeles.

Pepe is an avid motorcyclist and used to manage a tattoo parlor in Mexico City. He would make frequent trips to San Diego to purchase motorcycle parts and tattoo supplies because the mail in Mexico is so unreliable. He combined our wedding in Baja with one of these trips. Pepe was recovering from a motorcycle accident and was on government disability. All but fully recovered, he was happy to show us around town.

My wife and I have very different approaches to travel. When I get to a new place, I like to walk around until I find someplace—a café, restaurant, or even a bench in the square—where I can sit and watch the world go by. Nuvia likes to be on the move: walking, driving, riding buses and metro cars, constantly going from one place to the next. Museums, markets, galleries, and shops. I like to do these things, too, just not all at once. She is a speedboat and I am an anchor.

But there was one place I wanted to go in Mexico City. I wanted to go to Tianguis Cultural del Chopo a.k.a. El Chopo a.k.a. the punk rock flea market. I'd seen videos about the place and had read about it in Hernandez's book. When I told Pepe I wanted to go there, he smiled as if I'd uncovered a secret.

"I can take you there," he said.

Suddenly, I wasn't sure I wanted to go.

El Chopo is only open on Saturdays, which gave us plenty of time to explore this amazing place. Mexico City has to be the unlikeliest population center in the world. It was built in the early fourteenth century on an island in a shallow lake on a plateau high up in the mountains, surrounded by volcanoes. As the city grew in size, the inhabitants used up more of the lake, creating manmade islands where they grew corn. As the population exploded, the lake dried up and the city expanded. The Aztecs built huge temples, which almost immediately began to sink in the loose soil. When the Spanish came, they built their churches on top of the existing structures; a trend that's repeated for generations. As a result of the soft soil, frequent flooding, and the occasional earthquake, very few of the buildings are true. Some tilt to the left or right while others lean precariously forward. I didn't notice this phenomenon until I took a photograph in the Zocalo and realized the buildings slanted crazily across the skyline. Then I noticed it everywhere: gaps between buildings, uneven sidewalks, structures that looked like they were ready to topple over. It was extremely disorienting.

Then there's the elevation. Mexico's City elevation is 7,382 feet—over a mile and a half—and that's just the valley. The surrounding volcanoes soar even higher, making it easy to forget how high up you are—until you start moving around in the thin air. Unfortunately, the surrounding

mountains trap the smog created by industry, pollution, and the exhaust from four million automobiles. Although the government has attacked the problem and made great strides in reducing smog and implementing green alternatives that would be considered radical in the United States, the smog can still be pretty intense.

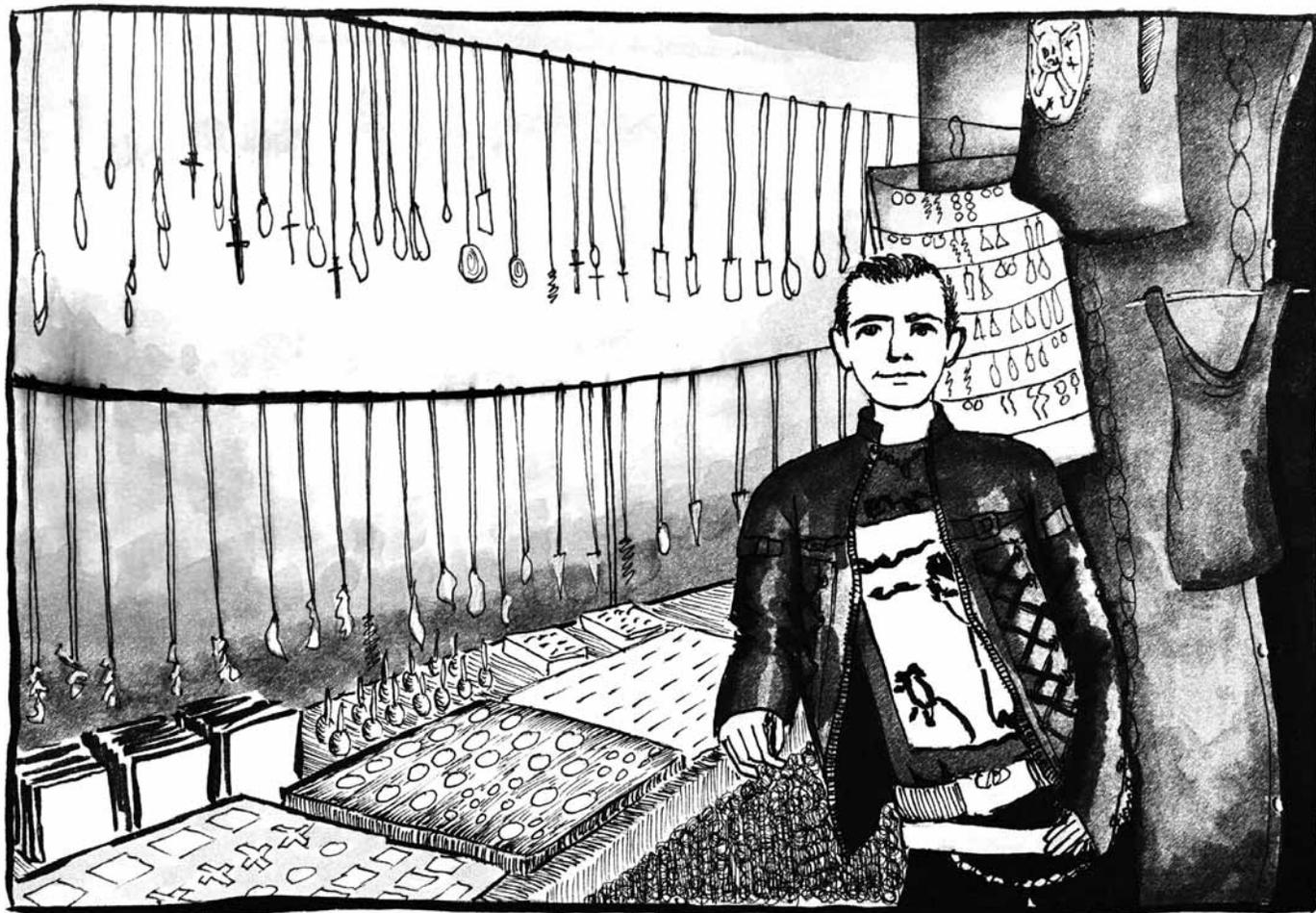
On one of the days we were there the smog reached emergency levels. When we woke up in our hotel that morning we couldn't see more than a few hundred feet. The weather report for Mexico City on my iPhone read, "Smoke."

I consider myself a hardy traveler. I have a strong stomach and adjust well to extreme temperatures. Even though my people come from the boglands of Ireland, I do well in the high humidity of the jungle—and during my time in the Navy I never once got seasick—but Mexico City kicked my ass. The combination of the elevation and the smog did a number on me. Headaches, low energy, dry mouth and, worst of all, shortness of breath made it hard to get around. In his book, Daniel Hernandez wrote that in order to survive and thrive in Mexico City, you have to be a mutant. After a week in the sinking city, I was inclined to agree.

To get to El Chopo we took the metro to the Insurgentes station and then took a cab (one of the few times we didn't use Uber to get around). The market is located on a pedestrian street with stalls that form a narrow pair of rows with merchants on either side of each corridor.

As we made our approach, a drug dealer made his pitch. I didn't catch what he was selling; I was preoccupied by the police officer ten feet away. I pulled Nuvia closer so I could discretely ask her what he had said when the guy called out, "Don't worry, I won't take her!"

I had envisioned something like a cross between a merch table at a punk show and a zine fair. The experience was closer to a swap meet where everyone wore black. The stalls were narrow but tall. Clothing vendors filled every inch of their space with T-shirts, jackets, shoes, and boots hanging from floor to ceiling. I'm always impressed by the hustle of the Mexican entrepreneur, but there was something heartening about seeing vendors hawk hardcore patches and punk T-shirts with the same understated yet indefatigable spirit as the lady who sells tamales out of a



BECKY RODRIGUEZ | INK-SKETCH.TUMBLR.COM

Even though I was bummed that almost no one was selling records, it was nice to know that Mercyful Fate's entire catalog was available for just a few pesos.

cooler on the street outside the panadería, even if much of the merchandise was the same and virtually all of it was bootleg.

It was a little jarring to see punk and hardcore share the same space as death metal and thrash. Punk and metal seemed confusingly synonymous at El Chopo, like going back in time to when crossover was the way forward. I was surprised by how little contemporary punk rock music was available, though I shouldn't have been given how unreliable the mail is. Still, I was shocked by the depth of the selection of what was available. If the record was released in the 1980s it was in stock, and by record I mean CD, and by CD I mean bootleg, oftentimes burned on the spot and slipped into a plastic sleeve with a color photocopy over the cover. I was stunned to see multiple stalls with music and merchandise featuring Sacred Reich, a little-known metal band out of

Phoenix, Ariz., whose sole claim to fame was they used to open for Flotsam And Jetsam, Jason Newsted's band before he decamped for Metallica to replace the late Cliff Burton (don't ask me how I know this). Even though I was bummed that almost no one was selling records, it was nice to know that Mercyful Fate's entire catalog was available for just a few pesos.

I asked Pepe what he thought of El Chopo; you can probably guess what he said: "It didn't used to be like this. It's changed."

At the end of the street, where the stalls gave way to a jugo stall, I got a glimpse of "the way it used to be": some old anarcho punks had set their political scribbings in photocopied zines down on the sidewalk. They leaned on the wall with a defeated air, like they had just been told their bus broke down and it would be hours before another one arrived.

We went down the street via another corridor but it was virtually the same as the first. Same T-shirts. Same CDs. I bought a Donna Summer 7", some old Conan comic books in Spanish, and an amazing King Diamond scarf.

It was kind of a disappointing visit, but my approach was all wrong. I went to El Chopo as a tourist, a consumer. My mindset was "What does this place have for me?" That's not the true spirit of El Chopo. Next time I go to Mexico City I'll come back to El Chopo as an emissary from California. I'll bring a binder full of CDs of underground punk and as many issues of *Razorcake* as I can carry. I'll hang out with the old anarchists at the end of the alley, speak high school Spanish, and drag an oxygen tank; another punk rock mutant in the Aztec mega city.

—Jim Ruland

MY SEVENTY-FOURTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

WEIRD/GROSS SHIT I HAVE EATEN

ONCE AT A PUNK FEST I FOUND A SLICE OF PIZZA LYING FACE-DOWN ON THE STREET. I ATE IT.



ANOTHER TIME, AFTER A PUNK FEST WHILE I WAS CLEANING MY HOUSE I FOUND A CHEESE-BURGER UNDER THE COUCH. I ATE IT.



IN 1998 I WAS TRIPPING ON LSD AND I ATE TWO STICKS I FOUND ON THE GROUND.



SPEAKING OF NON-FOOD ITEMS, WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER I HAD A HABIT OF EATING HOT GLUE.



I ALSO ONCE HAD TO EAT A BAG OF WEED WHEN I GOT PULLED OVER BY A COP.



I'VE EATEN TONS OF GROSS SHIT WHILE STONED. MY FAVORITE IS THE PEANUT BUTTER AND PICKLE TACO.



ALSO I COOKED A PACK OF RAMEN IN AN OLD UNFINISHED 40 OF MALT LIQUOR.



I FOUND A CHOCOLATE XMAS ADVENT CALENDAR IN A TRASH CAN. I ATE IT. IT WAS MARCH.



I ONCE ATE A QUINOA AND KALE SALAD. IT WAS THE GROSSEST THING ON THIS LIST.

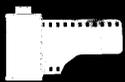


OH YEAH AND ONCE I ATE AN ENTIRE BOX OF DOG TREATS.



BON APPETIT!

AND REMEMBER WHAT THE CRAMPS SAID, "DON'T EAT STUFF OFF THE SIDEWALK!"



Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

Japanther crowd, Long Beach, CA



**Who cares
how I got
the job?**

Moneytalks

You could tell who the new hires were because they were exceptionally attractive but in an attainable, Southern way like people shopping for homes and using the phrase “curb appeal” on HGTV. There was something in their features—their blonde streaked hair, their Lycra dress pants—where you could tell they’d probably get excited over a walk-in closet or LG washer-dryer combo.

The nags and bitties had to have been grandfathered in. Their posture suggested a lifetime of sedentary office work, and there was no way the gross, all-male management team would have hired them on purpose. There was a clear divide during the one office birthday I attended. The new crowd sang with gusto, as though they had all been recruited at once at an Applebee’s job fair. The older women hung back, singing low or not at all, their voices joining together and sounding like a recording of Paul Robeson doing “The Birthday Song.” I did not sing and instead stayed toward the outside of the circle with Blaze, the other trucker I worked with once who mostly talked about his dream of growing legal weed while we drove from one economically depressed Texas town to the next.

It was obvious I did not fit into the hiring trend, that there had been some hiccup in decision-making that led the managers to let me “on board,” so to speak. David told the other managers I was a friend of the family who was having a rough time finding a job after moving to Texas. The naked truth was a lot simpler when you stripped it down.

This is really my life, I thought, standing in front of the doorbell. I am doing this right now, and this is really my life. I pressed the glowing doorbell, heard a ringing somewhere inside, and waited.

The door swung open. A man answered. He was in his mid-thirties, attractive in a “fit dad who winks at the barista who remembers how he likes his morning latte” sort of way.

“I’m here to clean your house,” I said, starting to laugh as the words committed themselves to reality. “And you must be David!”

David was wearing mesh shorts and the kind of musky cologne misguided men think will increase their chances with women due

to latent Neanderthal sexual instincts. “I am,” he said, breaking into a nervous laugh. “And you’re Cassie. And this is my apartment.”

The apartment was already pretty clean. Nothing outrageously dirty except a few dishes in the sink. “How about I start with the dishes?”

David took a seat at the dining room table. He nodded, giggling, and put his head in his hands.

“Well, here goes nothing.” I unbuttoned my shirt. Then my cut-off jean shorts. Then kicked off my grubby Converse. Then came everything else, and I put on yellow rubber gloves to start the dishes.

David sat at the table, open-mouthed. This was already five-hundred times more awkward than I thought it would be, but, as a lifelong introvert, I had adapted to making it seem like I knew what I was doing at all times even when I was dying inside.

“So, David. Tell me what you do for money and what you do for fun.”

“Um, I work for a marketing company.”

“That sounds terribly boring. Tell me more.”

“It is boring. It really sucks.”

“Why do you do it then?”

“It’s a living, and I haven’t figured out yet what I’m supposed to be doing with my life.”

“Hmm.” I put a pan in the dish rack and picked up a plate. *Awkward self-reflective pause. Time for a question, Cassie.* “What was the first concert you ever went to?”

“My brother took me to see Van Halen in 1984.”

“That was a good year for them.” Sometimes I like to play the game Frame of Reference when I am around people older than me. This is where I compare whatever I was doing at a given time to what the people around me were doing. In 1984, I turned two and the family dog was hit by a car. My dad buried it in the backyard and my grandfather grew vegetables over its body. In 1984, I ate Dead German Shepherd Potatoes, and to this day, I can’t look at certain vegetables without retching. Meanwhile, in a stadium two thousand miles away, a teenage boy pumps his fist to “Jump,” not knowing he will one day hire a nude girl to Windex his flat-screen TV.

I eventually finished the dishes and moved onto the living room, dusting the

giant television and folding a Southwestern-themed blanket over the back of the couch.

“What do you do?” David asked, sitting on the arm of the white leather loveseat.

“I make comics. I guess—I mean, I only really just started doing that. I write. That’s my primary thing. And I karaoke. I’m actually not really sure what I do. I’m just seeing what sticks at this point.”

“So you don’t have a job?” So far, in addition to selling off my books, CDs, and plasma while sending a hundred resumes into the ether, I had tried waitressing, temp work, tutoring, and being a clerk at a video store.

“I haven’t found one that suits me yet, I guess.” I picked up a statue on the television stand and blew the dust off of it.

“Why don’t you just find an office job?”

“That sort of thing makes me nauseous just to think about it. First of all, I only really have two sets of work-appropriate clothing. Second of all, having tattoos on your arms and working in an office is like trying to live a double life. It’s more trouble than it’s worth. Trust me.”

“Why are you doing this, then?”

“I moved here with only a thousand dollars, which, in hindsight, was probably not enough money. Rent is due in a week, and this seemed like the easiest thing I could do that wouldn’t involve purchasing more cheap office clothing.” I paused, looking at the clock on the wall. The half hour was almost up. “Why are *you* doing this?”

“I just needed someone to clean my apartment.”

When I left, David offered to make copies of my comic, which I had been photocopying for free at my part-time tutoring job, but the office manager was starting to get wise to the missing paper since I got greedy and made four hundred copies. A few days later, I was being reprimanded at work for my questionable use of the photocopy facilities when David left a message. His company could pay me fifty dollars to update their blog every week. This involved the use of motivational upbeat corporate speak—the sort of thing I could rattle off in my sleep but could never actually take seriously, like saying the Pledge of Allegiance at a sporting event. Count me in, I guess.

A week later, David called again. “Do you want a job?”



STEVE THUESON

In a stadium two thousand miles away,
a teenage boy pumps his fist to “Jump,”
not knowing he will one day hire a nude girl
to Windex his flat-screen TV.

I was making rice in my roommate’s complicated Japanese rice cooker. I had somehow managed to set it on fire, something I did not know was possible. “Uh, it depends. What am I doing?”

“It’s like a legit job. Basically, you’ll be out of the office most of the time.”

“Yeah, but what am I doing?” I was using a spatula to scrape blackened rice out of the bottom of the probably-expensive device.

“Measuring road ramps.”

I held the phone between my chin and shoulder, fanning the hair-burning fumes with my free hand. “No way!”

“I’m serious. You get a company truck and everything.”

My parents, for the longest time, had been pressuring me to get a “good union job.” I did have teamster fantasies, and lunch lady fantasies, and bus driver fantasies,

but only when there was nothing around to read except the classified section of the *PennySaver* and they were usually fleeting. This was opportunity knocking.

Who cares how I got the job?

—Cassie J. Snieder

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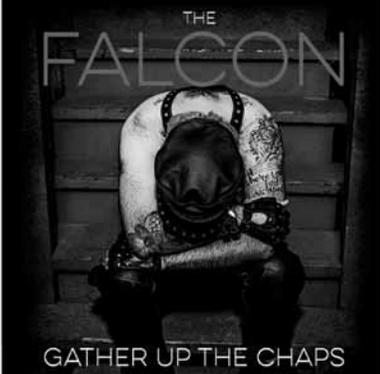
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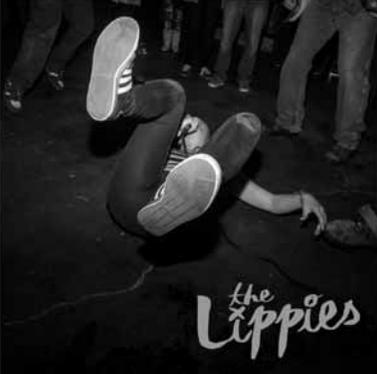
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It was at a dinner in Boston earlier this month that Tidd Taylor from this very magazine offered a possible solution to my cat Dracula's anxiety.

My friends have a cat with anxiety and they started putting him in a harness. It really helped.



It jogged my memory that Thundershirts were created to soothe pet anxiety, but would Dracula really wear one?

Remembering when I tried to put him in a Halloween costume

I think he's trying to disappear into himself!

Vampire cape. Get it?

Good.



Well, it turned out that my upstairs neighbor had a Thundershirt that his cat wasn't using, so...

It's worth a shot!

How does it work?

uh oh



Let's see, just velcro this under here, and...

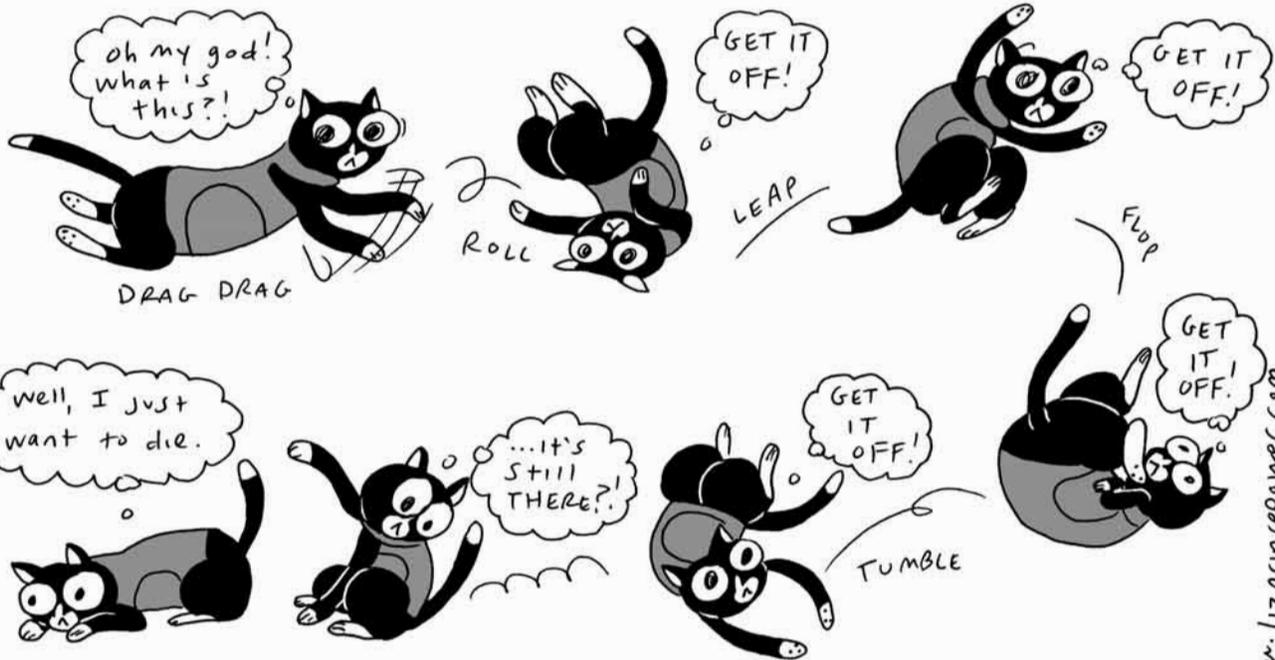
WTF?



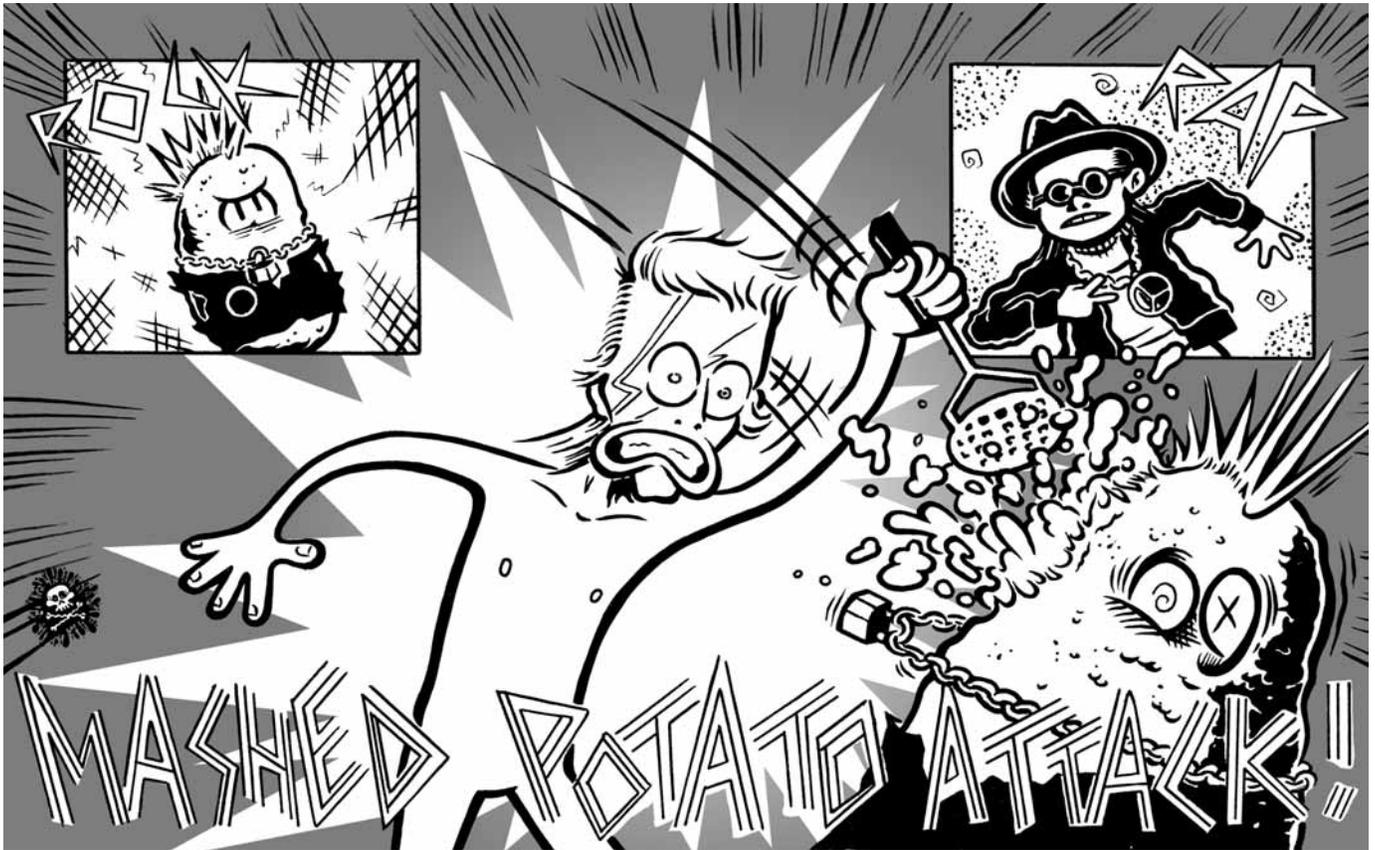
ZOOM



I had read up about it online beforehand, and apparently if a cat isn't used to wearing a shirt, it can make them think their legs don't work.



OK, so it doesn't seem like the Thundershirt is going to ease Dracula's anxiety, but I'm certainly holding onto it for when I need a laugh on a shitty day, because that was HILARIOUS.



ALEX BARRETT

Basically, the vibe on the street was that no one would have ever gotten their shit together if it wasn't for David Bowie, ever.

selling David Bowie short here. Now sure, legendarily leather-lunged rock preacher Bunker Hill said, "One potato two potato three potato four" in the song "Hide and Go Seek, Part I," right before he said, "if you hide behind my pie, I'm gonna hit you right in the eye"—and the Easybeats said, "one potato two for three potato four, Jerry Lee is gonna come knocking at your door," and they had Malcolm and Angus Young's big brother in their band, so you'd figure they knew their shit—and Derek, whomever the fuck he was, sang, "one potato two potato three potato four, let me in, Cinnamon, I want more"—and then, in a radical act of tuber fury, Derek doubled mankind's base of potato knowledge with, "five potato six potato seven potato eight, let me in, Cinnamon, I can't wait." PEOPLE COUNT IN POTATOES. Without potatoes to count to keep a beat, we'd all be playing free-form jazz! But, hey! Sometimes people sing about David Bowie, too! Like, uh, in "Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)" by Paul Revere & The Raiders, they sing "they took away our way of life, the tomahawk and the BOWIE knife," so, y'know, that's something.

Yet, I'll see your horrible Paul Revere & The Raiders song, and raise you Teenage Head singing about, "She's my Lucy Potato, she's that girl I gotta date," and Devo singing, "I'm just a spudboy, looking for a real tomato." And, what the hell, I'll raise you Dee Dee Sharp singing about "Mashed Potato Time." POTATOES ARE AN ENTIRE HISTORICAL EPOCH!!! And what does David Bowie sing? "Time won't change me, but I can't change time." *And why can't he change time???* BECAUSE IT'S MADE OF FUCKING MASHED POTATOES!!! And what did Dee Dee Ramone, DBA "Dee Dee King" say? He said, and I quote, "it's time to ROCK, it's time to RAP, it's time for the MASHED POTATO ATTACK!" That's right! An ATTACK! The mashed potatoes are on the OFFENSIVE! Attacking is punk!!! Meanwhile, what's David Bowie doing? He's asking, "so where were the Spiders, while the Fly tried to break our balls?" THE TIME STREAM IS COMPOSED OF MASHED POTATOES, AND IT IS ON THE ATTACK, and meanwhile Bowie is waiting for someone to help him prevent his testicles from being crushed by a housefly!!! Now, you might be

thinking, "Well, maybe it's a really super-huge fly, right?" NO! SUPER-HUGE FLIES CANNOT EXIST!!! Strength is determined by the cross-sectional area of your muscles, essentially height times width. That's a two-dimensional measurement. Mass is determined by height times width times depth. That's a three-dimensional measurement. If you double in size, your strength squares, but *your mass cubes*. A super-huge fly would be crushed under his own bulk before he could even attempt to execute a piledriver on Bowie's tender gonads. DON'T BE SO FUCKING IMMATURE. THIS IS HOW PHYSICS WORKS. Ergo, David Bowie's balls must be almost microscopic in nature, since their structural integrity is threatened by the mass of a common housefly. Either that, or the fly in question is not an insect, BUT A ZIPPER. Thus, David Bowie could be yowling about how he, like teenaged Ben Stiller in *There's Something About Mary*, has his junk caught in his zipper. Was it the beans or the frank, David? Potatoes by a mile!

Spuds,
—Norb



Here stands
a rock'n'roll
icon.

Godspeed, Herr Kilmister

Over the past fifteen years of writing for *Razorcake*, I've paid more than a few respects to some of the most important artists in my lifetime. This included original Motörhead drummer Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor, who passed last November and was the focus of my last column. Then, on December 28, 2015, just forty-seven days after Taylor died, Motörhead's founder, frontman, and Marshall stack-burning bassist Lemmy Kilmister joined his old bandmate in the rock'n'roll afterlife. He had just turned seventy on Christmas Eve four days earlier, and forty (!) of his last years were consistently spent turning out some of the most influential records and hitting the road.

Health-wise, Lemmy had a rough couple of years, but besides canceling a couple shows last year, the Rickenbacker bass-wielding force of nature continued on with a fuck-all attitude of not going down without doing what he did best. He passed after finishing a leg of Motörhead's *Bad Magic* tour in Germany. What officially did Lemmy in was an aggressive strain of cancer that spread to his head and neck, in addition to complications with congestive heart failure and cardiac arrhythmia (he had a pacemaker installed back in 2013). Add all of that together with the diabetes he was dealing with for some time—not to mention the lifestyle he'd lived most of his life.

Lemmy was an animalistic rock'n'roll machine, but he was also one of the most genuine people in rock'n'roll who you could ever meet. He was well-read. He was also a sharp-witted guy with a sense of humor to match. He was most certainly one of the last of a dying breed. Fortunately, I've had a few opportunities over the years to spend a little time with him; we picked each other's brains about the music that shaped both our lives.

My buddy Sean and I got the chance to interview Lemmy after a Motörhead show in 2001 (*Razorcake* #6), and we were both stoked just for the chance to sit down and talk music, let alone interview him. After they played, Lemmy came out to the front of the venue and walked us back to the band's lounge area. He looked at the covers of a few *Razorcake* back issues I handed to him for future reading.

"Razorcake, eh?" he asked me as we walked back.

"Yeah, that's us, Lemmy," I replied.

"Is that like a prank you pull on a friend—a razor cake? You plant a razor into a bar of

soap and wait for him to wash his hands and face with it?" he asked, cracking a smile.

"Not exactly, but that sounds like a helluva prank." Both of us chuckled.

After we got done interviewing him, I wanted to ask Lemmy about a few of his favorite bands, starting with The Beatles, which I soon found out were his favorite group, *ever*. I already knew he was quite keen on Little Richard and Chuck Berry, but as bands went, The Beatles were the best.

"No kidding? The Beatles, eh? I always thought you'd lean a bit more towards The Rolling Stones," I asked.

"Because of their 'bad boy reputation'?" Lemmy replied, laughing. "You have to remember that The Beatles were all from the Liverpool area, which was about as rough-and-tumble a neighborhood you could grow up in at the time, a real hard dockworker town. The Stones—as great a band they turned out to be—were mostly college kids from London, you see."

"I'll be damned," I replied, "I had no clue about Liverpool being that much of a fisticuffs-type of neighborhood."

"Yeah, The Beatles songwriting was far better than anything happening at the time, including The Stones, but they always had street credibility, as well," Lemmy said.

"Well, all I *do* know is that they both cut their teeth playing Chuck Berry songs!" I said. Both of us agreed wholeheartedly.

I then turned the conversation topic to the Ramones. I always knew over the years just how big a fan Lemmy was from his interviews. He always stressed just how important a band the Ramones were. He even wrote "*R.A.M.O.N.E.S.*," a one minute and twenty-five second song dedication to the band included on Motörhead's raucous *1916* LP released in 1991. When the Ramones played their last show ever here in Los Angeles in 1996, Lemmy was one of their special guests and joined the band onstage to play that tune with 'em. A year later, a box set (*We're Outta Here!*) was released that included a VHS tape of the show, a CD, and a booklet with personal inscriptions from the band members, including one from Lemmy: "*The Ramones were special. That's why I wrote a song for them. They were better than they knew. Don't forget them.*"

Sporting a Ramones tour shirt the night of our interview, I let him know just how much they meant to me and commented on the part of his inscription that struck a chord with me.

"That part you wrote about the Ramones understanding the bones and soul of rock'n'roll—you obviously get what they were all about," I said. "I've always said that they were one of the best rock'n'roll bands out of this country and beyond. And the other part of you saying that they were better than they knew—fuckin' a, they were anything but a dumb joke band!"

"The Ramones were smart," Lemmy replied, "They were a band that went beyond what you saw on the surface. Those songs and lyrics, no one has even come close. There won't be another like them."

To which I said, "It's like Seymour Stein of Sire Records said, Lemmy. 'Bands like the Ramones don't come around once in a lifetime. They come around *once*.'"

He just looked straight at me, pointed to my shirt, and said, "See, you fucking get it, too!"

I had gotten my hands on a double LP gatefold of *We're Outta Here!* that Empty Records in Germany licensed a while back, complete with the graphics of the booklet spread across the inside gatefold in a Monopoly game board style. Bringing it with me to the interview, I opened it up right after we talked about his inscription and asked if he'd seen the vinyl version of it. I pointed to the picture of him onstage performing with the rest of the Ramones. The night of this interview was around six months after Joey Ramone had passed away.

He got real quiet as he looked at the picture with his inscription, "No, I don't believe I have this record version, no. That was some night. Did you go?"

"Me and three carloads of friends," I said. "I'm really glad I was able to be there."

"That makes two of us. Joey was a hell of a guy. One of the good ones," Lemmy replied. He picked up a Sharpie and wrote "To Dale + Joey" and autographed his picture. He handed it back to me, smiling. "That's better."

When that *Runaways* movie came out, I was lucky enough to go to the Hollywood premiere with my wife Yvonne, whose music publishing company handles the late Kim Fowley's publishing (Fowley put together the band and co-wrote some *Runaways* tunes). After we were seated, I noticed that girls kept coming up to the guy sitting directly in front of me. I asked Yvonne who the guy was and why he was getting mobbed by girls. It turned out he was the dude who played a werewolf in those *Twilight* movies, and he was



CODEY RICHARDS

Lemmy was an animalistic rock'n'roll machine, but he was also one of the most genuine people in rock'n'roll who you could ever meet.

obviously there because two of the women from the *Twilight* movies had main roles in this *Runaways* film. Great. Don't know and don't care. I told Yvonne that I wish they had seated us next to Lemmy instead of the GQ Wolf, 'cause I know he and Joan Jett are tight pals and he was sure to be there.

After the movie was over, there was a clusterfuck of paparazzi outside, swarming around the *Twilight*-related individuals getting into their respective car services. Not thirty feet away from the feeding frenzy, who was standing by the entrance smoking a cigarette? Yep. Lemmy and two of his pals, standing all by themselves and not a single person bothering him with a camera. We walked over to say hey, talked briefly about the movie, asked what he was up to in the studio, and how the road was treating him.

Walking back to our car, I told Yvonne that there's no justice in the Hollywood press. Here stands a rock'n'roll icon—a fucking *icon*—right across from you, but you're interested in getting a limo shot of a tweener vampire wiener? Boo, I say.

The last time I got to shoot the shit with Lemmy was when he was being interviewed for Adam Carolla's podcast, the show my homeboy Jeff used to produce. I drove down the road to Burbank that night and brought along a small plastic cartoon figure of Lemmy that some English artist had produced in limited quantities years ago. After showing it to him, I asked if he'd ever seen it. He said no, which was surprising, because most Motörhead fans know that Lemmy was a collector of many, many things

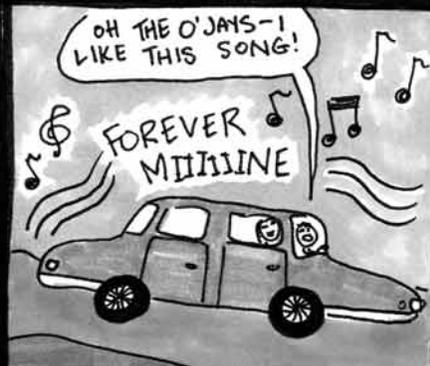
in that apartment of his. He then started fucking around and playing with it, and when a magazine photographer showed up to take a picture of him with people from the show, he hung it out of his front pocket to pose for pictures. Before he went into the studio I asked him to sign the back of it, and he was more than obliging. Before he handed it back, he held it up next to his face, mimicked the goofy face the figure has, and said, "Now you'll always know it's me."

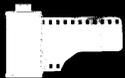
Godspeed, Herr Kilmister.

The world is most certainly a quieter place without you, but the impression you left will leave ears ringing until the end of time.

—Designated Dale

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ADD A SKULL DECAL TO YOUR BIKE.

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**The town may
be dry... but
its inhabitants
sure aren't!**

Dry Drunks

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to my town. I live in Ephraim, Wis. I know I've talked about my quaint little town before, but a recent development has brought Ephraim back front and center for further introspection. As I type this, Ephraim is still the only dry town in all of Wisconsin. Since the town was founded 163 years ago, they have never allowed alcohol sales of any kind within the village limits. For some regions of America, this may not seem too drastic. Ephraim, however, is within the wonderfully alcohol-soaked state of Wisconsin. The very existence of a dry community within the drunken-est state in the union, well that's particularly baffling. Some would say near impossible. Welcome to my town.

I've worked in Ephraim for more than ten years. I've lived here for the last five. Even before working or living here, I've lived nearby and have always known about this town's quirky dry status. It's always been an interesting conversation piece that usually leaves the tourist in disbelief. *A dry community in WISCONSIN? Impossible!* Honestly, though, it's really no big deal. If you really want a drink, one need only drive three minutes in any direction to the town line. Even when you are a beer-loving Rhythm Chicken, it rarely becomes a hindrance as long as you are prepared and well-stocked. Alcohol is not illegal in town; it merely cannot be sold in town. The village board does not issue a liquor license to anyone, period. Done. Dry town.

Five years ago I purchased a small building in Ephraim and opened up my soup shop. I now live in the shop's attic. Those who know me thought it odd I chose to locate my business and home in Wisconsin's *only* dry community. I never really gave it much thought. It's a beautiful little harbor town with plenty of tourist traffic and a cool, close-knit community of eclectic and interesting residents. Seeing as how I run errands in the nearby towns almost every day, I always make sure my cooler is well-stocked with Hammes or Blatz. I can't sell it, but I sure as heck can enjoy it myself and share it with my friends.

However, in recent months there has been a political movement shaking up our quiet village. A group of business owners have been petitioning to have a referendum among the registered voters to see if Ephraim should change this old law and allow the sale of fermented liquids. A lot of attention is suddenly falling on our little home. News crews from Green Bay, Madison, and

Milwaukee have interviewed some of our 288 residents. It's been front page news all over the state. Wisconsin's only dry town might finally give in and start selling the fire water. My soup shop, being the only restaurant open through the dead of winter, has become a hot spot for locals sharing their opinions on the subject. I keep my cans of Hammes in my old Razorcake coozie below the counter and out of sight when I voice my desire for the town to stay dry.

This brings us to the disjointed yet parallel topics for today's column: my top five reasons for keeping Ephraim a dry town and my top five favorite drummers I've ever seen live!

Reason and Drummer #1: Forbidden Fruit and Bill Stevenson

Seriously, Blatz has never tasted as good as it does when you're sneaking tasty gulps in Wisconsin's only dry town. Only in Ephraim is a can of Hammes seen as forbidden fruit. It just feels naughtier when I hide a Blatz fifteen-pack in the back of the cooler. On hot summer days, I conceal a few cans with paper wrappers and write "Ephraim Juice" on them before delivering them to my friends in the nearby coffee shop. The risk factor really makes you feel like you're getting away with something, defying the local prohibition.

I've seen the Descendents and All many, many times in my life. Watching Bill drum has always been a show in and of itself. His particular style is difficult to explain. He plays very hard and very exact. He also accentuates his delivery—which is one of an almost over-exaggerated confidence—but he's Bill Stevenson and he gets away with it because he's practically flawless. His rapid-fire snare rolls have always left my jaw on the floor.

Reason and Drummer #2: Historic Tradition and Peter Moffet

Ephraim began as a church settlement for the Moravian congregation who fled Green Bay and its sinful ways. For 163 years now, it has been a dry town. Long after the town outgrew its Moravian church influence, it honored its historic beginnings and stayed dry. Everyone up here knows that Ephraim is the little picturesque town stuck in a time warp, a window to the late 1800s. No bars, no neon lights, and strict control over new development. It all makes this a unique and quiet retreat, a place to escape from the hectic real world outside the village limits. I find it blindly disgraceful to throw away that 163-year-old tradition so a few business owners can make a couple extra bucks.

I only saw Government Issue perform once. It was at Kutska's Hall on the outskirts of Green Bay in 1988. I was already a huge fan of their previous album *You*, and had just acquired *Crash*, their latest. Both albums were graced by the rock drumming genius of one Mr. Peter Moffet. By listening to these recordings, I knew he was a solid skin-beater. (I still air drum to the albums to this very day.) My fellow drumming friend Paul and I sat on the side of the stage and just stared in disbelief. Peter was the human equivalent of Animal from *The Muppet Show*. Years later, he became the drummer for Burning Airlines and his drumming became more progressive, less Animal-like. Even many more years later, I ran into him backstage at a Bon Jovi concert in Las Vegas. It's a long story.

Reason and Drummer #3: Hindsight is 20/20 and Dave Grohl

Okay, let's just say this upcoming election decides Ephraim will overturn its dry law. The town will then blend into the rest of the state and soon be no different from any other tourist village up here. Years later, one might look back and remember when this town truly stood out as a unique little village, a village which stood up to convention and set itself apart from the rest of the state. Some might yearn for the old days when Ephraim had its own strong identity, its own distinct character. Would the town ever be able to return to the days of earlier dry times? I highly doubt it. I fear it's only a one-way street across the dry/wet line.

I believe it was also in 1988 when Scream from Washington D.C. played at Kutska's Hall. Again, my friend Paul and I were on the side of the stage checking out their drummer. This guy had a wiry frame and wild, stringy bleach blond hair. When he drummed, it was hard to believe that such intensely loud, solid rock was coming from such a skinny guy. He drummed with some rhythmic tricks we'd never seen before and it almost seemed like a type of drumming magic show. Paul and I spoke with him after the show and asked him how he did certain beats with only two hands. He laughed and tried showing us, but it was no use. Then he went on to be in two huge mainstream bands. Now you see him interviewed in almost every rock music documentary. I almost can't believe it's the same skinny guy.

Reason and Drummer #4: Dry Town Punk and Paul Ackerman

Once a year I throw an all-out punk rock show in my soup shop. The show itself is



BRAD BESHAW

The very existence of a dry community within the drunken-est state in the union, well that's particularly baffling. Some would say near impossible. Welcome to Ephraim.

really nothing too out of the ordinary. Some bands show up and play in my kitchen. Thirty to fifty people show up and cram into the shop. Some watch through the windows from the outside front deck. It's considered a private party and there is plenty of beer at hand for whoever wants it. This is not much different from any basement show or house show one may attend in Green Bay or Milwaukee, but this is Ephraim. Nowhere else in Wisconsin can you attend a punk rock show in a dry town. Everyone in attendance just *knows* it feels forbidden, and therefore more punk rock!

Paul Ackerman is my drumming friend from high school. He and I were the two main drummers in the high school concert band and jazz band. He was the more solid rock drummer. I tended to be more of the off-kilter, jazzy, weird drummer. Paul went on to play in a few hard-hitting Green Bay bands before he moved to Kansas City and drummed for the heavy mathrock trio Giants Chair. I will always be in awe of his

machine-like and loud-as-heck style. Giants Chair plays semi-regular reunion shows these days. If you are lucky enough to catch a gig, keep your eyes on the drummer and prepare to be floored.

Reason and Drummer #5: Contrast and... oh there's too many to pick from!

If Ephraim goes wet then the entire state of Wisconsin will all be the same, no exceptions. I prefer contrast. I enjoy that amongst the overwhelming alcohol-guzzling majority of this state, there is actually a tiny town that dares to be different. We flip the bird to all you who think the entire state should be littered with taverns! Now, within that contrast, one must also notice the recycling bins in this town usually have *double* the amount of booze empties than all the neighboring towns! The town may be dry... but its inhabitants sure aren't! Some locals might say that the county's biggest alcoholics are hiding in the one dry town. What better place to hide? But after this April election, the state's only hiding spot might be

no more. These could be the last months of Wisconsin's last and only dry community.

Other amazing drummers I've seen? Oh my goodness, where do I begin? I can't pick just five here. Dan Panic. Queeve Olejniczak. Todd Trainer. James Kimball. Jason Rodon. Jon Mueller. Shane Hochstetler. Jimmy Felix. Paul New. Erik Tunison. The list goes on and it's almost criminal to leave so many good ones out. I give up!

Dinghole Report #155: Quickest Ruckus Ever! (Rhythm Chicken unofficial sighting #700)

I was repairing my snare drum on the front deck last summer and my neighbor lady said, "Let's hear ya play that thang!" I hit the skin twice with my drumstick and then ran indoors. SHOW'S OVER FOLKS! And my back still hurts.

-Rhythm Chicken



RAZORCAKE FLASHBACK:

Shellshag



Shag (far right) after week-long softball camp in Tobyhanna, Pa. [1980]



Shell (center right) with Soul Patrol, his breakdancing group [1984]





“We thought we walked away unscathed, just to find we’re addicted to the way it was, the way it should be, the way it could be now...”

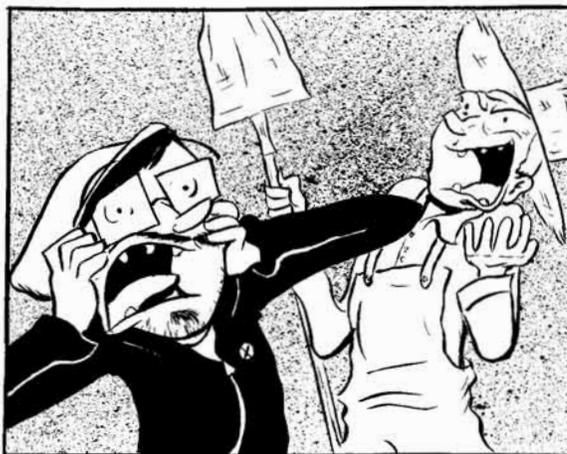
-Shellshag, “90’s Problem”
Why’d I Have To Get So High? LP [2015]

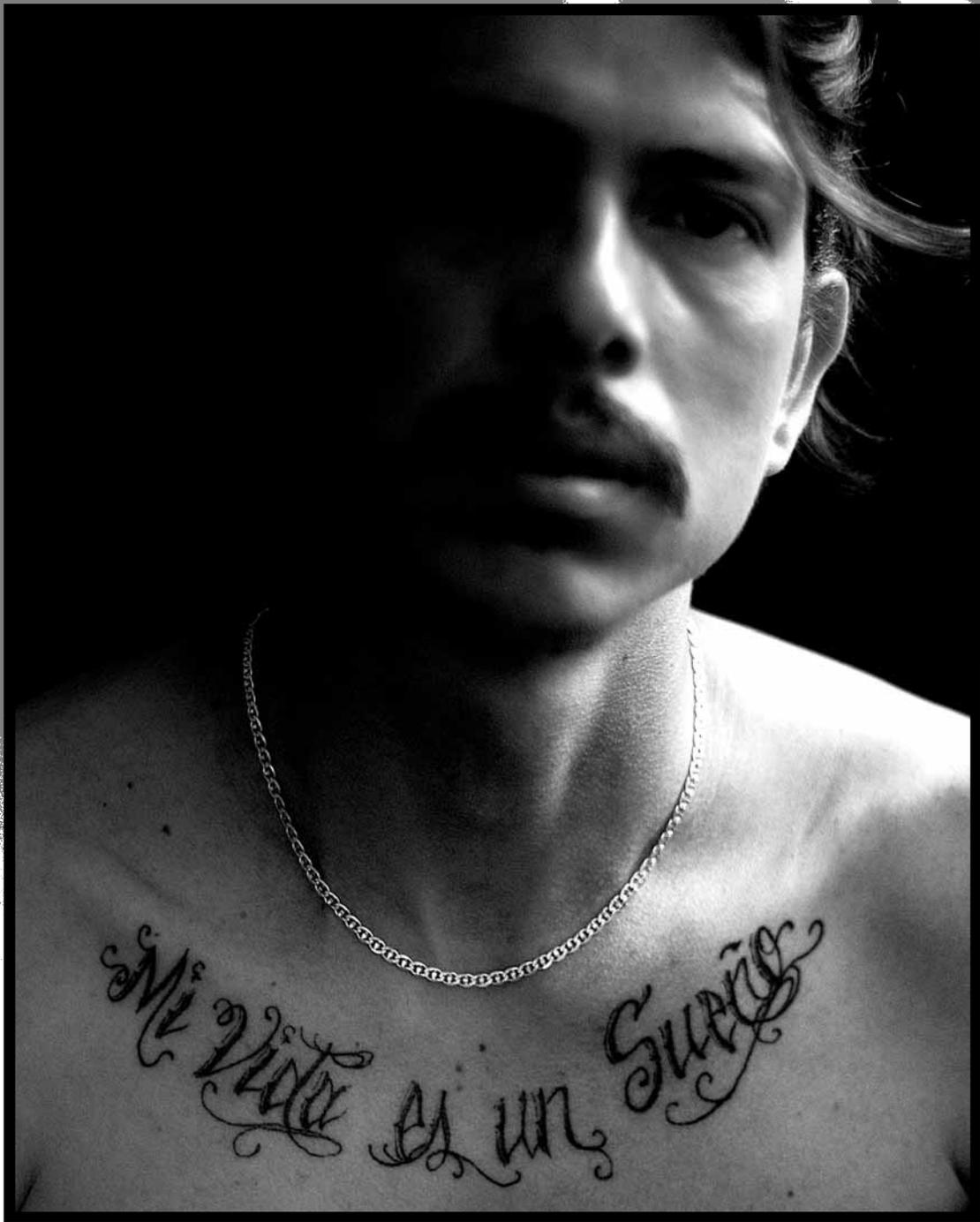
Top: Shell and Shag [2016]
Right: Shell and Shag [1997] - Photo by Vanessa Burt
Below: 50 Million (Shell left vocals, Shag on drums) [1998]



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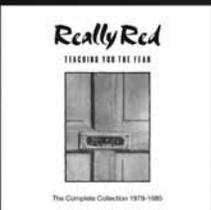
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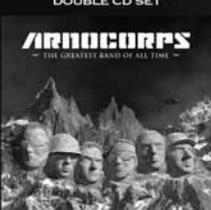
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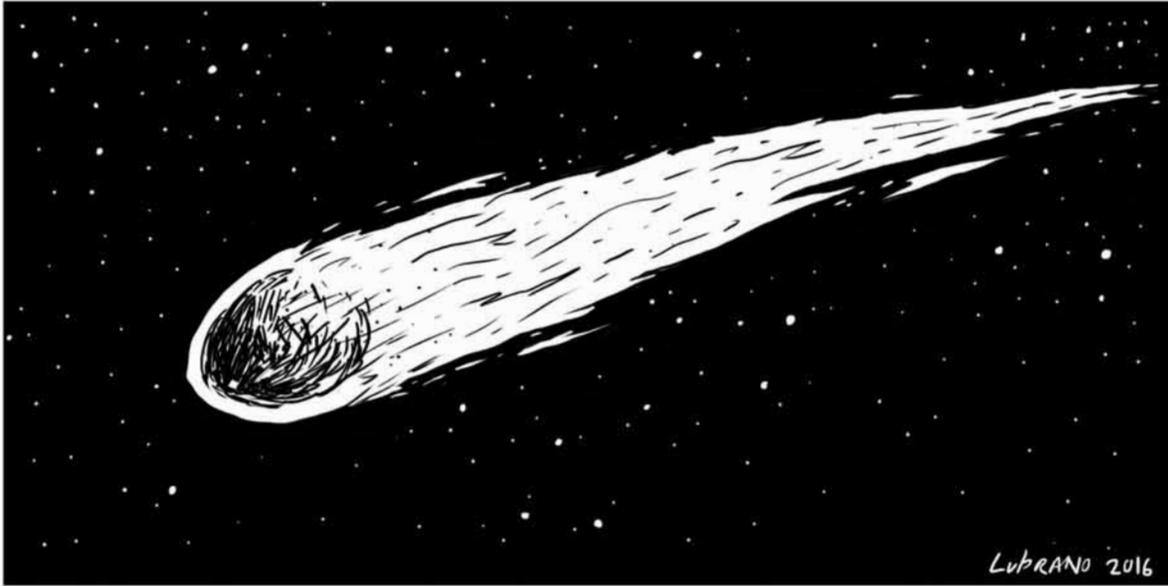
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Exploring the DIY state of mind

An Interview with Daniel Makagon



CLEANSING WAVE
Distant Castle // October 2015
[Dave Zukauskas]

Daniel Makagon is a breed of punkademic that blurs the line between fieldwork and theory, insider experience and meaningful observation, as well as sheer enthusiasm and critical perspective. Others have joined the fray by examining riot grrrls, straight-edge, and queer punk, but Makagon prefers to dig into punk spaces and rituals—the DIY vein forming an underground network of basement gigs, all-ages venues, and rented halls that have survived—even thrived—as the bar scene has stagnated. Schooled in communication studies, and teeming with an appreciation and keen eye for both performance and cultural studies, his new book *Underground: The Subterranean Culture of Punk House Shows* is an inclusive account of close-to-the ground democracy in action within the frenetic music communities that dot the ever-changing and tenuous American scenes. Straightforward, honest, and committed to his subjects, he offers a fresh gaze at the sociology, electrifying, cheap and youthful, and egalitarian and earnest.



RAD PAYOFF
'86 Mets // December 2014
[Patrick Houdek]

THE BROKEDOWNS
Lucky Gator Loft // August 2011
[Patrick Houdek]



Interview by David Ensminger

Photos by Patrick Houdek
& Dave Zukauskas

Layout by Madeline Bridenbaugh



THE COPYRIGHTS
 Lost Cross House // October 2011
 [Patrick Houdek]

David: The first theme I gather from your research is: DIY shows, whether at houses or oddball sites, tend to feel more authentic, intimate, and even a bit more dangerous—lighting fireworks in basements! In a world of Hot Topic and YouTube clips, do you think a quest for immediacy and intimacy will remain paramount to youth culture?

Daniel: It's funny because younger people seem to be comfortable with the kind of distance that comes from quick communication through relatively new technologies: texting, Twitter, image-based social media like Tumblr or Instagram. They appear to be more at ease with the lack of face-to-face social interaction that I personally need on a regular basis—and needed when I was younger. At the same time, punks go nuts at many DIY shows: hardcore shows will feature more aggressive dancing, but bands like Sheer Mag or CCTV have the whole room bouncing.

So, yeah, there seems to be a desire for some kind of intimate, embodied experience. With that said, Chicago—where I live and see shows regularly—is an older scene. Most shows tend to draw college-aged kids or punks in their twenties. I rarely see young kids at shows unless I'm going to see emo/screamo bands at a place called Gnarnia. That's the only space where I usually see parents dropping off and picking up their high school-aged kids. The scene here skews older and it's hard to say how the YouTube and Tumblr users will experience punk as an embodied alternative to the distance of screen time. I hope that there will be a balance: learn about new bands and connect with people in other scenes (a digital version of the old *Maximum Rock 'n' roll* personal ads) and then go see DIY shows to connect with local punks and support touring bands.

David: You note that shows also seem to be driven by market factors, like a lack of all-age venues. So, the gigs, especially house parties, seem to be about seizing space and reimagining space as fluid—domestic/cultural/musical melds together. Together with the movement towards “tiny houses,” are we witnessing the transformation of domesticity, a cultural trend redefining what it means to live in space?

Daniel: Yes and no. Younger folks have a long tradition of living together since such communal living can be cheaper, provide social outlets, and—if they see this approach as a reflection of a political act—the residents can work together on various types of projects. So, I don't know if current punk houses are that different from older frat

houses or dorm-style living in terms of rooming houses when it comes to how people share domestic space. The main difference is how the spaces are opened up to others, which I'll say more about in a second. The tiny houses seem to be a product of economic and environmental shifts—people striving to reduce costs and ecological footprints—but I don't really see those choices overlapping with punk houses. I say that because we would need to consider the space itself in terms of design: punk houses used for shows are often old, poorly insulated, perhaps filled with asbestos. The houses are the antithesis of green design. [Laughing]

Punk houses used for shows are often old, poorly insulated... the antithesis of green design.

With that said, houses that function as show spaces extend out, becoming more than a communal dwelling for people who live there. The spaces are somewhat public, messing with simple public-private dualisms. As I write in *Underground*, theorists who study public life from multiple disciplinary perspectives have been quick to indict the increasing use of private residences for social interactions as a problematic influence on the death of public spaces. But I think that house spaces show the flaws in this type of thinking: the house is open, a site to foster a local punk scene.

David: Speaking of space, you argue the internet flattens out a sense of time and place: many things across the spectrum of time and geography become immediately available regardless of where/when one is situated. Basement gig messages are monitored by local cops, too. This seems Orwellian, since info-mining can be monitored. Do you worry today's youth are never really underground or under the radar?

Daniel: The cops that have busted punk spaces in places like Boston and Denver seem to have done so for multiple reasons—concerns about tax bases, enforcement of sound ordinances, and mistaken beliefs that door donations are equivalent to ticket sales. These responses seem to be very different from some of the problems punks faced in the 1980s, when public officials equated punk with deviance.

My sense is that punk is less of a target today in the U.S.—in part because the music has been around long enough that mainstream people have a better sense of the music, in part because other genres of music might draw more concern—such as rap—and in part because officials seem to be focused on other types of social problems. House shows being busted or volunteer-run spaces having a hard time getting off the ground can be linked to punks being outside a system of protection for “legitimate” businesses. Other groups trying to do similar things—such as creating a community center—will likely face similar roadblocks if folks involved with the space don’t have contacts within local government. But I do agree that the rise of various new media tools has the effect of creating a system of monitoring. The closing of Boston show spaces and Mouth House in Denver have direct links to police monitoring social media sites.

David: You also mention the network of trust enabled by punk and the fanzine or internet network. But does this also spur a cultural “gray out,” in which the different scenes start melding into homogeneity? Like the former white belts, skinny pants, musical riffs, and now beards that migrate quickly, like weeds, along the same networks?

Daniel: I do think that social media provides tools so punks can see and hear how punk is done in other scenes. Models are offered for looking the part and doing punk in certain ways. As some of the folks that I interviewed told me, the weird differences from one scene to the next, which made touring so fun, have tended to be replaced with a kind of national homogeneity. At the same time, it seems to me that once the weird eclecticism of late-’70s punk was replaced by a more uniform sound and style of hardcore in the ’80s, punks were already starting to flatten out differences. Punks looked to photos in zines, *Flipside* videos, and relied on local stories to develop some sense of how local scenes compared to other scenes in the U.S. Many of the older punks that I interviewed for the book were explicit about various sources helping shape their sense of how a local scene should or should not function in the ’80s and early-’90s. *Decline of the Western Civilization* was one such touchstone.

David: You state house shows and basements shows offer an alternative to the prescribed behaviors present in local club circuits, yet I assume new or different sets of “normative” behaviors become incubated, meaning a new set of status quo behaviors and traits emerge at house parties. In such tight spaces, doesn’t the close-knit crowd dynamic simply intensify behavior expectations?

Daniel: Absolutely. Punk, like any other culture, adopts norms. There are patterns that develop in terms of how people exist together in a scene and by extension, in a space. DIY show spaces are locations to

Daniel: Not really. I’m not too worried about clubs or bars in general, which I know is kind of a dickish thing to say. But those spaces tend to have commitments other than DIY punk. If house spaces negatively impact business in a bar or club, the owners will just switch to another genre of music. Volunteer-run, all-ages spaces would be more of a concern for me but everyone I interviewed involved with all-ages spaces—1919 in Fort Worth, Flywheel in Northampton, Roboto in Pittsburgh, Charm City in Baltimore—talked about the importance of the volunteer-run spaces and the importance of house shows.

The reality is that most volunteer-run spaces book other types of independent events, for lack of a better term. For example, Flywheel might have a night where people are doing spoken word stuff. What happens if a touring band is coming through the same night and people want to see that band? The band plays a house. That house show doesn’t affect Flywheel if the spoken word artists aren’t the same crowd who goes to punk shows. Or maybe the band isn’t big enough to draw enough punks that might be needed to run the space that night and the energy will be better in a smaller space. There are a lot of issues that might influence where a band plays, but my sense is that in larger cities a scene can support different types of spaces without negatively impacting a stable, volunteer-run space. And smaller towns will likely stick with the community space as long as there



Cops have busted punk spaces in places like Boston and Denver for reasons that seem very different from problems punks faced in the 1980s.

learn how to do DIY punk. Sometimes this means something big from a socio-political perspective, such as chipping away at problematic inequities in mainstream culture. Sometimes this means how people act on an everyday basis, such as how to dress, to dance, to stand, to talk, and to relate with other punks. Sometimes the interactions among punks can positively model some feature of community or ways to challenge racism, sexism, heterosexism, et cetera. But DIY spaces can also become problematic clubhouses where people feel excluded from a clique standpoint—not part of the in-crowd—or excluded based on race, gender, sexuality, or sex.

David: One feature of the twenty-first century is the “sharing economy”—for instance, Airbnb allows people to rent rooms without being held to some local regulations, which agitates local proprietors of small motels. Do you worry that rampant house shows might eliminate/limit the existence of “legitimate” commercial or even alternative all-ages venues?

isn’t some kind of drama impacting the running of that space. For example, if the person running the space is an asshole then punks will take the shows elsewhere.

The issue you’re asking about has been part of the discourse here in Chicago for the past few years as various groups have tried to start a volunteer-run space. Some of the punks who have access to booking house shows think that a volunteer-run space isn’t needed; they are happier to just stay with houses. But I think that a volunteer-run space would be good for this city since most of the houses aren’t very stable or aren’t big enough or lose bands to some of the hipper bars that have age limits. The city is big enough that both types of spaces would work. And there are advantages and disadvantages to each type of space, as I write about in the book.

David: In some ways, as you note, DIY and punk are not the same thing even though their histories often entwine. You quote Tim Yohannan's (*MRR*) matrix of punk "independence": to summarize here, it is about conduct, not rhetoric; it is about separating from corporate and governmental control; and it is about class consciousness. The first two seem obvious with house/basement/DIY gigs. How do you envision the third? Do these spaces inherently help to foster/spur class-consciousness? That seems a bit unclear in the text.

having to give a cut to someone else, and there is a sense of this is "our" space.

Taken together, I view this list as an expression of an awareness of a political economy. Punks know what it means to enact an alternative economic model. This is one form of class consciousness. That specific house, for example, is then linked to other houses around the country by providing spaces for bands to play and punks to participate in DIY together. There is a calculated choice about doing music that differs greatly from mainstream economic models.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
Lucky Gator Loft // April 2011
[Patrick Houdek]



Daniel: I think that at the core of DIY is an unfolding awareness of what that "doing" means. Sometimes punks have no choice when it comes to doing shows: they can't put on a show anywhere else besides their house because bars or clubs will not do the shows or will not do all-ages shows, the community center wants nothing to do with punk, the veterans hall requires a deposit that is beyond what the show promoter can afford, et cetera. And sometimes the house is a calculated choice because one's house is a space of greater control: rent covers the living space so the show space is in effect free, decisions can be made about running a sober space versus having BYOB shows, donation prices can be set without

This is not a macro-vision of class consciousness, some grand revolution that will undermine capitalism as we know it, or economic exploitation. House shows do nothing to end wage disparities or environmentally problematic forms of production and distribution. House shows don't unite workers in Sacramento with workers in Boston. I don't have any problem with that. If punks want to link their efforts to macro-level transformation, great. But I don't see such connections as necessary for doing DIY. Instead, I'm proud of the ways that local punks have helped create a network that provides a model for people to be together in space that is driven by a quest for greater equality. Some spaces and

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I'd much rather see bands in a house than in a bar or club,
and I am almost always the oldest punk in the room.

SASS DRAGONS
'86 Mets // December 2014
[Patrick Houdek]



scenes do that better than others. Some spaces and scenes are learning how to do that better. And some spaces and scenes need work.

Going back to our discussion previously about punks learning about punk through mass media, my hope is that when punks read about queer fests, or efforts to enact safe show spaces where people can stand in front without getting clobbered, or using show spaces to share information about larger political issues, that such information can then become localized: "Wow, they've got a Black and Brown Punk Show fest in Chicago, I want to do that here," or, "I'm sick of dealing with a local park space not prioritizing our shows. I see that kids are doing house shows in their city, I'm going to do that." All of this is the kind of class consciousness that I think leads to doable action.

David: One of the issues you discuss is aging out: the fact that younger people tend to drawn to egalitarian, collective living while older people seek privacy. One concern I recently discussed with older punks is mixed feelings about someone forty-four years old entering spaces in which frenetic, free-wheeling, sometimes inebriated youth—sober houses don't seem to survive as much—are gathering. Do these youth-branded spaces inadvertently hinder inter-generational interaction?

Daniel: I'm going with a copout here again and say: yes and no. This is a hard one to answer because I don't have conversations with many punks who don't go to shows anymore. I don't know if someone would stop going to shows because they have an aversion to basement shows, or they think the shows are more chaotic than a show at a club and feel detached from such experiences. Most of the punks that I talk to regularly about this kind of stuff, people like you, they still go to DIY shows.

I'm sure there are older punks who have no interest in hanging out in a basement with people they don't really know. And I'm aware that there are a variety of hassles that come with basement shows that might lead older punks to think that they just don't want to fuck with these types of experiences: the space is too hot or too cold, it's hard to see, the sound might suck, people might be smoking cigarettes in the space making it hard to breathe,

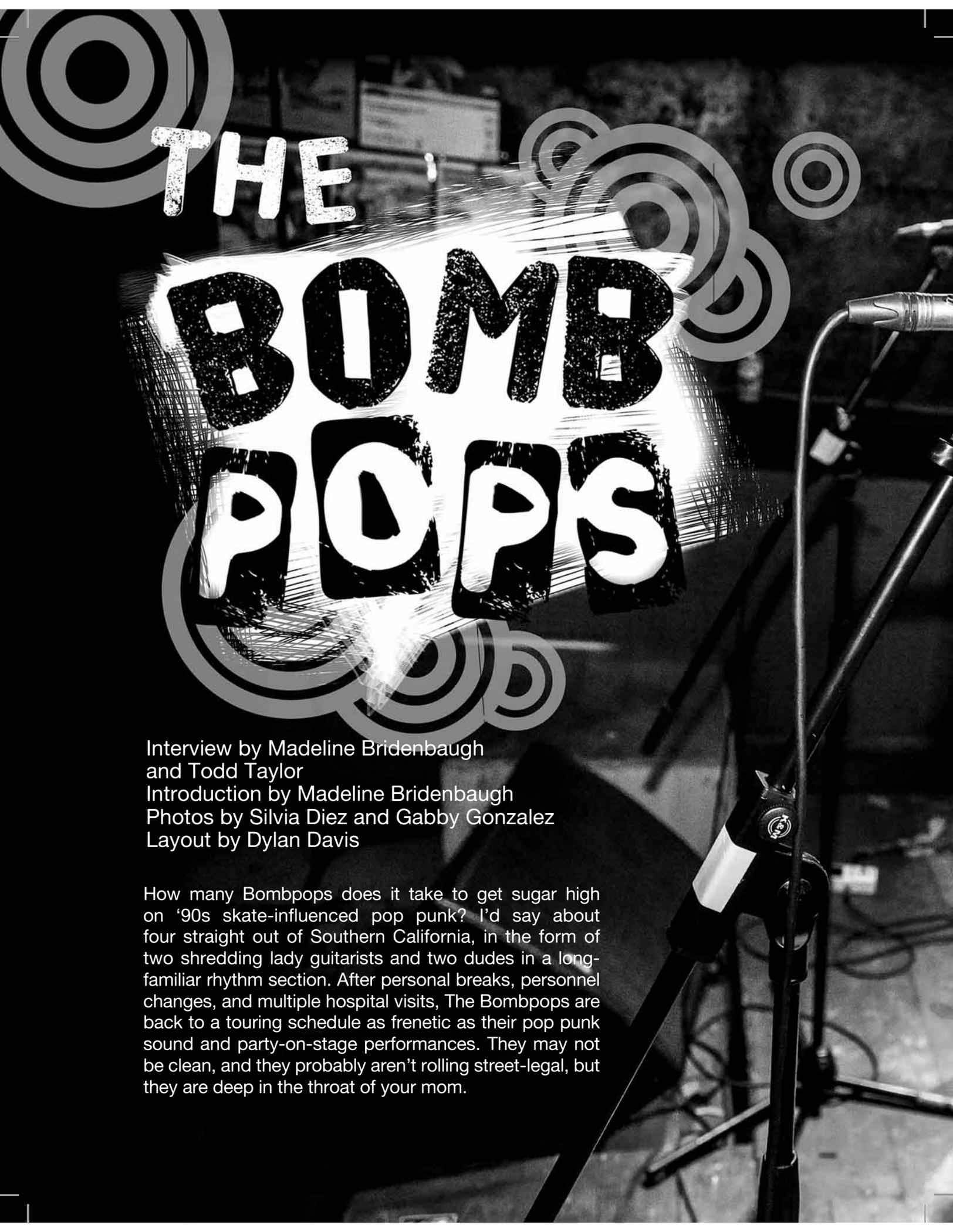
whatever. But I think that punks age out, as you say, for reasons that have less to do with not liking a house show experience and more to do with other things in their lives.

I think the biggest reason is time. When I have a good run, I might go to four or five shows in a month. But there might be a couple months in a row where I don't go to any shows. This has nothing to do with the bands, which I would love to see, or a problem with seeing bands in houses; rather, life gets in the way of life. I've got work to do, I've got family stuff to do, I've got friends in town who aren't interested in going to a basement show or who could care less about punk.

When I was twenty almost all of my friends were into music. We would go to the same shows and we hung out at the radio station where we worked. So my co-workers were also my friends who were part of a scene we shared. Now I have two or three co-workers who are into punk but we're all living different lives from one another, and different lives than the twenty-somethings that mostly make up the punk scene in Chicago. Those co-workers rarely go to DIY shows on their own.

Usually I'm initiating something. But I'm also lucky because I know where to look for shows and who to email or text if I don't have an address for a new space. Other punks might not be in the same boat. Once they start to drift away it becomes harder to get back in. If "ask a punk" is the norm in many cities for finding addresses to houses and a forty-year-old punk hasn't been to a show in a year, how are they going to find out where the house show is happening? Yet, they can certainly find out when the Copyrights are playing a local bar or Drive Like Jehu is playing Riot Fest—those shows are advertised.

So, I think the issues of time and awareness might be bigger factors that influence a lack of inter-generational interaction among punks. But again, I might be viewing this situation with blinders on because I'd much rather see bands in a house than in a bar or club, and I am almost always the oldest punk in the room ... my sense of these things might be skewed. [Laughing]



THE BOMB POPS

Interview by Madeline Bridenbaugh
and Todd Taylor
Introduction by Madeline Bridenbaugh
Photos by Silvia Diez and Gabby Gonzalez
Layout by Dylan Davis

How many Bombpops does it take to get sugar high on '90s skate-influenced pop punk? I'd say about four straight out of Southern California, in the form of two shredding lady guitarists and two dudes in a long-familiar rhythm section. After personal breaks, personnel changes, and multiple hospital visits, The Bombpops are back to a touring schedule as frenetic as their pop punk sound and party-on-stage performances. They may not be clean, and they probably aren't rolling street-legal, but they are deep in the throat of your mom.



JEN/GUITARIST, SINGER
POLI/GUITARIST, SINGER
JOSH/DRUMMER
NEIL/BASSIST

Todd: So, uh... bacon titties van.

[Jen laughs]

Neil: Ah, good old bacon titties. The memories.

Josh: The proper, full name is “Clifford, the Big Red Bacon-Tittied Ballsack.”

Poli: [to Josh] Nailed it! I just imagine bacon-flavored nipples. [Poli’s son Adler laughs in the background.]

Jen: Yeah, some guy made a bunch of random stickers. The other classic one is “On Your Bitch.” Really don’t know what they mean. Our old drummer Dylan got them and just—“Bacon Titties” was the one that went on the van.

Neil: We still get honks, though. That’s the best part. We’re like in mid-Texas and next thing you know....

Jen: One time we woke up in this city and there was a bright pink sticker on our bumper that said “I love cock” and we were so stoked on it! Like, “Who put that there?” And just as miraculously as it was there it was gone the next day, and we were so bummed! [Laughs]

Todd: So, Poli: you drank Fat Mike’s girlfriend’s... piss.

Poli: [Laughing] During the show we knew his girlfriend Soma, or fiancé now, just makes him a drink I guess and goes in the bathroom. And everyone knew it was happening, but just after the song or whatever he hands it to me. I just chugged it. [laughs] I mean, it was fine. It was probably all pretty much vodka in her piss anyway.

Madeline: But you guys haven’t had anything released on Fat Wreck?

Poli: No. We just hang around on the outskirts. But it’s cool to still be able to play with a lot of those bands. And we’re good friends with Kent Jamieson (tour manager).

Jen: He basically told us after a couple of the first shows, “You guys are just fun to be around. You just appreciate it and get so stoked on it, not jaded on any of it.” Then throughout the years we’ve just—through touring on our own and doing our own thing, becoming friends with other bands, like the Flatliners and Dead To Me.

Todd: Tell me if I’m wrong that you guys are channeling a lot of that mid-’90s...

Poli: You’re wrong! [laughter]

Neil: That’s definitely what we all grew up on.

Jen: That sound is what we, especially in the beginning, were kind of going after and those are the bands we love—No Use For A Name and Lagwagon and NOFX, really the ‘90s Southern California skate punk.

Todd: So do any of you skate?

Jen: Uh, Josh skates like an asshole. At every show just like, “Check me out! I am going to jump off a roof into a pool,” or “I’m going to go snowboarding and almost break my back.” Two days before we played with Anti-Flag.

Josh: My drum tech literally had to carry me off the stage after our set, I couldn’t even walk. It hurt really bad but I had duties to attend to, and it was my own dumb fault I was hurt so I had to play the show. But, yeah, I started skating when I was eight

years old. Neil and I grew up in the High Desert. Apple Valley, Victorville.

Jen: It’s like *The Hills Have Eyes*.

Madeline: You guys moved out here about ten years ago?

Josh: Yeah. I have known him since he was four years old. We grew up together and started playing music together in high school. It was pretty much over from there.

Todd: Let’s go to the origin, which would be... you two [points to Jen and Poli].

Jen: Poli and I met in like, a practice spot. When she was thirteen and I was nineteen.

Poli: I was coming there for lessons. I stopped taking lessons and started a band with the guitar teacher. I was just always around.

Jen: I remember the first time I saw you. “Who is that little, cute blonde girl just shredding on guitar, always in the parking lot smoking cigarettes?”

Poli: I was not, at thirteen.

Jen: Maybe fourteen. [laughter]

Poli: There you go.

Jen: Then that band that you were in with the guitar teacher, he asked me to play bass for them and I wasn’t a bass player, really. This guy liked Cinderella (hair metal band).

Poli: He got our chops up, though—a lot on guitar. I would play with him and the drummer from Nihilist. He was always like, “You need to realize—get your own gear. Go do your own shit. I’m not going to be around forever. You’re way younger than me.” It was always tough love and finally Jen and I are like, “Fine, then fuck you. We’re done.” Jen’s like, “Here, I wrote this song for this class.”

Jen: We got it together because she had her battle of the bands. I think it was your sophomore one? And I was already twenty or twenty-one at this point.

Poli: Lying about everyone’s age.

Jen: We started in 2007. The battle of the bands was in the spring of 2008, that’s when our first show was.

Todd: Who encouraged you to play guitar?

Madeline: As young female guitarists. There aren’t that many out there.

Jen: For me—I was getting into seventh grade when I moved to Carlsbad in San Diego. I went to a Blink 182 concert with Bad Religion opening. I think that was in 1999 or 2000. I had picked up guitar three or four months before that and I was always playing. But I just remember being at that concert, “I want to play on a stage one day. There’s no doubt in my mind that I’m going to play punk music.” Loving Bad Religion from that concert, getting introduced to Fat Wreck Chords through that—going back and back. It was all such a spiral. It was therapeutic coming to a new place—I did nothing but play guitar every day.

Todd: But your parents are very tolerant of it?

Jen: They loved it. Took me to guitar lessons. My guitar was just my best friend. I was constantly playing.

Poli: [coughs into palm] Loser. [Laughter] The best gift my parents ever did for us was putting us in piano lessons when I was five years old. But same as Jen—when she said that, seeing that show and saying, “There’s no doubt in my mind. I have to do this.” That

gave me chills. Just to be fucking cool. I want to be a girl who plays guitar.

Jen: We played with The Adolescents on your prom night.

Poli: That happened two years in a row. Homecoming, and we did something rad.

Todd: So, why no LP after eight years? You recorded one but scrapped it because you didn’t have enough money.

Jen: We paid a lot of money to record that record and then we had nothing else after that. Also, at that point the member changes were so severe. After everything was super cool, someone would leave. It was literally starting over again so many frickin’ times.

Poli: I swear it’s not us. We’d look at each other like, “Fuck. All over again.”

Jen: We were just overly ambitious with our first tours and you come back, the last thing we want to do is get together and try to come up with money to write a record.... Poli had the baby.

Poli: He’ll be three in January. That’s almost already four years ago that we put things on hold.

Neil: We were at that point: we’re putting in the work, we’re going to make this full-length—okay, we can’t do this for at least a solid year.

Jen: The break was essential to what we are now. The second we came back, everything was awesome.

Todd: So what do each of you do, day to day, work-wise?

Josh: I work in the medical cannabis industry. We’ll put it that way. I really just trim weed. It’s really easy to do. It’s good. It pays well. Steady work.

Todd: Josh, did you give up baseball to become a musician?

Josh: I did. I was fifteen years old, sophomore year of high school. I was actually burned my freshman year. The ace pitcher of the varsity team had problems with my sister or something. The coach gave this kid the roster to print up and post. He took my name and two other kids off of the list. So I went out again my sophomore year, I made the team, and I quit for drum line.

Neil: He found weed.

Josh: Weed had a small influence on my decision, I guess. Music and weed kind of go together better than baseball and weed. We were the Apple Valley Sun Devils. It was good.

Neil: Aside from the usual race riot every other week. Or the psychotic religious people running after it all the time, “The devil!”

Todd: So Jen, what do you do?

Jen: I work at a restaurant down the street, here in Highland Park. Just went back to school after a long time of not going to school, studying marketing.

Poli: I have Adler, obviously. And I work in a restaurant as well. Shocker.

Todd: How did you come up with his name?

Poli: It’s a name I’ve always liked. I found this list of names I liked in an old folder when I was pregnant. It’s a common last name so I must have picked up on it.... *The Shining*. The typewriter that’s in there.

JOSH SKATES LIKE AN ASSHOLE. AT EVERY SHOW JUST LIKE, "CHECK ME OUT! I AM GOING TO JUMP OFF A ROOF INTO A POOL."



JOSH | Silvia Diez

Jen: When we were in Germany, Adler was also on sewing machines, so it's like a General Electric kind of company.

Madeline: Did you guys spend a lot of your European tour in Germany?

Neil: A good chunk of it.

Poli: We did seven countries, though.

Jen: We skipped over Neil's career.

Neil: Just the bass player, you know.

Jen: We don't care what Neil does for work.

Madeline: Oh, yeah. [dismissively] You're a graphic designer, right? [laughter]

Poli: He's the one with a real job. You have a job you can actually talk about.

Madeline: No, we care about that. [laughter] We care about Germany but we care about graphic designers, too.

Neil: Oh, thank you. I work for Guitar Center. I am a designer there.

Josh: I get his stupid artwork in my mail every Friday of every week.

Jen: Cluttering up my mailbox.

Josh: "Oh, look at this. I know the asshole who made that. Damn it."

Neil: It's great, though. Awesome discounts. I also get ninety days a year just for tour leave.

Todd: You're the first person from Guitar Center I've ever actually liked.

Jen: Because he doesn't work in the store.

Josh: They're just so beat up in the stores. It's just sad.

Neil: We saw a gnarly skulllet. He had the conversation that "Led Zeppelin will always be the greatest band of all time."

Poli: The guy at the Guitar Center in San Marcos, in the wheelchair. He's been there forever. He's the best. Shout-out to him.

Todd: Sorry, it goes to two.

Jen: You have a favorite Guitar Center person?

Neil: Yeah, it's me. [laughter]

Jen: "What? Who's Neil?" But, yeah, we can talk about Germany.

Todd: Did they ever tell you, "You've got forty-five minutes. Fill that time up."

Neil: We were given a heads up about that.

Jen: We were pulling out songs from that record we never put out. [laughter]

Poli: There were a couple times that we were like, "Let's just play this song and this song again later. They don't fucking care. They don't know." [laughter]

Jen: I don't know if you know those Thug Life videos. There's this one where this kids goes. "What are you, five?" He's like, "Five inches deep in your mom." So every time with our 7"s, we'd be, "Seven inches deep in your mom."

Neil: We'd get the one clap.

Jen: No one got it. But when we came back to Germany at the end of the tour, some kids came up to us and said, "Seven inches deep in the mouth of your mom!" Even better than the original. [laughter]

Neil: We kept ending up back in Germany. We'd go to Austria, then back to Germany. Switzerland, back to Germany. It was kind of like home after a couple weeks.

Jen: We didn't know this until we got there, but in our rider: "The girls have to have it very clean. They have to have their own room." Every time we're like, "This is cool. We have our own rooms." We didn't really know until we showed up at Schopfheim (small town on the German border) maybe three hours before they were expecting us. They're mopping and bleaching the toilets, freaking out. "Oh, you're here early. The promoters said it must be clean for the girls." We're like, "What? We don't care." It was nice. Just the rest of the night it was crazy. They had this drinking game they wanted to play. Flunkyball.

Josh: We go across the street to the park. There's a bottle in the middle and you throw something at the bottle to knock it over. The other team has to run out, stand the bottle upright, and grab whatever the fuck you threw at it—the rock, we'll call it—and run back to their side. While that's happening, our side is drinking. Whoever's done drinking first wins. We're in this random park in Germany at three o'clock in the morning playing this game and it's loud as shit—fifty people in the park, easily. This guy starts climbing this lamppost in the middle of the park.

Poli: We were sitting right where it crashed.

Josh: It's chaos for ten seconds and I start to walk out of the park. As it's going on, two cop cars drive into the other side of the park and everybody just scatters.

Neil: Our tour manager looks at us, he's like, "Run." [laughter]

Josh: So I'm the first one back at the bar. I walk inside. I have taken my sweatshirt off at this point. I was never there. I'm inside, drinking a beer, hanging out and I hear chaos going on outside. I poke my head outside and it's them frantically looking for me.

Jen: We were convinced—because Josh always gets caught by the cops—we have to get Josh out of German jail. Poli's crying.

Poli: He was smoking a joint. "What's up, bitches?" I'm like, "Oh my god. You're alive!"

Neil: [laughter] "I haven't done that since I was sixteen." I'm twenty-eight and running from the cops.

Jen: We were like, "The German police. It's going to be so scary." Our tour manager's like, "You guys are from Los Angeles. Your police are a lot scarier than our police. You're not going to die over a game of Flunkyball here. You're not going to get shot."

Neil: The funkiest spot was in Spain. We stayed in an old fire station. It was just weird.

Poli: They had all the uniforms in there.

Jen: We tried to take a shower and the water was so cold, Poli and I were in there together, ass to ass. Splashing our pussies, just to get a little wet. And then Neil—it's going on day eight on his last pair of boxers. The balls. If you sat on the same seat that he sat in, you could smell the balls.

Neil: [laughs manically]

Jen: We'd been in freezing cold water to splash our pussies. You could at least dunk your balls in the sink.

Neil: No, I had a goal. I was going all five days of Spain, no shower.

Madeline: True American punk rock.

Josh: That was our last day in Spain, so he's like, "Fuck you guys. I'm not showering until we leave Spain."

Jen: Mondo Bizarro in Rennes, France was probably one of my favorite venues of all time.

Neil: There were some parts of France where you had to shit in a hole in the ground.

Josh: I have a fuck load of complaints about France. No toilets, no toilet seats, no-weed-having fuckin'—fuck France. They rape you on the toll roads. It's making me angry. France was the only country I could not find any weed in. France hurt me.

Poli: All of Europe and Germany—no ice. It's fucking frozen water. How do you not have ice?

Josh: Poli's in the hospital. She's begging for ice. "I just want fucking ice water."

Jen: We went on a two week tour with the Swingin' Utters before we went to Europe. Then we had a week off. Two days before the Swingin' Utters, Poli was like, "I've got to go to the hospital to get my appendix taken out, but I can still go on tour in two days."

Poli: I was really anxious about it. "How the fuck?" I spent one night in the hospital, then I was home. Then I was like, "I'm supposed to wake up in the morning..."

Josh: ...and get in the van and drive to Phoenix.

Jen: Then we flew to Germany.

Poli: After I puked once I was like, "I think it might be the Vicodin." But then when it kept going—this is our first tour in Europe. Descending into Berlin and I had to ask the stewardess, "Can I have a bag?" I'm diabetic as well so everything escalated. Ended up in the hospital. Missed the first show. It was really bad.

Jen: The best was when they came in, "Ms. Van Dam, we just have to check." [to Poli] They finger your pussy and your ass and try to check you. As soon as you saw the doctor, you were like, "You're hot."

Poli: I wanted him to do it. I'm laying there, looking at Jen, they're fingering my asshole. I was pretending I was getting off. They'd be so weirded out. [laughter]

Madeline: Have you guys done a national U.S. tour?

Jen: Two. Definitely each time someone quit. We had one guy fly out. It was our first time and last time playing Fest (Gainesville, Fla.), 2010 and our bass player in the middle of Texas: "I'm going home." We flew in our old bass player. We hadn't played with him for years. Then our drummer left after Fest. [laughter] It's not us.

Poli: We can hang with anything. These guys were like, "I'm fucking hungry. I'm going to be an asshole." I'm fucking hungry. I'm fucking tired. I don't want to drive, either. So now we have these guys.

Todd: So from the internet, it says that you're focusing more on storytelling in putting your songs together.

Neil: I feel like a lot of our songs are written about each other.

Poli: Especially after, really, to get down to it—when I was pregnant, it was big. I had to tell them and that was a huge thing. It was

fucking horrifying. The songs are a lot about that, but I think we are getting more in tune with trying to say something. At this point in our lives there are a lot of songs about, "What are we doing? We're kind of fuck-ups." That's what I write about these days.

Jen: There are times she's shown me a song and I know it's about me, but: "That's the best song I've ever heard." But I think it can also transcend. That could mean something to someone else.

Poli: And I'm just the weirdest songwriter ever because I will go for awhile without having anything and then sit down in a night and have four different ideas and that's just how it comes. Or I'll just start playing and words—everything—will just come and it'll be done.

Jen: We just take a lot of time with our songs right now. Sometimes we have a song and we could go record it, but we like shiny, polished. Those are my favorite records.

Poli: And just learning that less is more, too. I'm so concerned about the lyrics and how they flow. "That's not even a chorus." You need to be short and sweet or something special for most songs. It doesn't hurt.

Jen: It's almost a lot more to think about, to be simple. Especially when you have a lot to say. I've got a page. Maybe it's four words of that or the chorus repeated.

Poli: Don't be afraid to repeat things. [laughter] We never particularly missed anything because we didn't have the full-length. I don't want people to think we can't do it. "Can they really write ten good songs?"

Neil: That is our ultimate goal right now. That's what we're working on. That is where we're at. After these tours we have coming up. We're writing a whole bunch of new stuff. It's sounding really cool.

Poli: Five years later...

Jen: We're definitely going to start recording. The songs are there. We have a dream team. We have stuff we want to do. We don't have money.

Neil: Lawrence Katz (Mighty Mighty Bosstones) took us under his wing. The girls went in every week. We've been working on these songs for awhile. It was all of our first experiences where we had an actual producer working with us. We all loved it.

Poli: Lawrence Katz is an amazing human being. He's like, "I don't do this all the time." We obviously know that. "But I just like a band that can get in the van and go. And that's what I see in you guys so I want to help you out."

Jen: And that's what we did off those songs that we did with him. We hopefully stoked him out on that.

Neil: We even had our friend Intruder Blue come in.

Jen: We were done and I had some backups that I already knew that I wanted to do on "Can of Worms." They had missed their flight back from Australia to come to L.A. so they randomly said, "If anyone can pick us up at the airport, be there." Neil picked them up. Anyways, I said, "That would be so cool if you could come in." We asked Lawrence,

and he was like, “I don’t know. Sometimes too many cooks in the kitchen is just a bad thing.” He (Intruder Blue) had the best ideas and harmonies. Lawrence was like, “This is the exact opposite that I thought was going to happen.”

Neil: I consider most of those bands, they’re just friends now. It doesn’t matter being on a label like that or not. We play with all of them. We’re always staying together.

Jen: At this point, we’re not worried about it, either. Whatever happens with us is going to be right for us. We’re stoked, too—it would totally be a dream come true—but there are so many awesome things that are out there.

Poli: I’ve seen what we’re capable of doing on our own without a manager, without a booking agent, without a label. There always is something more.

Neil: I’m proud of us being that way. We’ve always been able to do it ourselves. All of us, every time we hang out with these people, it doesn’t matter. We’re all part of the same thing. Even if they’ve been doing it for thirty years longer than us, we seem to all have the same idea.

Madeline: You guys are so polished and poppy and catchy, people don’t give you a lot of DIY credit.

Poli: We’re sucking everyone’s dicks to get where we are. [laughter] Jen and I, fourteen and nineteen in my room. “We’re going to fucking do this.”

Jen: We’ve just heard the most awful things about us, too. Now it’s funny. I don’t care. I don’t know how people come up with the things they come up with.

Madeline: Having really attractive female guitarists.

Neil: Me and Josh have been playing in bands for a long time. We both agree we’ve never seen anyone work as hard as these two have, getting where they’ve been. Through the players. Through Poli having a baby. Poli having her appendix taken out and two days later, “I’m getting on the road.” It’s hard work.

Josh: Both of those tours that Poli finished after being in the hospital, I know tons of people—men—who would have given up. “Fuck that. I’m going home.”

Neil: The hard work is the main reason we are where we’re at.

Josh: And that’s why we’re sticking around. We’re not going anywhere. Music is my life and I fucking love these kids. We’ll keep pushing. That’s all we can do.

Jen: I think about it, too. I don’t care if I’m going to be fifty years old and play a dive bar with you on a Friday night. Yeah, it would be nice to be more, but if that’s what we get out of it—we’ve played shows and older women have come up to us. “I dream about playing guitar. I never did.” That’s so cool to me.

Poli: It’s cute. Messages on Facebook, “My five-year-old daughter said she wants to be you guys.”

Neil: No she doesn’t. [laughter] But it’s so cute. Seriously, I would tell anyone right now, tour with these two girls is way nastier and grosser than four guys.



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Josh: I've toured with two bands full of men and touring with one band with two females in it—yeah, they win. I've toured with some gnarly fucking humans.

Jen: Josh used to be, "You bitches are nasty."

Josh: You shit your pants more than anyone I've ever met in my life. I don't understand it.

Poli: I've never known someone who thinks they've sharted one or two times a week.

Jen: If I accidentally shart and I text you, you go, "Lucky." [laughter]

Josh: That's the problem. They're proud of it. I'm not throwing no one under the bus. They're the first to own up to it.

Jen: I'll never forget Poli pulling out her tampon in the van and slinging it around like a lasso.

Neil: Then they bitch about ball sweat. [laughter]

Todd: So when you guys played the Doll Hut many years ago, did two of you have to be outside and play?

Poli: Our ex-bass player (Austin) and I.

Jen: I was the only one who was over-age. But Dylan used your (Poli's) boyfriend's I.D. to get in the show. So the drummer was on the stage and I was on the stage.

Poli: And our amps were on the stage. We had the mics and everything. So half the crowd was inside. Half the crowd was outside. It was bizarre.

Jen: People were kind of into it, though. People would come outside, then go back in for a little bit.

Neil: This year we played with the Street Dogs on St. Patrick's Day at the Anaheim House of Blues. A bunch of the Nazi punks are in there. The Street Dogs bassist threw

his bass two feet past the photo barricade into this guy. Someone takes a wooden barstool from the top deck and chucks it.

Josh: Complete chaos. Lenny (Lashley) jumped off stage and kicked the dude in the face harder than I've ever seen. It was the coolest thing.

Jen: We also played this place called Coconuts in San Juan Capistrano with TSOL. In the pit, there were guys "sig heil"-ing with swastikas—to us, while we're playing. We're all, "This isn't cool." One of the security guards was, "You've just got to leave. I'm sorry. Because you're going to get beat up."

Todd: So, *Hair Products and Narcotics*?

Jen: That was going to be the name of the full-length that we never put out. What we ended up doing was taking some of those

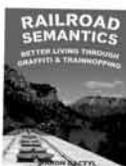


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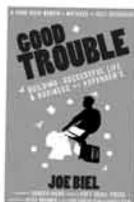
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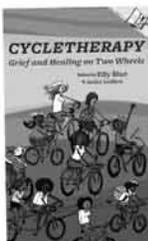
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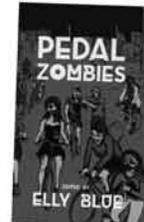
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OUR TOUR MANAGER LOOKS AT US, HE'S LIKE, "RUN."

songs, putting them on a burned CD. That became an EP. But everyone had a different version; sometimes we'd put two songs, sometimes we'd put four.

Neil: I can't help with the hair products, I go au naturale. Shampoo once in a while.

Poli: For me, every fucking night on tour, knocking on our door. "Can I get the shampoo and conditioner?" [to Neil] Why do you need conditioner? You barely have hair.

Neil: It's all for how I'm feeling for the day. Sometimes you just want to feel beautiful. I like any kind of drug. I tried molly for the first time this year. Projectile vomited.

Jen: I don't like hallucinogenics. Terrible.

Neil: We did mushrooms in Dallas a couple months ago. That was an interesting time.

Jen: I didn't. I was trying to sleep in the van. I called them. "What are you guys doing?" Neil's all, [in strained, freaked out voice] "We're watching dogs."

Josh: We were watching *Best in Show*. That furry-looking, weird dog-thing. It can't be a dog, but it can't be a dog. I fucking lost it.

Neil: Dallas. We get there a day early, so we went to the practice space. The band next to us, they heard us playing. "You guys are The Bombpops. We're going to the show tomorrow night."

Jen: We just asked them casually, "Well, what kind of drugs can you bring?"

Neil: "Don't worry. I will have you guys covered tomorrow." So he comes the next day to our van. He gives us a bag. We've got a gram of cocaine. Eight capsules of mushrooms. Adderral. Vicodin. Weed pills.

Josh: We were trying to pay for it. "I'm not a drug dealer. I can't take your money."

Jen: "It's just what I do."

Poli: It was kind of a sensitive subject. Jen, the whole tour, was so pissed at Josh for having weed and then we get this.

Jen: At that point, it didn't matter though because you already had drugs.

Josh: However you want to justify it to yourself, Jennifer.

Todd: Last question. Does anyone think of The Bombpops as the banana fudge one instead of the red, white, and blue one?

Poli: No. Never had that.

Jen: Only the Lickety Lix Jolly Rancher Bombpop. That sounds really good. Fudge. I really can't get down on more than half of a Bombpop.

Neil: [Open throat choking noises.]

Jen: "Deep in the mouth of your mom."

ALLI



DYLAN KORDANI

DOGS

Nick—guitar
Amanda—bass
Jesse—drums, hair
Maryn—guitar, vocals

Interview by Dylan Kordani
Photos by Dylan and Adam Pfahler
Layout by Daryl



Do you remember that one night in mid-summer in the Midwest? The one when you were tipsy off of whiskey and the energy of the sick basement show you just saw? You were electrified by the oncoming storm, uncaring and standing next to the bonfire as the drops of rain evaporated before they hit your salty skin. Remember leaning in for a sweet kiss as the thunder boomed and lightning struck almost too close for comfort? That time you walked your bikes hand-in-hand, getting drenched and watching the town light up like fireworks? Or falling asleep, with the fan droning and whining you to sleep under a thin sheet and a thick blanket of sweat? All Dogs is kind of like all that.

Dylan: I'm just gonna start out real easy. How did you choose the name All Dogs? Is it *All Dogs Go to Heaven*?

Maryn: We were in a band called Wolfs—Amanda and me and Richard, our friend. We were just joking about titles for that release, just messin' around and we were like, "Wolfs... *All Dogs* would be like the name of the album." Amanda said it. When we started this band, Amanda and I were the ones who originally played together and then Jesse joined. We were trying to think of names and I was like, "Remember when you made that joke about All Dogs? That's a really good band name." I think it was kind of a reference to *All Dogs Go to Heaven* but I don't know.

Maryn: He was on tour with Nona. I had met him before but most of the other people in the band hadn't, so we were just like, "Excited to know ya, Nick!" We had a great time. The last show we played in Pittsburgh, he was like, "Can I play 'Buddy' with you 'cause I really like it? Are these the chords?" He played the last song with us and we were like, "We want you to be in our band 'cause that felt so great and so fun and we love you and so..." Then we couldn't find him anywhere on the last day.

Dylan: Amanda just moved to Philly. How is it having some members there and some band members in Columbus?

Jesse: So far it's been fine because we're not really writing stuff. I think that'll be a

it in Columbus. Nick was in Philly, so this is gonna be a whole new adventure because I feel like we were able to form the songs together like, "Okay, this is what we have, Nick."

Nick: Do a guitar solo over it. [laughs]

Maryn: Now it's gonna be Jesse and me. We'll just play together and figure it out.

Dylan: What was the creation of this record like?

Maryn: This record was a continuation of what we started with the 7", which is a more developed version in ten-ish songs. The 7" was cool but I just felt like I really wanted to write a record that was a little bit more formed and thought out and more fit together.

Being a woman, you're told you're overreacting to everything and that what you're feeling is bullshit.

Dylan: And your old band Wolfs had one release? It was a four-song tape? Was there more?

Amanda: We played six songs.

Maryn: We just didn't record all of them. I don't know what the other songs were.

Dylan: So All Dogs started out as a three-piece in Columbus. How long were you a three-piece?

Jesse: A year and a half.

Dylan: How'd you meet Nick and incorporate him into the band?

Maryn: We went on tour with Nona, one of the best bands in the whole world, and he was in that band. It was one of the best tours we've done.

Jesse: It was the first tour we've done. [laughs]

Dylan: Where's Nona from?

Nick: Philadelphia. That's where I live.

little different, trying to figure that out, but now it's okay. If we're going on tour, either the two of them will come to Columbus a couple days early or we'll go to Philly a couple days early.

Maryn: When we wrote this last record we made videos of our practices. Amanda and Jesse and I practiced together. We would record it on our phones or I would record a video of me playing the song. It's kind of weird but it works out.

Nick: All the technology makes it way easier.

Maryn: Yeah, yeah totally.

Dylan: Do you feel like the long distance practices, or the long distance collaboration of songs, does that change the music or affect your songwriting at all?

Jesse: I'm sure it does at least a little. It has to.

Maryn: And it's gonna be different now because this record, the three of us wrote

Dylan: The new songs tell more of a story?

Maryn: Exactly! A reason why I wanted to start All Dogs was because I wanted a place where I could play songs about things that made me feel upset or angry or really sad. When we were writing this record I was like, "All right, I'm gonna fully realize that and I'm gonna totally write about shit that I don't feel comfortable talking to a lot of people about." There's stuff on there that I don't tell anyone. It was a cool way to get all this shit out of my brain.

Dylan: Do you feel like that frustration and depression is an undercurrent for your life or do you feel like it was a period of time and it's passed?

Maryn: I definitely think it's an ongoing thing and it's really weird, having mental or just emotional problems. Struggling with depression and stuff is such a strange thing



DYLAN KORDANI



ADAM PFAHLER



ADAM PFAHLER



DYLAN KORDANI

You might see pictures of us in this and we all look so good, our hair especially. That's all you really need to know about us.



especially in our society. Especially being a woman, too, 'cause you're told you're overreacting to everything and that what you're feeling is bullshit. That's how I've always felt. My parents literally used to be like, "You're so dramatic," and it's so crazy 'cause I'd be feeling these incredibly real things. They would be just like, "What's your problem? Calm down." And I'd be like, "What do you mean?" It's always been an issue and it's very therapeutic to finally be like, "This is what's going on in my brain."

Dylan: Are there any other things that you do that help you process through your mental illness, besides songwriting?

Maryn: I am very, very lucky to have a partner who's very helpful for me with that stuff and was a huge part of a lot of healing processes for me. I also have friends. There are a lot of things. I think there are healthy things I do to try and cope. It's such a come-and-go, up-and-down thing. Especially being on tour all the time, I have to find interesting ways to not lose it. Last year, I went on a bunch of tours the second half of the year and it was really, really hard. By the end of it I was just like, "I don't even have a brain anymore." There are a couple songs on the record that are about that, where I would not even feel like a human because I wasn't taking care of myself. I think I've developed ways to cope on these tours. So far it's been going pretty good because, knock on wood, just being able to know when those signs of, "All right, you're starting to freak out," and recognizing them and just being, "Okay what do I do? I need to nip this in the bud."

Dylan: Go eat something or be alone.

Nick: Drink some water.

Maryn: Yeah, just put my headphones in, listen to music, or not talk to anyone.

Dylan: So you and Jesse are both in bands that historically tour a lot. Do you feel like you have enough energy to make time for both bands?

Maryn: It's a big part of my life, balancing Saintsenecca and this band, but it works. It's like juggling, kind of, and a lot of communication.

Jesse: Yeah, yeah. Making sure everybody's aware of what's going on with everybody else's projects. And talking about it, trying to plan far enough in advance.

Maryn: It's like this weird race. Where we're like, "We have to start booking stuff next year! We have to be the first ones to nail down those dates!" So we're booking through March at this point.

Dylan: Are you able to financially support yourself on tour?

Maryn: Yeah. I'm able to do it because I have two full-time bands. I did have to get a job as a fry cook because I had the summer off. It was the worst job I've ever had in my life. So sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But I think everybody else has jobs.

Jesse: We are able to support ourselves somewhat while we're on tour. That's happening. But I think everybody needs to have jobs when we get home.

Dylan: Maryn, I heard via the internet that you helped organize a "band-in-a-hat" for women only. Can you tell us about that?

Maryn: It was something I struggled with what to call it because I wanted it to be "band-in-a-hat-for-everyone-but-cis-dudes." But I didn't wanna make that the title 'cause I didn't wanna be making it about them again. It was a response to how I was feeling in Columbus and something I had been very frustrated with in the recent past. There were a lot of dudes making music, especially when the house show scene sort of died out. That was a big part of why I moved to Columbus—house shows and the things surrounding that—and that's pretty much gone now.

There was this house called Villa Villa Kula, VVK, and they had shows. The people who booked the shows there booked mostly women, queer folks, trans folks, people of color, and it was really cool. When that died out or when that house ended, there were no houses and this weird thing happened where nobody booked those bands anymore.

Dudes coming through and playing shows at bars and I was like "I hate this.... Where the fuck are all my women in bands?" I just want to see more of that. I knew friends of mine who were like, "Oh yeah, I'm learning bass. I've been playing bass for three months but I don't know what to do." And I was like, "Ahhh! Start a band!"

Dylan: Can you give me a rundown of what the event was like?

Maryn: So band-in-a-hat—you put names in a hat and then you draw the names and form bands. You had a month to practice with your band. I've been involved with band-in-a-hat things before and never before have all the bands stayed together. I mean, people dropped out of bands but all the bands that were drawn played. That never happens. There were eight bands, three songs. Two originals and a cover. The event was amazing. It was so, so cool.

We had it at this place Mint Collective, which is—I don't know the exact term for it—but it's an art space that's collectively run. I chose that space because it was a very neutral space that was accessible. It was run by a lot of queer folks and people of color. I was having trouble living in Columbus and it really helped me be like, "All right, this is cool. I can be here. There are still amazing folks here."

Dylan: Did it help revitalize the marginalized musicians' presence in your community?

Maryn: I actually think that it did. Not to toot my own horn. [laughs] It wasn't about me. There are bands that exist and there are people playing in them that probably wouldn't have met, made those connections, or had the confidence to be like, "Oh! This is how a practice happens. Play a show. It's not as scary." That's why I started playing in bands. Someone saying, "Yeah. Just do it. We'll have this practice. It's not hard." Then I was like, "Oh." It demystified everything. There are instruments I play now that I wouldn't have played if I didn't do band-in-a-hat.

Dylan: How do you feel like you've been treated throughout your musical career? Do you feel like the attitude around women in punk is changing?

Maryn: In my experience—and I can only speak to my experience as a white woman—I've had the resources to play music for most of my life. I think—compared to when I first started touring with Saintsenecca—a big difference is that I'm not the lead person in that band. So, I feel like when I would walk in the door with that band that people wouldn't know I was going to play and sometimes be treated kind of strangely.

Nick: Just instantly tell you where the merch table is.

Maryn: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. Weird micro shit like that. Obviously, blatant shit has happened to me before, but not too much. People don't even know that they're doing it but I think that my experience in this band has been pretty... pretty all right. You know, I think maybe just people knowing who we are and knowing that I'm definitely in the band—that might change once we start playing different places and more venues. I feel like sometimes people who work there are just like, "All right, this is my fucking job. I don't give a shit about who it is. I don't know who the fuck you are." [A lot of dogs arrive to the place we are having breakfast.]

Dylan: Dog party.

Maryn: I'm losing my mind.

Jesse: Oh my god.

Dylan: Do you feel that that's in your future? Playing bigger spaces?

Maryn: I think so.

Dylan: Have your shows been overfull on this tour?

Maryn: No, not really. It's where we want the band to stand in our lives. As opposed to being, "Oh, we have the summer off. We can go on tour just for fun or whatever." I think we all agree that this is what we want to do with our lives. I feel like it was a natural progression to be like, "We wanna play shows where everyone can still come to the show. And at the end of the night we might actually be able to pay ourselves at the end of tour and not have to go to work or not have to worry about being on tour for three weeks."

Dylan: So as far as record labels for this last record, who put it out?

Maryn: Salinas. They're great. It's our friend Marco, one person basically, and it's really nice to be working with him 'cause he's just so chill, so nice. There's no added pressure of anything. He's just like, "I'll release these records for you."

Jesse: There's no bullshit with Marco either. It's just like, "This is how it is. I'm not gonna do any extra stuff. I'm gonna put your record out. You do what you want. That's it."

Nick: There's so much transparency. Completely clear.

Dylan: Do you feel like releasing through Marco and through that network has helped propel your band forward in a specific direction?

Nick: Good question.

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DYLAN KORDANI

Twenty years later,
she won't drop it.

Maryn: I really do. I think that Marco has really great taste. He picks bands that he likes and has built this sort of thing where people will just go to the website or look at the things he circulates and think, "I haven't heard this band. I'm gonna listen to them," because they're on this label. Because the label definitely has a vibe and a feel and if you're into that vibe, then you're gonna find things you love on that label. So releasing it on Salinas definitely helped us find new people who like our music. [More dogs visit.]

Dylan: Distracted by all the dogs?

Maryn: Yeah, so many cute dogs. That's my dream dog.

Dylan: Jesse, aren't you allergic to dogs?

Jesse: No, I'm allergic to cats.

Maryn: I didn't know that.

Nick: We're all learning something about Jesse. I knew that.

Maryn: I just tried to forget 'cause that's fucked up.

Dylan: Is there anything else you want the readers of *Razorcake* to know before I ask my last question?

Maryn: We all have really great hair [laughs]. You might see pictures of us in this and we all look so good, our hair especially. That's all you really need to know about us. And we do love dogs.

Dylan: My last question—is there something about you that your bandmates don't know?

Nick: I think we're all pretty open people.

Maryn: I'm sure there's a memory I can recall from my childhood.

Jesse: Or something dirty.

Dylan: It could be. That would be more interesting.

Jesse: That would be way more fun.

Maryn: I love shit like this.

Nick: When I was six, I peed myself on a Ferris wheel. I don't know if that's the kinda stuff you're looking for.

Jesse: I was probably between eight and ten. It was on a family vacation. We were at Virginia Beach and we went to this arcade. My mom and I were playing air hockey. I was like, "Mom, we gotta stop. I gotta go to the bathroom." She's like, "No, you're just saying that because I'm beating you." She wouldn't let me go to the bathroom and I ended up shitting my pants while we were playing air hockey.

Dylan: I bet she felt pretty stupid after that.

Jesse: I had to wait for the person to come out of the bathroom with the shit in my underwear—to go in, clean it out, and then do the walk of shame back to the hotel. It was a mile and a half away.

Nick: But did you win the game?

Jesse: No, so my mom—anytime we go with my family, anytime there's an air hockey table around—my mom makes fun of me.

Nick: Sore winner.

Jesse: Twenty years later, she won't drop it.

Maryn: I had an American girl doll. The one you create that's supposed to look like you. I didn't make it look like me. I also had the horse, which no one had.

Nick: No one had that shit.

Maryn: I didn't have much growing up.

Jesse: So y'all are leaving me hanging with the poop story?

Maryn: Fuck!

Nick: We were supposed to play Plan-It-X Fest and I missed it. I took a bus from Cleveland to Columbus and somewhere along the line I contracted probably the worst illness I've had as an adult. I was just shitting myself and throwing up all over myself at this house. It was actually the day that I met our current tour manager, Caitlin. I was like, "It's so nice to meet you," and the next morning I woke up super sick and I was like, "Remember how we met last night? You need to take me to the hospital."

Maryn: 'Cause we were gone.

Nick: Yeah, they were gone. It was a bad scene.

Maryn: The worst.

Caitlin: There was shit and throw-up everywhere.

Nick: Everywhere. I was like, "Caitlin, it's so nice to meet you," and she's holding my hair while I throw up into a garbage can in the hospital waiting room.

Caitlin: He would go into the bathroom and come out, pants unbuttoned. Slouch back into the wheelchair.

Nick: I did watch all of season six of *Roseanne*, though.







JULIE A. FERGUSON

Introduction by **Todd Taylor**
Interview by **Todd Taylor**
and **Madeline Bridenbaugh**
Photos by **Julie A. Ferguson**
and **Patrick Houdek**
Layout by **Eric Baskauskas**
Transcription by **Matthew Hart**

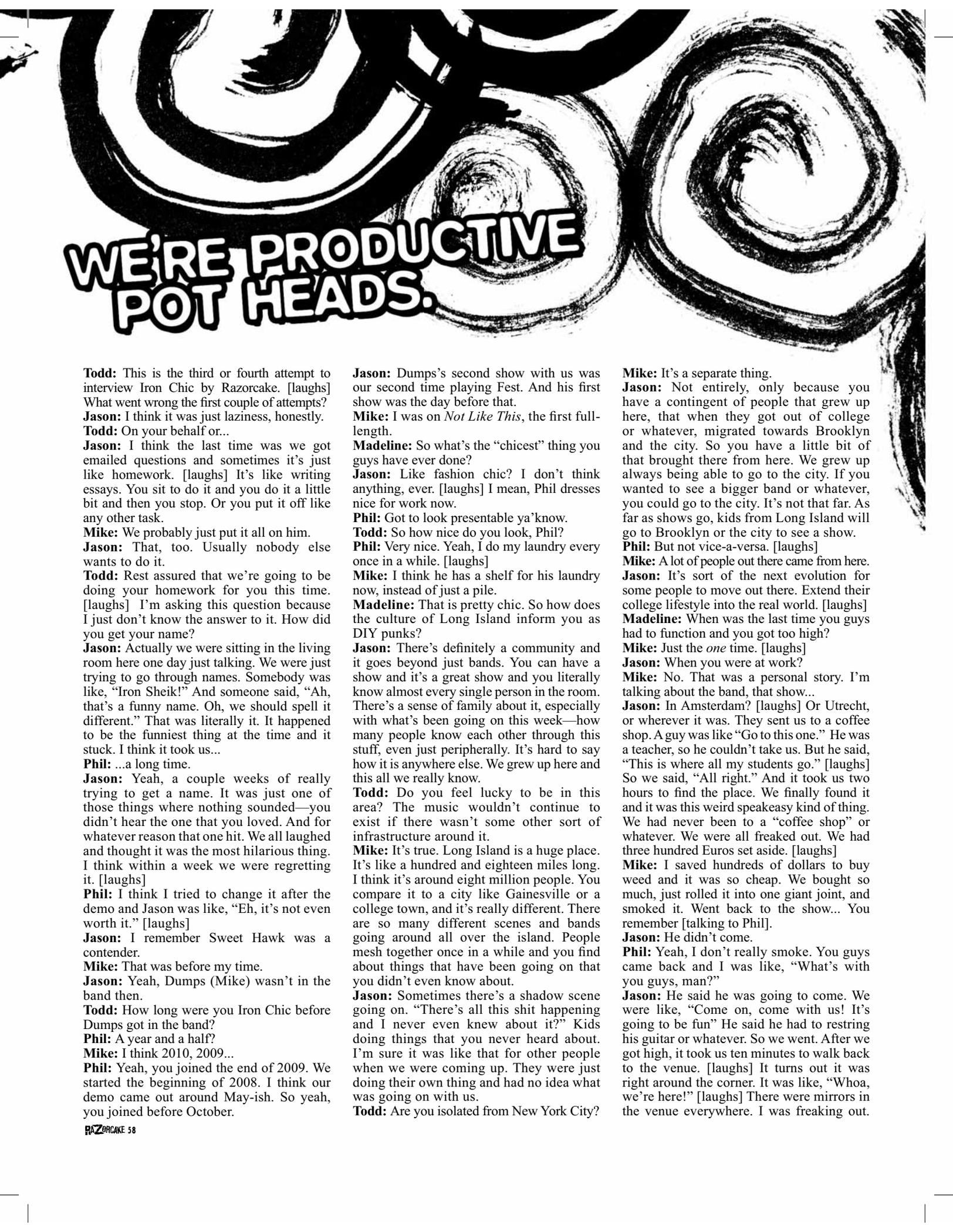
There's a high-mileage mini-van in the driveway, "Up the Punx" stencil graffiti and a Latterman sticker on the front door. Phil answers the door and leads us back to a sparse, ordinary room with acoustic foam on parts of the walls and ceiling. Monitoring speakers flank the computer. Exposed PVC pipes from upstairs are above us. Cigarette smoke fills the room.

Downstairs from where this interview happened is where Iron Chic has done most, if not all of their recording. This house is their nerve center. It's not fancy. It's functional; all geared towards recording music.

Iron Chic isn't a band that lends itself well to hyperbole; I just really like them. They're a band that plays melodic and heartfelt punk music. It's really fucking catchy. I have listened to their two full-length LPs over and over again, for several years. **Triangulate Low Culture**, **Tiltwheel**, and **RVIVR** and you're in the vicinity. It's emotionally honest, strident DIY punk.

Mike Dumps and Jason Lubrano show up shortly after us. They're unassuming, warm, a little quiet, like Phil. Here's what we talked about.

PRESENT
Jason Lubrano: Vocals
Mike Bruno: Bass
Phil Douglas: Guitar
IN THE BAND BUT NOT IN THE INTERVIEW
Gordon Lafler: Drums
Jesse Litwa: Guitar



WE'RE PRODUCTIVE POT HEADS.

Todd: This is the third or fourth attempt to interview Iron Chic by Razorcake. [laughs] What went wrong the first couple of attempts?

Jason: I think it was just laziness, honestly.

Todd: On your behalf or...

Jason: I think the last time was we got emailed questions and sometimes it's just like homework. [laughs] It's like writing essays. You sit to do it and you do it a little bit and then you stop. Or you put it off like any other task.

Mike: We probably just put it all on him.

Jason: That, too. Usually nobody else wants to do it.

Todd: Rest assured that we're going to be doing your homework for you this time. [laughs] I'm asking this question because I just don't know the answer to it. How did you get your name?

Jason: Actually we were sitting in the living room here one day just talking. We were just trying to go through names. Somebody was like, "Iron Sheik!" And someone said, "Ah, that's a funny name. Oh, we should spell it different." That was literally it. It happened to be the funniest thing at the time and it stuck. I think it took us...

Phil: ...a long time.

Jason: Yeah, a couple weeks of really trying to get a name. It was just one of those things where nothing sounded—you didn't hear the one that you loved. And for whatever reason that one hit. We all laughed and thought it was the most hilarious thing. I think within a week we were regretting it. [laughs]

Phil: I think I tried to change it after the demo and Jason was like, "Eh, it's not even worth it." [laughs]

Jason: I remember Sweet Hawk was a contender.

Mike: That was before my time.

Jason: Yeah, Dumps (Mike) wasn't in the band then.

Todd: How long were you Iron Chic before Dumps got in the band?

Phil: A year and a half?

Mike: I think 2010, 2009...

Phil: Yeah, you joined the end of 2009. We started the beginning of 2008. I think our demo came out around May-ish. So yeah, you joined before October.

Jason: Dumps's second show with us was our second time playing Fest. And his first show was the day before that.

Mike: I was on *Not Like This*, the first full-length.

Madeline: So what's the "chicest" thing you guys have ever done?

Jason: Like fashion chic? I don't think anything, ever. [laughs] I mean, Phil dresses nice for work now.

Phil: Got to look presentable ya'know.

Todd: So how nice do you look, Phil?

Phil: Very nice. Yeah, I do my laundry every once in a while. [laughs]

Mike: I think he has a shelf for his laundry now, instead of just a pile.

Madeline: That is pretty chic. So how does the culture of Long Island inform you as DIY punks?

Jason: There's definitely a community and it goes beyond just bands. You can have a show and it's a great show and you literally know almost every single person in the room. There's a sense of family about it, especially with what's been going on this week—how many people know each other through this stuff, even just peripherally. It's hard to say how it is anywhere else. We grew up here and this all we really know.

Todd: Do you feel lucky to be in this area? The music wouldn't continue to exist if there wasn't some other sort of infrastructure around it.

Mike: It's true. Long Island is a huge place. It's like a hundred and eighteen miles long. I think it's around eight million people. You compare it to a city like Gainesville or a college town, and it's really different. There are so many different scenes and bands going around all over the island. People mesh together once in a while and you find about things that have been going on that you didn't even know about.

Jason: Sometimes there's a shadow scene going on. "There's all this shit happening and I never even knew about it?" Kids doing things that you never heard about. I'm sure it was like that for other people when we were coming up. They were just doing their own thing and had no idea what was going on with us.

Todd: Are you isolated from New York City?

Mike: It's a separate thing.

Jason: Not entirely, only because you have a contingent of people that grew up here, that when they got out of college or whatever, migrated towards Brooklyn and the city. So you have a little bit of that brought there from here. We grew up always being able to go to the city. If you wanted to see a bigger band or whatever, you could go to the city. It's not that far. As far as shows go, kids from Long Island will go to Brooklyn or the city to see a show.

Phil: But not vice-a-versa. [laughs]

Mike: A lot of people out there came from here.

Jason: It's sort of the next evolution for some people to move out there. Extend their college lifestyle into the real world. [laughs]

Madeline: When was the last time you guys had to function and you got too high?

Mike: Just the *one* time. [laughs]

Jason: When you were at work?

Mike: No. That was a personal story. I'm talking about the band, that show...

Jason: In Amsterdam? [laughs] Or Utrecht, or wherever it was. They sent us to a coffee shop. A guy was like "Go to this one." He was a teacher, so he couldn't take us. But he said, "This is where all my students go." [laughs] So we said, "All right." And it took us two hours to find the place. We finally found it and it was this weird speakeasy kind of thing. We had never been to a "coffee shop" or whatever. We were all freaked out. We had three hundred Euros set aside. [laughs]

Mike: I saved hundreds of dollars to buy weed and it was so cheap. We bought so much, just rolled it into one giant joint, and smoked it. Went back to the show... You remember [talking to Phil].

Jason: He didn't come.

Phil: Yeah, I don't really smoke. You guys came back and I was like, "What's with you guys, man?"

Jason: He said he was going to come. We were like, "Come on, come with us! It's going to be fun!" He said he had to restring his guitar or whatever. So we went. After we got high, it took us ten minutes to walk back to the venue. [laughs] It turns out it was right around the corner. It was like, "Whoa, we're here!" [laughs] There were mirrors in the venue everywhere. I was freaking out.

I don't think I even drank that day. It was crazy. Phil was like, "How was it?" "It was a good thing you didn't come. You would have been gone forever." "Bye!"

Phil: I was like, "When are you guys going to go smoke again?" Jason was like, "I don't think I'm ever getting high again." [laughs] I was like "What if I smoked?" "You'd never come back." [laughs]

Mike: That was really the only time collectively as a band.

Todd: So, did you play that night?

Jason: Yeah! It wasn't too bad.

Madeline: It turned out just fine.

Jason: The last time... we played that skate and surf fest last year or whatever it was, in the summer? We played early and we didn't have time to drink. I ended up going on the boardwalk and just smoking a joint by myself. Then when we played—this happened to me twice, and once was because I ate an edible—I felt like, "Everyone is going to witness me die here on stage," because my heart was slamming into my chest. [laughs] I think when I overcompensate smoking—when I can't drink—that's when it gets weird.

Todd: When was the last time you got really high and it worked out awesome?

Jason: Pretty much every day of my life. [laughs]

Mike: That's all the two of us really do. We don't drink much besides at shows and tour. We just smoke.

Madeline: Have you been to Colorado since weed was legalized?

Jason: No, we've never played there.

Phil: We'd always circle around the edges of the country, like the coast. We never made it. We were planning next tour to go more middle of the country, that area.

Madeline: We would like that. We were always frustrated that you guys never played there.

Jason: I've never even been there and I have family there.

Madeline: It seems like the kind of place you guys would really enjoy. [laughs]

Phil: My old band (Latterman) played there a lot.

Todd: Do you think, as Iron Chic, that weed chills you out and keeps you humble?

Jason: I will say that, at least for me, I know that I have an addictive personality. My dad had problems with substance abuse. It was like, "I'm going to get addicted to something. It might as well be weed." And that's pretty much why I do it. Also, it's just so great and fun. It doesn't make you feel like shit. Yeah, it makes you lazy. It has its drawbacks, too. But for me and for the kind of things that I like to do—when I want to draw or write or whatever, it usually does help facilitate that sort of thing.

Mike: We're productive pot heads.

Jason: I think most of the drug use I've done in my life has in one way or another opened my mind. When you say humbled—I think it does help center and give me a sense of self, or place in the universe.

Todd: I've come in contact with a lot of people—because it's legalish in California—



JULIE A. FERGUSON

that it's part of their daily life and they're great people. And it's a coping mechanism. Dealing with anxiety.

Madeline: Insomnia.

Jason: Especially in today's world. Anybody can drink or have their glass of wine or beer after work, nobody thinks twice about that because that's the way it's been forever. Because weed is illegal, it's this crazy thing. Even today, I'll be at a family party and my cousin will say, "You smell like weed!" "I don't care." [laughs] "You are all drinking."

Madeline: "You smell like whiskey."

Jason: None of us are cops. [laughs]

Todd: Okay, so none of you are cops? [conspiratorially]

Jason: We have to tell you, right? [laughs]

Todd: What would an Olympic weed smoking event entail?

Jason: I feel like I've thought of this before....

Todd: This is from previous interviews. So if you're feeling a little déjà vu, that's what it's from.

Jason: [laughs] I know I had an answer for this at one point in my life.

Todd: We're going to come back to it. Someone has to remember that. [laughs] When was the last time that somebody thought you were really drunk or high and you weren't?

Jason: Not so much a specific time, but the way that I am on stage—whether I'm drunk or not—people think that I'm drunk. They think that I'm drunker than I am.

Todd: Live shots of you are ninety-eight percent with your eyes closed.

Jason: Yeah. That's just how I sing. I don't know. It's not a conscious thing. I actually consciously try to open my eyes more now than I used to. Just to keep an eye on the crowd....

Mike: He stumbles around and he is drunk most of the time, but everybody



JULIE A. FERGUSON

WHAT DO I DO?
ALL THE BULLSHIT.
EVERYTHING ELSE
NOBODY WANTS
TO DO.

thinks he's like blacked-out drunk. And sometimes he is. [laughs]

Jason: It's pretty rare that I'm that drunk. At least before we play. I got into an internet—not fight, really—“discussion” on the Westchester board, where the Spraynard kids all post. And some kid was talking about how drunk I am all the time. He was calling me alcoholic. I had to make an account. “Maybe you should get together with my mom and talk about how I smoke too much weed, too. I don't know why you're talking about this.” [laughs] He thought it was somebody faking me. It never occurred to me that somebody would pretend to be me on the internet. [laughs] He finally apologized. I said, “It's fine. I usually am drunk. But I don't see why you have to talk about it.”

Mike: It's part of the whole “drunk punk” association. We all get annoyed by it, but it's fine. We understand it. We're not trying to glorify that. I don't know; it's a weird thing.

Todd: It doesn't seem like an aesthetic choice with Iron Chic. When you see street punk guys present themselves in a way to engage with a specific audience.

Jason: For me personally, I don't really drink that much. I do it because I get nervous. Nervous isn't exactly the right word. It's how I prepare for playing. The times I've played sober have been a nightmare for one reason or another. It's just what I do. I mean, I feel crazy. I'm standing in a room full of people staring at me. [laughs] And whatever I do, to even feel remotely close to being able to perform, I have to do that, I have to be drunk.

Madeline: So that 7" you put out with Low Culture, is that a buddy obligation split? [laughs]

Mike: No, no, it's more of an infatuation split. [laughs] Chris Mason is probably one of the best friends I've made since I've been playing punk. We've probably split released more records together than any other labels (Dead Broke, Dirt Cult), ever. We met by our old bands going on tour. We didn't even know each other. It was just a natural thing that we'd go on tour with Low Culture. The split came with that. It's what me and Chris think of automatically. “We do a tour, we do a record, right?” We're all really good friends with him. He's like my personal psychologist. [laughs] Whenever I have a meltdown in life in any way. He's a good friend to me.

Madeline: You are close with RVIVR, too?

Phil: Yeah, super close.

Jason: Phil has a long history with them.

Phil: Me and Mattie were in Latterman. And I've recorded them. I went out to Olympia a number of times. I recorded their first record, another EP. I recorded Mattie's other band Shorebirds. I've known Canino for a very long time.

Madeline: [to Phil] So with all the songs that you've recorded, you've been called the GZA (Wu Tang Clan) of the material. Do you write all the songs?

Phil: Yeah, I wrote most of the music, but then we'll collaborate as a band. Bounce ideas off one another. Jason and I will work on vocals. Jason comes up with pretty much all the lyrics. We collaborate on melodies. It's pretty collaborative, but usually I start it off with the main structures and progressions. We work from there. It's a fairly slow-moving process. It gets done. [laughs]

Todd: Do you guys agree with that?

Mike: Phil's the music.

Jason: Yeah, generally.

Todd: So what do you do, Mike?

Mike: What do I do? All the bullshit. [laughs] Everything else nobody wants to do.

Jason: Hey, I do some of the bullshit, too.

Mike: I know. He does all the art and the lyrics. I do the records. For the longest time, I did the tours. Everything else.

Todd: Do you feel overlooked at all?

Mike: Nope. Not really. [laughs]

Todd: [to Mike] Are you comfortable with your role?

Mike: Yeah, I think so.

Todd: Just sitting here, I think you guys feel very comfortable with one another.

Phil: Even before the band, we knew each other for forever. I've known Jason since I was seventeen.

Jason: Yeah, we were all friends before—well, I met Gordon when we started playing—but other than that, we were all friends beforehand.

Mike: And before we were all friends, our bands always played together.

Phil: I recorded all of their stuff.

Jason: I used to be Dumps' hero. [laughs]

Mike: He loves that. [laughs] I grew up listening to his bands.

Jason: I'm only like five years older than him. I'm thirty-six, I think.

Todd: I think?

Jason: Yeah... [laughs] It's 2016?

Todd: Yeah. Can I ask a question about Rob really quickly?

Everyone: Sure.

Todd: Did any of the kids at his school know that their custodian is in Iron Chic?

Jason: I don't think so. He worked for the longest time in kindergarten. So they were little, little kids. I think he had recently moved to a middle school. They were still younger than people who would know.

Todd: Has he had that custodian job for a while?

Jason: As long as I've known him.

Phil: Since he was eighteen.

Todd: Did that restrict your touring a little bit? Did he have the most rigid job schedule?

Phil: Gordon, too.

Jason: Gordon and him both....

Todd: What does Gordon do?

Jason: He's the drummer. Oh, for work?

Phil: He's a lab technician.

Jason: He builds temperature sensors or something.

Phil: Medical equipment. Moisture sensors.

Jason: He sits in like a freezer pretty much. And puts components together, I guess. I've never really got a clear picture of how it works. [laughs]

Mike: We've done a few tours without Rob and stuff, because of his schedule and his family life. It's always been a comfortable understanding with him. If he can't do it, he wanted us to do it.

Jason: Even coming into the band initially, that's how it was. He was like, “I can't really tour that much.” “We're fine with that as long as you don't mind that we have fill-ins for you.” Obviously, Gordon and Rob would get first pick of what they wanted to do. So if we're going to Europe, we'll work around them. If they have three weeks, we'll use those three weeks to do Europe and then we'll figure out the rest later on.

Mike: We've been getting fill-ins for a couple tours. The touring line up is revolving.

Todd: Have you guys played any non-traditional shows?

Mike: We just played our friend's wedding.

Madeline: Did you do cover songs?

Mike: No, everybody else did. [laughs]

Jason: We were going to... that was around the time we actually ended up splitting with Rob. It was a little hairy. We just ended up playing a couple of our songs.

We were actually going to do a RuPaul—it was a gay wedding. And Mark is obsessed with RuPaul. So we were going to do “Supermodel.” “Work it, girl.” [laughs]

Mike: But it didn't work out. [laughs]

Todd: Lubrano (Jason), reading over quite a few interviews it seems that you have difficulty explaining the mechanics and thought process of writing your lyrics.

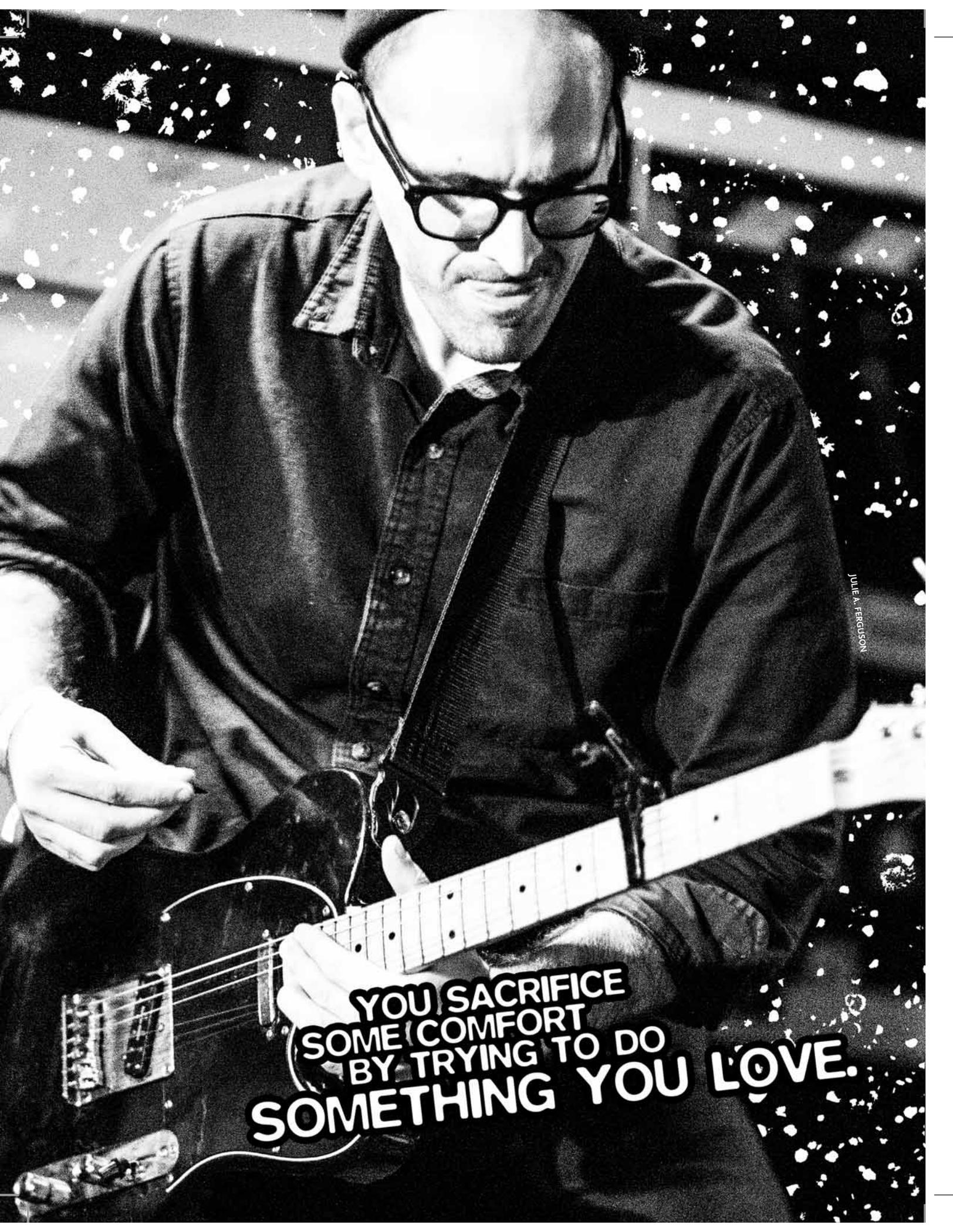
Jason: Yeah... [laughs] We had a podcast interview where the guy was getting so frustrated. “What's this song about?” “It's kind of about whatever you think it's about.” [laughs]

Todd: So let's look at song titles and album titles. I'm a sucker, because I think punk rock has meaning—even if you ascribe your own meaning. So, the two album titles, they are references to what?

Jason: Well, the first one, everybody thinks *Not Like This* is a reference to *The Matrix*. When the one—I forget her name in the movie—but she's dying and she goes, “Not like this....” And it's sort of—by way of an inside joke—kind of a reference to that, because me and Phil would just say it to each other but not specifically referencing *The Matrix*. Just, “Not like this, Phil. Not like this.” Literally, one day we were like, “Let's just call our record that.” So, that's technically a reference to a movie.

Mike: We didn't pick it because of the movie.

Jason: *The Constant One* was actually me. When I can't think of titles, I usually sit on Wikipedia and just let myself fall into a Wikipedia hole; the first thing that strikes my fancy... I'll pick from there. I got into this deep comic book hole. I was getting into reading about Constantine, who's from *Swamp Thing* and *Hellblazer*. I'm a big comic book nerd. There was just this concept—because his name is Constantine—he's a sorcerer. Someone from his bloodline always occupies the role that he occupies within the universe of being this



JULIE A. FERGUSON

**YOU SACRIFICE
SOME COMFORT
BY TRYING TO DO
SOMETHING YOU LOVE.**

supernatural force or regulator. So they refer to that as being “the constant one.” There’s always a Constantine. I just liked the idea of it. It’s actually the one comic book reference that most people don’t bring up to me from that record. They get the Batman one.

Phil: There’s the Alan Moore thing, right?

Jason: Well Alan Moore created Constantine, but I don’t think that concept was actually... that was later on.

Phil: Oh, okay.

Todd: In Iron Chic there’s Batman, Superman, Constantine, and let’s not forget He-Man references in “A Serious House on a Serious Earth,” “The Man of Tomorrow,” and “Castle Numbskull.” Another source that you pull from is funny movies. Like *Groundhog Day*...

Jason: You are literally the first person to get that. [laughs] Or at least to bring it up.

Todd: So would it be reasonable to think that those are the lenses you’re comfortable with? You say comic book nerd, but how you deal artistically with the world is really important. It’s like reading graphic novel. Your writing style is evocative of that. I don’t know if I’m way off base.

Jason: No, no. I appreciate that. It’s just—fiction, science fiction, and fantasy—it’s an interesting way to get people to think about concepts that you wouldn’t normally think about. In a sense, it’s even like LSD or something like that. You think about things in a strange new way. That’s what I respond to.

My favorite authors tend to be strange and heady, existential. That’s just the way it comes out of me. Everything that I’ve ever really done is sort of me trying to be like, “Oh, I like this. I want to do that”—from art to whatever. Sometimes when we sit and we write, I’ll go, “Let’s write a song like this band.” Or, “let’s take apart this part.” I don’t think of it as creating, I think of it as more restructuring things that exist already. I think pretty much all art and thought—everything is that. It’s just taking matter and rearranging it into other configurations. It’s all one thing that exists all the time.

Todd: Also, I learned something about particle physics from you guys. Do you guys know this?

Mike: Spooky action?

Jason: Yeah, it’s like quantum entanglement and particles being in the same place at the same time.

Todd: You can’t discern between two different particles because they act in almost the identical way.

Jason: But over distances, yeah.... I don’t know if anybody would get the same throughway from why I picked the title to what the content of the song means. I don’t think I could accurately explain that. That’s kind of my point, too, when I say I don’t know how to explain songs. It’s not that I don’t, I do in some ways. The stuff I know I don’t necessarily want to tell anybody about. The stuff I don’t, I don’t know how to articulate.

Todd: When you were talking about the spotlight being on you—how do you have a

personal interaction with creativity and be a public person? Or publicly creative?

Jason: People do feel—I don’t want to say entitled—but entitled to know everything about what is that you do. I’m the same way. When I see something, I want to know everything I can know about it. As long as that’s respectful, that’s fine. There’s a certain amount of sharing that you’ll do that goes beyond what you’re necessarily even comfortable with, because you sometimes feel more comfortable than other times. Whoever you’re talking to. Whatever the situation might be. And sometimes you just don’t want to talk about it. Or you don’t feel that anybody deserves to know about it. [laughs] It’s a little bit of all of that.

Todd: I think that spooky action is kind of elegant. It also kind of explains my thorough enjoyment of your band—when two particles are so deeply linked that they share the same existence. The only reason Maddie and I are here today are because we’re both huge fans of the band. And I think there’s something special about the band. I’m just happy you guys exist and are making music.

Jason: Thank you.

Mike: Thanks, man.

Phil: Thank you.

Maddie: He also wants to know what’s up with the New York/New Jersey love of the Gin Blossoms. [laughs]

Jason: Is that a thing? They’re just one of those bands that fall into that weird zone, that post-Replacements pop thing that happened with Goo Goo Dolls and Soul Asylum and all that stuff.

Mike: I’m obsessed with all that shit, bands like that. That show that happened was clearly just because I work at the venue. Us and Timeshares played. We just got on because me and Erik, the drummer of Timeshares, worked there. It was just a lucky thing.

Todd: What show are you talking about?

Mike: We played with Gin Blossoms. [laughs] I thought that’s why you were talking about it.

Todd: No, you just reference them in a song. [laughs] They were a Phoenix band called the Sand Rubies that would come up and play Flagstaff where I went to school. Fucking didn’t like those guys.

Mike: And now the singer is from Long Island, so they always play around here. We played with them, funny enough.

Jason: That’s just one of those things when you’re a teenager growing up. I didn’t think I liked the Gin Blossoms then, but I’ve learned to appreciate it later on.

Phil: That record rules. [laughs] It does.

Maddie: I think you’ve only given him more questions. [laughs]

Mike: It’s hard to explain.

Maddie: Have you ever considered getting a comic book made with your lyrics?

Jason: Not specifically that. But because I like to draw and stuff, I’ve always wanted to do a comic. It’s just such a daunting project for me, the way I work. I’ve never been able to just sit down and do it. If somebody wanted to, I would think it was awesome.

Todd: So the transmission of your van conked out and you had no reverse on tour?

Phil: It was a little weird at first. [laughs]

Jason: It wasn’t just weird at first, we were freaking out about it. But we got so used it within a day or two.

Phil: Yeah, within a couple days you just push it out of the spot and you’re on your way. You don’t park anywhere where you need to back out.

Jason: We did have to ask some places—when we played Chicago or wherever—“Can you put some cones out? We can’t parallel park.”

Todd: Only forward. [laughs]

Mike: Like a shark, you know. That was the joke. It really changed the way you drive. It was like two weeks, too.

Jason: I think it was longer than that.

Phil: We had actually lost the transmission. Got a brand new one for four thousand dollars in a day. Missed one show, I think it was in Albuquerque. Then we blew out the reverse on the brand new transmission and couldn’t get it fixed anywhere else, otherwise it voided the warranty.

Todd: How did you blow out the reverse?

Phil: I didn’t. [laughs]

Todd: [to Jason] Okay, how did you blow out the reverse? [laughs]

Jason: Because we were driving through the mountains.

Mike: I wasn’t going to say anything. [laughs]

Jason: I don’t remember where we were going.

Mike: I think it was Missoula.

Phil: Yeah, it was the Montana mountains.

Jason: It was kind of snowy and whatever. I’m trying to downshift to go up a hill and it was kind of sticking and I was wiggling it. And it just went up through neutral into reverse straight from drive.

Mike: It sounded like a shotgun blast.

Jason: I yanked it back down and it was fine; we were driving. It made such a crazy noise.

Mike: We only missed one show.

Phil: We ended up stopping in a rest stop....

Jason: ...and I went into reverse and it just wasn’t doing anything. I think the gears shaved off. We didn’t tell them that’s how it happened. [laughs] We ended up getting it fixed under warranty...

Mike: When we got home. Two weeks. Fucking Boston, Chicago, major cities with no reverse. [laughs]

Jason: That’s when we got it stuck in Boston, right?

Phil: I think so. In the parking garage?

Jason: We couldn’t find anywhere to park near the show, so we had to go to a parking garage. It had clearance, but the turnaround thing—the ramps you drive up to go to the next level—had these concrete pillars that were diagonal. So it came down way lower at this particular point. We’re driving up it and JR gets the van stuck up against the concrete. [laughs] The guys come out and they’re like, “Put it in reverse!” “We don’t have reverse!” [laughs] I’m trying to push it out and it’s stuck against concrete. We finally got it out and the guy said he couldn’t

let us out without a ticket, and we couldn't find the ticket. I'm just like, "Charge me the twenty dollars or whatever it costs for the day!" I was screaming at this guy. I was about to kill him. This was while the show was happening. I went with JR to park. I literally got back like twenty minutes before the band before us played. I got shitfaced immediately. [laughs] I was so mad.

Mike: We don't have any luck with vans.

Phil: The one we have now, besides the transmission, has been okay. We're in it.

Madeline: Why didn't you guys go to Fest this year?

Phil: I think it was just an issue of—we played seven years in a row.

Jason: We'd been trying not to play for the last three or four years.

Mike: I've been there ten years in a row.

Jason: Even before we ever played.

Mike: And it's great. It's the greatest show we play every year. But yeah, we just needed a year off.

Jason: Every year it's like, "You want to play? Here's some money," and we do it. I personally enjoy it. I like having a thing to do every year that we do. It just worked out that that was the year we could take a break.

Madeline: Do you ever get annoyed being grouped into that community all the time?

Todd: Beards and PBR?

Mike: It goes along with the whole drunk punk thing.

Jason: I don't take any offense from that crowd. I'm fine with it, I enjoy it, I identify with it. But it's not all there is. I think the idea that the whole thing is pigeonholed isn't really fair. There are some crazy ass bands that play at Fest that don't sound like we sound or what people expect bands like that to sound. I don't think it's as cut and dry as people make it out to be. It's an easy target sometimes. Like, beards? [laughs] Beards are beards.

Mike: I'm lazy. I didn't purposefully grow a beard.

Jason: My face looks stupid without it.

Todd: And it's cold here. [laughs] So, this is from RVIVR: what pro-dawg, pro-dude stuff on tour do you actively have to thwart?

Mike: There are a lot of things that make us feel uncomfortable that we avoid in a pro-dawg world.

Jason: Merch cuts is one. Merch cuts is when the venue takes a percentage of your merch sales.

Mike: We're very adamant about shit like that. We hate radius clauses and things like that.

Jason: We understand the concept of why people would ask for a radius clause. And for the most part, it's not that bad. Some things are like, "You can't play for basically nine months." And especially if it's in the New York area. "Oh, we can't play in Long Island because we're playing a show in Jersey or whatever it is?"

Mike: We don't sound check, really. [laughs]

Jason: We kind of sound check. We did on the last tour.

Phil: The pro-dawg shit is weird because we grew up in DIY punk for the most part.

We straddle a line between being a working band and trying to maintain—but not cross over into—weird, super pro business areas. Keep it balanced between where we came from and...

Mike: We have strong morals. We're not going to do something that we don't feel comfortable with just because somebody else thinks it's going to be good for our band. We're pretty well aware of what's good for our band at this point.

Jason: We're also a highly self-sufficient band. Phil records us. Gordon and I do all the merch—artwork and stuff. Dumps (Mike) has always booked us and put our record out at the beginning. Yeah, we want bigger opportunities. But if it's something we're not comfortable with, then, "Fuck you. We have the ability to do this on our own." We do want to try new things and expand a little. A lot of bands are just hungry for it. They'll do anything. It's not necessarily their fault. People will tell you a lot of things that you want to hear just to get you to do something.

Madeline: So touring... what was the weed situation like in Australia?

Mike: It was good.

Jason: We got weed. [laughs] The first day we got there we didn't have any, and that sucked.

Mike: We met a band called The Bennies, who're this crazy party band that got us really stoned and fucked up.

Madeline: Oh yeah, they're a Fest band, too. They traded me merch for weed when I saw them at Fest. [laughs]

Phil: Those guys are wild.

Mike: We got weed and people took care of us. People generally know. They'll either offer to smoke with us or whatever.

Jason: Australia was a little strange, because when we got there, we had two days off and two shows in the same city. So we were in Melbourne for five days in a row without going anywhere. They put us up in a little hotel suite thing. We weren't in the van going from place to place. We were just sitting around like we were at home watching TV, walking around town. We got weed right away and it was kind of nice. [laughs] We didn't have that weird nervousness of driving around with it.

Madeline: Did you like Australia more than touring in Europe or more than you like touring in the U.S. in general?

Jason: I wouldn't say so much "like," but it was less of a culture shock than I was expecting.

Mike: Yeah, totally.

Jason: I thought it would be more European, more like the U.K., and it felt more like here. Honestly, besides some of the weird names for things and the weird stores, and people driving on the wrong side or whatever... [laughs] ...it felt like it could have been in Portland, or parts of New York.

Mike: It was the farthest we'd travelled and been the most comfortable. It was nice.

Jason: I think being sedentary for parts of it helped with that. We got used to walking around and dealing with the grocery store. We usually get kind of dragged through

Europe by the seat of our pants. We don't get to experience a lot of everything.

Madeline: So that's the most comfortable. What's the most uncomfortable place that you have toured?

Mike: Here. [laughs]

Jason: Absolutely. Parts of the U.S.

Mike: Touring Europe is miles better than touring the U.S. We love doing it, but any time we go there it's a fucking blast.

Jason: You start seeing some of those billboards and weird shit on some middle highway... I don't want to say anywhere in particular.

Madeline: Oh yeah, I grew up in Nebraska. [laughs]

Jason: Remember that fucking billboard with like, "Be good or the Devil will get you!" [laughs] "All right, fuck. Here we are. Let's stop as little as we can."

Mike: Touring the States is hard.

Todd: What are you facing as a band that you've never had to face solo?

Jason: That we wouldn't have to deal with on our own? That's hard to vocalize.

Phil: I think in one respect—the idea of us trying to do the band as a big part of lives as getting older—it's a big risk in a way. You sacrifice some comfort by trying to do something you love. Obviously, you're not going to make a lot of money in this. It's one thing when you do it in your early twenties, but as you get older, you have to confront the realities, the responsibilities of being an adult. Trying to figure it out; you don't want to leave what you love behind. You try to strike a balance where we can sort of be comfortable.

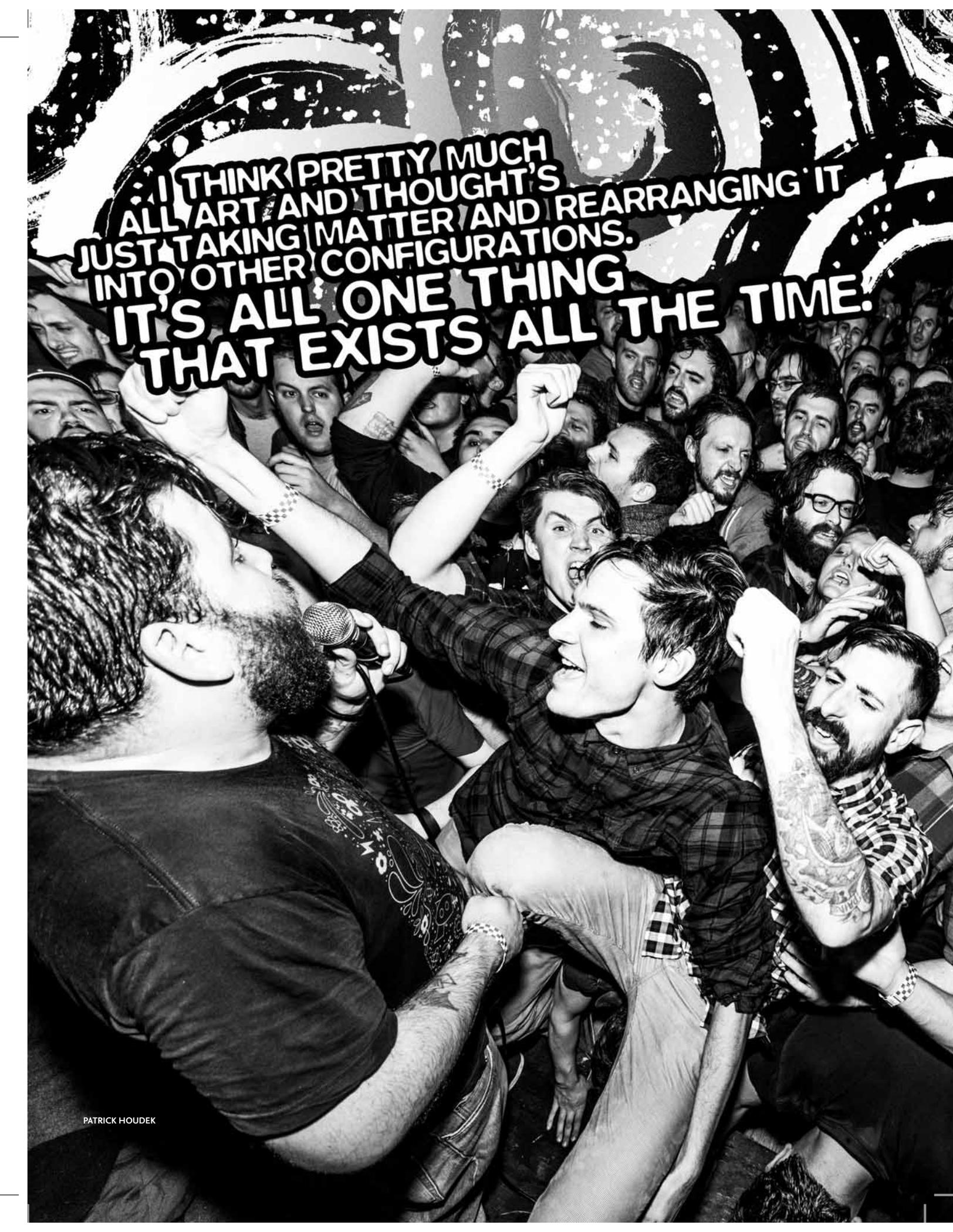
Jason: I know what you mean. It's not like a regular job where you can be a workaholic or go put yourself through law school and bust your ass.

Phil: And there's an obvious return.

Jason: Yeah. There's an obvious return and an obvious long-term return. But being in a band, you sacrifice your time from your family, your friends, or whatever it is that you do when you're not playing music. It's fulfilling in one sense, obviously, because you're doing what you want to do. What do you do when you're forty, have no retirement, and you can't do it anymore—and also don't have whatever it is that you neglected to do it. It's kind of a catch-22. It's a very hard thing to balance.

And as we saw with Rob and we see with Gordon now, and even me to an extent—my wife wants to have a kid eventually. Gordon just had a kid. Rob has a kid. It's not easy to balance that. We, as the ones who have less responsibility, would set it up so that we can do what we need to do and they can be as active as they want to be. Not a lot of bands have that. It's kind of all or nothing. Or when you're younger, it's not as big a deal. You can say, "I'm going to do this for five years. When it's done, then I'll worry about whatever." When we have to worry about it, we'll be too old for it. [laughs]

Todd: How do you feel about that, Mike?



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Mike: Doing this is all I know. I think the three of us will continue to do it for as long as we can and make as many sacrifices as we need to do it. If nothing more comes of it, that's fine, too. We never did it to try and get anywhere with it. We just did it because we enjoyed it. The fact that it's come this far has blown all of our minds already. We're in it for the ride of it. We'll see where it goes.

Madeline: All right, so weed Olympics?

Jason: [laughs] What we used to refer to as the Weed Olympics was when you'd have multiple things—a bong, a bowl, a blunt/joint/whatever, all going around at once. As soon as you pass something, and it just goes around until somebody taps out.

Phil: A weed decathlon.

Jason: Yeah, pretty much. You just didn't stop... until you die.

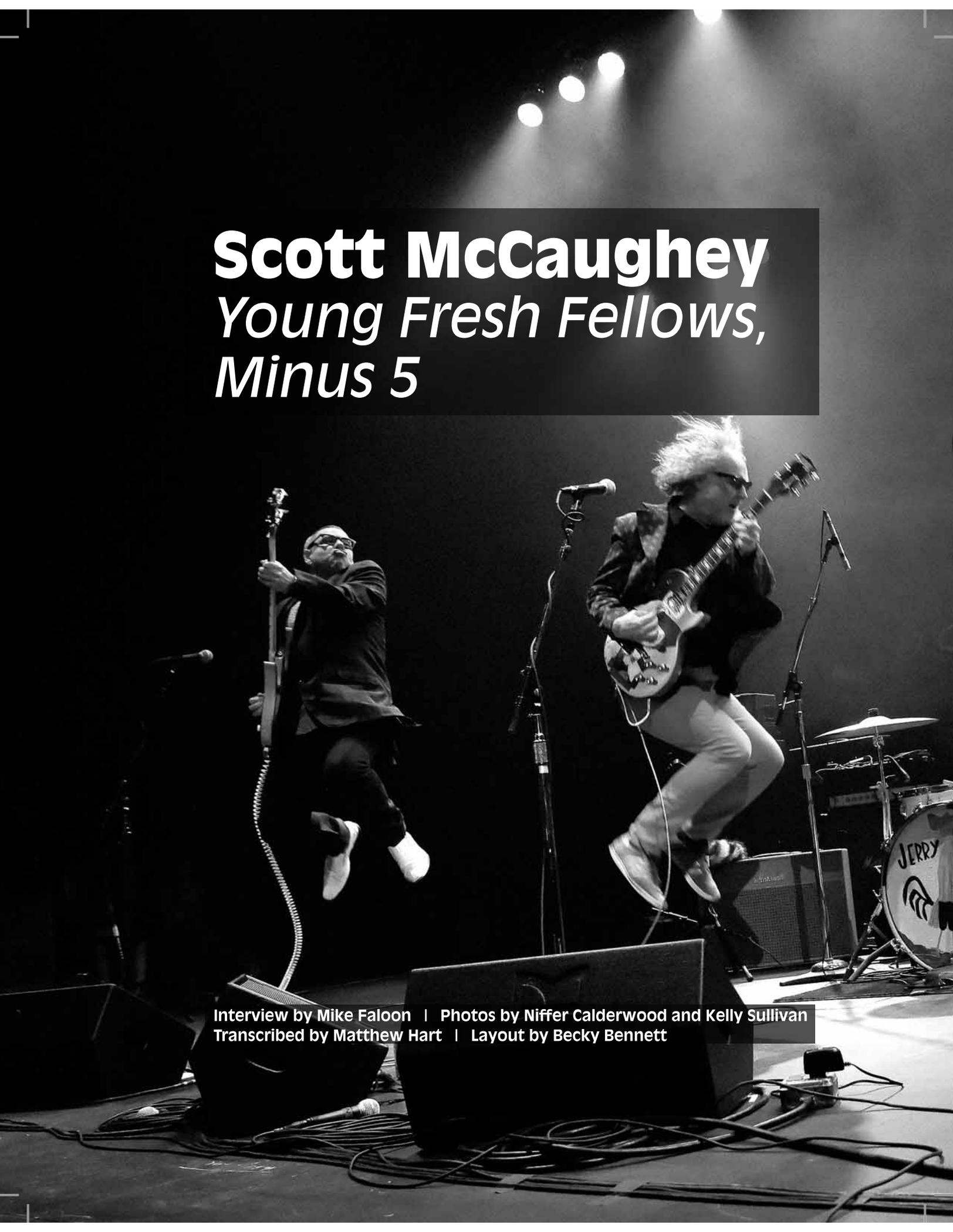
Todd: That's a good place to end. [laughs] Thank you very much. We really appreciate your time.

Everyone: Thank you.



The McAllister Family Memorial Fund aims to provide long-term support to the loved ones Robert McAllister (Iron Chic/Capital) left behind when he passed away on January 9, 2016. While other crowdsourcing pages have been established to provide immediate relief for Rob's family in the aftermath of his passing, the McAllister Family Memorial Fund will serve as an ongoing resource to help Marisa, Rob's partner, and Ramona, Rob's daughter, in the weeks, months, and years to come. www.youcaring.com/marisa-pulchin-502523





Scott McCaughey

Young Fresh Fellows, Minus 5

Interview by Mike Faloon | Photos by Niffer Calderwood and Kelly Sullivan
Transcribed by Matthew Hart | Layout by Becky Bennett



Seattle. Mid-to-late '80s. Hair was long, thrift store flannels plentiful, grunge was on the rise. Black Sabbath, blurry black and whites, opiate-fueled brass ring aspirations. The story has been told many times but is further simplified with each rendering, and overlooked are the bands that laced their records with humor, those for whom commercial success was secondary to having fun.

Chief among these bands was the Young Fresh Fellows, led by Scott McCaughey. I was drawn to their first-listen hooks and barely contained pandemonium. I loved singing along with songs that felt like they would sail off the rails at any moment. And while the tunes hit early and often, McCaughey's wit revealed itself both upfront and over time—with lyrics that keep me returning for more.

Over the years, McCaughey has fronted a number of bands (Young Fresh Fellows, Minus 5, Baseball Project) and played with countless others (R.E.M., Robyn Hitchcock). He's been a music reviewer, record store clerk, and filler of mail orders. Along the way he's garnered a reputation as a writer and performer that led to playing Paul Westerberg's wedding and producing Teengenerate's first album.

Yet for all that he's accomplished McCaughey exudes a restless sense that he hasn't yet found what he's looking for. Or maybe he keeps finding it and that spurs him to press on. In either case, he has no plans to ease up. In fact, McCaughey will tell you that he's never had any plans other than to keep the proverbial shirtsleeves rolled up.

His last venture was the most expansive of his career, a five-LP set of all-new material, the Minus 5's *Scott the Hoople in the Dungeon of Horror*, a project he recorded at home with friends. His songs evoke the Beach Boys and Big Star, along with the Clean, Reigning Sound, and Treasure Fleet. He continues to mine that vein of timeless garage pop and rock and punk that many of us can't get enough of.

Mike: You grew up in California and the Young Fresh Fellows formed in Seattle. What brought you up to the Northwest?

Scott: We went up there to start a music magazine, me and Chuck from the Fellows. They had *Bay Area Music* magazine, which was sort of the first free entertainment magazine. We thought, "Oh, we should start one of those someplace else." So we ended up moving to Seattle. We thought that or Tucson would be really cool. I think somebody told us that we could stay in their boyfriend's basement or something. [laughs] I think that might have been the determining factor. We loaded up his Volkswagen van with all our equipment and records. We bought a 4-track and we'd record stuff in the basement. We already had some of the early Fellows songs.

Mike: This was '79 or '80?

Scott: The end of '79 is when we moved up there. We just started recording stuff. We met Conrad Uno (Egg Studios, Popllama Records). He said he had a studio and wanted to start a label. And if we put it out on his label, he'd record it for free. That's how it all started. [laughs]

Mike: To what extent did you pursue the music magazine?

Scott: In the two or three months since Chuck had been there, a magazine had started—*The Rocket*. We walk into the Rainbow Tavern and there was a rack with issue number two.

Mike: It's not even number one. It's already the second one.

Scott: Yeah, exactly. They had The Clash on the cover and it was like, "Goddammit! What are we going to do?" We went and talked to them and they said, "Well, you guys could work here." Chuck got a job selling advertising and I got a job driving around collecting quarters from the newspaper boxes. [laughs] It was ridiculous. We were paying fifty dollars a month for rent. We had enough money for beer and hot dogs.

Mike: And you later wrote for *The Rocket*?

Scott: I ended up writing a lot for *The Rocket*. I interviewed Dave Davies and Dave Edmunds, people I really like a lot. I did a column for a long time called "Searching USA" that was all indie records. I discovered a lot of great records.

Mike: To be a Seattle music writer in the early-to-mid '80s, that's a good place to be. [laughs] The first Fellows record (*The Fabulous Sounds of the Pacific Northwest*) got a good review in *Rolling Stone*. It seems like independent releases used to circulate more than they do today.

Scott: That review was actually in *Rolling Stone Record* magazine. They had another magazine. Our second record (*Topsy Turvy*) got in actual *Rolling Stone*. That was a big moment. That was pretty cool.

But our first record got some good reviews. People started playing it at college radio stations. Uno sent it to like thirty stations. We wouldn't have even done that. We weren't going to do anything. Then we started getting on these playlists. People would write, "You should come in." We thought, "Wow, maybe we should!" [laughs]

We just rented a van and went out and played for a month without really having a clue what we were doing.

Mike: Just hitting some of those towns where there was support.

Scott: And trying to fill in through word of mouth with other places. Somehow we got one college gig that paid like eight hundred dollars, which basically paid for the tour. [laughs] We didn't come home with any money, believe me.

Mike: Was that happening closer to home, too?

Scott: People started liking us in Seattle pretty quickly. We played a couple of shows, then six months after our first show our record came out. We recorded the record before we played a show.

Mike: It was just the three of you, right?

Scott: Me, Tad, and Chuck. When we started playing live Jim joined in. It just came together. I think we were pretty good instantly. I don't know how it happened, but it was fun to watch because we were goofy. Tad was crazy—super-on-fire drummer and all that. Then five months later when we had a record out people were like, "Whoa, they have a record." [laughs] There were a lot of punk bands in Seattle that made singles, but there were very few LPs that came out.

Mike: You had a cassette and then you went to the LP?

Scott: The cassette was just Chuck and I. It was on a 4-track kind of thing. We just sent it to our friends. We made like twenty copies or something. That was 1981. The album was three years later.

Mike: Later Chuck leaves the band and Kurt Bloch from the Fastbacks joins?

Scott: We really liked the Fastbacks, we did shows together. I worked at a record store in Seattle, so I knew all of the people in bands who put out 45s. Kurt went on tour with us in '87 as our soundman. He'd never been a soundman before, but we just liked him. [laughs] "You should come with us." Which actually wasn't that great, because it wasn't smart for him to be out there every day with us playing and him not playing. All he wants to do is play guitar and do rock'n'roll. I think he had fun, but I think it was difficult for him.

But the Fastbacks, they went through a lot of periods where they had a lot of downtime—in between drummers and stuff like that. In '89 they weren't really doing much at all. I didn't even know if they were going to keep going at that point. That's when Chuck quit. So we asked Kurt if he wanted to try playing with us. It just seemed so easy because we were already good friends with him. We'd already traveled with him. We went to Idaho and did two shows on a weekend. One was an outdoor show at a park and I think on the first song I dumped a beer into his guitar. [laughs] His guitar totally stopped working. [laughs] "This is what it's going to be like." [laughs]

Mike: That was an accident?

Scott: No, that was on purpose. I wasn't actually doing it to test him, I was just having fun, being an idiot. [laughs] I don't

think he thought it was that funny. But he knew what were like. He had a totally different style from Chuck. Chuck came more out of the Beatles and country rock, whereas Kurt came out of punk rock and hard rock. Deep Purple and the Buzzcocks, Pointed Sticks.

Mike: Those are oil and water combos in lesser hands.

Scott: Kurt was kind of perfect for us. I wanted to have a little harder sound at that point. It worked great. Some people I don't think liked him as much because he played those really shredding solos, like super [imitates righteous shredding]. [laughs] Some people thought that that wasn't part of our "pure pop approach." But we never had any kind of approach. Our approach was just to play anything that we felt like at any time, whether we knew how to do it or not.

Mike: Malleable.

Scott: Exactly. That was great. It was great having Kurt. He's still the new guy in the band, even after twenty-five years in the group now. [laughs]

Mike: The Young Fresh Fellows still put out records every once in a while. Do you still play in the Northwest?

Scott: We play in Portland occasionally. We play in Seattle more occasionally.

[laughs] We play in Spain every three years, probably. We go over there for a week and do five to ten shows. That's pretty much our circuit. I'd love to play more, but Jim and Tad have real family lives, real jobs, the whole business. Kurt and I are down for the count. [laughs] Jim is working now for a cabinet maker. He's really handy with that kind of stuff. He would always build the cages in the inside of the van, to hold the gear. Tad works in the dump. He's in the little house and he tells you how much you owe. [laughs] Depending on how much you've put into our landfill. He actually likes it I think... eh, he probably hates it. [laughs] But it's a decent job.

Mike: You co-produced the first Teengenerate album. How did that come together?

Scott: We went to Japan in the early '90s a couple of times. We got to be friends with all the bands that opened for us. One night it would be the 5.6.7.8's, the next night it would be Supersnazz, the next night it would be Teengenerate.

Teengenerate came over and they did stuff in Egg Studios. Then I took them down to Kearney Barton, the guy who recorded The Sonics. That's where we did (Teengenerate's) *Audio Recording*. Recording there was so funny, too, because you had no idea what stuff was going to sound like. His studio was such a mess. It was in his house and it was chaos. There was junk everywhere; you couldn't even get to the board there were so many tape boxes and shit on top of it. He threw up a couple of mics and you start playing and recording on his 1" 8-track and you couldn't even tell what the playback was the speakers were really crappy so you had to take it somewhere else to listen to it. But

you take it wherever and listen to it “Whoa, sounds pretty awesome.” The Fellows did some songs with him. “99 Girls” is the greatest sounding thing we ever recorded. I think it sounds amazing.

Mike: As producer, were you more a cultural conduit and ambassador?

Scott: Yeah, definitely. I brought ‘em in there. I was between them and Kearney: trying to say what we wanted, what to do, all that stuff. It was fun. I brought a lot of bands in there—I took A-Bones there and The Smugglers. With varying results.... [laughs] Billy (A-Bones, Norton Records) was so excited when he saw a disc cutting machine. “We could leave with an acetate of your session.” So, Kearney was like, “Oh yeah, no problem!” He cut them an acetate of the two songs they recorded, we took it home, and it didn’t play at all. It just completely didn’t work. [laughs]

Mike: What was his take on Teengenerate?

Scott: He was unfazed by anybody we brought in there. He recorded The Sonics! Most of what he was doing in later years was recording barbershop quartets and going to churches and recording church organs. Just whatever he got hired to do.

Mike: One anecdote I’ve heard about but have never read about is the Fellows playing Paul Westerberg’s wedding.

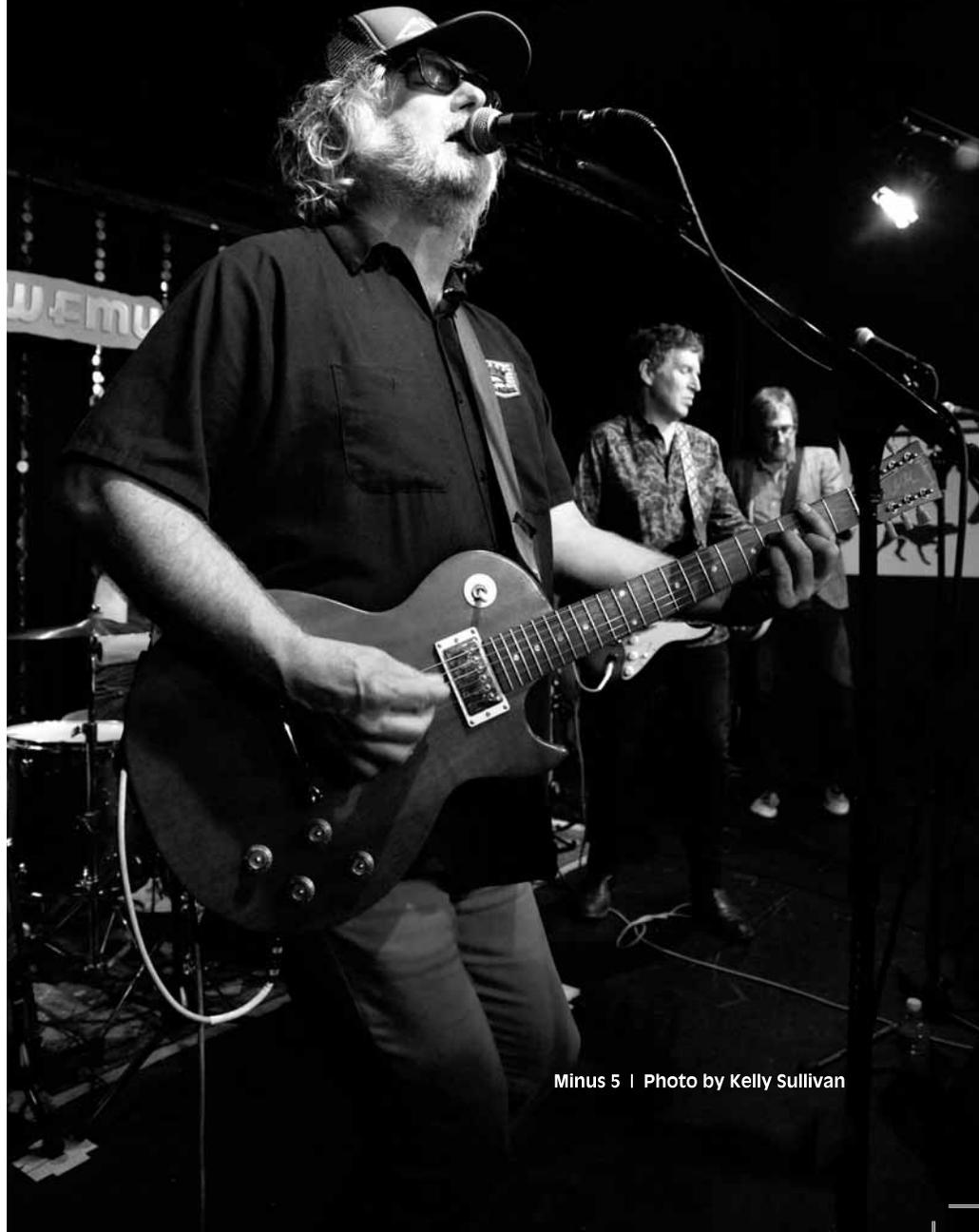
Scott: We did that. I think Paul had heard of us from his girlfriend at the time Lori Bizer, who worked at Twin Tone. Somehow she got hip to the first Fellows record—I think she might have been a DJ at a college station. She turned him onto it and for some reason he liked it, too. [laughs] That was ‘85 or ‘86 probably. We got to be friends and they asked us if we’d be interested in playing their wedding. I was like, “Yeah, if you think we could do it.” Because there’s going to be families and old people. You can’t just get up there and go apeshit. We recorded versions of us doing “And I Love Her” by the Beatles and “Beginnings” by Chicago on my 4-track. [laughs] We sent those two and he’s like, “Okay, you’re in.” [laughs]

As it turned out, the whole wedding was just a rage. We started the first set playing standards like “True Love,” “Misty,” et cetera... probably rather poorly. By the end of the set, I’m pretty sure the Replacements had joined in. The second set was just pure mayhem. [laughs] I don’t know if I even got on stage. The minister was playing harmonica. [laughs] Whoever was up there with an instrument played covers and other songs that were not even songs. It got out of hand really quickly. [laughs] It was fun.

Mike: I remember a very flattering quote by Westerberg saying that you were his favorite songwriter, or something to that effect.

Scott: I don’t know if I remember him saying anything about my songwriting. If he did, I’d be happy. He had said in some interview like, “If you think NRBQ is great, you should hear the Young Fresh Fellows, they’re like the punk rock version of NRBQ and they’re the best band in the world.” Or whatever. [laughs] That was really cool.

We were paying fifty dollars a month for rent. We had enough money for beer and hot dogs.



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Mike: One of my favorite Fellows songs is “My Boyfriend Is in Killdozer.” Butch Vig recorded a few Killdozer records and later the Fellows’s *Electric Bird Digest*.

Scott: That song actually came up before we ever knew Butch or considered him for producing us, though the Killdozer records were not unknown to us. We were playing at O’Cayz Corral in Madison—home of Killdozer, Butch, and Smart Studios—around ‘87 or ‘88 and as soon as we rolled up we belted up to the bar and the bartender was hip, pretty, and aloof. Still, we tried to make friends, as we would, but she was too cool for us. As the evening went on, we all reported back to each other that at various times getting drinks she had dropped the casual comment, “My boyfriend is in Killdozer.” I thought it was funny and the song pretty much wrote itself.

Sometimes I feel a little guilty about it, like maybe it wasn’t nice to make fun of her in song, maybe she’s a lovely person behind that cool façade. But hey, maybe she’d think it was worth it to have inspired a song at all. Although for all I know, there might be a big pile of Killdozer tunes that she inspired as well. She could be the Muse of Madison. Anyway, I do wish her well, wherever she is.

Mike: And all these years later you’re still going, still forging your own path. I mean, the Minus 5’s *Scott the Hoopie in the Dungeon of Horror*—these records are amazing. This is your best stuff.

Scott: Oh, thanks.

Mike: When I first heard about the box set, no matter how many times I read that it was going to be a five album set, I thought, “No, that’s a mistake. No one puts out five-LP sets.” But I have a copy at home to prove that it exists, and one song that comes to mind is “Song for Peter Tork.” That chorus really resonates: “You just work, and it works, to keep on working.” It would have been easy to mock his fall from grace. Instead, you chose to focus on his work ethic after the Monkees broke up.

Scott: Yeah, Chuck and I were living in Sonoma County, and we were coming back from seeing somebody at Berkeley Community Theatre or something, maybe the Kinks. I don’t know. [laughs] But we saw

this sign in the town he lives in, “Tonight Peter Tork.” And we’re thinking, “No way. You’ve got to be kidding me.” We pull in and it was literally like two in the morning. They’re putting the chairs on the table and Peter was there just winding up his guitar cables, packing up. I was thinking about that when I wrote the Peter Tork song, just about the keep on working thing. There’s something to be said about it.

Mike: I think that’s one of the things that binds the people that contribute to this zine that I was talking about earlier (*Razorcake*). It’s not about climbing rungs. It’s about doing your part and that’s part of the reason that we’re able to continue with these pursuits. The means over the ends. There’s a shared frame of reference.

Scott: Yeah, I don’t know what else to do. I don’t have a plan. If I just do stuff that I love to do, that’s what I do. I’m lucky enough that somehow I get by doing it and have a great time. [laughs]

Mike: So how did someone with no plan manage to put out a five-album set?

Scott: Also, without having a plan. I was just recording a lot of songs in my basement whenever I had time in-between all the other stuff I do—not really knowing what they were for or if they were demos or real recordings. At one point I thought, “I’ve got to decide which of these songs are going to be on the next Minus 5 record.” It had been three years since our last record: I could do this kind of psychedelic record, I could do a downer record, I could do a total pop record, I could do one that’s a sequel to the *Killingsworth* album. I couldn’t decide.

Mike: So all of those categories had enough songs that you could see them developing into records?

Scott: Yeah, but I never really made a conscious decision to focus on one of them, so I just kept recording. I thought I would try to finish as many of them as I could and then figure it out. At one point I was like, “I really like this stuff. Some of it’s really good.” I started talking to Yep Roc (Records), “What if I did a three-record set?” Thinking they’d just be, “Oh God.” [laughs] Picturing them in their office going, “Uhh...” They were very supportive: “Well, okay if you could figure

out a creative way to do it.” And I think they suggested that it could be a Record Store Day thing. “Oh, that’s a cool idea.” We made tentative plans to do that. They said, “We need it finished by November.” Then I actually had a deadline. [laughs]

I kept working on the songs, but I still didn’t know which ones were going to be on it or what it was going to be. I just kept trying to finish all of the songs. I called them, “What if it’s a four-record set?” [laughs] They’re like, “I guess... okay.” And then, “It’s going to be a five-record set.” “Oh my god. But, well, we can’t give you an advance.” [laughs] They knew it was going to cost so much to make the goddamn thing. “Okay, I understand that.” We worked out a deal. I finished the five records. They were thrilled with it actually, thought it was a super cool thing to do. I’m sure they got their money back. I think there were 750 copies made. They probably put five hundred out there and kept some. I got one hundred of them.

Mike: So not having a plan yielded more in the end. One of the songs that sticks with me is “Weymer Never Dies.” It’s one of the many songs about gratitude and honoring people you’ve known. My first impression was “What a great, long song. So easy to get lost in it, in a good way.” Then I picked up the references to musicians such as Michael Hurley and Alice Coltrane.

Scott: I could have written that verse like ten times with different people in it.

Mike: So who is Weymer?

Scott: He’s a friend of mine who I grew up with. He was in the first couple of bands that I was ever in. He’s part of my high school gang that I’m still friends with, except he’s not with us anymore. Despite my claim in the song that he never dies, he actually did. [laughs] That’s the whole point of it. He was a super funny guy, but unbelievably passionate about music. He was kind of the ringleader in the first rock band that I was in, Hannibal’s Chorus Boys. He was also in the first actual group that I was ever in, this kind of avant-garde, freeform, freak-out collective of guys who didn’t really play instruments called Vannevar Bush And His Differential Analyzers. [laughs] That was the first band I was in.



Hannibal’s Chorus Boys, Saratoga, CA, 1973

L to R: Gary Norris (piano), Jerry Peterson (electric clarinet, bass, guitar, in this photo apparently on nothing), Chuck Carroll (guitar), Dale Robinson (drums), Scott McCaughey (ill-advised white navy pants, guitar), John Weymer (bass)

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Bruce Louden, another friend, and I were conceptualizing a musical group that would consist of our friends and not be bound by genre, traditional music forms, or ability. Looking for a name, we were inspired by this photo in our high school trigonometry textbook more by the name itself than by the fact that he was quite an influential historical figure. I don't think we grasped that at the time. We just thought it sounded funny. To this day, my old pals and I still describe something that's weird/funny/cool/wacky as "so bush" or "totally bush." It's the ultimate compliment. We have many recordings of Bush, and I'd love to release something one day. It would be much hated I'm sure. [laughs] That gang from high school has stayed friends. All united by music.

Mike: "Dead Irish Writers" is in a similar mold, in terms of expressing appreciation. I've had mixed luck with those writers. I loved *At Swim-Two-Birds*. I did okay with *Dublin Stories* but I'm too intimidated by *Ulysses*. What's your experience with dead Irish writers?

Scott: Well, *At Swim-Two-Birds* is genius so I'm glad you like it. I also heartily recommend *The Third Policeman*, *The Poor Mouth*, and collections of his (Brian O'Nolan) early collegiate writings and later newspaper columns. As for Joyce, *Dubliners* often travels with me. I find I can pick it up and read a story any time or any place and get so much out of its perfectly understated blend of humor and heartbreak. *Ulysses* is a load, but so amazing on every level that it's worth the effort, and also a book that I can open to any page at any time and be instantly drawn in.

Anthony Burgess, of *Clockwork Orange* fame, wrote a very helpful and enlightening book on Joyce that can be used to get you going. I consider both *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* my two favorite works of fiction. People think of Joyce as an unfathomable intellectual but they often forget, or just don't see, how fucking funny his work is. And yet with so much heart. And then Brendan Behan; he's more the drunken lout of the bunch—not a criticism!—and I'm much less familiar with his work but he made for a more entertaining verse than Frank O'Connor—whose stories I love, read "The Drunkard" sometime!—or Seamus Heaney.

Mike: It seems like your lyrics have shifted from focusing on specific words, lines, or phrases to having a broader scope—being more thematic or conceptual.

Scott: That's possibly true. I haven't really thought about it that way. With the Fellows a lot of times, we would just grab on a phrase that we thought was funny or intriguing and just make something out of it. I could whip up something really quickly and we could start playing.

I guess it's different, because the songs in the box set weren't "band-tested." I took a lot of time to get the lyrics where I liked them, where I wanted them to be. Some I wrote pretty fast. Others I did a lot of editing, tweaking all the way along. I think with "Michael Nesmith," I'd already recorded it



Young Fresh Fellows | Photo by Niffer Calderwood

We never had any kind of approach. Our approach was just to play anything that we felt like at any time, whether we knew how to do it or not.

when I thought of two more verses would be really, really good. [laughs] Which was absurd, because it was already ten minutes long. It's a flight of fancy and the story isn't linear and somewhat nonsensical. I still felt the need to make it tie together. I guess Mike Nesmith heard it and said, "Yeah, I don't know if it's really about me but it's a cool song." [laughs]

You might be right about the lyrics. The one thing that I've noticed in my songwriting in recent years is that I'm still so limited musically I keep coming back to the same chords over and over again. I've figured out that I pay more attention to melody than I ever used to. I figure if it's got a good melody it doesn't matter if it's D-G-A again or whatever. I learned how to grow in that way a little bit because I never thought about melody in the Fellows. I was just like, "Get three chords, let's cram these lyrics in, and let's go!" [laughs]

Mike: Do you think that your reading has impacted your writing, too?

Scott: You'd be surprised how little I read, actually. I read a lot of stupid books about music and baseball. I am reading *Don Quixote*, which I've never read. I'm about two hundred pages in and I think it's amazing. I had no idea how funny Cervantes was. It might take me months to read it. I just don't have that much time, especially during baseball season

when I'm doing fantasy baseball instead of reading and educating myself. [laughs] I'm educating myself with statistics.

Mike: How'd you get Chris Mars (Replacements) to play on the record?

Scott: Well, I knew Chris from the Young Fresh Fellows / 'Mats days. But he had long since stopped going out much into the rock world and settled into doing his quite amazing artwork. "Rocket for Girls" is the one song on the whole box set that was recorded a long time ago, probably in 1998 or '99. But for some reason I'd never quite finished it or found the right place for it on an album.

One night in Minneapolis, probably an off night on an R.E.M. tour, I went to my buddy Scott Ferril's house. Scott is a film director who has done most or all of the Minus 5 videos. He had a recording setup at his house, and was friends with Chris and violinist Jessie Greene. So we all gathered together that night at his place and they overdubbed drums and violins on "Rocket for Girls." I finally mixed it another ten years later, when I was doing the box set. I always really dug the song and thought it'd be a perfect finale to some album. It just took me a while for it all to come around.

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE



Adam Perry

1. Messenger, *Peeling Out* LP
2. Messenger with MA&SK, Rotations, Ventura, CA, 1/29/16
3. *Tomboy* by Liz Prince (graphic novel)
4. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl* by Carrie Brownstein (book)
5. *Armageddon in Retrospect* by Kurt Vonnegut (book)

Andy Garcia

1. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*
2. Strangers, *Where Do We Go? 7"*
3. Stick Men With Ray Guns, *Grave City* LP
4. Electrocutitioner, *Wretch in Order* CS
5. Digi Boys, *Digi Demo* CS

Art Ettinger

- Face To Face, *Protection* LP
- The Thermals, *We Disappear* LP
- Darkbuster, *No Revolution* LP
- Violent Femmes, *We Can Do Anything* LP
- Kepi Ghoulie, *Valentine 2016 7"*

Billy Kostka

- The Lavender Flu, *Heavy Air*
- Monoshock, *Lost Shock Vol. 1 & 2*
- Patsy, *Eat It*
- Glassboots, demo tape
- A Frames, 1, 2 & 333

Chad Williams

In honor of the greatest rock 'n' roll punk bastard of all time, Lemmy, these are the Top 5 Motörhead records from the second half of their forty year career, 'cause Ace of Spades was only the beginning...

1. *We Are Motörhead* (2000)
2. *Inferno* (2004)
3. *Overnight Sensation* (1996)

4. *Kiss of Death* (2006)
5. *The World Is Yours* (2010)

Chris Mason

1. Outtacontroller, *Television Zombie* LP
2. Gag, *America's Greatest Hits* LP
3. Marvelous Mark, *Crushin'* LP
4. Public Eye, demo tape
5. Chroma, *Cuerpos Dociles 12"*

Chris Terry

1. Daylight Robbery, *Accumulated Error* LP
2. Uliczny Opryszek, *Na Zawsze Punk* LP
3. Nakam LP
4. David Bowie, *Blackstar* LP
5. MED, Blu, & Madlib, *Bad Neighbor* LP

Craven Rock

1. Lemmy Kilmister, David Bowie, Blowfly, R.I.P.
2. Tie: *Carnival* by Rawi Hage and *Marvel and a Wonder* by Joe Meno (books)
3. Dumb Luck, Zone Out, Listen Lady! at a house
4. Patterson Hood at Tractor Tavern
5. *Decline of the Western Civilization I - III* (movies)

Daryl Gussin

- Lost Balloons LP
- Backbiter, *Fvck the Bozos*
- Angries, *Hollowed Out*
- Acid Fast, *Last Night on Earth* LP, tie with Red Dons, *Dead Hand of Tradition* LP
- Swirlies, *Blonder Tongue Audio Baton* LP, tie with Period Three CD-R that Vince burned me.

Designated Dale

Top 5 Artists That Lemmy Kilmister Had Collaborated with

1. The Damned
2. Girlschool
3. Johnny Ramone
4. Wendy O. Williams
5. Throw Rag

Eric Baskauskas

Five Highlights of Early 2016, *Self-Obsession Edition*

1. Releasing a new record with my band
2. Brutal Youth, School Damage, Eradicator, and Brain Vacation (that's my band!) live in Toronto
3. Bong Mountain, Eradicator, and my band live in Grand Rapids
4. Wishing my band was as cool as Sleep and Bongripper, live in Chicago
5. Wishing my band's new record was as cool as Blood Pressure's *Need to Control 12"*

Gabie Gonzalez

1. Glue
2. Nails
3. Spokenest
4. AnnaTommy
5. Gothic Cholo

Jim Joyce

1. Marky Ramone's *Punk Rock Blitzkrieg* book, in which Phil Spector points to Dee Dee and asks Marky, "What the fuck is wrong with that guy?" (pg. 170)
2. Cretin Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's uncanny resemblance to Dee Dee Ramone circa 2001, of which not enough is written.
3. D.L.I.M.C. November cassingle, "I Hope B.P. Explodes"
4. Leslie Jamison's essay collection, *Empathy Exams*
5. Generacion Suicida at Chop Shop, 1/30

Jim Ruland

1. Neighborhood Brats, Rough Kids, Maniac, and Oxidizer at the Redwood.
2. Backbiter, *Fvck the Bozos*
3. This sentence by Rebecca Solnit: "Punk rock had burst into my life with the force of revelation."
4. *Punk Elegies: True Tales of Death Trip Kids, Wrongful Sex, and Trial by Angel Dust* by Allan MacDonell
5. "Fly in the Ointment" by Wire (a wee bit late to the party)

Joe Dana

Two Super Bumpers and Three Small Bits of Good...

1. Bummer: David Bowie dying.
2. Bummer: Lemmy Kilmister dying.
3. Nemesis Of Progress, Scalia, is dead. Bye, Scalia.
4. RVIVR at Pehrspace and Golden Rulers, Streetwalkin' Cheetahs, and Barrio Tiger at the Redwood in the same night
5. David Bowie Skate Night at Moonlight Rollerway

John Mule

Doom Metal Daze Thanks to Bonedust...

1. Sleep, *Jerusalem*
2. Conan, *Revengeance*
3. Earth, *Hex or Printing in the Infernal Method*
4. Electric Wizard, *Dopethrone*
5. Yob, *Clearing the Path to Ascend*

Juan Espinosa

- Still Not Quiet On The Western Front Fest with Uranium Club, Neighborhood Brats, Iron Lung, Arctic Flowers, Generacion Suicida, Buck Biloxi And The Fucks, Flesh World, and more. SF/Oakland
- World Be Free, Give, Haarm, Life For A Life at Union, LA
- Career Suicide live at Vinyl Solution, Huntington Beach
- Gaucho, *Desplazados 7"*
- Muerte LP, tie with Era Del Vacio LP

Kayla Greet

1. The Lippies, Self-titled
2. *Even Trash Has a Place* by James Alex
3. Success!, The Loss, Hilltop Rats, Fox Hole Norman, NYE show at The Kraken
4. Turkish Techno, Listen Lady, Young Go-Hards at Lucky Liquor
5. The mayor of Seattle proclaiming February 9 to forever be International Clash Day b/w twelve hours of Clash related tunes on KEXP

**Cretin Mayor
Rahm Emanuel's
uncanny resemblance
to Dee Dee Ramone circa 2001.**

Kevin Dunn

1. David Bowie, *Blackstar*
2. Rats From A Sinking Ship, *Rise as One*
3. The Stops, *Nameless Faces*
4. Fox Jaw, *Ghost's Parade*
5. Birthday Suits, *Spin the Bottle: Adult Party*

Kurt Morris

1. Propagandhi, *Supporting Cast(e)*
2. Slayer, *Repentless*
3. Propagandhi, *Potemkin City Limits*
4. Mutoid Man, *Helium Head*
5. Propagandhi, *Failed States*

Madeline

1. Denver Broncos at SB50
- DFMK / New Swears at VLHS
- Neighborhood Brats at Redwood
- RVIVR at Pehrspace
- Beyonce's "Formation" video

Mark Twistworthy

- Unfun, *Waterboarding* LP
- The Ex-Optimists, *Phantom Freight* LP
- Pronto, Self-titled LP
- This Heat LP re-issues
- Sun City Girls, *Torch of the Mystics* LP re-issue

Matt Average

- Rough Kids, live at the Five Star in Los Angeles
- Diät, *Positive Energy* LP
- Creatures Of Space, *Wrynar* LP
- TV Freaks, *Bad Luck Charms* LP
- Nervous Trend, Self-titled EP

Matt Seward

1. B.B.R.E.A.M (Basement Bender's *Lydiad* Rules Everything Around Me)
2. Radon sides of Worthwhile Way and Shallow Cuts split 7"s
3. Ty Segall, *Emotional Muggler*
4. Unfun, *Waterboarding*
5. Stressface and RZC enamel pins!

Meztl Hernandez

- Top 5 Bands I Saw at Still Not Quiet On The Western Front*
5. Flesh World
 4. Neighborhood Brats
 3. Arctic Flowers
 2. Generacion Suicida
 1. Uranium Club

Michael T. Fournier

- Janelle Hessig, *Men Are from Mars, Women Need to Stay off That Space Dick* (comic)

- Larry Livermore, *How to Ru(in) a Record Label: The Story of Lookout Records* (book)
- Alex Robinson, *Our Expanding Universe* (graphic novel)
- Bucky Sinister, *Black Hole* (book)
- Kurt Vile, *I B'lieve I'm Goin Down* 2xLP

Mick Dale

- Top 5 Records for Working Out and/or Crying*
- Jawbreaker, *Dear You*
 - Annihilation Time, *II*
 - Sunny Day Real Estate, *Diary*
 - Eagulls, Self-titled
 - Teenage Cool Kids, *Queer Salutations*

Mike Frame

1. Marcus Hook Roll Band, *Tales of Old Grand Daddy* CD
2. Mike Hudson And The Pagans, *Hollywood High* LP
3. Javier Escovedo, *Kicked Out of Eden* CD
4. Motherfucker 666, Self-titled CD
5. Kent Haruf, all six books

Nick Toerner

- Witches With Dicks, *Not Just a Passing Season* LP
- Vacation, *Non-Person* LP
- The Max Levine Ensemble, *Backlash, Baby* LP
- The Soviettes, *Rarities* LP
- The High Hats, *Too Much Is Never Enough* and *And Then Came Cancer* LPs

Nighthawk

- Forgetting to do my Top 5 (always hilarious)
- Growing a mustache
- The Methadones, live in Chicago
- Driving for Uber
- Going camping in January (in Missouri)

Patrick Houdek

1. The Copyrights, Break Anchor, Bad Taste, Hospital Job at The Skihaus, Carbondale, Ill.
2. Buzzzard, Blast Radius, Seamstress at Lost Cross, Carbondale, Ill.
3. Cockney Rejects, *Greatest Hits Vol. 1* LP
4. The Bollweevils, *Attack Scene 7"*
5. *Disco's Out...Murder's In!: The True Story of Frank The Shank and L.A.'s Deadliest Punk Rock*

Gang by Heath Mattioli and David Spacone

Paul Silver

1. Turkish Techno, *Number Two* LP
2. RVIVR, Western Settings, Tiltwheel, Bainbridge at The Casbah, San Diego
3. The Dirty Nil, *Higher Power* LP
4. Macho Boys, demo
5. G.L.O.S.S., demo

Replay Dave

- Soda, *Without a Head*
- Ship Thieves, *No Anchor*
- King Friday, live 1/16/16
- Motörhead, *Inferno*
- I Don't Care, *Wild Stab*

Rev. Nørh

- Barreracudas, *Can Do Easy* LP
- Baby Shakes, *Starry Eyes* LP
- Atlantic Thrills, *Vices* LP
- The Residents, *The Residents Commercial* DVD
- Michael T. Fournier, *Swing State* (novel)

Rich Cocksedge

- Kick It!, *Biere, Frites et Vandalisme* LP
- Hipshot Killer, *They Will Try to Kill Us All* LP
- Jon Langford's Men Of Gwent, *The Legend of LL* LP
- Turkish Techno, *Number Two* LP
- Wild Animals, *First Songs* EP 12"

DJ Naked Rob Radio Valencia | SF

1. Pins Of Light, *Home* LP
2. Total Abuse, *Excluded* LP
3. Andy California, *My Dying Bed* EP
4. The Come 'N Go, *Tumbling Heights* LP
5. Wet Ones, Self-titled LP

Ryan Nichols

1. Frankie Rose, *Herein Wild* LP
2. Iggy Pop
3. At The Drive-In reuniting
4. Charles Bradley
5. GLAS

Sal Lucci

- *Ho-Dad Hootenany* LP. Why didn't I own this already?
- *Last of the Garage Punk Unknowns, Vol. 1*, LP. Maybe I didn't get this used. Can't remember.

- *The Funky 16 Corners* LP. Why didn't I own this already?
- The Pandoras, *It's about Time* LP. Put off buying this for too long.
- Ghetto Ghoulies, Self-titled LP. My current favorite Austin, TX band. Even better live!

Sean Arenas

- The Albert Square, *I (Assume I) Know What I'm Doing* LP
- Your Pest Band, *Never Fall You Again 7"*
- Sonny Vincent & Spite, *Spiteful* CD
- Condition, *Actual Hell* LP
- Basement Benders, *Lydiad* LP

Sean Koepenick

- 7" Current Heavy Rotation*
1. Ian Love, "The Wrong Thing" b/w "Stuck Inside" (*Planet Home Series Vol.1*)
 2. J. Robbins, "New York State" b/w "Room 429" (*Planet Home Series Vol.1*)
 3. Joan Jett, *Recorded & Booked*
 4. Tommy Stinson, *L.M.A.O.*
 5. Emmapeel, *Avenging Punk Rock Godfathers*

Toby Tober

- Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed*
1. *Last Cab to Darwin*
 2. *Anomalisa*
 3. *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*
 4. *Boy* (by Taika Waititi)
 5. *A Perfect Day*

Todd Taylor

- Witches With Dicks, *Not Just a Passing Season* LP and live in Belchertown, MA
- *Marvel and a Wonder* by Joe Meno and *The Song Is You* by Megan Abbott (books)
- Lost Balloons, Self-titled LP
- OnSind, *Anaesthesiology* LP
- Acid Fast, *Last Night on Earth* LP
- G.L.O.S.S., demo 7"

Tricia Ramos

1. Joining a dance studio
2. Beyoncé, "Formation"
3. Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance
4. Beyoncé announcing the Formation World Tour
5. Beyoncé releasing new music



69 ENFERMOS: *Beyond Borders*: CD

Dateline: mid-'90s. Punk rock has reared its slightly less ugly head. The sound is different now. Bands are getting signed by record labels worldwide. Harmonies, galloping drums, and soaring guitars rule the day. Bands like No Use For A Name, NOFX, and Lagwagon are some of the leading names in this new style of rebellion. Flash forward twenty years. The aforementioned bands are still among the top names in this subgenre. The thing is; it is hard to play this style and not sound like those bands. 69 Enfermos are very capable at this. Hell, if someone put this on and told me it was the new Strung Out record, I would have absolutely no reason to think they were lying. Not bad, but not terribly stimulating. —Ty Stranglehold (Morning Wood)

A.S.D.: *Another Social Disease*: EP

Straight-up NYC '80s thrashcore with a mean dose of metal. Vocals are almost robotic—mechanical—that add to its hard edge. Tough as nails. Best stand back or get sucked into the pit. —Camille Reynolds (Social Disease)

ACTIVE MINDS / THISCLOSE: *Split*: 7"

The Active Minds side of this single is pretty raging hardcore with melodic vocals. This band has been around forever, with their first single released in 1987. Pretty solid stuff for a band this far along; rages pretty good. The Thisclose side of the single is mining similar terrain, but is a little thrashier, and they do a Discharge cover. —Mike Frame (SPHC, sphrecords.bandcamp.com)

ADACTA: *TMA*: LP

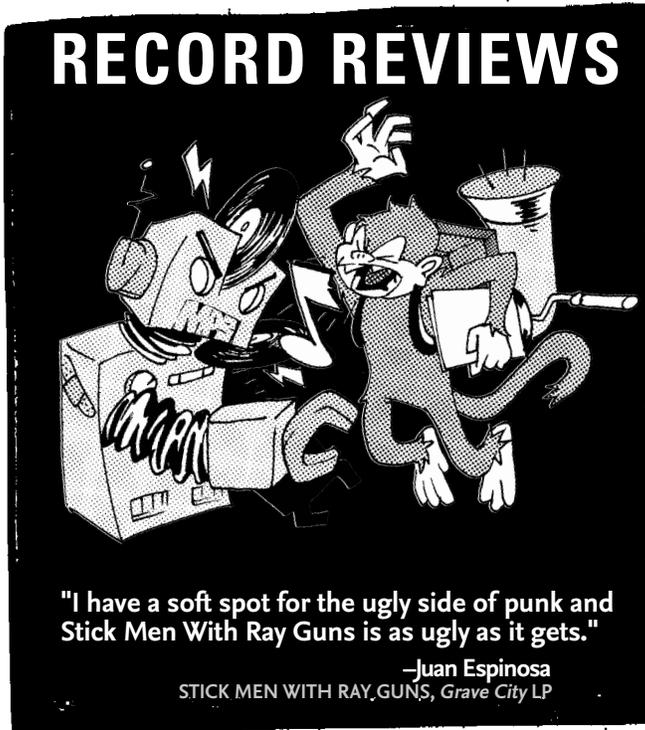
Dark, melodic, fevered crust stuff somewhere between Protestant and the awesome-but-unfortunately-named Chicken's Call. And I love the urgent, morose cello in "Katastrofy." It brings to mind Saké or Submission Hold. And I don't understand Czech, but there's no denying that as a physical artifact, *TMA* is pretty much a textbook example of beauty and care: chipboard gatefold, glossy black-on-black artwork, foldout poster, patch, and download code. Fans of the dark and menacing should eat this stuff up like—I don't know—the souls of the unrepentant or something. Not my preferred genre, but holy smokes these guys are good at it. —Keith Rosson (Adactive)

ADVERSARY: *Self-titled*: CD

Great stuff from the vaults at Boss Tuneage. I wasn't terribly familiar with this Stoke-on-Trent band from the early '90s prior to acquiring this collection, but it's way up the alley of the crux of the Razorcake brain trust, that's for sure. Poppy—yet sloppy—melodic punk in the vein of Leatherface meets Goober Patrol (and that's not just due to U.K. origins). —Steve Adamyk (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

ALBERT SQUARE, THE: *I (Assume I) Know What I'm Doing*: LP

With The Weakerthens as the compass, The Albert Square explores narrative



lyricism over sharp, distorted guitar chords and a driving rhythm section. Sim Castro's voice is reserved and achingly melodic, emphasizing the lyrics: "When these houses are no longer homes now / and it feels like there's nobody on your team." Each song is poetic, situated in a particular time and place. Every few minutes you're transported to a different American city and a relatable state of mind. Although the melodies are soft-spoken, the fuzz bass and Spencer Taplin's vibrant beats keep the tunes from slipping between the cracks. The Albert Square has crafted a thoughtful record at a time when most human experiences are reduced to a 140 letter character limit. With poignant lyrics ("It's hard being a black girl here in Missouri / when immaculate births are at the bottom of the list of your worries") and catching hooks, *I (Assume I) Know What I'm Doing* should be shelved beside *Fallow*. —Sean Arenas (Phat 'n' Phunky, phatnphunky.com)

ANARCHUS / DISROTTED: *Split*: 7" EP

Anarchus have been around for longer than some people reading this review have been alive, and that's no exaggeration. I was a little surprised to see they were still around, but I don't follow grind as closely as I used to. Maybe if there were more grind bands of the same caliber as Anarchus I would. On this release they do a great cover of Lords Of The New Church "Open Your Eyes," definitely making it sound like one of their own songs. It has the perfect amount of heaviness, the guitars sound thick and dark, and the vocalist sounds evil. Disrotted is a stark contrast to Anarchus style-wise. Here you get some slow doom sludge that I'd love to experience live.

From the opening hum and everything crashing in slow motion, this is capital-H heavy. Throaty vocals, impenetrable guitar, and plodding—though hard-hitting—percussion. Despite the slow crawl of "Oblivion Lull," there is a groove that hooks you in. I think I need to work towards attaining their entire discography if this song is any indication. —Matt Average (Rigid, rigidrecords.bigcartel.com)

ANOTHER SOCIAL DISEASE:

Self-titled: 7"

Metallic hardcore that sounds heavily influenced by later period U.K. acts like Broken Bones. They keep the songs catchy, the tempos gallopy, and the guitars mostly wank-free. I can totally see cats who whine that shit ain't been cool since the initial crossover wave going apeshit over this. —Jimmy Alvarado (Another Social Disease, socialdiseaserecords.bigcartel.com)

ANTICHRIST DEMONCORE:

Self-titled: *Postcard flexi*: EP

Postcard flexi that plays! These three songs slam with metallic hardcore. Think No Statik and Condition, with low hung bass. Screamy, possessed vocals tear through each song. —Camille Reynolds (To Live a Lie)

ANTLERED AUNT LORD: *Ostensibly Formerly Stunted (and On Fire)*: LP

The pale cheap shots taken at Robert Pollard, R. Stevie Moore, and R.E.M. in the press release accompanying this record are a turn off but whatever, I get it. You're trying to sell a record, and in particular you're trying to sell an undiscovered, underground pop genius in a country already littered with them. I suppose you have to puff your chest out a little. There isn't a single moment on

this record that rivals "Jar of Cardinals" or anything off *Phonography*, and that's the cold truth. And the more obvious connection to be made—given Jesse Stinnard's home base of Athens, Ga.—is to the '60s psych inflection and often overly pronounced aesthetic of the Elephant 6 scene. Stinnard is gifted—tracks like "Sigil to Noise" and "Throwback Bikes" are worth hearing more than once—but he's not surpassing the greats; he's repeating them. And there's the attendant queasy feeling that, like those Elephant predecessors, his music sits on a kind of sliding scale and could, intentionally or not, drift into something like the pop bloat of Arcade Fire. —Matt Werts (hbbtm, hbbtm.com)

APOCALYPSE MEOW:

The End Is Nigh: LP

Enjoyed the *Bats Bats Bats 7"* and would expect nothing less of a band called Apocalypse Meow to have brilliant song titles like "The Haste and the Curious," however *The End Is Nigh* swings too violently, pendulum-like, between fantastic Queers/Masked Intruder harmonies and just plain out-of-place, spooky feelings-laden "The Route" or Dr. Hook cover (including a rap?). Barrel straight ahead with "Baby, I'm a Scientist," or for the more adventurous, the pop-epic three-part "All Dinosaurs Are Ghosts" (a valiant attempt), but overall, too many spices spoil the stew. Endnote: would still purchase next release to see what happens. —Matt Seward (Night Animal, nightanimalrecords.storenvy.com)

ATLANTIC THRILLS: *Vices*: LP

Be not perplexed by the skull-o-centric packaging; this sounds like an East Coast version of Nobunny—with that omni-epoch hook worship and the what-not—coupled with a more legit *Nuggets* approach, but with reverb instead of fuzz on the guitar (except when there's fuzz on the guitar instead of reverb), and sublimated Barraracudas-like harmonies, and occasional faux glam excursions. Actually, perchance "A New Englandized version of the Barraracudas" is closer to the truth than the Nobunny reference. Either way you crack this particular Kit Kat, it's the best album of the first five weeks of the year. My long-held respect for the Providence Steam Roller—the last NFL Champions to go belly-up—is thusly rekindled. *Roll on, you crazy steamroller!* BEST SONG: "Treat My Baby." BEST SONG TITLE: "Bed Bugs." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The album is divided into two sides: Side A and Side R. —Rev. Nørb (Almost Ready)

BANDAGES: *"All Extreme Measures" b/w "Tokyo Carwash": 7"*

Part of Sorry State Records' North Carolina Singles Series, this two-song entry from Bandages serves as their long-awaited debut. One of several offshoots that grew after the disbanding of Raleigh hardcore heavyweights Double Negative, Bandages exemplify their pedigree without allowing their



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music to be hindered by it. This is hardcore, but hardcore rife with fascinating and often unsettling left-field flourishes. The spooky intro of "All Extreme Measures" paves the way for the guitars to occasionally transform into a UFO sucking the listener up into the air with its tractor beam. On "Tokyo Carwash," their furious riffing pairs with the drums to form the aural equivalent of descending into a *literal* spiral of madness. A musical recreation of spinning until I lose my balance is something I didn't know I needed, but now that I've experienced it, let me tell ya, it's a fucking marvel. Fingers crossed that a full-length—or even an EP—is soon to follow! —Kelley O'Death (Sorry State)

BASEMENT BENDERS: Lydiad: LP

It's easy to have high expectations for Basement Benders because they feature folks from Future Virgins, Sexy, This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb, Tulsa, Hidden Spots, and Black Rainbow. When talented folks start a band, they bring with them experience, expertise, and fine-tuned ears, but your gut might mistakenly assume that there's no way *Lydiad* can be as good as say, *Front Seat Solidarity* or *Late Republic*. I'm here to put your worries to rest and assure you that *Lydiad* is twelve tunes of pitch-perfect DIY punk. The live wire energy never lets up and the belted vocals pull you right in, especially on "Up North" and "Trick of the Light." The songs are both deeply personal ("Betsy") and universal, sharing experiences

and tricky feelings that many of us can relate to. This is indispensable listening for any fan of DIY punk. The first pressing also includes a bonus 7" with two additional songs. —Sean Arenas (No Idea)

BI-MARKS: If You Can't Swim, Drown: LP

Holy smokes. This Portland outfit's been around for a number of years now, but apart from a few cuts on a Sabotage sampler, this is my first introduction. Maybe the physical act of dropping the needle on the vinyl is what it took for me to really *hear* them, but goddamn. Unrelenting, snarling, fierce punk working from the same playbook as, I shit you not, the first Bad Brains record and Christ On Parade's *A Mind Is a Terrible Thing*, both of which are pretty flawless in my opinion. And those aren't comparisons I fling out all willy-nilly, okay? This is "Top ten of the year" quality shit right here. Absolutely worth seeking out. —Keith Rosson (Blackwater)

BIRTHDAY SUITS: Spin the Bottle: Adult Party: LP

I've seen Birthday Suits many times live, which is always a raucous and unpredictable time. This two-piece always puts on a show, leaving destruction in their path while furiously belting out their brand of chaotic, garagey punk. On record Birthday Suits still bring the rock, but it's a different experience. The studio really brings out the best parts of these

songs, especially the hooks and the melody. Listening to them on vinyl, and I mean *really* listening to them, I feel like I finally "get" this band, and I'm really into it. Fans of other Recess Records staples, like Toys That Kill for example, would undoubtedly get into this as well. —Mark Twistworthy (Recess, recessrecords.com)

BISHOP: Everything in Vein: 10"

Bishop plays tough guy straight-edge hardcore with thoughtful, decidedly non-macho lyrics. The explanations of the lyrics included with the lyric sheet lend themselves to criticism that Bishop is overly preachy, but it's hard to get upset when they're talking about important issues in a relatively insightful way. I especially enjoyed the sentiment on "Huey P. Was Right," a potent anti-cop track that tries to tie historical info with a current movement. More influenced by hard, second wave New York Hardcore than by early, classic hardcore; anyone into clomp around stomp punk will enjoy *Everything in Vein*. —Art Ettinger (Dead Truth)

BLEED THE PIGS / THETAN: Split: LP

Thetan bears a very close resemblance to San Diego's Jenny Piccolo: a band lost in the shuffle during the mid-to-late '90s powerviolence/hardcore scene due to the Locust's overshadowing popularity. Down-tuned and manic hardcore with some dirgey moments to allow you to catch your breath—yeah it's been done to death, but not always

as well as this. Bleed The Pigs' side of the split jams digital shards of glass into your ear holes with some circuit-bending harsh noise before walloping you with a steady stream of powerviolence savagery. Save for the brief moshcore breakdowns, Bleed The Pigs' songs had me checking the turntable to make sure I wasn't playing an Endless Blockade record. Great stuff. —Juan Espinosa (Dead Tank, deadtankrecords.com / Anti Corp, anticorporatemusic.com / IFB, ifbrecords.com)

BONVIVANT / SNACKS?: Split: 7" EP

Both bands have clearly spent some time drinking from the well of Hot Water Music / Leatherface if this release is anything to go by. On the evidence provided, Snacks? has made better use of what was imbibed, managing to steer clear from being an out-and-out copy and writing two very good songs which don't overly rely on those influences. My problems with Bonvivant are that the songs lack any memorable moments and that I really can't get past the vocals, which take gruffness into the realms of unintelligible. Therefore I definitely want more Snacks?. —Rich Cocksedge (Get Party, getparty.limitedrun.com)

BRISTLES, THE: The Last Days of Capitalism: CD

Another thrasher of a release from this Swedish institution. Tunes fly by with the requisite modified Discharge influence, topical lyrics addressing the state of Swedish (and western) society



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circa-now—work, “gendercide,” corporate control of pretty much everything, well-aimed swipes at both the right and left—delivered with an intensity that doesn’t snitch out just how long these cats have been around, yet is well informed with experience. A corker throughout. —Jimmy Alvarado (Heptown)

BRUDE LOFTER: *Kobenhavn: 7”*

I hate guitar solos. They are tedious exercises in vanity. Rarely do they even make sense within the confines of the song and, more often than not, the playing isn’t all that great anyway. They kill a song’s momentum. They are the equivalent of a singer taking thirty seconds mid-song to do some scatting. Fuck guitar solos. But! If a guitar solo is legitimately good, I fall in love hard. The solo in the title track of this record is the perfect example. It’s not flashy, but it’s smart. It builds upon what has been happening in the song. It takes the song to another level, and then lets itself get eaten up by the remainder of the song, and is used as energy to build something greater. This record does everything the right way, not just the guitar solos. It’s the work of an angry punk band that spent time crafting three songs that deserve immortality on wax. Give them a listen. —MP Johnson (Halshugga)

CAFFIENDS: *No Gods No Decaf: CD*

I fucking love this band. I am a firm believer in not taking life too seriously. You gotta be able to laugh at yourself and this ridiculous existence or you’ll

never make it out alive. The Caffiends embody this ethos and flawlessly put a soundtrack to it. Each track on *No Gods No Decaf* is a pop punk gem, interlaced with some samples that actually add to the music rather than distract from it. A couple of these songs ended up accidentally reminding me of how much I used to listen to Guttermouth, and, conversely, how I never got into NOFX (my apologies to SoCal brethren). In my ears, the Caffiends can do no wrong. I appreciate that their music, at least for me, makes the world a little bit better place. All the thumbs up! —Jackie Rusted (Anti-Authority)

CASTOFF: *Lines and Passages: CD*

Twenty year cycles. That is what they say that popular culture moves in. This is the second disc I’ve received in this review cycle that would point towards that being true. In 1996, this glossy, super-produced style of punk was everywhere. Labels were built upon it. Some was good, some wasn’t, but I honestly didn’t expect to see new bands cropping up playing this style to the letter. It isn’t so much that this isn’t good (in fact, they are very good at what they are doing), so much as it is that I may be a little further removed from my twenty-two-year-old music tastes than I would have thought. If mid-’90s Fat Wreck Chords stuff is your thing, you could do a lot worse than Castoff. —Ty Stranglehold (Morning Wood)

CAVE CURSE: *Self-titled: 7”*

Cave Curse is the new one-man synthpop/dark wave act courtesy

of Bobby Hussy. Cave Curse’s first release comes courtesy of Volar Records, showcasing two exquisitely sweet and supremely chill ditties. Both tracks feature deep, rich textures with ornate and intricate layers of vocals, keyboards, synths, and drum machines. It all adds up to remind me a bit of Digital Leather, which is, of course, a good thing. This is an extraordinarily enjoyable listen and comes highly recommended. —Jeff Proctor (Volar)

CELLULITE: *Dust Wave: LP*

Dissonant, minimalist synth noise with blown-out machines, drums, and voices. The song structures are largely stripped to the bones and the delivery is often harsh, if not overtly aggressive. A choice gift idea for that one asshole friend who keeps saying synths are “wimpy.” —Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

CHARLIE TWEDDLE: *Knee Deep Blues: LP*

If you liked “One Punk’s Guide to Outlaw Country” from *Razorcake #90*, you’d be crazy not to check out Charlie Tweddle. His Bandcamp page calls him a musician, artist, taxidermist, and hat maker, calling his hats “a wearable ten-gallon peyote trip.” His music is more on the mellow side: just a man, a guitar, and some great stories. This is outlaw country on a chill trip. —Jon Mule (Mighty Mouth Music)

CIVIL WAR RUST: *Help Wanted: LP*

If you enjoy California pop punk, chances are you already know and love

the East Bay’s Civil War Rust. If not, I suggest you check them out as soon as possible. Melodic, often upbeat punk that is catchy as all hell, the lyrics on this record have familiar themes such as failed relationships (“You make me go outta my mind / Just another waste of both our time”) and trying to be a better person (“I spent three short days and restless nights / at the bottom of a bottle to clear my mind.” “We wanted revolution / all I got was another shitty shirt”). The only bummer is that the ten-track sophomore LP is less than twenty-five minutes long, so I have to keep it spinning on repeat. —Madeline (Def Cow / Say-10)

COMMONWEALTH OF AMERICAN NATIVES, THE: *The Filth and the Furry: Vol. 1: EP*

First off, what’s up with their band name? The Commonwealth Of American Natives sounds just like their cover art—all cats, pentagrams, splattered gothic graphics, et cetera. They play bro-ey-sounding metal hardcore—with Rancid ska and even a dash of Marilyn Manson—that maybe Fat Wreck would put out. The vocals are grizzled shrieks that are intentionally unnerving. Flip to Side B with “Diabla Vista Pantalones de Gato” to experience the most punishing of breakdowns. Pass. —Camylle Reynolds (Nothing New)

CONDITION: *Actual Hell: LP*

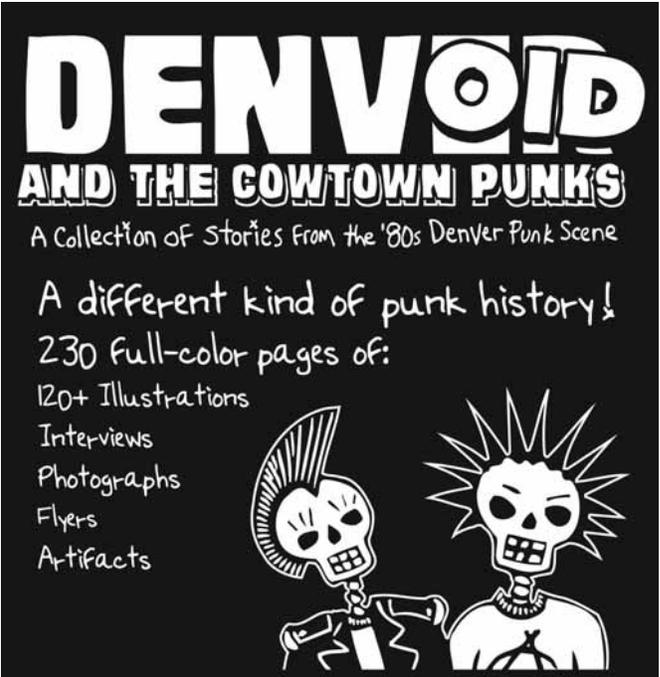
First of all, kudos to Iron Lung and Condition for the killer packaging



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which thoroughly satisfies the collector in me. The high quality tip-on record jacket is guaranteed to outlive most of us. Also, the lyrics are printed on a large fold-out poster. As for the tunes, the songs will scrape your eardrums raw. This California unit peddles relentless noise like Bastard and Conga Fury. The riffs are drenched in feedback and heavier than a freight train, and the howling vocals are sinister. Somehow the rhythm section manages to make sense of the chaos. There's nothing half-baked about this record. Condition rages with conviction. *Actual Hell* is reinvigorating hardcore for the jaded listener. —Sean Arenas (Iron Lung)

CRAZY & THE BRAINS:
Brain Freeze: 7"

These two new, light songs taken from the "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend" school of classic punk will stick in your head after a first listen. One of New Jersey's least-Jersey current crowd pleasers, this quick slab is pure, poppy fun. The download includes an additional six bonus tracks, which are well worth checking out, too. No one's getting out of toe tapping to these guys, so beware. —Art Ettinger (Baldy Longhair)

CREATURES OF SPACE: Wrynar 7: LP

When you're really hooked on music and it's something you spend more time thinking about than just about anything else, you are going to start to branch out from whatever genre you may have focused on for years and years, start exploring and hearing what's out

there, and broadening your mind and auditory horizons. Punk rock is great, but have you ever wondered what else is out there? Think of it like this: the music you listen to is a tiny blip in the cosmos of sound. All around you is this vast universe and each genre is another galaxy, and some of the heavy hitters are planets within that galaxy. *Creatures Of Space* fill that search in spades. Their music is way out there, somewhere in the universe of psych, Hendrix-style blues, German prog, and far left of left field. The opener "Way up There" sounds like some obscure track that could fit on the *Bonehead Crunchers* series, and doesn't really set up what lays in store. "Incoming" is like a tear in the fabric of reality, with its blast of distortion and guitar mangling. From there things really begin to happen. The inner space of "In the Woods" gives way to spaced out "Hard Road" and "New Rays," which reminds me of Funkadelic's XXXX. "Lizard Box" takes them a little further out, and then they start come back to earth at the end of the record. —Matt Average (Luminal)

CUSTODY: Self-titled: 7"

Three most excellent songs are on this EP. They've somehow captured the raw intensity of Superchunk, but with more polish and less grit. The vocals are clear, poignant, and damn near pitch perfect. It's just delicious on the ears if you're into '90s alt pop punk. —Camylle Reynolds (Brassneck / Waterslide)

D.O.A.: Hard Rain Falling: CD

Sticking with the program and keeping it real, D.O.A. has been at it since 1978 and *Hard Rain Falling* shows no sign of these dudes slowing down. I don't know what else to say about this record—if you love D.O.A., you will not be disappointed. If you've never heard of D.O.A. I have one word for you... *poseur!* —Jackie Rusted (Sudden Death)

DARKBUSTER: No Revolution: CD

After surprising everyone with some reunion shows last summer, this album pops out into the world. Apparently, the basic tracks for this one were done awhile back but left up on the shelf. Flash forward to 2013 and Lenny Lashley enlists members of Street Dogs and Mung to help polish up the rough edges. Whatever they did, it works. It doesn't sound disjointed with various lineups from song to song. "Jimmy Needs" and "Lil' Junkie" are my favorites here, but grab this and it will quickly slip into heavy rotation. —Sean Koepnick (Pirates Press)

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY:
Accumulated Error: LP

Accumulated Error is a third album in the way that *Rocket to Russia*, *Dookie*, or *Raising Hell* are third albums. Not that Daylight Robbery sound a thing like Ramones, Green Day, or Run DMC, but they're at a similar stage in their creativity. They've honed their sound, invested in a powerful recording, and come forth with their strongest set

of songs yet—songs that should define them as a band. Daylight Robbery are a Chicago three-piece fronted by bassist Christine Wolf and guitarist David Wolf, a married couple whose dark croons have earned their band countless X comparisons. Throughout this album, they both nail notes they've only hinted at in the past, especially on "New Threat," "Rememoration," and "Shadows in the Snow," which hit like a two piece with biscuit in the middle of the album. Over the years, Christine's driving bass and the compact clatter of Jeff Rice's drums have spread far from David's reverby guitar, resulting in music that's developed from garage to sharp post-punk. *Accumulated Error's* big recording forefronts the band's musical progress, with new guitar tones pushing David into surf and '80s alternative territory and Christine moving further toward New Order bass lead status. Jeff even plays the organ on a rootsy song later in the album. Maybe these new sounds hint at what's to come next for the band. At this point, it's hard to believe that Daylight Robbery could get any better at what they're doing, but they've proven that they're not a band to ever stop evolving. —Chris Terry (Deranged)

DEFECT DEFECT:
My Life Is Like Death: 7"

Three punk rock heat blasts from a band that I thought was no more. Defect Defect play spit-in-your-eye punk rock with no pretense. I keep spinning this back to back to back and

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I can't get enough. There is so much loathing, both inward and out. There is a lot to be pissed about in the world, and Defect Defect definitely taps into it. I sure hope they haven't called it a day. I would love to see them play again. —Ty Stranglehold (Dirt Cult)

DEFORESTERS: *Bones: 7"*

Toronto's Deforesters pack the energy of a large class of five-year-old children fed on nothing but sugar for a week into four songs of solid pop punk goodness. As the vinyl spins it's not difficult to imagine grabbing a beer, holding onto a friend, and jumping around like a set of drunk conjoined twin kangaroos as the band lets it rip on some sweat-drenched stage in a small basement. The gang vocals in the songs are perfect for that situation, too, and I'd love to think that somewhere out there people are getting that live experience on a regular basis. I admit to a touch of jealousy, but will hold out for a U.K. tour sometime soon... please! —Rich Cocksedge (Get Party, getparty.limitedrun.com)

DES ARK: *Everything Dies*: LP

I was in high school when I started going to Des Ark shows. I'd sit in crowds seated concentrically around Aimée Argote's feet while she whisper-sang songs over her weirdly-tuned guitar and introduced the grim content of her lyrics with measured sincerity and the occasional beleaguered joke. Des Ark's last two full-lengths (*Everything Dies* and *Don't Rock the Boat, Sink the Fucker*) document these

soft, bare melodies' growth into lush instrumental tracks a world away from guitar-driven records like *Loose Lips Sink Ships*. If you miss loud Des Ark, *Everything Dies* might enjoin you to grow up. There are strings, pianos, dobros, and choral vocals layered over Argote's finger picking, as her vocals and lyricism still bespeak the deep rage and sorrow that have kept me crying alone at Des Ark shows for the last ten years. If you like the *Live on WXDU* self-releases, *Everything Dies* is worth hearing, if only to catch a glimpse of Argote's process of spinning tinkly melodies of heartbreak, violence, and healing into full, robust arrangements—some the prettiest songs about dying I've heard lately. —Lyle (Graveface)

DESGRACIADOS:

***Humanidad en la Oscuridad*: EP**

Loud and out-of-control hardcore punk from these miserable wretches. Fast and bordering on blowing apart is how they deliver this sonic maelstrom. They only slow it down for just a moment on the intro to the song "Enemigos Callejeros," and that song builds in intensity from there. Other than that, these songs are delivered with an intense and desperate urgency. Check out the song "Desgraciados," that aims to batter the listener senseless. The drumming at the beginning of the song recalls 1980s peace punk, but the intent here is more sonically destructive and ratchets the energy up into the red levels. "Caos" is exactly what the name details: blazing insanity that

doesn't stop to the very end. I bet this record will be on a lot of "best of" lists at the end of the year. —Matt Average (Deranged, derangedrecords.com)

DÉSIR DECIR:

***Even the Earnest Learn*: CDEP**

This EP is six songs and seventeen minutes of folk-inspired punk rock. I hear a foundation of Bruce Springsteen but there's also the energy of the Ramones and the Clash. It's certainly more pop-influenced than punk-influenced, though. Vocally, there's a semblance to the band's New Jersey peers Gaslight Anthem, but with less harmonies and not quite as much of a mainstream sound (which is fine by me). Based on the bands I just listed, I would've figured I'd be into this more than I am, but after a dozen listens it's not done a lot for me. Nothing really comes out and makes me want to return to it. There aren't any songs stuck in my head, either good or bad, which keeps me from formulating an opinion on it. And as a music reviewer, that's not a good thing. —Kurt Morris (Désir Decir)

DEZERTER: *Kolaboracja*: LP

It took me a second to recognize this as a new pressing of Dezerter's classic 1987 LP. Dezerter were an influential early Polish punk band (anyone who has ever traded records with a label in Poland knows this because they are referenced over and over again). Think of a Black Flag or Crass for Poland. I'd been hearing about this record for years, but had never actually heard

it. I was excited but not sure what to expect. I've found that that there seem to be a handful of standard bands that influenced a large part of the punk bands from outside the U.K./U.S., and most sounds from the '80s are easily traced back to Black Flag or Discharge in some way. But Dezerter seem like they're from a totally different world. I guess the driest way to describe their sound is like the Minutemen with some hints of the Red Wave bands (Kino, et cetera) that probably had recordings make their way into Poland. I was floored by how mature the band sounded, and how little "mainstream" rock had impacted their sound. The record comes with a booklet with a lot of historical information (in both Polish and English) explaining the context of the record's release when it was censored by the government. It gives you an idea of how difficult it was just to be a "deviant" in Polish society in the '80s, let alone publically criticize the government. But outside of its context, the truth is the record is good enough to hold up on its own and if these songs had been penned by Californians or Manchester punks then we wouldn't need to discover this in 2016. This is an absolutely critical punk record from a legitimately tumultuous time. —Ian Wise (Pasazer, pasazer.pl)

DIÄT: *Positive Energy*: LP

This is one of the absolute best records I have ever heard. A bold statement, and I would not make it if weren't true. I have been listening to, and



involved in, punk and post-punk for well over thirty years, so I can be a bit jaded on what is and isn't good. This album is great—something so great that nothing else is allowed to get in the way. Put the record on, get out the lyric booklet, and just listen. Post-punk akin to bands like Joy Division, early Section 25, The Mob, Crisis, and others. They cover the Cannanes ("Blue Skies over the Ocean"), so use that as part of your guide. Minimalist, yet so much is going on with texture and atmosphere. "Toonie," which has now become one of my all-time favorite songs, will pummel you with its raucous beat and urgent delivery. "Nausea" will just blow you away. The aforementioned Cannanes cover will have you believing that life is wonderful (despite the darkness that seeps out of this music and somewhat droll vocal delivery). The way the ender "Sinkhole" comes in is perfect. It has a different texture than the dark, train engine beat of "Hurricane." It really stands out with its fuller sound and tempo that builds and builds. Had this come out thirty-five years ago, it would have been on a label like 4AD, Factory, or Rough Trade. So many are attempting this sound these days, and there are some really good bands, but Diät are the leaders and the high standard that the rest should take notes from. —Matt Average (Iron Lung)

DIRTY NIL, THE: Higher Power: LP/CD
I really don't know if the three members of The Dirty Nil are aware of the word

"subtle." From the off, it seems as if the band is on a mission to throw down a bunch of riffs that are powerful enough to feel like one has taken a hit in the head from Thor's Hammer. However, there are moments when proceedings become more restrained, with the vocals losing the sense of someone being tortured in front of the microphone as the guitar adds more intricate work, weaving a bit of texture into the album. The more abrasive material reminds me a lot of another Canadian band Single Mothers, as well as occasionally making me think of Nirvana, primarily due to similarities to Kurt Cobain. *Higher Power* is a strong debut album and builds on the promise of their recent single on Fat Wreck. —Rich Cocksedge (Dine Alone, dinealonerecords.com)

DOGS, THE: Swamp Gospel Promises: LP

I don't know what a Swamp Gospel Promise is, nor do I truly understand Norwegians' command of cocky hooks and glam (Turbonegro, natch), but I do know I'm very thankful this wasn't another surf band. To be fair, matching suits and weird/bad album art or photos can get me judging faster than I can read the book. The consistent touch of distortion on the vocals seems heavy-handed when A.) it appears that he can actually hold a note and B.) garage rock credentials are firmly cemented in the Farfisa and harmonica/tambourine action. An excellent surprise, touching my inner Apocalypse Dude, and an

incredibly worthy soundtrack to an evening of getting some dirty dazzle on. —Matt Seward (Astma)

EASY PREY: Closer: CS

I like Easy Prey a lot—they often remind me of a heavy, raw version of Young Widows. *Closer*, their debut two-song release, immediately attacks the listener with a song that sounds like if you mixed the ferocity and vocals of Swiz with the interesting and atmospheric guitars of the Young Widows. It's really good. The second song is not as fast, and as a result the vocals never reach the same level of frantiness, but the song's repetitive heaviness sounds like what you'd end up with if you took the Young Widows, made them heavier, and basically gave them more... soul. I hope that makes sense, because I absolutely mean it as a compliment. I'm looking forward to hearing what's next from this band. —Mark Twistworthy (Cosmic Western)

ESE: All In: CD

Ese are straight-up trashy, punk rock'n'roll madness. Are they Texas's answer to Zeke? They very well might be. All I know for sure is that breakneck speeds and blistering guitars are definitely on the menu and I am looking for seconds. Truth be told, they really remind me of a great local (Victoria, BC) band that has been going since the late '90s called The Sweathogz. All big guitars and getting wasted. Good stuff. —Ty Stranglehold (Sudden Death)

EXPLOITED: Death before Dishonour: LP

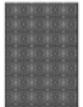
A recent Czech pressing of the Exploited's first foray into a more metal direction. The release is well put together, with a very good reproduction of the original sleeve (and inner sleeve). It's one of those "so much ink and glue that you get a little high off the fumes when you cut open the seal" affairs, but I'll let them have it. The vinyl is on some strange rotten orange color and has that distinct look and feel to it that all records coming out of the CZ have nowadays; a little thicker than most but somehow feeling inauthentic, like those CD-Rs somebody made to look like vinyl. The main problem I have with records coming out of that factory is that their cuts sound thin (with exceptions from very proactive labels), and this record certainly falls victim to weak mastering. Any punch this record has upon its original release is lost (but to be fair, 1987 wasn't a great year for engineering on punk records). Now to review the actual record... well, you probably already know what you're getting. The Exploited were a little past their heyday on this release and the jump to more of a crossover sound was probably an attempt to keep a new audience entertained. There are some cool ideas being played around with, but Wattie's voice sounds blown-out and tired while most of the riffs suffer in their repetition. The funny thing is that while some bands were incorporating metal into punk to try to incorporate the aggressive elements



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of it, the Exploited sound more toned-down. This is certainly one best left to die-hards. —Jan Wise (PHR, phr.cz)

FACILITY MEN: Demo/Futility Men: CS
It is a rare and beautiful thing to come across a punk guitar player who does not rely solely on two-finger “chunk-chunk” power chords, but uses the entirety of the scale and guitar neck to create a wide variety of sounds. Along with an intensely focused rhythm section and pointed vocals, the guitar here squeals, screams, and screeches. Facility Men bring something fresh on these songs. Dig it. —Jon Mule (Black Dots, blackdotsbuffalo.bandcamp.com)

FATE VS FREE WILLY: New Dead End: LP
Potentially the greatest band name ever. In the grooves you’ll find black and white (matching all record graphics) static and echo. Carol Anne’s voice—Big Muff attached and riding shotgun—speaks through the Poltergeist television. Fate Vs Free Willy make excellent driving noise. Pounding rhythms propel them forward as sound whips through the tunnel of an open window, and the constant white noise of gravel strikes the undercarriage. AmRep meets Nots. Yes, please. —Matt Seward (If Society, ifsociety.com)

FEMME KRAWALL: Self-titled: LP
One-side’s worth of straightforward Deutscher Girl-fronted punk with

mild garage and pop leanings that rip nicely, but I wish Germans would sing more songs about potatoes, as “how many potatoes do you have” is the only German sentence I know in the FatherTongue. All the same, it’s tough to completely dismiss a record that includes the lyrical phrase “Penisvergleish Narzist.” **BEST SONG:** “Intrusion.” **BEST SONG TITLE:** “Krokodile.” **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Band members include a “Dr. Goo.” —Rev. Nørb (Spastic Fantastic)

FINAL WARNING: Demonstration 1983: 7”
Lightning fast hardcore from 1983 (duh), out of Portland, Ore., released on vinyl for the first time in 2015. Final Warning has an obvious Discharge influence, but with a decidedly American bent. If there was an early ‘80s comp called *This Is Portland Not L.A.*, Final Warning would have been on it. A once long-lost hardcore punk demo, it’s now received a proper and deserved vinyl release, just thirty-two years later. —Chad Williams (Black Water)

FOUND DROWNED: Spooky Sounds: CS
If by “spooky” you mean “surf rock,” then yes, the title is accurate. I do like the fact that they’ve got a few song titles that would make Alkaline Trio proud (“Wrist and Relaxation” is pretty smart) and the Halloween theme they’ve got going on is pretty fun. But on a purely personal note, I just don’t need more instrumental surf

rock in my life, even if none of the songs top two minutes. —Keith Rosson (More Power Tapes)

FOX SISTERS, THE: Under the Stars: CS
There’s a party going on! The Fox Sisters play ‘60s-inspired, American R&B music complete with a horn section and a singer whose soulful rasp makes it sound like he skips the filters. Suit up, boot up, and check out this seven-piece crew from Rochester, NY. —Jon Mule (Self-released)

FREEBASE: Darker Days Are Still to Come: CD
Hardcore punk, American style. Think Blood For Blood; an East Coast-style collection of ragers on one disc. Solid stuff. —Steve Adamyk (Mosh Tunage, moshtunage.com)

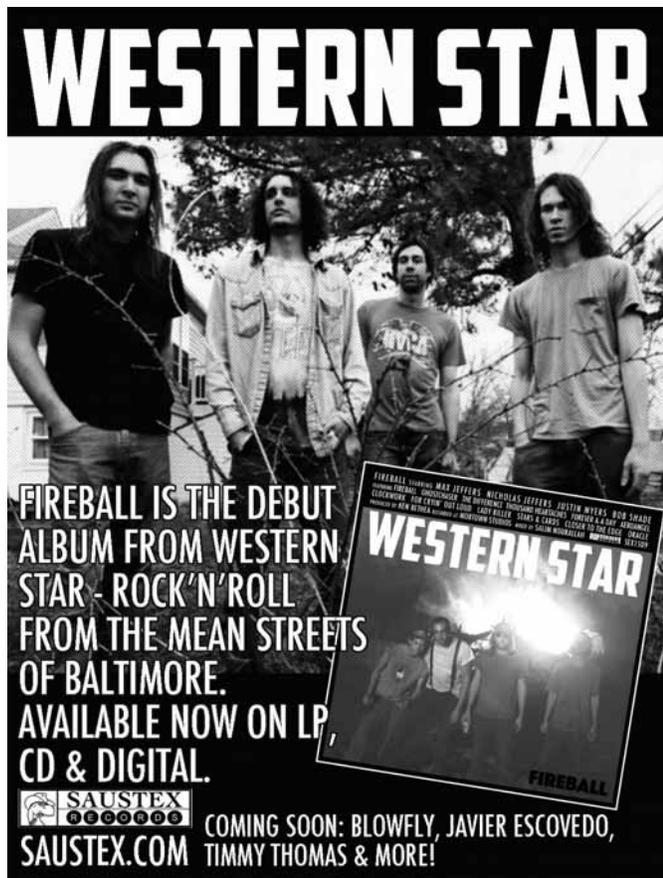
FRUIT PUNCH: The 7” Collection: CD
Excellent collection of this hardcore band’s singles output, which appears to have been long overdue. Fruit Punch is a band I’ve been familiar with, but I never actually had the chance to track anything down. They fall under the same umbrella as Good Clean Fun or Ten Yard Fight than, say, Crudos or Limp Wrist, but these dudes do a great job of ‘90s/turn-of-the-century, straight-edge hardcore. Twenty-five songs in twenty-five minutes—can you go wrong? —Steve Adamyk (Marsten House)

FUJIWARA: Kung Fu Twist: CD
Pretty straightforward fast rock’n’roll-based punk that could pass for melodic

hardcore. The leader reminds me a lot of the singer from Agent Orange. The songs are about sticking to your guns, being true to yourself, and calling out assholes who, “spit on their hopes and dreams... burn us with their lies,” coming back with stuff like, “But they cannot stop the hurricane/like a phoenix we will rise.” Turns out they’ve been at it in small town, Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina for near twenty years. So don’t doubt their resilience. I found quite a few moments when I felt like putting this on, in the morning, on the way out the door to do whatever, driving my taxi. —Craven Rock (Fringe)

GENERATORS, THE: Welcome to the End: LP
Welcome to the End, the introductory album from the Generators, was originally released in 1998. At that time, I was in high school and associated punk with group vocals, Margaret Thatcher, and Fred Perry shirts. Now it is being re-released by Dr. Strange Records who advertise this LP as being “for fans of Angelic Upstarts and the Clash.” There is great songwriting here and it’s worth picking up for fans who bought this on CD in 1998 or those who are just discovering it now. Better late than never. —Jon Mule (Dr. Strange, drstrange.com)

GINO AND THE GOONS, THE: “Check This Out” b/w “Let Go”: 7”
“Check This Out” is a solid mid-tempo rocker. “Let Go” is a Johnny Thunders And The Heartbreakers



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cover. Covers are sometimes throwaway tracks on singles like this, but they do it justice. Gino And The Goons are snot rock on a streak. If you're into punk'n'roll, they're a band to look out for. It's a nodder. —Billups Allen (Black Gladiator)

GLEAM GARDEN / CHESTNUT ROAD: Split: 7"

A perfectly paired split distinguished by its international East-meets-West approach—two Samiam-influenced bands from very different corners of the world complement each other nicely on this record. Chestnut Road is from France and Gleam Garden is from Japan. Each band delivers two tracks that would have fit in nicely in the early 1990s emo-pop era. Not that this style doesn't remain relevant today, but I think both groups would concede that they're basically playing tribute to five or less of their favorite bands. That's not a bad thing when their apparent idols include A Radio With Guts and Jawbreaker. It's definitely a record worth looking for if you're into any of the aforementioned. —Art Ettinger (Brassneck, brassneckrecords, bigcartel.com)

GRAPE ST.: Wallpaper: CD

From what I can tell via the internet, this is the second solo-with-backing-band album from some fellow who used to front some band named Harlem. It's pleasant indie rock stuff that I could see being—I don't know—a staff pick at the library? Or for people who go to

Sasquatch and wear sunhats, maybe? I don't know. It's a no-teeth, party rock-lite kinda affair. If you remember that Matthew Sweet video from the '90s where he's in space, those are the sort of jams I'm talking about. —Keith Rosson (Burger)

GREASESTREAK: Starve for Me: CS

Cassettes are a nonsense format. That said, I rather like this cassette, as it reminds me of old multi-generationally-dubbed punk cassettes from the early '80s. Shitty in all the right ways. Greasestreak, you just won 1984! BEST SONG: "Just Married." BEST SONG TITLE: "Digital Dogs." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I heard tambourine. —Rev. Nørþ (Self-released?)

GRIZZLOR: Cycloptic: 7"

Man, Hex Records does it again. Grizzlor is a slow, heavy band with loud, plodding drums and huge guitar riffs. They're definitely influenced by AmRep stuff of the '90s. The singer has a growling, shouting, ranting delivery. They belt out tongue-in-cheek screeds about bitterness and being a loser, with occasional diversions into insight. I like "War Machine," where he rants about smart phones. Trust me, it's all in the delivery. I know The Melvins and Killdozer are pretty much untouchable, but the former take themselves far too seriously these days and the latter are no more. So give Grizzlor a shot. —Craven Rock (Grizzlor / Hex)

GROSS POINTE: Bad Seed: 7" EP

Spot-on, stompin' garage rock delivered with swingin' punk rock heaviness. The first two songs just strut their way in and get the party heated up right fuggin' quick. "Time to Waste" offers a choice cool out, and the closer "Options" sends you out the door with a less-than-a-minute goodbye. *Fuuuuck* yeah, this rocks. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac)

GROWING PAINS: I Always Know: 7"

Lo-fi, poppy garage rock out of Detroit, peppered with an organ that sings some melody above the fuzz. Catchy tunes, heartfelt vocals, jangly guitars; this is combustive pop of the highest order. This one should fit nicely on the shelf, filed next to your Gentleman Jesse And His Men and the Golden Boys records. —Jeff Proctor (Volar)

HATE RECORDER: Flinching at the Square Waves: 7"

I haven't been disappointed by a Humanterrorist release yet, and this was no different. Hate Recorder not only have a great name but a great, angst, art-punk sound. The vocals are on the verge of giving out—imagine if you burned the Descendents alive and you have an idea of the sound I'm talking about. Hate Recorder are a killer three-piece band for fans of post-punk and 7" gems. —Ryan Nichols (Humanterrorist)

HELTA SKELTA: Beyond the Black Stump: LP

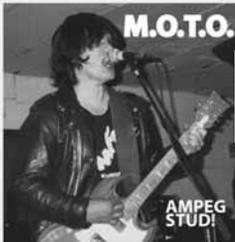
Helta Skelta are the love child of Cause Commotion and Thee Homosexuals.

It's a raw and minimalist style where the vocals are delivered in a matter-of-fact way, the guitar sounds like it was recorded in a basement, and the drums keep the beat simple. Very utilitarian. Kind of art damaged, but still rock'n'roll to their very core. I'm saying none of this as an insult, but instead as a list of compliments. This album is pretty damn good, something that becomes immediately apparent during the opening instrumental title track. Tempos vary throughout, from the hyper "Done," to the lurking swagger of "Zulu," to the driving tempo of "Cosh Boy." Every song on here is a keeper, and they all have their own character that complements the other. The guitar solos in "Reds" and "Done" are pretty cooking and very effective in sending those songs into the stratosphere. They did save the best song for last; "Must Go Wrong" starts off pretty unassuming with a scratchy guitar then quickly gets down to business once all the other instruments come crashing in. It's urgent and catchy all at once, as well as a little more layered than the other songs. —Matt Average (Deranged)

HEMPSTEADYS, THE: El Amor de los Muertos: CD

I have loved ska since I was a youngster and have despised reggae to the point of physical discomfort in the form of acid reflux-inducing, white-knuckled rage for just as long. Rocksteady can really go either way for me, but there is rarely indifference. The Hempsteadys, eleven

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Connecticut rude boys, really bring me back to my teen years. No shortage of horns or talent here. If you are looking for something to help you skank the night away, *El Amor de los Muertos* will do the trick! —Jackie Rusted (Telegraph Recording Company, telegraphrecordingcompany.com)

HIPSHOT KILLER:

***They Will Try to Kill Us All*: LP**

From the moment the intro to “Anthem” kicked in, I was sold on *They Will Try to Kill Us All*, the second album from this Kansas City trio. The guitar had a wonderfully crisp and clear quality which reminded me of something that would sit well on a Stiff Little Fingers track. It kick started a song that was aptly named, featuring a huge singalong chorus. As I took in the rest of the record, I was pretty much blown away at how much better Hipshot Killer had become (to be fair, the band’s first album wasn’t bad either). The production allows each element to be heard individually but also pulls them together to create a dynamic and stirring sound which drives the album along with ease. The band has the rhythmic punch of Naked Raygun mixed with a melodicism similar to M.I.A.’s *After the Fact*. I’ve been playing this to death and the law of diminishing marginal returns has yet to rear its head. Somehow I doubt it ever will. This is destined to be a lifelong favorite. —Rich Cocksedge (Throwing Things, throwingthingsrecords.com)

HORRIBLE THINGS:

***Everybody Else*: LP**

I gambled on the vibrant jacket art by Brian Galecki and won. Horrible Things write short pop punk gems with an acerbic edge. From what I can gather, this band is one dude: Tim Reynolds. This is made all the more impressive by the fact that the songs sound dynamic and energetic. The power is in the brevity, as the hooks never fall into cloying bro-anthem call and responses, and the guitars are often dark enough for the pessimist in me. *Everybody Else* is for fans of The Copyrights and Southern California’s Karoshi Boy. Recommended. —Sean Arenas (Secret Pennies, secretpennies.com)

HOUND:

***Live! At Golden Tea House*: LP**

I don’t usually like to start a band with a live release, but this album rocks hard on the scale of Sleep-inspired drippage to full-on, fifth gear stoner metal. The classic bootleg-style white sleeve with a flyer glued to it might skew my view. People who dig for records often stop flipping when they run across a homemade album cover to see what it is. Had I seen this in a bin, I would have likely kept going, not knowing the band. But I’m glad to hear it now. It’s got fire and—duh, I guess—it sounds good live. I don’t know what Hound’s studio albums sounds like, but this works. —Billups Allen (Bootlegger’s Banquet, srarecords.com)

HRDINOVÉ NOVÉ FRONTY:

***Válečný Území*: LP**

Diacritical-heavy punk from the communist-controlled Czech Republic, 1985-88. I’d say that it feels like I was caught in a time warp and got *MRR*’s mail from three decades ago, except that the worshipful packaging—colored vinyl, full color gatefold sleeve, full-color lyric libretto (hey, they called it a “libretto” for *Plastic Surgery Disasters*, I can use that word legally)—is far too bourgeois and decadent for that time period. I am glad this record exists. That said, Czech please. BEST SONG: “Dům Na Demolici.” BEST SONG TITLE: Tie between “Syfilis” and “Bombardéry.” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Band name means “Cut across Shorty” in Czechoslovakian. Not really. —Rev. Norb (PHR)

HUSSY, THE: Self-titled: 7”

Bobby and Heather Hussy make up this two-piece rock and roll duo out of Madison, Wis. and the two of them pound out four peppy, poppy, lo-fi shredders on this 7”, with each member getting a side with two tracks each. Heather’s side is the more immediately catchy of the two. Her tunes are fairly reminiscent of Bleached—joyous, singalong bursts of female-voiced garage pop. Bobby’s side is closer to Jay Reatard’s work, a little more raucous and rambunctious, with a little more pronounced post-punk angularity to the guitars, and bit of nervous jitter in the vocal delivery. Great stuff here. —Jeff Proctor (Volar)

ICKS, THE: Self-titled: 7”

The A-side song takes forever to get going. The intro is about three times longer than it needs to be. Once things get going, it settles into a moody, post-punk/goth sound that is pretty solid. The B side kicks into a real Slumberland indie pop-style song. Pretty decent single from this Indianapolis band. —Mike Frame (DOD, dodrecords, storenvy.com)

INDEX: Demo: 7” EP

Insert says this was originally released on cassette in 2012. White labels and all-but-illegible lyrics/song info Xeroxed onto the inside of the cover add to the mystery. Further scratching around reveals it was a short-lived hardcore band that included members of Brilliant Colors, Flesh World, Jump Off A Building, Nosediva, and Via. The sound is predominantly mid-tempo punk with reverb-drenched vocals and guitars that sound like they’re coming straight out of a 1981 garage. Not sickly catchy, not quite forgettable, definitely a nice time capsule piece. —Jimmy Alvarado (Vague Absolutes)

INKWIZYCJA: *Wojny Nie Bedzie*: LP

Inkwizycja (Polish for Inquisition) appear to be working with quite the unusual blend of influences which I can only describe as an awkward three-way between Tragedy, Severed Head Of State, and Machine Head. I have a feeling if they left one of those three out of the equation (you can probably guess which one), the results would be

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much sexier. However, commendations are in order for the Polish-to-English translations and overall for being a DIY product. —Juan Espinosa (Pasazer, pasazer.pl)

JACK SCRATCH: *If Only*: CD

Ugh. Derivative paint-by-numbers bar rock stylings that you'd find at a county fair or street festival. Dull. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Another Bam Bam Recording)

JACUZZI BOYS: *Happy Damage*: CS

I have seen this band name around for a couple of years, but this is my first time actually hearing Jacuzzi Boys. There is some fast, fairly hooky, poppy garage-y stuff to be found on this cassette. It makes a whole lot of sense that it is released on Burger. Jacuzzi Boys fit right in there with a lot of that mid-fi thing that bands like Strange Boys and Audacity and Nobunny do as well. Pretty solid release, though I have to admit that I have had more than my fill of this type of thing over the last decade or so. —Mike Frame (Burger)

JERKS, THE: *"Cool" b/w "Cruisin'": 7"*

The Jerks "Get Your Woofing Dogs off Me" single is another of those KBD collector classics that has been reissued over the years. This recent reissue of their second single is as urgent a grab if you're into '77. "Cool" has the mechanical '60s snare slap of early trash rock. "Cruisin'" is a great reaction song to someone who promised to write and never did. They are both mid-

tempo snotty. Essential if you're into KBD. —Billups Allen (Paramecium, parameciumrecords.com)

JIM THREAT AND THE VULTURES: *Afraid of the Dark*: 7" EP

A four-song sonic blast that clocks in at just under ten minutes, but will keep your ears ringing for a lot longer than that. It is hard to pick a favorite here, but trust me—this slab of wax is red hot. You can get it on red vinyl directly from the label, but act fast. —Sean Koepenick (Dr. Strange, drstrange@drstrange.com)

JOHN WESLEY COLEMAN: *Greatest Hits*: LP

I bought this record at John Wesley Coleman's release party. The show was free, there was free pizza (although I arrived having eaten dinner, missing the memo on pizza), the records were cheap, and half of your record purchase dollars were donated to a charity of your choice. Can't get much cooler than that. Even though JWC has more releases under his belt than I can count, *Greatest Hits* isn't a collection of favorites and chart-toppers, just the name of the album. This time around, we find JWC more somber and wistful (i.e. "Pick up the Phone," a tune perhaps about how as we grow up we grow apart from friends). The Rolling Stones wish they could have written "Television." But my main question is: where's the rollicking, drunken sax party of *Last Donkey Show*? Dare I say JWC is less silly this go-around (and remember the

man has a song called "Nightmare on Silly Street")? Let's not go that far. The sax sneaks in on side two, somewhere around "Portlandia." There are still a few up-tempo romps like "Tea and Sandwiches" and "Miranda" so don't worry, Mr. JWC can and will still bring the good times. —Sal Lucci (Super Secret, supersecretrecords.com)

JOHNNY THUNDERS: *Daddy Rollin' Stone*: 10" EP

Second in a series of archival releases and produced by Steve Lillywhite, featuring Phil Lynott (Thin Lizzy) on bass. "London Boys" will be familiar to Heartbreakers fans, but the title track and "Hurtin'" are probably new to most. Great sound and on yellow vinyl. Why wouldn't you seek this out? —Sean Koepenick (Remarquable, yo@remarquablerecords.com)

JOHNSON FROM ACCOUNTING / MOLEDEBATER: *Split*: CS

Cheap, shitty, and fun. Johnson From Accounting starts this off with some one-to-two-minute blasts of '90s-style skate punk. The vocals are hilariously toneless shouting (in a good way, I think), and everything has that signature possibly-recorded-in-a-trashcan sound. This gets bonus points for lyrical content: "Macho Bullshit" offers great lines like, "I'm sorry that you're sad, but that makes no one a whore," while "I Wanna Skate" just boldly states what everyone's thinking. "Another Casualty" is about how much The Casualties suck. The Casualties

really, really suck, so I am on board with this. The Moledebater side starts out heavier and thrasher, but there's some unexpected melody buried in there somewhere. This side sounds like it was recorded at the bottom of a far worse trashcan than the previous side, and I can't really tell what's going on. But I can dig it, I think. —Indiana Laub (Faxed, faxedrecords.storenvy.com)

K, THE: *Burning Pattern Etiquette*: CD

The ten songs and thirty-nine minutes of music on this album is what happens if the Blood Brothers and Pissed Jeans had a baby and raised it in Belgium. The lyrics are all in English, but the vocalist's accent helps the sound to stand out amongst a crowd of bands that might otherwise be too similar. There's a darker bass sound that creates dissonance, but not in a way that is distracting. Instead, it makes me curious and wanting to get a closer listen. There's an anger and frustration just below the surface that doesn't emerge much but is instead diverged into a brooding angst. I can dig it. —Kurt Morris (JauneOrange, jauneorange.be)

KEEPERS: *Blasé*: 7"

Blasé is the debut release from Keepers, a San Diego three-piece featuring members of the Soft Pack and Plateaus. What you get here is Gang Of Four-styled post-punk, anchored by a dancey rhythm section (featuring a very pronounced, bouncy bass), punctuated with shards of abrasively intricate and crunchy guitar, and with vocals with



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a touch of British affectation. It's a nice introduction to the band. Looking forward to checking out future output from these folks. —Jeff Proctor (Volar)

KEEPERS: Self-titled: 7"

The Keepers play bass-heavy post-punk veering into early '90s Touch And Go and AmRep-style sounds. This is one of my least favorite styles in the world, but they seem to do it as well as, or better, than most. —Mike Frame (Volar, volarrerecords.bandcamp.com)

KINDLING: Galaxies: 12" EP

Kindling features folks from Ampere, and they play densely textured, shoegaze-inspired punk. The guitars are warm and dirtied with fuzz and the bass thumps alongside the crashing cymbals. Overall, the production is spot-on. Although I enjoy most of the components of *Galaxies*, the EP is underwhelming. The vocals left me as bored as they sound, and there isn't enough variety to make these four songs stand out. —Sean Arenas (No Idea)

L'ASSASSINS:

"Fire of Love" b/w "Liar": 7"

Minnesota's L'Assassins have a clear mission statement. Their surfy girl-power tunes fall somewhere between The Cramps and Annette Funicello, and their aesthetic falls somewhere between *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* and *Beach Blanket Bingo*. The fuzzy, DIY sensibility of the band's previous efforts served up a tasty cocktail of dirty, campy, self-aware homage; this

single steers them closer to the realm of style over substance, its newfound polish canceling out much of the messy exuberance that made L'Assassins' gimmick work. The accompanying music video for "Fire of Love" follows suit, portraying the band's members less as tough, inhabited characters and more as pinned-up Masuimi Max clones. The higher production value does no favors for the music either, which now evokes the yeah-okay-weg-et-it of HorrorPops as much as the transformative energy of The Sonics. While "Fire of Love" and "Liar" are still catchy, solidly composed songs, the dash of sandy grit that once made L'Assassins' rebelitas-without-a-cause image resonate has begun melting down into a glossy veneer that's just not as fun or memorable. —Kelley O'Death (Piñata, pinatarecords.blogspot.com)

LAURA STEVENSON: Cocksure: LP

Breezy Midwest fields of grain. Intimacy of a house show, but a barn. Airy, not thin, perfect fuzzy pop with toes in possibly both the *No Depression* and punk pools. Imagine seeing a band with enough warmth in sound to fill a storehouse. You might be the only attendee, but still never feel alone. The root of the experience lies in Laura's voice, with the songs breathing and swelling forth. Went into this LP with only peripheral name recognition, but fell in headfirst on initial listen. *Cocksure* being her fourth full-length, cheers to a Neko-esque output future. —Matt Seward (Don Giovanni)

LAWSUIT MODELS:

"Dudeman" b/w "Hot Garbage": 7"

This Lawsuit Models single for Snappy Little Numbers Quality Audio Recordings contains no false advertising: "Dudeman" and "Hot Garbage" are indeed snappy little numbers and recordings of quality. These bouncy punk rock odes knock on your door like little kids, plaintively begging you to come out and sing along with them. A little Lawrence Arms, a little Wonder Years, a little Off With Their Heads, Denver's Lawsuit Models may not up the ante of contemporary punk rock, but they fit in nicely, extolling the virtues of playing music with your friends, drinking beer with your friends, and growing old gracefully with your friends. The refreshing lack of pretention and abundance of humor on display make me suspect that if you're lucky enough to attend one of Lawsuit Models' shows, you'll probably wake up the next morning with a gnarly hangover, a hazy recollection of the night, and all of the band members' numbers in your phone. —Kelley O'Death (Snappy Little Numbers)

LEFTOVERS: This Time Tomorrow: CD

This might be harsher criticism than Leftovers deserve to shoulder alone, but I can't listen to any more of this style of pop punk. I'm certain that nine out of ten bands I see in promo photos asking for votes to get them a spot on Warped Tour sound exactly like this. "Party Fucker" is basically a Blink-182 tribute

song that drags on about two minutes too long and is about getting beat up by tall dudes after trying to kiss their girlfriends. The entire last verse turns out to be a dick joke. Really struggling to find anything remotely interesting in this, except the knowledge that this kind of music sounds exactly the same in Italy as it does here. Album of the month for drunk boys looking for new creepy pickup lines to use on girls at parties. —Indiana Laub (Morning Wood, morningwoodrecords.com)

LOST BALLONS: Self-titled: LP

The Jeff Burke hit parade rages on! This most recent installment is a fourteen-track collaboration with Yusuke Okada (Suspicious Beasts) of dreamy, ethereal, often-acoustic '60s pop-influenced songs. The tempo may be slower than most of these two's sonic output, but the melodies are just as crushing as ever, the songwriting crafted with precision, and the emotion all too relevant. Imagine if Love spent twenty years wreaking punk chaos on the scene before they wrote *Forever Changes*. Continue the ride you've taken with *Lenguas Largas* and *Treasure Fleet*; transcendence never felt so free. —Daryl (Alien Snatch)

LOST BALLOONS: Self-titled: LP

It would not be an outlandish statement to say that I worship at the altar of The Marked Men. I know I am not alone. I get excited every time I hear that a member of that band has a new project going because I know it will be quality.

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Lost Balloons can be added to that growing list of amazing records. A two-man collaboration featuring Jeff Burke (Marked Men, Radioactivity, et cetera) and Yuske Okada (Suspicious Beasts), my first reaction was that sonically it falls in with Mind Spiders (featuring Marked Men and Radioactivity bandmate Mark Ryan) more than Burke's other projects. I like that. I am not familiar with Okada's other bands, but I think I am going to have to hunt them down because I really like what he is doing here (musically, as well as all of the artwork). In a nutshell, if you are familiar with Jeff Burke's music, you know what to expect; well-crafted songs with incredibly depressing song titles. ("I Water a Tree (Called Depression)" and "Murder Me on Stage" instantly come to mind). As you would expect, I can't recommend this record enough. -Ty Stranglehold (Alien Snatch)

LOVE MOON: Clouded Bliss: LP

Stoner rock, sludge, post punk, whatever the Melvins are... this fits into some mix of those genres. Great-sounding recording done in the band's practice space; it's clear, warm, and not trying to be too heavy, just rocking. Good riffs and pounding drums play an equal role in guiding the feel of the record. And because it seems Love Moon comes from a punk background rather than metal, no riff or song section is ever beaten to death. These are concise songs that never bore the listener by unnecessary repetition. The only thing that keeps this record from reaching that next level is the

vocals. They're not unlistenable, grating, or anything like that, they're just not all that varied from song to song. With the exception of "Starstuff"—which contains a chorus hook that is undeniable—all of the songs' vocal patterns, cadences, and melodies (to the extent that shouted vocals can be melodic) are very similar, and contribute to a bit of a lack of distinction between songs. Really though, that's a minor complaint; this is a solid first album for this Oakland, Calif. trio. -Chad Williams (Drink Or Die, dodrecords.storenvy.com)

LOWER ECHELON, THE: Descent of...: 7"

For starters, this four-song release was recorded by Golden Beat Studios's Andrew Schubert, who is a one-man army when it comes to documenting West Coast-based, independent punk bands. Others who owe a debt of gratitude to Schubert include personal favorites Spokenest and Neighborhood Brats. As for the Lower Echelon, what's not to love? It is Los Angeles-based, guitar-centered punk rock with Jello Biafra-inspired vocals that playfully poke and prod the listener in hopes that they will wake the fuck up. -Jon Mule (Ghostbot)

LUMBERJERKS: Four More E.P.: CD

Joliet, Ill., is not exactly a hotbed of punk activity. This may explain how the punk rock renaissance men in LumberJerks expertly fold so many different styles into their songs. These so-quick-you-might-miss-'em hops

from one influence to the next feel effortless, almost subconscious. The *Four More E.P.'s* tracks sound like what would happen if the brothers in the documentary *The Wolfpack*—who spent their whole lives hidden away, confined to their New York apartment—had been exposed to popular culture only through a handful of classic punk records rather than a handful of classic movies. The first seven seconds of the excellently titled "Trailer Thrash" fool you into thinking LumberJerks embrace the jazziness of post-punk masters Fugazi before launching into an authentically snotty, no-fucks-given punk reminiscent of The Dead Kennedys, punctuated with buried love letters to Sex Pistols and The Misfits. The frenetic, grinding vocals on "Schizo Episode" sound like Darby Crash posthumously conceived a lovechild with Choking Victim-era Stza—sorry for that mental image. Standout track, "Somthin," is a surprisingly melodic Frankenstein's monster of punk influences that has been given—inexplicably—Blondie's heart. "Garage Hopping" introduces a little Operation Ivy into the mix, but also maybe shades of Strung Out, and possible a nod to The Go-Go's? It's just... it's weird, you guys. And these days, that is perhaps the highest praise one can bestow. -Kelley O'Death (Chump, chumprecords.com)

MAC BLACKOUT BAND:

City Lights EP: CS

Six new tracks from the prolific Mac Blackout are featured on this cassette,

which came out for Cassette Store Day in the fall of 2015. The frontman for The Functional Blackouts and many others, Mac Blackout records a lot of solo material. Here we're treated to a small group of catchy glam cuts that won't disappoint. Who needs to travel to Chicago to see Mr. Blackout when you can pop this worthy cassette into your player? -Art Ettinger (Rainy Road, rainyroadrecords.com)

MAL BLUM: You Look a Lot Like Me: LP

Mal Blum has that kind of hyper-enunciated style that's right there on top of everything, front and center. Whatever happens, however it's arranged, it's always going to sound like Mal Blum. Both their voice and lyrics have this confessional quality that gives everything the feeling of a private bedroom recording, though they're well past that now. I'm going to get in the spirit and make my own confession, which is that my partner has overplayed that "Crying at the Wawa" song Blum did with Chris Gethard so much this year that it's become a running joke how much I hate it. So listening to this album has kind of been my own personal journey of acceptance. I've come to understand that I don't hate Mal Blum; I'm just prone to feeling uncomfortable and self-conscious when confronted with a certain kind of intimate honesty. Fortunately, this album deals heavily in uncomfortable and self-conscious feelings, so I'm in good company while I figure it out. I'm glad this one

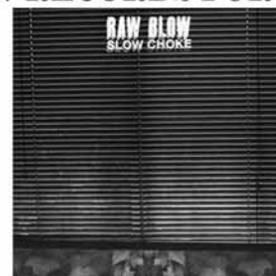


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has as much of a “band” feeling as it does; I know the multi-instrument twee arrangement thing works for a lot of people, but this is connecting with me a lot more than the older stuff I’ve heard. Songs like “Robert Frost” and “Reality TV” strike the balance particularly well—catchy and driving without losing any of the introspection that makes the singer/songwriter stuff work. This is a good one, even if it’s not always for me. There’s something very real and raw at the heart of it. Also, I looked up a picture of Mal Blum to see if I actually do look a lot like them, and... I kinda see it? —Indiana Laub (Don Giovanni)

MAMA: Speed Trap: 7” EP

Things start off with a bit of post-punky Hüsker sheen that quickly burns off into high-octane pop-powered punk (or vice versa). There are hints of a dark undertow bubbling up in spots but the tracks retain their catchiness throughout, careening from one to the next. Thumbs up. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

MANN KACKT SICH IN DIE HOSE / SAD NEUTRINO BITCHES: Split: 7”

The very German-named Mann Kackt Sich In Die Hose kick out four songs of really solid hardcore punk with a very clean guitar tone. Falling somewhere between Amdi Petersons Arme and Japanese thrash, there is a whole lot to like here. Sad Neutrino Bitches are faster with cool, snotty vocals; kinda like a thrashy Bratmobile if you can

pardon a strange comparison. This is a pretty good split from a couple of solid European bands. —Mike Frame (Spastic Fantastic, spasticfantastic.bandcamp.com)

MANTS, THE: Do the Dummy!: LP

I have been waiting a hell of a long time to hear a full-length record from Planet X’s (via Calgary in the ‘90s, via Victoria BC currently) Mants. Twenty years, to be exact. The *Half Man, Half Ant, All Action 7”* came out in 1996 and I have been a diehard fan ever since. What’s not to love? Raw, fuzzy garage punk played by humanoid ants in dapper suits is an all-around win in my books. The big question is do The Mants hold up after a couple of decades? Well, it is apparent to me that Mants age differently than us puny humans since this LP sounds as fresh as that first slab did back in 1996. If the time has come to be enslaved by our insect overlords, I will be first in line doing The Dummy! —Ty Stranglehold (Dead Beat)

MARRÓN: Self-titled: LP

Marrón play punchy, rock’n’roll-inflected post-hardcore with husky, breathless vocals. They sound exactly like Swiz. Lyrics are in English and Spanish and are personal but just broad enough that they could be about being a brown person in the white punk scene, or in all of white America. But damn, I tune out for a second, forget what’s on, and think, “Wait, what second-tier Swiz song is this?” It makes for a

frustrating and off-putting listen. Most of Swiz are now in a band called Red Hare. Check them out instead. —Chris Terry (Take It Back)

MASSENGER: Banshee: CS

Massenger is a surf-infused garage punk group from Southern California. The star is Sasha Green’s confident, pitch-perfect voice. When she belts, I’m reminded of Alley Cats’ Dianne Chai and, of course, Siouxsie Sioux’s swagger. The aforementioned singer/songwriter also adorns the cover and is the recipient of a playful ode. These six tunes are equally cool and rocking. I imagine that Massenger rages live so if you get a chance, see them or pick up this killer cassette. —Sean Arenas (Burger, burgerrecords.org)

MEDICATION: Warm Places: LP/CD

Medication, a collaboration between ex-members of The Sainte Catherines and Leatherface, offers up a bittersweet listening experience with *Warm Places*. On one hand, it serves as a posthumous release of Dickie Hammond’s final work. It also allows for a celebration of that man’s talent and influence. Obviously the album is not all about one man, but it took me half a dozen plays before I could get beyond trying to identify anything other than his input. There is a relaxed—and at times sombre—feel to a lot of the tracks with Hugo Mudie showing that his voice is the perfect fit for that tone. However, his input is overshadowed by Hammond who takes up the mic for

“Stalingrad,” a song which has more of an Americana quality as he documents the downs of his life and offers a reason why alcohol was such an important part of his existence. It truly is a beast of a track and brings me to the verge of tears each time I hear it. The one surprise I found is in “Saptor Raptor,” which seems to have a dual personality, trading back and forth between being in the same vein as the rest of the album and also fancying itself as an up-tempo Down By Law track. Regardless of the poignancy surrounding this record, it stands on its own two feet as a piece of work and is worth checking out. —Rich Cocksedge (Paper + Plastick, paperandplastick.com)

MIND SPIDERS: Prosthetic: LP

Any time any former member of Denton Texas’s Marked Men releases some new music, it is cause to celebrate. It is no secret how much this group of guys’ music speaks to me, especially Mark Ryan’s Mind Spiders. For those unaware of this amazing band, here’s the run down: off-kilter, guitar- and synth-driven pop songs with heavy science fiction themes throughout. I often describe them as Marked Men meets Devo through the filter of a 1950s comic book. I love them. So here we are with Mind Spiders’ fourth full-length offering *Prosthetic*, and we find the sound evolving again. Right from the first song it is apparent that there is a harder, scrappier sound



(perhaps the influence of long-time bass player Daniel Fried) and ever-further leaning into digital and synth territory. There is a heavier Devo spirit lurking within and it works masterfully. Over everything, we have Ryan's words telling stories of alien loneliness and frustration. I keep playing it over and over, and every time I hear something new that gives me the shivers and makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. With *Prosthetic*, Mind Spiders are going on the attack. We are seeing the beginning of their full-fledged invasion. —Ty Stranglehold (Dirtnap)

MODERN PROBLEMS: Identity: CS

First off, this cassette came out of Black Dots, so I was pretty sure it was good before I even listened to it. And it's really good. I know nothing about this band, but they soar through some early 2000s youth crew HC with ease. This stuff isn't really my style but the recording is spot-on and the riffs are exactly what they're supposed to be until they hit a killer Uniform Choice-style breakdown that sounds fresh and relevant in 2016, which ain't easy in this style. The thing is over before you have time to think. If this cassette's any indication of what this band will do in the future, there's an audience ready and willing to X up and mosh in basketball shorts with their friends so that later they can cool down with an ice cold can of Coke. Do it! —Ian Wise (Black Dots)

MOOD OF DEFIANCE: In a Box: 7"

Mood Of Defiance are a San Pedro outfit that formed in 1981. This 7" is comprised of unreleased demos produced by Spot, who worked with many of SST's stalwarts like Black Flag, Minutemen, and Descendents. The production has a uniquely South Bay, L.A. vibe, but the main attraction is Rachel Mason's voice; she is ferocious and rabid. She howls, "We are hardcore drug addicts" without sounding remotely tongue-in-cheek. *In a Box* isn't only a piece of punk history, but way ahead of its time. "She's Afraid" is haunting and visceral, still gut-wrenching after thirty-five years. The digital download also includes a bonus track "Child Swapping Throws." —Sean Arenas (Recess / Water Under The Bridge)

MUCH WORSE: Chronic Instigation: LP

Second LP from this Minneapolis band. I did not hear their previous record, so I'm flying a little blind here. A lot of it reminds me of a lot of Double Negative—and in some ways Brown Sugar (but the vocalist sounds just like the vocalist from Positive Reinforcement)—but with a lot more *wank* in the guitar. The recording is crisp and appropriately heavy, and the musicians are clearly competent, but the problem with this record is that the songs follow no discernable path. I found myself zoning out whenever I tried to follow a song. By the end of the first side, I was left sort of just wondering what it is they are trying

to do. Unfortunately, the second side offers no answers. —Ian Wise (25 Diamonds, 25diamonds.com)

MUERTE: Self-titled: LP

Was totally expecting some Mexican Discharge worship, but it ain't that kinda party here, kids. They do bash things up a bit here and there in ways that'll please the most stiff-necked hardcore fan, but underneath the chanting vocals and *Sturm und Drang* is a heavy duty post-punk strain o' misery that seeps through and adds a haunting, almost psychedelic quality to the din. Some interesting things seem to be afoot in the motherland these days, and this is one of 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (SPHC, sphc.bigcartel.com)

MUGWUMPS: Can't Be the One: CD

Kind of formulaically pop punk (after all, it's on Monster Zero), but there's a lot to like here. Mugwumps sound a lot like the more melodic early work of the Hard-Ons, but a bit slower, sort of like the Hard-Ons meet the Ramones. You know what you're getting with this, and it doesn't disappoint. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Monster Zero)

MUTANT SCUM: Field Recordings: CS

This cassette comes complete with your very own hermetically sealed sample of ectoplasm painstakingly collected from ground zero of the hottest scientific discovery of the twenty-first century. Right here, on our beloved home planet, scientists have unearthed a *new* species of being. As explained

by business management program junior, Skippy Williams of Jersey City State College, N.J., the species is believed to be the forgotten product of industrial waste and left to fester in the "way down deeps of Brooklyn, NY's Newton Creek." So far, research is inconclusive. Musicians, mutant waste, a Brooklyn favorite of the scientific community, and byproducts of said festering industrial waste have been tapped to seek out the help of the global community in the hope to prove the validity of government funding for the research of our new "neighbors." Thus samples of this species' excrement have been included with this album, allowing scientists worldwide to get the chance to, "Take a crack at it, yeah?" as stated by a member of Society for Estuary Waste Education and Research whom wishes to remain anonymous at this time. Joke or not, preserving our water supply is a big fuckin' deal, so why not have some fun whilst raising awareness with some super tight metallic punk? —Jackie Rusted (Sewer, sewernyc.org / Handstand, handstandrecords.com)

NERVOUS TREND: Self-titled: 7"

Excellent, excellent single! Nervous Trend plays music that falls into the realm of goth/death rock, similar to Catholic Spit, Christian Death, and Part 1. Instead of focusing on death and decay, they're tackling gender issues with these two tracks. "Shattered" is nothing short of great. The music builds in tempo at the beginning and hits its stride with the bass and percussion

OUT NOW:

BUM OUT - "PAIN DON'T HURT" CS
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BOSS EYE -
"PLAYS COTTAGE VORTEX" - LP
(TEN SONG 12", ROCK'N'ROLL NOISE FROM AUSTIN)

GHOST KNIFE - 7"
(POWERPOP PUNK WITH RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS & EX-J CHURCH MEMBERS)

FLESH LIGHTS - 7"
(KILLER GARAGE/POWER POP FROM AUSTIN)

LIVIDS - 7"
(BROOKLYN SUPERGROUP WITH NEW BOMB TURKS & ZODIAC KILLERS MEMBERS)

WET LUNGS - 7"
(BRUTAL AND HEAVY WITH GABE FROM THE LOCUST)

THE BEST - 7"
(POWERPOP W/OBN III'S & FLESH LIGHTS MEMBERS)

WEIRD PARTY - 7"
(EX-SUGAR SHACK & FATAL FLYING GUILLOTINES)

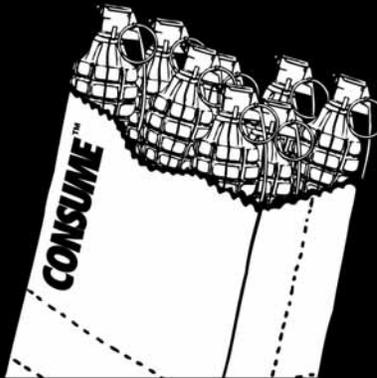
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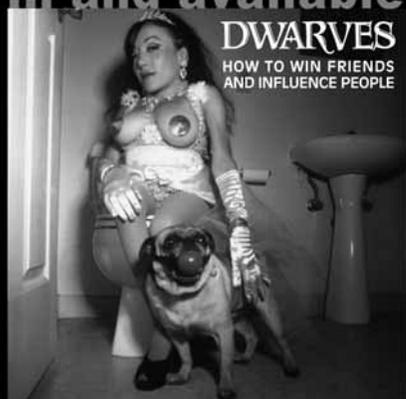
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propelling everything forward in a very direct manner. The vocals are just short of being high pitched and switch to something more sober when the mood calls for it. "Decency" is just a bit more urgent and quicker, but doesn't have that dark, cold, and layered sound of the A side; however, it's just as strong. I'm looking forward to hearing more from this outfit. Pacing the floor in anticipation. —Matt Average (Residue)

NIKKI LOUDER: Trout: CD

Took a minute—after listening to release upon release adhering to some sort of template or another—to get the noggin around this slab of noise rock, but it was worth the effort. Lots of dissonant guitars, weird rhythmic noodling, and the like, as can be expected. When they really get going, however, the repetition gets hypnotic and almost psychedelic as each song stretches out. Not for everyone, I reckon, but those in for this kinda thang will find much to dig here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Moonlee)

NO MARKS, THE / SPOILERS: Split: 7"

A while back I received the LP by England's No Marks and was really into them. They play a melodic style with lots of guitar parts that reminded me of Leatherface. Well, they're back and this time they've brought their pals Spoilers on a split 7" endeavor. The No Marks play upbeat melodic punk with solid production. The singer sounds a lot like the singer from Whatever... (amazing '90s Cleveland punk band

that is hard to Google search). That is a good thing. On the flip is Spoilers who instantly made me think of Snuff. That faded when the vocals kicked in, mainly because I don't imagine there is anyone else out there who sounds quite like Duncan Redmonds. This is some great, fun poppy punk action. All in all, a good release from a couple of bands that are doing a great job at what they do. I always look forward to hearing more. —Ty Stranglehold (Brassneck, brassneckrecords.bandcamp.com)

NUCLEAR FAMILY, THE: Self-titled: EP

Grabbed this thinking it was something new by the punk band Nuclear Family, who released a great LP on Loud Punk. Wrong band. I should have paid closer attention to the "The" in their name, and not think maybe it was a mistake on the artist's part. This Nuclear Family—The Nuclear Family—are a grungy sort of noise rock band. Crunching riffs, thundering drums, and a layer of distortion over the whole thing. The male and female vocals work well, as they tend to do with this style. The riff change towards the end of "Milk & Metho" is pretty good, and one of the more driving elements on this record. "Crash" is the best of the four here. The structure has more going for it with changing tempos, more texture, the dual vocals, and a somewhat intense approach. This is good, but I get the sense that their strength is in their live performance. —Matt Average (Urge, urgerecords.bigcartel.com)

PAINTED ZEROS: Floriography: LP

Floriography is the recording project of Katie Lau, a songwriter, singer, and guitarist with an enviable vocal style somewhere in the ballpark occupied by Sinead O'Connor and Jolie Holland. Lau fronts an indie/pop/rock band—a three-piece live—whose music ranges from distorted (though not aggressive) alternative rock to lush, layered (but not over-produced) indie pop. All styles are executed in perfect balance to tell a story of heartache and heartbreak, a theme that runs throughout the entire album. Haunting, melancholic, and captivating. —Chad Williams (Don Giovanni)

PALBERTA: Hot on the Beach: CS

Is it punk? Kind of. JMC Aggregate put out this cassette and described Palberta as "no-wave bounce," which speaks to the dissonance that tends to characterize Palberta's tracks as well as their inescapable catchiness. These songs are ear worms, but in a gross way. The guitars are spare and angular. The lyrics are shouted or screeched or occasionally sung in a funny voice. The last track on this cassette is a thirteen-minute drum machine jam with the words "it's prollly for the best" repeated continuously over consummate giggles. —Lyle (JMC Aggregate)

POINTED STICKS: Self-titled: CD

This Canadian quintet has been kicking out their own brand of power pop off and on since 1978. I call that sticking with the program. This album opens up with positively adorable Doo-Wop-

style ditty titled "La La La," and it's all over the place from there. Pointed Sticks have a little something for just about everyone: an acoustic sounding instrumental that noodles about, showing some serious guitar chops; some rock'n'roll; some bluesy bar rock; '60s British Invasion-sounding stuff; there are horns, an accordion—and fuck it—a cowbell! All this comes wrapped in a power pop package that is totally timeless. —Jackie Rusted (Sudden Death)

PONCHES, THE: Hum: CD

The Ponches are an Italian pop punk band (singing in English) that mixes the simple structure of the Ramones and Misfits with the pop punk sound of 1990s Lookout! Records bands. On "Shame, Same Shame" they say the word "surreal" repetitiously to the point that I thought there was something wrong with the CD. Two songs later, they have a track called "Getting Jiggy with It" and no... just no. It's not a cover of the Will Smith song, but I'd honestly rather listen to that one than the song by The Ponches. The songs are played competently, but I've heard this sound a hundred times before. —Kurt Morris (Monster Zero)

PRIMITIVE CALCULATORS:

I'm Fucked: EP

Two brand new songs from the '70s synth punk Primitive Calculators are teeming with huge noise-synth sounds. "I'm Fucked" is super-out-there, deep-space weirdness. I'm pretty sure that

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"BAD" is a bizarre noise-industrial cover of Michael Jackson's "BAD"? Nuts. Fucking love this. —Camylle Reynolds (Emotional Response)

PROGERIANS:

The Fabulous Progerians: CD

Sludgy, punky rock that sounds like a cross between a 'core-influenced Sabbath and every heavy mosh breakdown ever conceived. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hannibal's Records, hannibals.com)

OLIPHOTH: Self-titled: CS

My old boss told me that when he was in college and bought a CD player, he smashed open all his cassettes and shot the spools out his second-story window at passing frat boys, yelling "YOUR TECHNOLOGY IS INFERIOR!!!" as he did so. I hope he returns as a post-graduate student, as he can add this screamie hogwash to his arsenal. **BEST SONG:** Fuck you. **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Bothed." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Sorry, wrong number. —Rev. Norb (Dead Tank)

R.U.T.A.: Gore: LP

Polish punk rockers and folk musicians united to play and record an album of traditional Polish serfs' rebel songs, using traditional instruments. The power in politically relevant folk songs, in rebel songs, in protest songs, lies in the words. Consequently, even though an English translation is thoughtfully included in the lovingly assembled

booklet that comes with this album, I find it difficult to really feel the music, to connect in the same way I can with a Joe Strummer, Billy Bragg, or Tim Barry. My loss, I'm sure. If you have any understanding of the Polish language, or are better at absorbing music sung in a foreign language than I am, then this record would be a solid pickup. —Chad Williams (Pazazer, pasazer.pl)

RAD: Return of Thrash Radical: CS

This is the long-awaited demo out from the Sacramento hardcore band Rad. Straight D.R.I., Reagan Youth, '80s-style thrashcore. It's a full-on assault that lasts for barely five minutes, shredding through eight (eight!) songs. Nerdcore lyrics and a brutal sound. Ridiculously good. Only fifty demos made. Heads up to a possible 7" in the making. —Camylle Reynolds (Sacramento, sacramaniacs.com)

RADON / SHALLOW CUTS: Split: 7"

Whoa! Okay, so "Volume 1 Brooklyn" is a reply to someone who wrote this on Facebook: "Aaron Cometbus and Travis Fristoe wrote a book about Radon. We wrote about that book. If Radon wrote a song about us, that would complete some kind of circle." And then *they got a song from Radon!* The author wasn't even a big Radon fan! I reviewed that book! All I needed to do was ask in a somewhat charming matter? I'm green with jealousy over here. All ranting and sour grapes aside, let's get to the song. It starts out strumming and quiet with familiar,

obtuse Radon lyrics. Louder riffage comes in bursts for the chorus. It's a quieter number, but peppy and upbeat. It's not bad. It sounds more like one of those songs Fay Wray wrote about Radon than Radon. It's not their best, but any Radon is good Radon. Shallow Cuts really bring it with two songs about happiness. "Wintersong" goes like this: "The streets are covered with melting snow / we can go anywhere we want to go / everything seems alright today / I don't trust myself / I feel okay." "Ocean" is in the same vein. It reminds my own really good days when the sun goes down and everything is just right. They're written in the present tense, not nostalgic. They're redemptive in the way they remind you there were those days and they'll come again. Since both these songs work together on that theme, I can't wait to see where they go next. I'll be following Shallow Cuts. —Craven Rock (No Idea)

RAMONES: Do You Remember Rock 'N' Roll Radio? Live '95: CD

While the authorization of this recording is probably questionable, for fans it is worth a listen. This was a radio broadcast of a show in Buenos Aires on October 5, 1995. Thirty-three songs of pure Ramones goodness as the Spanish DJ chimes in "Viva Ramonez!" at the most awkward moments. —Sean Koepenick (RoxVox)

RATS IN THE LOUVRE: Self-titled: LP

Serpentine death-throes straight from the mid-to-late '80s. Razor sharp,

careening so close to the edge. Snaking bass, twitching guitar—I'm trying too hard to not say "post-punk," because Rats In The Louvre would have fit any Masque bill. Surgically carving their own space (think Flesheaters or White Murder), their self-titled first endeavor is a giant piece of granite on your auditory lap; its sheer weight refusing to be ignored. Jerk back and forth and get cozy in the uncomfortableness. So, so, so good. —Matt Seward (Water Under The Bridge, waterunderthebridgerecords.com)

RAYDIOS, THE:

"Craps" b/w "Teacher's Pet": 7"

Fink from Teengenerate seems to have a band for every speed. Seventeen years of The Raydios and it's hard to tell an early single from a later one. The Raydios trade the Teengenerate fuzz for furious ratchet riffs. "Craps" rails at Registrators' speed while "Teacher's Pet" slows enough to throw in a catchy harmony. If you're into this gang's bands, the Raydios still have it. —Billups Allen (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

REALITY SHOW, THE:

Vicious Cycle of Life: 7"

This brutal and fast powerviolence record is on the more metal end of that subgenre. Once it speeds up and there's less time for camp metal guitar lines, it becomes more palatable for my punk snob ears. They're from Finland, with two of the three tracks featuring English lyrics. The third is in

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Finnish. Some powerviolence is oddly accessible, but this is less so, with the focus on showy speed musicianship. I like the throwback to a decade ago that seems to be happening on this record, but it still has me scratching my head at times because I think they're going for a relatively broad audience, at least within hardcore's circle. *Vicious Cycle of Life* is vicious indeed. —Art Ettinger (Rakalevyt, diyturku.net/rakalevyt)

REV. NØRB AND THE ONIONS / LAST SONS OF KRYPTON: Split LP

I have no way of being objective when reviewing this record. But, really, what kind of robot listens to music objectively anyway? My first move out of my hometown was to Green Bay, Wis. This move was driven almost entirely by the fact that, at the time, Green Bay's punk scene was super fun. I was closer to Minneapolis, but that was kind of crusty back then and not really my thing. With the Concert Café at the epicenter, Green Bay was packed full of bands that were less into posturing and more interested in having a good time. So I moved to the other side of Wisconsin, got a shitty job at a factory, and spent my nights rocking out to bands like Last Sons Of Krypton, the Onions, and Rev. Nørþ's old band Boris The Sprinkler. This record brings me back to those nights, when I met some of the best friends I've ever had. These bands still rock with zero pretension. There is no objective in these grooves other than to have fun, and they still deliver smiles with every

lyric, every riff. That's timeless. —MP Johnson (Self-released)

RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS:

Time to Let Her Go: 7"

The second single in the series of new Riverboat Gamblers 7"s being released on End Sounds offers two songs: a new original and a cover of the Soft Boys classic "I Wanna Destroy You." The A side is a great up-tempo punk/pop tune that could certainly stand up amongst any of the classics that the Riverboat Gamblers have pumped out over the years, while the Soft Boys cover is pretty close to the original. I've been a fan and friend of the Riverboat Gamblers for many years and while their sound has definitely come of age since their earliest records, this release takes me back to the same feeling as some of their most revered releases, just with a better recording. —Mark Twistworthy (End Sounds)

ROTTEN: *Punk Cult Fetish: CS*

Is it "Rotten" or "Rotten (UK)"? I have no idea. Are they from the U.K. or are they from Rochester, N.Y.? I'm pretty sure the latter of each inquiry is correct, but who the fuck knows? Whatever the fuck they're called (WFTC is the acronym/abbreviation I will be using for the duration of this review) and wherever they're from, they are punk as fuck, and in the end, isn't that all that really matters? WFTC kicks off this collection of singles and B sides with a cover of The Exploited's "Sex and Violence." The recording is

pretty muddy. It makes me miss the purity of sound from the toms and bass of the original, but for a young band's demo, I appreciate the rawness of it. The production quality stays pretty consistently poor for the next few songs, but right around the third release showcased, WFTC really starts bringing their A game. At first exposure, this really looks like a forgotten gem from the past: the cut-and-paste album art, cassette format, the sound, the rage, and the "Oi! Oi! Oi!"s." Let WFTC take you on a journey back in time! —Jackie Rusted (Jelly Music Inc., jellymusicinc.bandcamp.com)

SAM RUSSO: *Greyhound Dreams: CD*

Brit Sam Russo lobs at us an acoustic singer-songwriter platter of mostly melancholy songs generated by relentless wanderlust. Over and over, Russo's haunting songs remind me of earlier Tom Waits records, in which the only comfort one has in home is the very lack thereof. But unlike those Waits records (*Frank's Wild Years* being a notable exception and ready-made point of comparison here), there seems to be a vague narrative thread here. Near the opening of *Greyhound Dreams*, the songs revolve around the glories of freedom on the road. By the end, the bitter truth sets in as the road becomes a remorseless punisher—but a punisher that one hates to give up. I didn't realize the road can be like any other addiction. Well done, Mr. Russo. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Red Scare)

SELF-MADE MONSTERS:

Draggin Our Knuckles: CD

Raw, primitive punk rock from the wilds of North Carolina. So simple and so great. —Ty Stranglehold (Brain Drain, braindrainrecords.com)

SEX SNOBS: *Pop Snobs and Other Ways to Die: CS*

'90s alt/grunge very much like those bands featured at the listening stations at Tower Records. Remember when every cock rock glam band put away the microphone stand scarf and flannelled up? Sex Snobs are reminiscent of that period when bands literally listened to Dinosaur Jr. once. For my money, a band like Supercrush does this style so much better. —Juan Espinosa (Hip Kid)

SEX TIDE: *Vernacular Splatter: 12" EP*

Lux and Ivy have kids who go down in the basement and bang around on their mom and dad's gear, which is good, because the drums have no cymbals and the echo is up. The bad news is that the kids play some sort of incomprehensible garagey alt-plod. I've never heard a six-song 45 drag on so painfully before in my life. DEAR EARDRUMS: Please accept this gift of a knitting needle in the spirit in which it was given. BEST SONG AND SONG TITLE: Band is too cool to list songs anywhere. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: There are three different colors of spray paint used for the back cover stencil, so good work on that aspect of things. —Rev. Nørþ (Superdreamer)

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SHARK TOYS / UV-TV: Split EP

Shark Toys pick up on that '80s L.A. Urinals sound and make it new. "New Song 3" is raw and gritty. It deliciously falls apart and frays and picks right back up again. And "Delirium Tremens" has a post-wave melody that drones throughout the song. It's bizarre and catchy. The shitty guitar solo is the cherry on top. UV-TV from Florida sounds like a harder-edged Cold Beat. The lo-fi recording sounds canned, hot, and actually is a great contrast to the lush, echoed vocals. Both "Lilith" and "Only Matters When" are just super dreamy garage. Love it. —Camylle Reynolds (Emotional Response)

SHIVERS, THE: *In the Morning*: 2 x LP

Not-so-subtle hints of early Velvet Underground permeate throughout the four sides here, along with maybe a more-together Vaselines and the artier fringes of singer/songwriter-land. When it's at its best, the songs are haunting, introspective and, yes, beautiful. Sunday morning music for those times when Johann Bach is a bit too old school. —Jimmy Alvarado (Untide)

SICK LIVERS, THE: *Mid Liver Crisis*: LP

Early candidate for album title of the year. Dirty, sleazy, barroom rock'n'roll is the order of the night here. Nothing new, but nothing new is required for this brand of rock. Always good to hear bands carrying on the tradition of balls-out rock, with no apologies given. Nashville Pussy and

Turbonegro would be proud of these Welsh rockers. —Chad Williams (Baldy Longhair, baldylonghair.com / Glunk, glunkrecords.co.uk)

SOFT SHOULDER: *No Draw*: LP

Another band aiming for the noisier end of the block. They keep things pretty eclectic while still maintaining a healthy dose of dissonance—"No Occupancy" is almost danceable with its swinging rhythm—as well as keeping things structurally sound instead of letting them dissolve into a wall of pure noise. Even the closer (also known as "side two of the album," if you wanna get technical about things), the instrumental, barely-shy-of-twenty-minutes "Repeat #3," revolves around a structure built on a primal bass/drum backbone with other parts added on. All told, these kids would've fit nicely on a bill between Tragic Mulatto and Distorted Pony, which is indeed a compliment. —Jimmy Alvarado (Gilgongo)

SONNY VINCENT & SPITE: *Spiteful*: CD

As a Sonny Vincent fan, you know what to expect and you can't go wrong with this release. The sixty-something punk elder statesman still belts hot fire. His bitter poetry is no less hard-hitting some thirty-plus years later. The backing supergroup features the likes of Rat Scabies (The Damned), Glen Matlock (Sex Pistols), and Steve Mackay (Stooges). What's truly remarkable is that this record doesn't sound like an exhausted nostalgia

trip, but electrified with the same caustic spit present on Testors' "Bad Attitude." Steve Mackay is MVP, as his tenor sax elevates the bluesy punk songs with a gutter jazz vibe. This is an ideal example of a supergroup. No one member attempts to outshine the other—instead operating as, god forbid, a band. If snarling punk or Sonny Vincent is your preferred poison, then *Spiteful* is a lethal dose. —Sean Arenas (Ultramafic)

SONNY VINCENT: *Bizarro Hymns*: CD

It's always exciting to see a current release on Get Hip, which is such a solid label, and this is the first thing I have seen since the last Mullens album. This appears to be a U.S. pressing of a 2011 release from the ever-prolific Sonny Vincent. Considering how much stuff this guy releases, the quality level is incredible; nearly everything is great. From the early outings with the Testors on through to current day, he just keeps cranking out stuff with his friends along for the ride. One song on here has Scott Asheton on drums, which is pretty cool. This is more of the usual mid-tempo and faster punk stuff, which is usually embarrassing out of someone this age, but Sonny Vincent just nails it, time and time again. Highest possible recommendation for fans of Jeff Dahl, Mike Hudson/Pagans, The Dogs, and other "old guy punk." —Mike Frame (Get Hip)

SPOILS, THE: *Have a Drink with*: CD

The Spoils are a band that I had heard of for a while, but hadn't actually

heard. I knew a couple mutual friends had started a surf rock band here in Austin, but surf rock was never really my thing, so I never checked 'em out. So honestly, when I got a copy of this to review I was a bit skeptical if I would like it. Well, I was completely wrong... this is really cool! Ex-members of J-Church and The Smears have some involvement, although this sounds absolutely nothing like either. The eight songs on this CD are what the band refers to as, "noisy, surf-inspired instrumentals." Honestly, I would say that these songs are sitting more on the "rock" side of the fence than the "surf" side, but they're all absolutely drenched in surfy reverb so the surf influence is definitely still there. And they are noisy, adding to the list of what makes this CD really... listenable. Good stuff. —Mark Twistworthy (Deep Eddy, deepeddy.net)

STAPLES IN CARPET:

Beyond Belief: 7"

Is "doom punk" a thing? Seattleites Staples In Carpet describe themselves as an old school punk and metal crossover, but that's such a mouthful. Maybe doom punk is more appropriate. The *Beyond Belief* EP's first two tracks, "Burn" and "Small Amount of Something," tear ass out of the gate with blistering '80s hardcore intention, but eventually settle into a chuggy monotony dynamically reminiscent of the kind of doom metal that makes me sleepy. The latter half of the EP—"Closed Out" and

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2016 is fine I guess. I'll happily take 2006 or 1996 instead. This is "Reunion Show" it's a split LP between Dirt Bike Annie & The Unlovables, or The Unlovables & Dirt Bike Annie. I hate it when you can't decide which side to file the LP under, fear not. 1 LP, two covers, the choice is yours. Oh, it's 11 brand new songs, I should tell you that.



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“Ornaments”—dispenses with much of this urgency altogether, and the roughly two-minute tracks feel much longer than their actual running time. It’s difficult to qualify how *Beyond Belief* differs from Staples In Carpet’s previous effort *One of the Same*, which didn’t seem to suffer from this same affliction. Like that release, there is plenty of distortion here, the vocals are still angry and talky, and the drums are still serviceably helmed, but comparatively this record feels more lethargic, groggier, and cloudier. At least the translucent red vinyl is beautiful. —Kelley O’Death (Totally Brainless, staplesincarpet.bandcamp.com)

STICK MEN WITH RAY GUNS:

Grave City: LP

Stick Men With Ray Guns were a Texas punk outfit who, like most legendary cult bands, existed for mere moments and were allies with bands who would go on to become household names—in this case the Butthole Surfers. Notorious in Dallas for their unapologetically offensive lyrics and deliberately violent behavior onstage, they were a certified opening band for scores of popular touring bands including the Dead Kennedys, Bad Brains, and the UK Subs. Most of the tracks on this album were recorded between the years of 1981 and 1984 and previously only appeared on long-out-of-print compilation albums (among them the classic *Cottage Cheese from the Lips of Death LP*)

with no proper full-length or singles ever released. Often mentioned under the same breath as Flipper due to their atonal wall of dirge, the songs on the first side of this record certainly bring to mind *Generic’s* alienating experimental punk qualities as well as the bizarre nature of Butthole Surfers’ *Locust Abortion Technician*. The second side wanders further more towards cow punk territory with a Dicks and Big Boys twist, save for the final track “Kill the Innocent,” which is the musical equivalent of watching a plane crash in slow motion for hours on a loop. I have a soft spot for the ugly side of punk and Stick Men With Ray Guns is as ugly as it gets. —Juan Espinosa (End Of An Ear)

STOPS, THE: Nameless Faces: LP

I had been hearing this band’s name thrown around by quite a few people whose opinions I really respect, so I thought the logical thing was to grab a copy for myself. I am sure glad I did. It’s pure West Coast punk rock goodness that makes my blood pump. I swear if I listen to this in the car again, I am going to bend my steering wheel in half and punch a hole in the roof! If you were to dig back into my past Razorcake reviews, you would find that two bands that I truly love are Neighborhood Brats and Arctic Flowers. The Stops take my favorite aspects of both of those bands and create something unique and ripping. I am going to make it a mission to see The Stops live as soon

as possible, but until then I have this amazing record to keep me company (barring any auto accidents) —Ty Stranglehold (Dirt Cult)

SUNPOWER: Last Rites: EP

I was not expecting this from a Belgian band named Sunpower. Fucking unleashed! It’s like a mix of the Clash, Dead Kennedys, the Jam, and the Coachwhips but on amphetamines—full-force, melodic hardcore garage. Deliciously short songs are all killer, no filler. —Camille Reynolds (Spastic Fantastic, spasticfantastic.de)

SUPERSUCKERS: Holdin’ the Bag: CD

The Supersuckers are as peculiar as a two-headed cow. They are a Janus-like, teet-wielding beast that sports two seemingly separate heads; one bovine head representing the side of the band that is a sort of American Turbonegro—in other words, a swashbuckling hedonistic band that effortlessly combines the disparate elements of arena rock and punk—and the other head representing the puke-encrusted, cowboy-hat wearing, chaw-drooling side of the band. Despite the differing orientations of each head, they are both ultimately connected to a hind quarters equipped with a dung-spangled tail and two hooved legs, all too capable of suddenly rearing up and kicking your Adam’s apple down your throat. As Eddie Spaghetti himself points out in the liner notes of *Holdin’ the Bag*, the key to making it work is finding that stripped-down, deeply honest core at

the heart of both punk and country—a bullshit-free core that existed in both country and punk’s nascent forms, before corporate pirate tendrils snaked into openings in both and polluted their naked honesty quotient. Here’s to the Supersuckers for pulling out their bowie knives and chopping those encroaching corporate tendrils into bloody chunks and tossing them into their bubbling pot of booya. *Holdin’ the Bag* is the Supersuckers’ second “country” studio album, coming some eighteen years after 1998’s *Must’ve Been High*. We’ll have to wait to see if any of the bruised ditties on this album become new classics, but after a few listens, I dare say that it’s a pretty safe bet. Help out Mr. Spaghetti as he battles cancer by picking up a copy of *Holdin’ the Bag* and tossing a few dollars his way. And in so doing, let your inner Hellbilly out and let him/her ride nekid and tendril-free on the two-headed cow of the Supersuckers. —Aphid Peewit (Acetate)

SUZARDS, THE: Pour Votre Santé, Écoutez The Suzards: 7” EP

The Suzards are from Bordeaux, France. As a result, despite employing Google translator and having taken two years of high school French, I can’t tell you much about them. Things I can tell you: they wear impossibly tight pants, they are influenced by New York Dolls, and their four-song EP *Pour Votre Santé, Écoutez The Suzards*—in English, “For Your Health, Listen to The Suzards”—is

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expertly crafted, throwback '70s punk ensconced in *adorable* album art drawn by someone named Van Gogo. Featuring a healthy dose of weedy-wah guitar fuckery, jaunty drumming, staccato vocals, and even some hand claps on the EP's closer "Just Gimme a Kiss"—oh, how I love me some hand claps!—these four songs are upbeat and danceable without sacrificing the anarchic spirit that necessarily accompanies all great punk rock from or inspired by this era. —Kelley O'Death (Adrenalin Fix, adrenalinfixmusic.com / Barbarella Club, barbarellaclubrecords.bigcartel.com)

THISCLOSE: Chapter III: LP

Seriously don't get this band. Discharge references galore, a layout that looks like it's culled from an Abe Froman or Defiance, Ohio record—quick, galloping riffs that toe the line between hardcore and metal and, again, Discharge—and hands down the worst vocals I've heard in a long time. Sorry, guys, but holy shit. Relentless operatic falsettos just *do not* work here. Whose big idea was this, anyway? —Keith Rosson (SPHC)

TIDELAND: Love Luster: CS

Indie rock firmly planted in fertile shoegaze territory. Sometimes dreamy, sometimes catchy, and judging by the liner notes now very much defunct. If you loved Sleepwall then you'll dig these guys. —Juan Espinosa (Protagonist, tideland.bandcamp.com)

TOLERANGRENZE / DANGER DANGER!: Split: EP

I'm digging this split with Tolerangrenze and Danger Danger! Three weird fastcore songs from Tolerangrenze are recorded with the perfect amount of fuzz. Screamy atonal vocals add to its oddball sound. It's in German, and I love the fact that I can't understand a damn word of it. Just raw, early '80s Euro-punk. Danger Danger! lays on a nice, gritty layer of early DC hardcore meets oi!/street punk with some of the most maniacal beats out there. Both sides rule. —Camylle Reynolds (Spastic Fantastic / Crapoulet / Munich Punk Shop / PIFIA)

TÖRSÖ: Sono Pronta a Morire: LP

Bleak and blistering feminist d-beat made by members of a million good bands I don't need to name because this stands on its own. The vocals are snarling and caustic—definitely the biggest standout on this release, though the rest of the band sure as hell keeps up. The vocals actually remind me a lot of Reivers, another Oakland outfit, though the bands aren't necessarily that similar otherwise. There's some kind of effect on them that makes them sound like they're coming out of a cave, which is really the cherry on top when it comes to lyrics like, "We all have dreams of being dismembered." I feel like I could make closer comparisons if I was more familiar with European crust, but I know hard-and-fast-as-fuck when I hear it. This is tight. —Indiana Laub (Sorry State)

TOTAL COYOTEL: Artwar: CD

Fourteen tracks of soundscape/industrial/spoken word stuff with the pretense meter turned up to eleven. An anti-authority screed pointing out fairly obvious things kicks it off, coming off a lot like something a nineteen-year-old kid would come up with during the first year of art school. Titles like "Art War Declaration" give you an idea of what you are in for. If you are big on spoken word/performance art, this will probably be up your alley. —Mike Frame (Records Ad Nauseum, recordsadnauseum.bandcamp.com)

TUNNEL, THE: Apparition Overdrive: CD

I would guess that of all the music I like to listen to, about ninety percent of it is because it is fun. Music makes me happy. The Tunnel falls into the other ten percent. It isn't fun and it doesn't make me happy... But I can't stop listening. Every time I try and to put it into words, I end up hitting backspace because it's not quite right. I can't remember the last time I had this much trouble describing a band. If the band is reading this, I apologize for this ham-handed attempt to describe what I am hearing. Musically, it is as if you're able to combine The Jesus Lizard with Portishead and it somehow works. The vocals are a whole other story—they creep and croon around the songs—yet are right out in front of everything. It slides a bit too far into "bluesy weirdo" territory for my liking at times, but not enough for me to want to turn

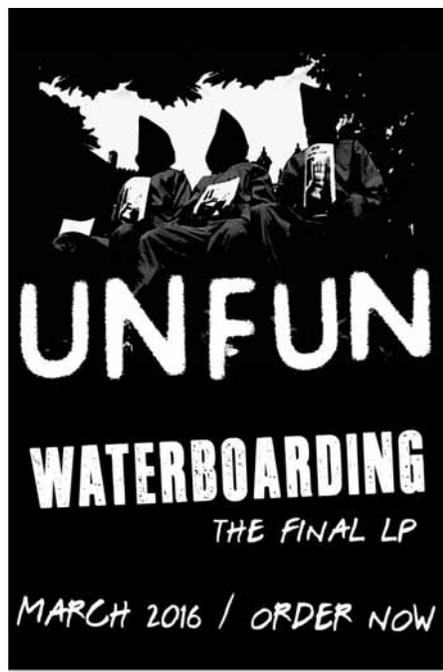
it off. In fact, I can't turn it off. This record is not enjoyable yet incredibly satisfying. —Ty Stranglehold (Glorious Alchemical, insidethetunnel.com)

TURKISH TECHNO: Number Two: LP

After a period of depression during which I didn't listen to any music for almost five months, I slowly eased myself back into the saddle with some tried and trusted favorites, along with a handful of new releases. One of those newbies included this, Turkish Techno's second album—one where time wasn't wasted on choosing a title—containing a collection of songs that almost singlehandedly reignited my pilot light. From then on, doors kept opening and I felt reborn, with a renewed desire to listen to whatever I could get my hands on. No mean feat, yet all it took was the sound of two guitars frantically buzzing away, some catchy tunes, and to top it all off, an outstanding cover of "Just Like Heaven" by The Cure to getting the fire burning again. Much better than any prescription drugs, so I tip my hat to the band for this record. —Rich Cocksedge (Dirt Cult, dirtcultrecords.com)

TV FREAKS: Bad Luck Charms: LP

The ever-prolific TV Freaks return with a new album and have ratcheted the nervous energy up even higher than before. TV Freaks are one of those bands that get better and better with every new record. How they'll surpass this one remains to be heard, as this is up there, high in the levels



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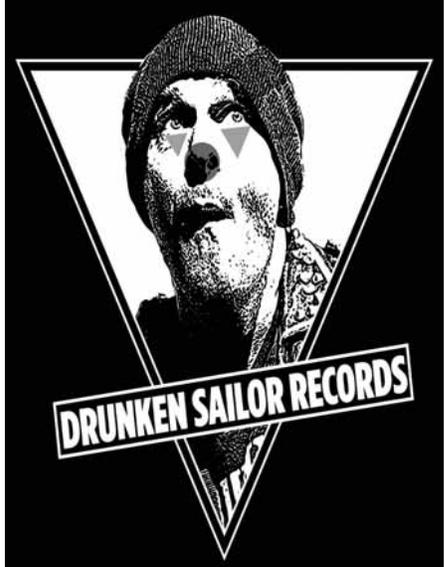
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of greatness I assign to their records, and makes their previous records pale in comparison. It starts off with edgy and belligerent then comes blazing around the corner and it's full-on from there on out. "Fly High" sounds a little like Mission Of Burma, only with a dirtier and distorted sound. "Glue" is a crunker! The song is boiling over in urgency that reaches a frenzy, ending this record on a high note. I love the character that's in the vocals and how David O'Connor stutters some of the words for emphasis, or just changes how he sounds at times in other songs to drive a point home. One of the best of the past year, for sure. This one is the limited edition purple vinyl version with screen printed cover art that's different from the regular version. Get this, whatever edition is within reach. —Matt Average (Deranged)

TY REX: Self-titled: LP

I got into T. Rex late but fell totally in love with the band, so when this record arrived I was intrigued and pleasantly surprised. Ty Segall seems to be putting out a new record everyday, which is great, but it can be overwhelming. The Ty Rex take on T. Rex is really loose and garage-y, as you would expect. Most of the covers are done at the original tempo with Segall's lo-fi twist on the vocals and overall production. "20th Century Boy" is taken to a much faster tempo, how I imagine T. Rex would sound at a live show if they were having a blast. There are some really great song selections on here,

but what's more important is the songs he didn't pick—the obvious ones that have been covered ad nauseam. —Ryan Nichols (Goner)

ULICZNY OPARYSEK: Na Zawsze Punk: LP

Current Polish band Uliczny Opryszek pays tribute to old-school Polish punk bands from the late '70s through the early '90s, covering their songs and using bootleg live recordings of the originals as interludes. It's an awesome concept, executed in a way that positions punk as a folk tradition to be passed along. Uliczny Opryszek ties all of the bands' sounds together into a clean-vocaled, anthemic, melodic hardcore/oi! hybrid that's a pleasure to listen to, revisiting the past without sounding stuck in it. Liner notes include info about the old Polish bands and a bunch of rad photos. —Chris Terry (Pasazer)

UTAH JAZZ: The Ivory Wave: LP

Though Utah Jazz are based in Buffalo, I keep thinking of something Brett Kucharski (of Bad Taste, Live Bait, Reel Time Records) wrote about Rochester—home of Eastman Kodak, maker of the raw material for our projected desires—and its status as an almost exact midpoint between rust belt industry and cinema dream space. As he puts it: "...the absolute physical connection between industrialism and art... the link between urban squalor and imagination." It's not quite either and also an extreme combination of

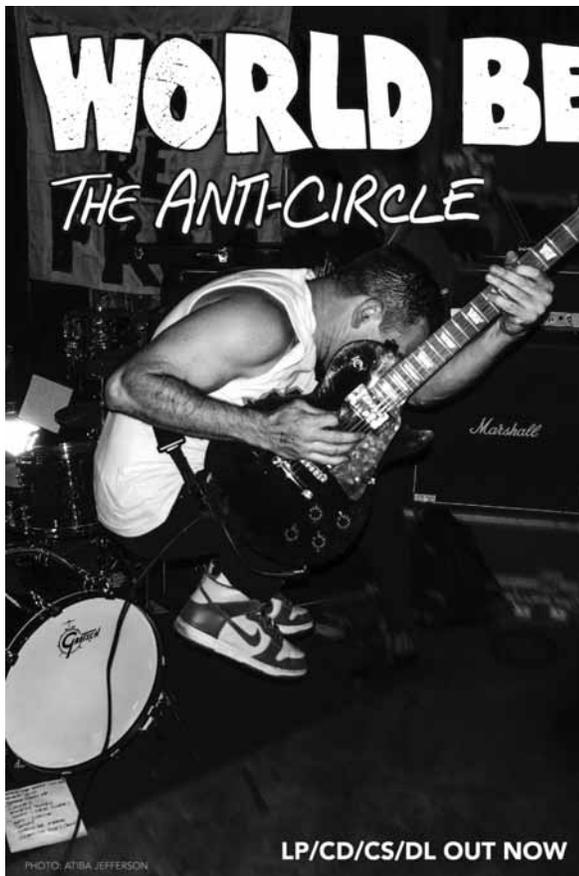
both. We have our feet very much on the ground and our heads very much in the clouds, and we do the leg work so that out West (or anywhere, really) people can, I don't know, be shaggy and laid back or make party records ad infinitum. Utah Jazz fit into the current upstate/Midwest/rust belt golden age of psych punk that's both caustic and fun, far enough away from their influences to resemble only themselves, even on "Growin' Stuff," the best X song to come out in a long time. I'm not trying to pick a fight with the West Coast, either (look who I'm writing for), and even if I am, I'm not saying anything nearly as strong as the lyrics to "Moontan." I'm not even saying you have to suffer for your art; I'm saying Utah Jazz actually made some art. —Matt Werts (Black Dots, blackdotsbuffalo.bandcamp.com)

VALENTEENS, THE: Fuzzed out Tone for the Painfully Alone: CS

The cover of this release from the Valenteens is a beat up Big Muff, one of the greatest fuzz pedals ever created. If you love that guitar accessory as much as I do, then this album will not disappoint. From the second you hit play, you hear the sonic hum, grind, and feedback and then an eardrum-disintegrating guitar assault of an album. It's fast, it's aggressive, but it has some real tenderness in terms of songwriting. This cassette hits all the right notes for me. —Jon Mule (Hip Kid, hipkidrecords.com)

VAPIDS, THE: "Punitive Damage" b/w "Thin Skin": 7"

This single is the first release from Canadian punk veterans The Vapids since 2009. It's a worthy reemergence, employing all of the credentials they've amassed over their two decades in the scene. The Vapids have a knack for crafting catchy songs just as adeptly as any of their '90s and '00s pop and skate punk contemporaries—as well as bands like Ramones, who directly influenced most of that ilk—but their melodies and hooks always rolled through the dirt and gnashed their teeth in a way that set them apart. "Punitive Damage" pulls even further away from the band's poppier inclinations, boasting a distinctly rock'n'roll swagger and a blazing guitar solo. "Thin Skin" is even more of a ripper, tightly composed yet steeped in the kind of youthful aggression that evades so many veteran bands. The all-analog recording makes the A side's tracks feel loose and alive, even dangerous—like they are blazing along the edge of a cliff and may plunge into the abyss at any moment. The B side is home to a secret untitled track dedicated to The Vapids' fallen brother and guitarist Robert "Robo" DeGrunt. The song slows its roll enough to be called an anthem, but swaps one kind of intensity for another, deftly conveying years of hurt in less than four minutes. With album art inspired by The Misfits' 3 Hits from Hell EP, this single is a whole cornucopia of punk rock pomp fit into a neat, little package. —Kelley O'Death (Surfin' Ki)



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VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Into the Voodoo: LP

"Toilet Paper Torches" by the Jim Parsons Project kicks this collection off with such blatant Misfits worship that I immediately groaned. If you want to cover "Halloween," just cover "Halloween," guys. Bad Whoremoans stick closer to a standard melodic punk sound, but go heavy on Misfits-style "Whoa-oh-oh"s. It works on "Deep Red," but not so much on "Maniac." Their on-point Argento and Henenlotter movie references are enough to keep the horror movie nerd in me satisfied, though. Creepersin threaten to do something original once in a while, but then pull back into a style that brings to mind Michale Graves-era Misfits. I listen to a lot of horror punk and what amazes me here and on so many other records is how bands can pull off the sound of the Misfits while totally missing the vibe altogether. —MP Johnson (Uncommon Interests, uncommoninterests.bandcamp.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Ritmo Selvagem: 7"

Either a giant split or a tiny comp, this offering from Porto Alegre's Yeah You! Records features four of the "most thrilling bands in activity in Brazil." These groups represent "iê-iê-iê"—or "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"—Brazil's term for their garage movement that sprang up in the 1960s. Renegades Of Punk are first in line on Side A with "Estes Homens Farrapos (The Beggars)," on which the band's lively, jangly garage

roots show through their growling punk aggression. Omitorrincos are next with "Lutamos Para Viver (Os Brasas)," a lo-fi entry that belies its contemporary recording via both its production and its vintage punk bop. Side B is home to Futuro's "Abre, Sou Eu (Beat Boys)," the comp's standout track that revels in its fist-pumping refrains, high psychedelic guitar interlude, and spastic, layered gang vocals. Rounding out the pack is Mahatma Ganguê's "Mundo Vazio (Márcio Greyck)," the former half of which translates to "Empty World" in English. This final track trades in the upbeat, rebellious punk of yore for spasmodically breathy vocals over a mid-tempo, fuzzed-out, three-chord melody that could totally pass for one of the Ramones' adolescent love ballads—"I Want You Around" comes to mind—if it wasn't sung in Portuguese. *Ritmo Selvagem*—or "Wild Beat"—is not only an excellent introduction to Brazilian garage punk, but also an all-around gem of a compilation. —Kelley O'Death (Yeah You!, yeahyourecords.bigcartel.com)

WARCRY: Needle Zero Drone II: 7"

Latest slab-o-wax from the long(ish) running Portland crust band Warcy, featuring members of a bunch of other bands. Warcy are one of the better Discharge-by-way-of-Sweden bands (and there is some stiff competition in the genre) and these three songs keep up the aesthetic and energy of their earlier releases. The two songs on the A side are new (or at least new

to me), while the B side "Drone" is a different mix of a song that appeared on their last LP. While the style is certainly referential, the production and execution is top notch. This is a solid effort from a group of people that seem to be incapable of making a bad record. —Ian Wise (Self-released)

WASTED POTENTIAL:

Nervous Conditions: 7"

These Canadians provide an energy-packed hybrid of punk and metal with thick, chunky guitars and wailing solos being the order of the day. It's not reinventing the wheel but the four songs are invigorating and fun, easily keeping my attention as they rage and thrash in equal measure. With a tag line of "Gluten Free Crust Punk," this is a band with a sense of humor although I admit to struggling to truly understand the meaning of the songs, even with a lyric sheet. What is unusual is that the last two sentences of both songs on the side A are exactly the same, not something I've ever encountered before. —Rich Cocksedge (Get Party, getparty.limitedrun.com)

WESTERN SETTINGS: Old Pain: CD

I love San Diego. It's one of the farthest points in the United States from my home, yet from the few visits there, I actually ache for it. Western Settings' sound is a piece of that yearning. *Old Pain* is warm and inviting, but with a strong undercurrent of melancholy. Friend-punk, "cause real friends go through all the emotions with you.

That being said, beginning the six tracks with a rousing, heart-bearing singalong borders on the pre-ejaculate. Honestly, I burned this into my laptop, but completely changed the track chronology. Not saying it's better than what the actual band decided, just saying I'm so invested in the songs I had to make it work for me. —Matt Seward (La Escalera)

WET NURSE: Daily Whatever: LP

There's usually only so much of that jangly garage aesthetic I can take with my poppy punk, but Wet Nurse is totally nailing it. The whole album has this stripped-down but unfailingly energetic sound, something like what Songs For Moms or Jabber have been doing. It's new and different from almost anything I've heard lately, but something about it feels like it's from another time—a couple decades from now, I doubt anyone would be able to pin down exactly when this came out. I was hesitant to suggest that "Bon Voyage" and "Peace Treaty" kinda have this '60s-girl-group feeling, but then I got to "Randy Kelly," and damn, no doubt about it. This band just sounds like they are cool as hell. —Indiana Laub (Recess, recessrecords.com)

WET ONES: Self-titled: CD

A punk rock supergroup of sorts, featuring members of Mouthbreathers and Fag Cop. Tunes vacillate between spazzed-out, blown-out punk and spazzed-out, blown-out garage punk, with "Static" being the

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point where the two converge into a truly choice tune. If ye like yer music to sound like it's being played through groovy power drills, look no further. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

WHATEVER BRAINS: Self-titled: LP
This is the fourth self-titled Whatever Brains LP. Confusing? Yes. But it's fitting given how absolutely goofy they are. From the artwork mimicking old timey video game fonts to the bizarre electronica that punctuates most of the tracks, this is the sort of polarizing release that most will either love or hate. I didn't find it pretentious at all and can see why some might get amusement out of it. It's semi-obnoxious, but in a good way. I can't tell if it's purely a joke record or more of a tongue-in-cheek attempt to use a gimmick to worthy effect. Either way, it's an interesting Devo-inspired trip into musical nuttiness. —Art Ettinger (Sorry State)

WHITE FANG: Chunks: CD
White Fang and the GnarTapes/Burger crew have given us thee ultimate party record. *Chunks* is bananas from start to finish. It's fucked. Totally ridiculous—yet brilliant—lyrics somehow co-existing in harmony. Strip The Black Lips of their love of the '60s, replace it with some current L.A. fuzz and Municipal Waste's sense of humor, and you're off in the right direction. Nice. —Steve Adamyk (Burger, burgerrecords.com)

WOLFHOOR: Dead on Arrival: LP
This Swedish supergroup is made up of members of classic Swedish bands including Anti Cimex and Driller Killer. Thus there's a built-in audience for this release, as there should be, given how great those earlier bands were. Musically all over the map—from melodic semi-pop to screamed mainline hardcore—it's as well-studied and solid as you'd expect given its members' backgrounds. Sometimes supergroups disappoint, but this isn't one of those instances. Highly recommended, and not just for fans of their earlier groups. Wolfhour is terrific. —Art Ettinger (Kibou, kibourecords.bigcartel.com)

WRONG, THE: Technology: CS
I think of Chicago and Northwestern Indiana as tacitly competing to make the weirdest punk releases in these United States, and the Wrong (from Chicago) is doing their part. This four-track release from Not Normal Tapes spins itself out in less than six minutes, during which the listener is pummeled with yelp-screamed vocals and mixed-down riffs too classic to resist. It's noisy but deceptively catchy, like if the Ramones played twice as fast and vocalized by screeching. It makes me wanna slam, and I plan to. —Lyle (Not Normal Tapes)

YOUR PEST BAND: Never Fall You Again: 7"
Your Pest Band consistently writes really good music. Period. "Never

Fall You Again" is now my favorite YPB song. They no longer resemble manic pop punk, so if your favorite tune is "You Were the Rebel," then you might be disappointed. However, this Japanese quartet re-envision '60s garage pop hooks with a growling attitude. Fumito's snarl softens the shimmering guitars and keeps the 7" from being too cute or throwback. When "Escape" kicks in with a howling guitar, I want to pogo until I puke. This is a great place to start for newcomers and an all-around excellent release from a prolific group. —Sean Arenas (Brassneck)

ZEN LUNATICS: Sacred Mountain Blues: 12"
Zen Lunatics are from Kyoto, Japan, and this one-sided 12" record brings ten songs of thrashy, hardcore punk. Immediately upon putting the needle on the record and seeing that they were from Japan, I had an expectation of what I thought this was going to sound like, but was I ever wrong! The first song—with its bluesy lead riff and mid-tempo start—threw me for a loop, but it didn't take long for the songs to take a sound seemingly influenced by both the late '80s singalong or youth crew hardcore scene (without the lyrical content of '80s singalong or youth crew stuff) and early '90s thrashcore. Actually, I would have never guessed they were from Japan without having read it first. Ultimately, this is good and comforting, like visiting an old friend

you haven't heard from in ages or a good book that you've read a million times. —Mark Twistworthy (Divis And Mason, zenlunatics.bandcamp.com)

ZEX: Fear No Man: 7"
Ottawa's Zex have done some serious global damage within the last two years. Since their inception, the band has toured—seemingly non-stop—all over North America, the Pacific Rim, and I believe they're now in South America. No surprises to those who know Jo; the man is literally a road warrior and is determined as all hell to succeed at his craft. Germ Attak and Blue Cross left their marks and now it's time for Zex to shine. This single is more of the punk-meets-NWOBHM the band has come to be known for (even though the back photo is a little dated with a non-current member). These tracks have more of an Adicts feel than previous releases, that's for sure (especially "I Didn't Know"). Great stuff. —Steve Adamyk (Loud Punk, loudpunk.com)

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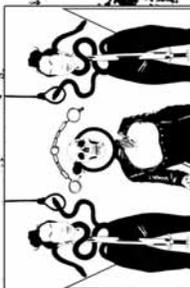
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BAD MECHANICS are a lo-fi scatter-brain punk two piece from CHICAGO made up of former mbrs of GALACTIC CANNIBAL and HEWHOCORRUPTS. Think DEVO, NO MEANS NO, and THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS and you'll probably get something close to BAD MECHANICS. BAD MECHANICS' debut release "DEMO 2015" is a four song demo tape w/ drop card LIMITED TO 100.



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to bands and labels that were reviewed either in this issue
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- **Adactive**
c/o Martin Macuga,
Trnavska cesta 40, 82102,
Bratislava, Slovakia
- **Alien Snatch**,
Rodenbergstraße 31,
10439 Berlin, Germany
- **Almost Ready**,
313 President St., Ste. 2,
Brooklyn, NY 11231
- **Baldy Longhair**,
PO Box 1853,
Rahway, NJ 07065
- **Black Dots**, 223 Lafayette
Ave., Buffalo, NY 14213
- **Black Water**, PO Box
5223, Portland, OR 97208
- **Burger**, 45 S. State
College Blvd. #A,
Fullerton, CA 92831
- **Dead Tank**, 2814 Green
St., Jacksonville, FL 32205
- **Dead Truth**,
9238 NW 13th Pl., Coral
Springs, FL 33071
- **Deadbeat**,
PO Box 361392,
Cleveland, OH 44136
- **Deep Eddy**, PO Box
143221, Austin TX 78714
- **Deranged**,
c/o Gordon Dufresne, 2700
Lower Rd., Roberts Creek,
BC V0N 2W4, Canada
- **Désir Decir**, c/o Mitch
Cady, 52 Bright St., Apt. 4L,
Jersey City, NJ 07302
- **Dine Alone**, 290 Gerrard
St. East, Toronto,
ON M5A 2G4, Canada
- **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
- **End Sounds**,
PO Box 684743,
Austin, TX 78768
- **Fringe**,
1021 Rifle Range Rd.,
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
- **Get Hip**,
PO Box 666,
Canonsburg, PA 15317
- **Get Party**,
340 Colborne St.,
Apt. 603, London, ON,
Canada, N6B 3N1
- **Goner**,
2152 Young Ave.,
Memphis, TN 38104
- **Graveface**,
5 W 40th St.,
Savannah, GA 31401
- **Grizzlor**,
140 Smith St.,
Derby, CT 06418
- **Handstand**,
PO Box 110398,
Brooklyn, NY 11211
- **Heptown**,
Sankt Lars väg 21,
222 70 Lund, Sweden
- **Hex**, 201 Maple Ln.,
North Syracuse, NY 13212
- **HHBTM**,
PO Box 742,
Athens, GA 30603
- **Hip Kid**,
2020 N. California Ave.,
#276, Chicago, IL 60647
- **Iron Lung**,
PO Box 95521,
Seattle, WA 98145

- **Jelly Music Inc.**,
PO Box 10512,
Rochester, NY 14610
- **JMC Aggregate**,
603 Bushwick Ave.,
Brooklyn, NY 11206
- **Loud Punk**,
PO Box 6115,
Albany, NY, 12203
- **Maniac Attack**,
Goethestr. 72, 35390
Gießen, Germany
- **Monster Zero**,
Rennweg 24, Innsbruck,
A-6020, Austria
- **Get Party**,
Krizevniska 5, 1000
Ljubljana, Slovenia
- **More Power Tapes**,
PO Box 467,
Buffalo, NY 14226
- **Morning Wood**,
Draversdyk 10, 8641WT
Rien, The Netherlands
- **Night Animal**,
1041 S Mariana St. #6,
Tempe, AZ 85281
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PO Box 14636,
Gainesville, FL
32604-4636
- **Nothing New**,
210 Townes Dr.,
Nashville, TN 37211
- **Paper + Plastick**,
619 S Main St., Ste. C,
Gainesville, FL 32601
- **Pasazer**, PO Box 42,
39-201 Debica 3, Poland
- **Piñata**, 4105 Elliot Ave. S,
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- **Pirates Press**, 1301 17th
St., SF, CA 94107
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64574, Tucson, AZ 85728

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Kids should be artistic.
Adults should encourage it.

—Matt Seward
BIG DIAMOND

ARTCORE #34, £6, 8½" x 11", offset, 48 pgs.

This is part one of old school U.K. zine *Artcore*'s thirtieth anniversary issue. It features interviews with Henry Rollins, Pillage, and Tau Cross, among others. That's mixed in with articles on NYC peace punk, Randy "Biscuit" Turner, and more, along with a slew of reviews and a free, green 7" split that ranges from the shout-along, political punk of Oi Polloi and the blazing crust of Grand Collapse. *Artcore*'s a thorough and dedicated zine. It's cool to see them continuing to approach punk with a fiery political and critical eye. —Chris Terry (Artcorefanzine.bigcartel.com)

AS YOU WERE: A PUNK COMIX ANTHOLOGY #4
\$10, 5½" x 8½", offset, cardstock cover, 112 pgs.

As You Were is a comics anthology featuring a who's who of punk artists: Liz Prince, Brad Dwyer, Evan Wolff, Rick V, Ben Snakepit, Steve Larder, and many more. If you recognize and enjoy at least one of the artists just mentioned, then this is for you. Each contribution is short, to the point, and hilarious, especially the stories by Steve Thueson and Nomi Kane. (What an awful roommate!) The theme this time around is "Living Situations," which is code for "Punk Houses." As someone who has stayed at a handful of punk houses in the past, I can relate to the narratives shared. Expect dirty dishes, bedbugs, house shows, and a really good time. —Sean Arenas (Silver Sprocket Bicycle Club, 1057 Valencia St., SF, CA 94110, silversprocket.net / Last Gasp, 777 Florida St., SF, CA 94110, lastgasp.com)

BABA YAGA BURNS PARIS TO THE GROUND
\$, 5½" x 8½", copied, 18 pgs.

Author Wren Awry is fascinated by historical myths, especially those connected to fairy tales. She writes of unruly women in early folklore, horror films, and witch hunts, as well as Baba Yaga, a supernatural witch-like woman who normally lives in a house with chicken legs and may help or curse strangers who pass by her house. The myth of the pétroleuses, or fire-wielding women, is another of special fascination. Pétroleuses were—according to rumors—the female supporters of the Paris Commune, a radical socialist and revolutionary government that ruled Paris for a short period in 1871. The French government's tabloids accused these women of burning down much of Paris during the final days of the Paris Commune. It was easy for the government to circulate rumors about the lower-class women committing arson because the middle and upper class already saw them as radicals and anarchists. Though the Paris Commune in fact did set the fires, there was no secret female supporter group associated with them or setting them. The pétroleuses were a myth. The damage of the rumors had already been done, however. Caricatures of women holding torches and gasoline-soaked rags with unruly looks surfaced in newspapers and later books. Of the thousands of women suspected of being pétroleuses, official trial records show no women convicted of arson. —Tricia (Baba Yaga Burns Paris to the Ground, seamsandstory@gmail.com, tangledwilderness.org)

BIG DIAMOND, \$4.50, 5½" x 8½", glossy, 28 pgs.

Kids should be artistic. Adults should encourage it. Three-and-a-half-year-old Liam's parents helped him make a zine. Liam's parents own Pioneers Press. Take a trip into the psyche of child and his world of superhero mittens and spinach. But why anyone without a connection

to said kid would purchase his art is beyond me. Call me a humorless, childless monster. Not trying to be inflammatory or unnecessarily harsh, this zine is just filed under "connectionless" in my archives. Pasted photos with Liam's concise point-of-view dictation make for a quick read. —Matt Seward (Pioneers Press, pioneerspress.com)

COLOR A COMIC COLORING BOOK

\$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 6 pgs.

I love comic books and enjoy comedy. I've been known to laugh at stand up. Not sure why one would need or desire another person's portrait drawings of six current stand-up comedians to color. Has to be one of those jokes some people, such as myself, "don't get." If you're a current comedy fanatic, maybe this is for you. —Matt Seward (The Escapist Artist, theescapistartist.etsy.com)

CRAMHOLE #4, \$?, 7" x 8½", copied, 36 pgs.

The fourth issue of this comic zine has been a long time coming. This is likely because Billups Allen, the author, moved. He also had cancer. Twice. He said he didn't want to make this issue of *Cramhole* about cancer, but I would've loved to have heard about that. Not to say I'm glad he went through it, but we know about what it's like when Grandma or our co-worker gets cancer, but what's it like when someone who writes a zine gets cancer? When someone who draws comics or works at a record store gets cancer? I haven't heard that story before. It would've been really engaging and interesting, I bet. Instead, there are a bunch of random comics about working at a record store, curiosity about what if Cliff Burton (Metallica's original bassist) had lived, and John Judge meeting people. Additionally, there are pieces on actor Adrienne Shelly and saxophonist Aubrey Moore. This issue is a quick read and perfectly fine for what it is, but certainly nothing spectacular. —Kurt Morris (billupsallen@gmail.com)

DISTANCE RUNNER:

A JOURNEY THROUGH JAPAN WITH BANE

\$5, 4¼" x 5½", glossy, 44 pgs.

Distance Runner is a collection of photos and ruminations by Aaron Bedard and James Siboni of Bane. There is a somber tone to the narrative, even when relating epic karaoke singalongs to Biohazard or the lighthearted fun of friends on tour. A strong current of introspection can be found throughout—thoughts of tours past, choices made, and lives led. Above it all is the understanding that this is the last hurrah. The last tour of Japan. Another nail in the coffin of a band going over twenty years strong. One of the underlying themes that runs throughout *Distance Runner* is that all doors eventually close. What we are left with are images, photographs, and memories. The zine not only captures the bittersweet swan song of a great band, it also strives to capture an understanding of the Japanese culture: "There is a deep feeling of respect that blankets nearly everything here.... What lesson did [Japan] find in defeat that they could make an entire country bloom like that?" Bedard and Siboni do an admirable job distilling what, in their minds, is the essence of Japan. What develops is not just an examination of a moment in the life of a band, but an exploration of the powers of friendship and an examination of another culture. It's a complex mix of themes and emotions, but I'd expect nothing less from one of the greatest lyricists in hardcore. —Paul J. Comeau (distancerunnerzine@gmail.com)

FASTCORE PHOTOS #4

\$3.25, 4¼" x 5½", glossy cover, printed pages, 51 pgs.

Will Butler, of To Live A Lie Records fame, returns with the latest issue of *Fastcore Photos*. If you were waiting more than a minute for this edition, you will not be disappointed. Butler is adept at capturing bands in the moment. There's such immediacy to his shots that you almost feel like you are a member of the audience. With forty-eight different bands represented in these pages, there is a lot to see. Butler notes in the intro that most photos were taken at DIY venues in Raleigh, N.C.; Greensboro, N.C.; and Richmond, Va. Although the photos were shot on different days and at different venues, these black-and-white shots convey a unified feeling. The intensity of the bands translates very well in these images. All these images were great, but I felt missing was more of the story. I'd have loved to read a few words from Butler about each band—maybe a note about the show or the venue where each shot was taken—to add an extra layer of detail for the reader. Personal preferences aside, *Fastcore Photos* is a great zine, stuffed with some great bands. I'm looking forward to future issues. —Paul J. Comeau (To Live A Lie, tolivealie@gmail.com)

GOOD LORD #00, \$?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 22 pgs.

A collage zine. Not particularly interesting, artistic, or something I'd pick up on my own. There doesn't seem to be any theme or rhyme or reason for the random text that appears on the pages. One page has the definition of diarrhea. Another page has a drawing of a cat with a thought balloon that contains a swastika, and above that it says "cats racist." The last page breaks from the collage to tell us to "check out art/music by these peeps!!!" and lists random bands I'm assuming they're friends with. What the hell? —Tricia Ramos (Good Lord, crazyandthebrains@gmail.com)

cock gives a woman. I couldn't help but eye roll my way through this one. —Camillye Reynolds (RoosterHouse, 3052 Elliot Ave., MPLS, MN, 54407, RoosterHouse.org)

LAST SLICE, THE #1, \$?, 2¾" x 4¼", 6 pgs.

Bizarre detective comic noir with stabby knives, drippy pizza, bags of garbage, shit on shoes, and saxophones. Some dark nightmare shit. The zine unfolds into a strange romanticized zoot suit/Roger Rabbit kind of scene, again with stabby knives and pizza. Easy read. More of a head scratcher than anything. Still kinda liked it. —Camillye Reynolds (5zenkoff, 5zstuff5z@gmail.com)

MESCAL, \$3, 8½" x 5½", copied, 30 pgs.

One zinester's story about his friend Chad, a serious drug user who is really good at describing psychedelic experiences, and the narrator taking Chad's mescaline with another buddy. As a beer-drinking lightweight, I enjoy hearing hallucinogenic fans describe their experiences; *Mescal* author Karl Noyes is good for this. Also there are collages; lovely, druggy, in-color collages. That includes a bottle of Colt 45 filled with water, a talking mushroom—"If you eat me you will die"—and lyrical descriptions of, well, a mescal landscape. This might be of particular interest to fans of Hunter Thompson or Denis Johnson and his junkie-thin book *Jesus' Son*. And one more thought: speaking as a guy who has made some really, really unreadable zines, the layout here is kind of nuts. The text—small font cut in uneven strips—could not be any closer to the margins. It dares the reader to keep going, and I did. —Jim Joyce (Roosterhouse, 3052 Elliot Ave, Minneapolis, MN, 55407 roosterhouse.org)

Bizarre detective comic noir with stabby knives, drippy pizza, and saxophones. Some dark nightmare shit.

—Camillye Reynolds | THE LAST SLICE #1

HERE BE DRAGONS #10, \$4, 8½" x 7", offset, color cover, 44 pgs.

Listen, I'll be honest. While there was certainly some part of me that enjoyed this for the pure nostalgia trip—I distroed early issues of *HBD* nigh on two decades ago—the rest of me was just unabashedly stoked to read a well-done, thoughtful, cleanly laid-out zine with real depth to it. As with their previous issues, this one's a great return to the old motif of the personal being political. Interviews with a punk pizza place in Pittsburgh (!), artist Jen Gooch, a pair of folks who operate a vegan pierogi night, and a bevy of essays relating to aging, personal health à la the two-wheeled machine, hope, and more. It's all earnest as hell, well-written, and very much centered on this notion of community, looking out for each other, personal accountability, and self-care. It was a little droll here and there—the Jen Gooch interview was really short and lacked depth—but damn, it is really terrific to see a new issue of this zine out in the world. —Keith Rosson (HBD c/o Mike Q. Roth, 4625 Torley St., Pittsburgh, PA 15224)

LARGE AND LONELY, \$3, 7¼" x 4¾", 22 pgs.

Large and Lonely is a zine set on the fictional premise that a young man finds a discarded package chalk full of *Penthouse*, *Boobarama*, and a twenty-page hand-written story written by an anonymous author. *Large and Lonely* is the twenty-page handwritten story. First off, I have to admit the cover and the way this zine is presented is pretty rad. Its cover is a photocopy of a torn First-Class package envelope and the pages are aged yellow copies of painstakingly immaculate cursive writing. In the middle is a fold-out picture of a life-sized eleven-inch cock with a two-and-a-half inch diameter. *Large and Lonely* is written like a vintage *Penthouse* letter about the trials and tribulations of having a massive, giant, over-sized cock. It's gross, it's funny, it's mostly just male-adolescent romanticism of giant cocks, lust of giant cocks, sex with giant cocks (and as a sidenote, hairy pussies) and the immense pleasure that only a giant

NIGHT I WAS SAMMY HAGAR, THE:

A BREAKING AWAY FROM THE HERD ZINE

\$3.00, 5" x 8", offset, full color, 22 pgs.

Gem of the month! This issue is the story of a night in the life of the hard-partyin' author back in the eighties. He and his buddy hit the town, do lots of blow, and decide it's a good idea to pretend he's Sammy Hagar. He actually pulls it off and finds himself with an entourage of fifty or so people following him from bar to bar chanting "SAMMY! SAMMY!" I'm not going to give anything away, but things take a turn for the worse, allowing for an angry, butthurt cop, a kind-hearted ambulance chaser, and a pair of shat Zubaz to make their entrance. It's laugh-out-loud funny and the dude's writing style makes you feel like you're sitting in some shitty dive hearing him tell it to ya. I know you probably hear that a lot, but I mean this in the most literal way. It's as if someone said, "Tell the Sammy Hagar story," and hit record. Another bonus is his buddy's awesome collage layout in vibrant full color. It really has to be seen to be appreciated. I'll be hittin' ol' boy up for back issues for sure. —Craven Rock (Roosterhouse, 3052 Elliot Ave., MPLS, MN, 55407, roosterhouse.org)

NOT LIKE YOU #5, 8½" x 11", copied, 36 pgs.

This zine could be my life. Seriously, these pages contain the same inner workings of the last thirty of my forty-two years on this planet. Punk rock, skateboarding, more punk, more skating... Throw in some rad cover art (homage to Pushead), great photos, record reviews, and a "collector's corner." Yep, this feels like an old friend. Featured in this issue are a skate rock band called Stale Phish (Whom I really gotta check out. I thought I was the only one who had a song about Gator!), Warzone, legendary pro skater Bill Danforth, DOA, and the second part of an interview with Ian MacKaye. I don't know the folks responsible for this, but I feel like I definitely have some kindred spirits out there. I will be contacting them for more issues. —Ty Stranglehold (Not Like You Zine, 102 Richmond Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106)

The PICKS

from texas

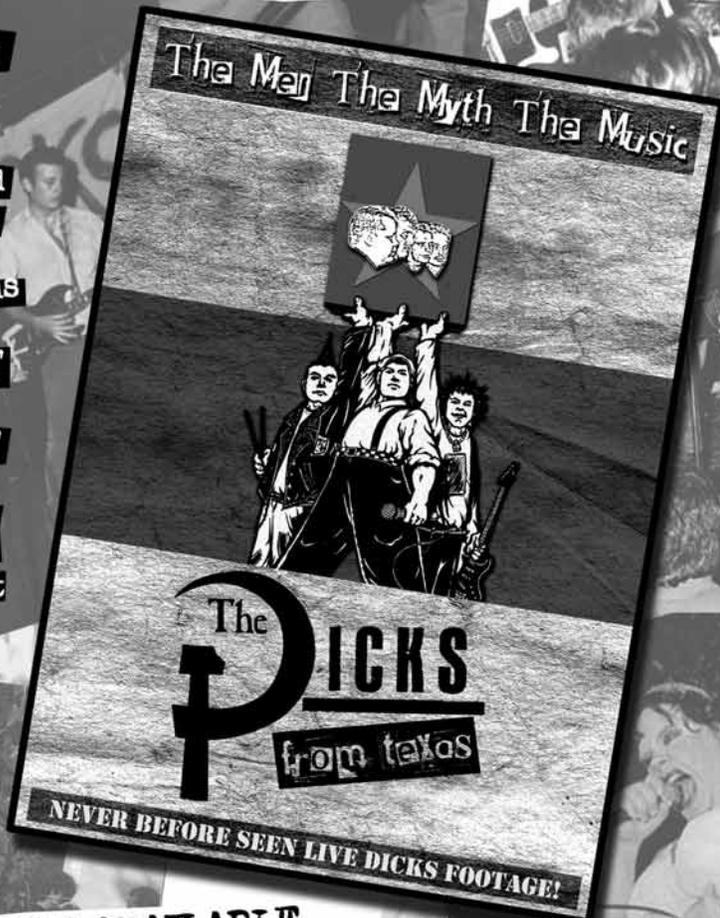
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"Dead in a Motel Room," and "Dicks Hate the Police."

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PAPER RADIO 15, \$4, 8½" x 5½", printed, 22 pgs.

DJ Frederick has been writing about shortwave radio culture for a number of issues and his love for this hobby—or lifestyle maybe—is contagious. I could read him talking about radio waves for pages, and I have. *Paper Radio*, or shortwave radio itself, is such a useful metaphor. It is the difference between the painfully-lame-stadium-rock-Spotify, spiritless-Coldplay world and the analog side of things. The human side comes with producing, pirate radio shows or zines that curate the stories of people who can celebrate music and broadcast art. They do so without losing the intimacy factor which makes it all worthwhile. So yeah, a zine about that. Issue fifteen is the latest, but grab any of them or check out Frederick's other zine *Turntable Operator* for similarly good times. —Jim Joyce (Antiquated Future, antiquatedfuture.com/zines/paper-radio-15)

TAPEWÜRM #2

\$5 or trade, 4¼" x 5½", screen print cover, stapled, 56 pgs.

Issue number two of the best cassette zine has hit the streets. Located in Tokyo, writer and tape diehard Leif Lundgren (originally from the Bay Area) covers way more in this issue than in his first venture. Starting off, the black screen print on textured black paper is "metal" and dark as fuck. The images covering those covers are difficult to see unless you reflect light off the ink, but they are totally worthy of any powerviolence band T-shirt. In this issue Leif doesn't stray from the format too much, though he does open it up to other contributors, as well as conduct many more interviews with both bands and labels that primarily release on cassette. After the zine's intro and a piece on why preserving the tape format is important and in dire need of support, Leif launches into a list of Holy Grail tapes—his white whales, so to speak. There is a live show review (complete with photos), a list of labels and contact information, spotlights of record shops in Tokyo, and reviews of cassettes, which take up over half of the zine. He reviews forty tapes! Most of the bands reviewed are of the black metal, powerviolence, and grindcore persuasion, with a few softer genres thrown in, too. This is a passion project that is worthy of any music nerd, especially if you have a fondness for releases on cassette. —Kayla Greet (xdistortxjapanx@hotmail.com)

TRUST #174, €3.00, 8½" x 11", glossy, 64 pgs.

From Germany, the country that brought you Karl Marx and sauerkraut, comes *Trust*, a fanzine devoted to punk, hardcore, and underground music. I am impressed with the high quality of this product and the incredible full-page, live photos that are included. This issue includes an article on how to make beer and important European tour dates, as well as reviews of other zines, anti-fascist literature, and recent releases. —Jon Mule (trust-zine.de)

TURNING THE TIDE, free, 8½" x 11", newsprint, 8 pgs.

Here we have some far left news that fights the good fight to get wrongly arrested guys out of jail, end institutionalized white supremacy, and provide news about Palestinian youth revolts. Perfect reading if that's your jam. Put out on newsprint of the smudge-your-fingers *Maximum Rock'n'roll* variety. —Jim Joyce (Anti-Racist Action Publishers, PO Box 1055, Culver City, CA 90232-1055)

WASTED OPPORTUNITIES #10, \$2, 6" x 8 ¼", glossy, 56 pgs.

At some point last summer, I must've fallen into a coma long enough to miss an Australian visitor named Justin, who came to Los Angeles and made his presence well known. All of a sudden, many of my friends were talking about Justin and talking about him as if he had arrived in a UFO or started a new, life-changing cult. While I missed out on a great opportunity to meet a now-legendary bloke, I did manage to snatch up one of his zines: *Wasted Opportunities* #9. It was great! Now here is another issue and, like the legend of Justin, it does not disappoint. There is a lengthy interview with Night Birds, who I consider to be the best band in America, and an article on the crossover between *Star Trek* and punk, two of Justin's self-professed loves. I may never meet the man, the myth, the legend from down under, but I love the work he does in *Wasted Opportunities*. —Jon Mule (GPO Box 2712, Brisbane, QLD, Australia 4001)



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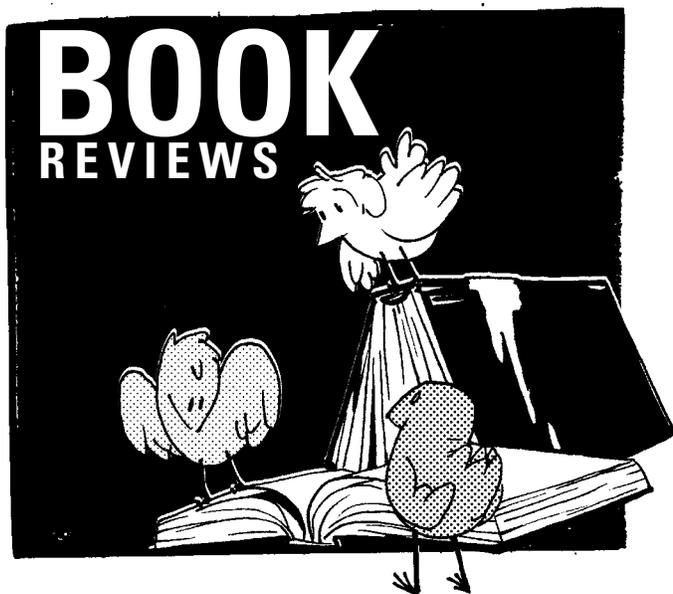
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All Ages: The Rise and Fall of Portland Punk Rock 1977-1981
 By Mark Sten, 315 pgs.

As can be inferred by the title, this is another brick in the wall of tomes recounting punk's hydra head history. I can almost hear the collective groan coming from bald and spiky-headed readers across the planet, but fuck 'em, I think the way things are rolling out—many voices from many different places, like punk itself—is just as it should be. So many unique eras, pockets, and sub-pockets of talent and characters have made their mark on a patchwork quilt of scenes that the catch-all “history” that rock journalists and assorted

Like other punk gangs of the day, La Mirada Punks consisted largely of neglected suburban kids enjoying the run of a neglected Hollywood.

—Jim Woster, *Disco's Out... Murder's In!*

academic nose wavers strive to force down our throats is all but impossible. As I've said before, one can't rely on rock's traditional “importance” markers to assess a scene that disdains everything those markers measure. Admittedly, the quality of many of these historical accounts can vary wildly, but when one pops up written by an insider who knows how to sling a keyboard, the results can be quite impressive.

Such is the case with this book. Writer Mark Sten's own history is deeply embedded in that of his subject matter, having been a musician and founding member of the Revenge collective that set the tone for Portland's wildly independent, creative, and resilient scene. Sten's take on the scene's history unravels more like a memoir than straitlaced history, peppering its traditional timeline format with personal anecdotes, snarky comments, and heapings of the sarcastic wit that made punk's early waves so goddamned funny. This angle can be more than a bit dicey, but he's more than familiar with the subject and has a great voice, one that engages the reader more in a conversation than a lesson, still piling in all the info scholars drool over without all the stuffy academic bullshit verbiage.

With its coffee-table size and three-hundred-plus page length, it's a decidedly heady read. I'm also sure that Sten's old school punk sarcasm will likely result in whole sections sending various “trigger generation” readers into one tailspin after another. Yet, even casual perusers will find much to suck them in—especially those with a yen to learn more about the scene's varied denizens—including the Wipers, King Bee, Sado-Nation, Dead Moon, Neo-Boys, Smegma, Rancid Vat, and Poison Idea. It's chock full of pictures, flyers, illustrations, and highlighted sub-conversations so that many aspects of a scene usually left out of the conversation get some attention. Hats off to ye Sten, this is a fine read from beginning to end. —Jimmy Alvarado (Reptilicus Press c/o Mark Sten, 215 SE 13th Ave., Portland, OR 97214, reptilicususa.com)

Disco's Out... Murder's In!

By Heath Mattioli & David Spacone, illustrated by Raymond Pettibon, 224 pgs.

With a story that everyone knows, it's often useful to hear it again from a peripheral point of view. John Scalzi's science fiction novel

Redshirts, for example, tells the story of an intergalactic starship from the point of view of the crew members who seem to exist solely as laser-cannon fodder.

Most histories and memoirs of the '80s Los Angeles punk scene address its pervasive violence. *Disco's Out ... Murder's In!* tells the story from the violence's point of view.

The narrator of this as-told-to memoir is Frank the Shank, a member of the gang La Mirada Punks (LMP). Like other punk gangs of the day, LMP consisted largely of neglected suburban kids enjoying the run of a neglected Hollywood. These were actual “gangs,” with initiations and hierarchies and knives, and several times while reading the book I was reminded of Brooklyn in the 1950s.

Stan Ridgway has said, “In the beginning, punk was anything goes, and then the hammer came down.” Punk gangs thrived during the time of hardcore's hammer. As Frank says in the book, “Weakness no longer had any business in punk rock. If you were shaky, you got picked on or picked off. Expression was periphery, power was principal.” And I now understand that when Los Angeles cops saw a group of punks in the '80s, they likely saw organized crime, not music fans—though if that was the case, a gang task force should have investigated more discriminately than truncheon-eager officers seem to have done. Regardless, hardcore punk sounds more bully-friendly after reading this book.

Disco's Out ... Murder's In! was published by Feral House, for readers who like well-designed and -constructed books to hold and collect. Feral House's ethos is sort of a lurid nihilism—as indicated in this instance by the title's exclamation point—and the book, which comes wrapped in plastic, frequently veers into a true crime (how true, I don't know) pulp-ness:

...Manny jerked my steering wheel, putting us on the Long Beach 710 heading south.

“Let's roll a crack dealer.”

What could I do but smile.... Manny chambered his Ruger .22 when bad news tapped me on the shoulder, calling for us to exit.

[Later] I felt my car take another hit as we rounded the corner to safety. I punched it to the freeway exit, leaving the war zone behind.

But Frank, who—it's easy to forget while reading the book—was an adolescent when he was in LMP does acknowledge that, “Too many people died at the hands of punk rock violence.” Has that ever occurred to you? It hadn't occurred to me. —Jim Woster (Feral House, 1240 W Sims Way #124, Port Townsend, WA 98368, feralhouse.com, info@feralhouse.com)

How to Ru(i)n a Record Label: The Story of Lookout Records

By Larry Livermore, 282 pgs.

Readers familiar with Larry Livermore's writing—whether his columns of yore for *Maximum Rock'n'roll* and/or *Punk Planet*, or his excellent and engrossing *Spy Rock Memories*—will find the pace and style of *How to Ru(i)n a Record Label* a familiar return to form, and new readers should have no trouble jumping in mid-stream. Throughout, Livermore's prose is crisp and engaging, and his storytelling is candid, occasionally to the point of inducing cringes (as an example, witness Livermore badgering Sam McPheeters of Born Against to release the band's CD anthology on Lookout!, with Larry progressively getting meaner and drunker as negotiations go south).

With that said, I wonder how many readers threw this new book across the room around chapter twenty: it appears Livermore's answer to the titular question is to *hire a woman*. As Molly Neuman becomes part of the label's management, we see Lookout! Records come off the rails, acting like a major label, spending ridiculous money on barely-seen videos, putting out more records than it can adequately promote, and dealing with Ben Weasel. Ol' Ben isn't happy with the label's sixty percent royalty rate, and begins demanding ridiculous advances and threatening legal action. Throughout all this, it appears that Livermore is heaping blame on Neuman and the rest of the label's growing staff rather than taking responsibility.

But that's the thing—*appears*. It's not fair for readers to stop reading as the label's crash happens. Prior to Neuman's arrival in the narrative, Livermore spins tales of Gilman Street's early days, including the heyday of Operation Ivy and Green Day's meteoric rise both on Lookout! and later the major label realm. Livermore paints himself as an ethical, if scattershot businessman, what with the aforementioned royalty rate and a contract

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clause reverting ownership of recordings to bands if owed moneys go unpaid for six months or more. But the emphasis here is on scattershot—what was at first a labor of love turned huge and nigh-unmanageable with Green Day’s success, making the label feel less like fun and more like a job. Livermore does a good job illustrating this change of scope through anecdotes discussing the small bedroom office eventually being moved to a huge warehouse.

Ultimately, Larry does a nice job owning up to his personal failings. Lookout!, after all, was his brainchild. The responsibility to make choices was in part his, but rather than making decisions—*any* decisions—he instead let apophysis reign. Choosing not to choose, he says at the end, was both his own and the label’s ultimate downfall, not any staffing or roster choices.

Stick with *How to Ru(in) a Record Label* and you’ll find that Larry Livermore’s writing style is executed as if in the moment, which makes his eventual realizations all the more impactful. Recommended. —Michael T. Fournier (Don Giovanni, PO Box 628, Kingston, NJ 08528)

From a disembodied moustache crime boss to a hardcore band of disembodied parts, the surreal characters are sure to hold your attention.

—Paul J. Comeau, *Sick Pack*

Single Stroke Seven

By Lavinia Ludlow, 185 pgs.

Single Stroke Seven is a novel whose protagonist Lilith drums for a band called Disonanz. The year is 2015 and she lives with her three bandmates in a run-down shithole in San Jose, Calif. All the members of the band are in their late twenties and early thirties, and are struggling through quarter-life crises—working jobs they hate or having no work at all, lacking health care, and struggling to make a go of the one thing that they (or at least Lilith) want to do: make music.

The book starts with Lilith’s co-worker attacking her with a knife in a meth-fueled rage and her somehow grabbing the blade and cutting off his balls. This over-the-top genesis is a sign of things to come in *Single Stroke Seven*. Lilith is quickly blamed for the attack, arrested, and yet somehow keeps her job. Throughout the book it seems Lilith can’t catch a break. She’s constantly bleeding, throwing up, or having people verbally put her down (her boss, her mom, her “friends”). None of these experiences are written in a humorous manner; they seek to show how tough and difficult her life is.

That being said, most of these occurrences were Lilith’s own fault; she’s twenty-seven but seems to have the maturity of a sixteen year old. She wants to be an adult but goes on hijinks that always end badly. She’s dedicated herself to spend time with her bandmates (both the ones she lives with and the neighbors next door, for whose band she also drums), who are at best unsympathetic, and at worst, just horrible people: cruel, insensitive, and self-centered.

Lilith complains of having to work a shit job she hates (although the environment at her work place seems so absurd as to be cartoonish) but gave up playing with the San Francisco Symphony (although I’m assuming the mention that she made \$100,000 to hit a tambourine was a joke) as well as other respected ensembles. Instead, she focused on Disonanz, a band that hadn’t played anywhere outside the Bay Area in their fourteen years of existence. This makes little sense—if you have to work a job you don’t want (the symphony), why not have it at least be in the field you’re interested in?

And yet I still kept on reading because I do love me some punk fiction. While the dialogue was consistently too smart for its own good (no one says things like, “Our gen’s supposed to leverage the economic collapse as an excuse to fuck up our parents’ momentum and chase our delusions”), I still held out hope that the characters would accomplish something with their lives and stop all their fucking around. By the end of the book Lilith appears to be heading in the right direction, but I couldn’t help but wonder where her common sense was that kept her from getting to that place a lot sooner. —Kurt Morris (Casperian, PO Box 161026, Sacramento, CA 95816)

Specious Species, No. 7

Edited by Joe Donohoe, 282 pgs.

The seventh issue of this literary anthology is built around the theme of “California.” Choosing a subject broad as the state could have easily been an exercise in futility based on the sheer geographical size, not to mention the incredibly diverse populations and social narratives that make up the Golden State’s fabric. In the issue’s introduction,

editor Joe Donohoe admits that due to logistics and resources there is a heavier emphasis on the San Francisco Bay Area than the rest of the state. Even so, this anthology covers an admirably far-ranging physical and historical area (often informed by a punk perspective), and feels like a text that supplements the study of California’s many unique yet integral historical eccentricities.

Boasting around forty entries, contributions range from comics and poems, to interviews, to exhaustive historical surveys. Joe Donohoe’s impressive historical sketch of pioneering rocketeer and occultist Jack Parsons ties together such seemingly disparate threads as Aleister Crowley, the United States space program, Scientology, and the stately Craftsman mansion neighborhoods of Pasadena (that were walking distance from where I used to live in Northeast Los Angeles). Having personally just finished a program in moving image archiving at UCLA, an interview conducted with film historian and curator David Kiehn of the Essanay Niles Film Museum in the San Francisco Bay Area was particularly absorbing. Much of the moving image history in the United States is centered on Los

Angeles, New York City, and the Library of Congresses film holdings, so reading about the one-time prodigious film production in Niles, Calif. during the early twentieth century and the still-robust film archive there was an illuminating addendum to what I studied.

Shorter pieces—such as capsule histories of the Chinese town of Locke, Calif., or the origins of the legend of Joaquin Murrieta—are fascinating glimpses of the more obscure corners that occupy California’s history. Interviews with current/future cult figures such as writer Jerry Stahl, counterculture literary distributor Last Gasp’s head man Ron Turner, and Avengers’ singer Penelope Houston are great oral histories of more recent subcultural movements that have shaped modern California and popular culture in general. The centerpiece of the whole book has to be Donohoe’s astute and extensively detailed biographical and literary survey of the life and works of Oakland’s pioneering author Jack London. Donohoe’s thoughtful and careful analysis of the life and contexts that birthed London’s literary successes and failures serves as a great primer to approaching London’s body of work. London is presented as a complex and often contradictory figure, and as such readily personifies the messy but oftentimes fascinating nature of the state that he called home. —Adrian Salas (Specious Species, 3345 20th St., SF, CA 94110, speciousspecies.net)

Sick Pack

By MP Johnson, 104 pgs.

Sick Pack is the story of a man and his abs. Male model Fabulo’s six pack has brought him fame and fortune—the shirtless image of him and his chiseled abs have adorned the covers of countless trashy romance novels the world over. But Fabulo’s abs don’t want fame and fortune. They want freedom! Fabulo’s abs launch a daring plan to escape him and his drudgery of crunches, leg lifts, and constant flexing. The result is an absurd and surreal tale of body parts trying to find themselves, and a man left to figure out who he is without the most defining part of his identity. Featuring plenty of sex, drugs, rock’n’roll, and a sexy bounty hunter who hunts rogue body parts, *Sick Pack* careens from one action-packed scene to the next. Chapters are short, with each one encompassing mostly the same scene. The briefness of the chapters kept the pace tight, and the action going. A few longer chapters offer moments of brief introspection on the parts of the characters, be they people or anthropomorphic body parts.

A bit more in the way of introspection/character development might have made this more compelling for me, but what it lacked in character was made up for with a plot that knew what direction it was heading in from the first chapter. Astute readers are likely to also have a clue where things will end up, but with *Sick Pack*, the journey is certainly more enjoyable than the destination. From a disembodied moustache crime boss to a hardcore band of disembodied parts, the surreal characters and bizarre situations of *Sick Pack* are sure to hold your attention the whole way through, but I wouldn’t cut off a hand to read it. —Paul J. Comeau (Bizarro Pulp Press, bizarropulppress.com)



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Faction Destroys O.C., The—Cab's 50th B-Day Bash: DVD

There once was a time when skateboarders and punk rock created something called "skate rock," a type of punk rock that was wild, aggressive, and full of adrenaline and risk. Not to be confused with "skate punk" that would come later (baggy shorts and chain wallets singing about getting dumped again), skate rock was the real deal, and at the front of the pack was The Faction.

Coming out of San Jose in the early '80s, The Faction played a style of punk rock so unrelenting that it was impossible to maintain for a long time. The band released a couple of albums and a handful of EPs, and was gone before anyone knew what happened. For a while, that is. At some point around 2014 the band got back together to play some shows, culminating in this DVD which was filmed at guitarist (and legendary pro skater) Steve Caballero's fiftieth birthday party.

Let's start with the answer to the big question: yes, The Faction are every bit as amazing as they were thirty years ago! The musicianship these guys are putting forth is something to behold. Hell, the playing was damn near studio quality. The set list was one classic after another with a (great) new song thrown in near the end as an added bonus. Maybe a new record in the future? One can only hope.

I need to touch on a couple of issues I have with this DVD. First of all, what the hell is wrong with the crowd? They're all standing around with their hands jammed in their pockets, unless one arm happens to be stretched skyward taking video with their phone. You're seeing The Faction play live in a skatepark for Cab's birthday! You should be going nuts! It was way too mellow down front. Another issue is some of the camera work. Mainly, it quite often would cut to a wider angle stationary camera that seems to have been sitting on top of one of the house speakers or something because it's vibrating out of focus in time to the music. Nope, didn't like that. Other than that, this is an amazing document featuring one of the best, unsung bands in West Coast hardcore history. It also comes with a live CD of the show, which rules as well. It's time for me to take some arthritis meds so I can go for a skate! —Ty Stranglehold (Beer City, PO Box 1759, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1759)

Oh Cool! Popular E.D.M.: VHS

This VHS cassette video is spliced, diced, fuzzed-out, and clipped tidbits of blockbuster and B movies, TV shows, some infomercials, U2 concert footage—it pretty much runs the gamut. E.D.M. plays over all this, cutting in and out just as randomly as the footage. At first I was thinking this might be cool to watch while stoned or under some kind of fuzzy, NyQuil feel-good whatever, but after a while things just got dark and it was more like a bad acid trip. I don't know. I like the montage. It would be actually cool to play in the background at a show on some old TV—which was probably the general idea. A ripped-out note with a scribbled love letter of sorts to Razorcake came with the VHS tape. On the back cover there is a short description of "Becky" the creator, about her wanting to kill her parents or her dentist and some DJ Rex Blankets character that she may or may not like. It's all very confusing, but it definitely got the wheels in my noggin turning. Not sure if there was a point to all this, but a lot of things are pointless. Sometimes it's all about the ride. —Camillye Reynolds (No address listed)



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