

razor cake

non-profit
punk rock



We do
our part.

#93

aaron comettus
EUREKA CALIFORNIA



Basement BENDERS

\$4

lenny lashley

(DARKBUSTER,
STREET DOGS,
GANG-OF-ONE)

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Razorcake is a magazine. A magazine that believes in the separation between content and profit. A magazine that strives to amplify the unheard voice. The unique story. The perspective you could have never imagined, because it could only come from someone who has lived a life different from your own. These narratives should be far more commonplace than they are. In a small way, we hope to change that.

Diversity will only improve DIY punk. If you know of a story that needs to be heard, *Razorcake's* doors are open. While we have high standards for what goes to print, everything will be considered, and feedback will be offered.

Corporate media and the internet troll-mongers can rot to death in the sinking pit of shit that they've created. We want to be proud of what we've created. We want to create something that people can be proud to be a part of.

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

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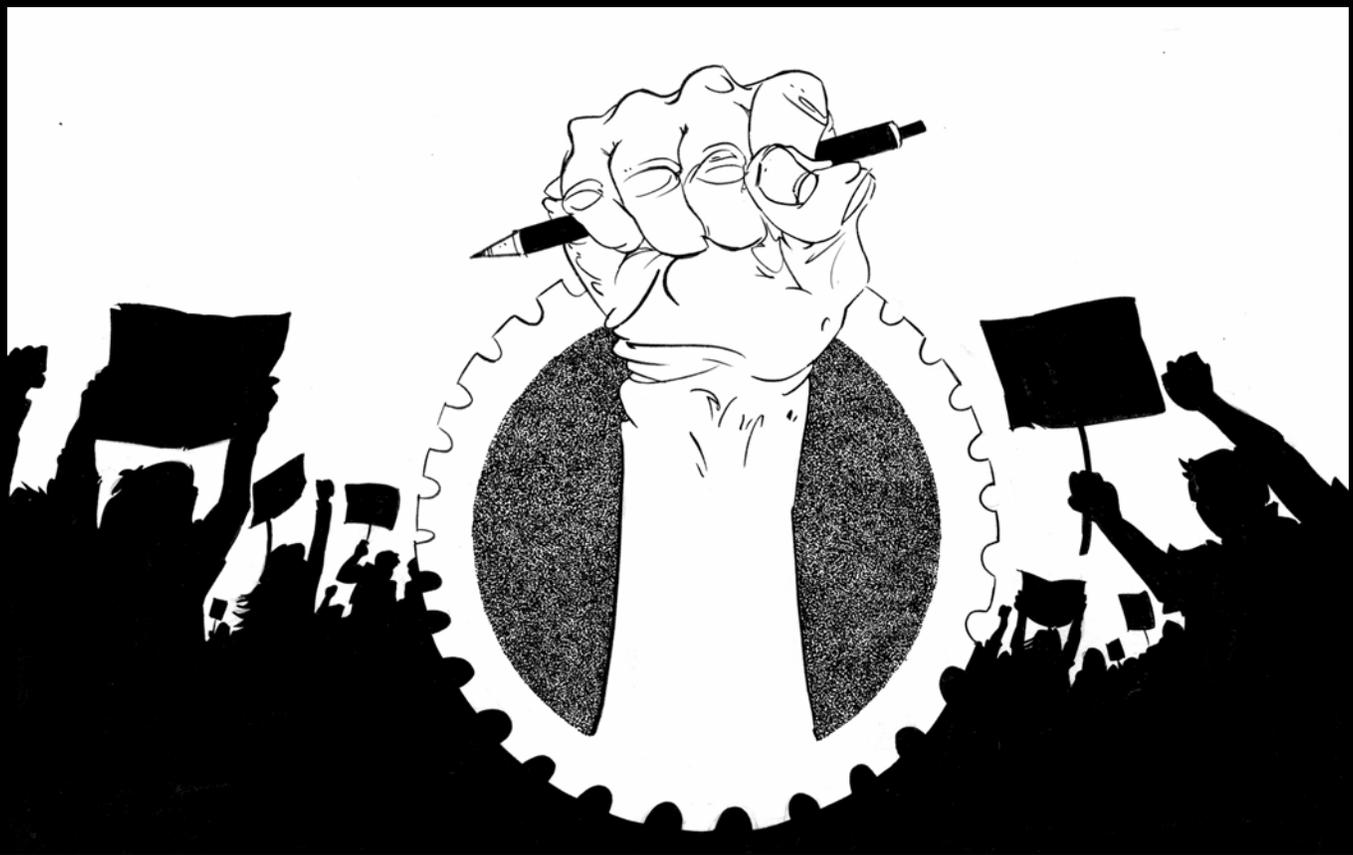
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STEVE LARDER

The First Annual Chris Pepus Prize

On June 9, 2015, Chris Pepus took his life. To honor his memory and his work, Razorcake is announcing the first annual Chris Pepus Prize.

The winner will be awarded \$350.

This is an open call for submissions, including those from current Razorcake volunteers.

Please visit razorcake.org/announcements/chris-pepus-in-memoriama-collection-of-chris-s-contributions to get a fuller understanding of the breadth and depth of Pepus's work. All submissions will be compared to Pepus's standard of quality.

We are looking for pieces that capture and also push forward Pepus's spirit of fairness. They also must engage with and confront social class issues. (Or, in Pepus's words, they must be "against class bigotry.") Submissions should be well written, non-fiction, and punk applicable. Pieces can

be narratives but must be research-based and factual. We are not looking for research papers.

We are not looking for rants or purely anecdotal articles.

Submissions should be between 3,000-5,000 words. Only the following attached formats will be accepted: (.doc, .docx, .rtf)

All submissions have to be submitted electronically, via razorcake.org/contact-us

All submissions must be open to rigorous editorial feedback and revision prior to publication.

Deadline for all submissions is Dec. 5, 2016. The pieces will be read and evaluated by a team of Razorcake contributors, with the winning submission(s) announced Jan. 21, 2017.

The winning piece will also be published in a future print edition of Razorcake (and later on www.razorcake.org).

It's Well Worth Celebration

Let's start with two sets of images.

Nighttime had slowly descended. Led through the thick Boogaloo crowd by a marching band, The Mummies posed and hammed atop their inoperable '63 Bonneville ambulance as it was pushed across the field, right up next to the stage. The roof of the ambulance doubled the size of the existing stage and was almost the exact same height. A sheet of plywood was screwed into place. It served as a bridge that flexed under the weight and shenanigans of the finest budget rock the world has ever known. Hands down, it was the best entrance I'd ever seen by a punk band. The Mummies then played like the bandaged offspring of a *Mad* magazine and *Animal House* coupling. The crowd went wild.

A day before, I took time to appreciate the sunlight—transparent red brown—coming through the outstretched wings and tail of a hawk. To notice the island-like shapes of sleeping bison in a sea of grass. To admire shin muscles—how they separate and form long, delicate lines next to bone ridges—that come from a lot of bicycling. To ride and wiggle from one end of a small city and back with two dear friends.

To be happy, we need people to love, something to do, and something to look forward to. To not only take time to smell the roses, but to sometimes learn their names and which ones smell the best. To have favorite colors and consider how they remind me of variations of colored vinyl. Going back for second and third smells. Sharing the smell of the roses.

How to make this not sound corny? Over the past several months I got reacquainted with my best friend. We'd been out of touch for close

to a decade. The separation was subtle, like two slowly diverging paths that ended up in wildly different places. Dark and light.

I now see what happened. My parents taught me responsibility. I internalized that responsibility when I took my wedding vows. Over nine and a half years, I developed unhealthy behaviors in an attempt to keep the marriage alive, to attempt to make it work. I hid more and more of my emotional self as a protective measure against abuse and trauma. I made a thick, protective, suffocating shell. I also caged my best friend—myself.

Earlier this year, I made a promise to myself: a long-term investment in self care. Sure, I feel lonely from time to time, but the pervasive loneliness has abated. I am currently developing a loving, healthy relationship with myself. I am learning to quit saying bad things about my mind. I am intentionally carving out time to spend with family and friends and protecting that time. I now *want* to be around people. I don't *need* to be around people. These are small increments of change, like grains of sand on a slowly tipping scale.

I am coming to fully realize that the cost of constant sadness is so much more than the price of seeking happiness. And watching The Mummies' lead singer, lying on his stomach on top of the ambulance, tongue curling, flicking the tip of the microphone, then popping it entirely in his mouth to leap up and scream—shit like that doesn't come along every day.

It's well worth celebration.

—Todd Taylor

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Cover design | Candice Tobin
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Easy money never goes to the shelters. Easy money never goes to the schools. It lines the goddamn pockets of CEOs, while the rich get richer and the poor get priced out of town.

—THE TAXPAYERS, "Easy Money"
Big Delusion Factory

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Barker Gee



Photo by Brian Kelher

Rest in peace, Barker Gee. Thirty-two is far too young. (Ringers, Fest 2009)

THANK YOU: Crayon and inside-of-security-envelopes freehand design thanks to Candice Tobin and Jen Shagawat for the Basement Benders design and photo; Steve Larder for the Chris Pepus Prize artwork; Robert Stack's overcoat thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Donna's column; "We're not a group. We're you're neighbors" thanks to Becky Rodriguez for her illo. in Jim's column; Hot jar of piss is nothing compared to the hot pile of hate tattoos thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo in Cassie's column; A hat is a very important cranial signifier—separating elevated kook from ska-nerd by the thinness of material thanks to Alex Barrett for his Nørb illo.; Mere moments before the constrictive grip of the steel anaconda thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in Dale's column; Cheeseburger before major back surgery, heavy on the Voivod, thanks to Brad Beshaw for his Chickin illo.; Snoop Dogg hands back music to Nardwuar. United States and Canadian trade relations spiral into a tailspin thanks to Danny Rust for his illo.; "Your mother's genitals" thanks to Ryan Galtin for his illo. in J.V.'s column; Dedicated to the memory of Travis Fristoe thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh and Lauren Denitzio for the Aaron Cometbus interview, photos, and layout; "Hide yer gators!" thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh, Dylan Davis, Paul Coalfield, Tim Hackmack, and Misfit And Lad for the Lenny Lashley interview, layout, and photos; Pretty and predatory invasive flora thanks to Robert Ibarra, Jen Shagawat, Griffin Wynne, and Eric Baskauskas for the Basement Benders photos, transcription, and layout; Photo album of Martha magazine covers thanks to Will Fitzpatrick, Stacey Piotrowski, Mike White, and Becky Bennett for the Eureka California interview, photos, and layout.

"Is it possible to play bass while simultaneously using the strings to strangle people? Because that's what this sounds like." MP Johnson reviewing Dissident Clone's *Creating the Consumed 7'*. Thanks to 93's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Jeff Proctor, Lyle, Jon Mule, Becky Rodriguez, Cynthia Pinedo, Keith Rosson, Mike Frame, Jackie Rusted, Paul J. Comeau, Rich Cocksedge, Matt Werts, Indiana Laub, Sean Koepenick, Sean Arenas, Chris Terry, Bryan Static, Art Ettinger, Mark Twistworthy, Steve Adamyk, Garrett Barnwell, Matt Seward, Ty Stranglehold, Chad Williams, Simone Carter, Kurt Morris, Kayla Greet, MP Johnson, Jimmy Alvarado, Juan Espinosa, Camylle Reynolds, Billups Allen, Ryan Nichols, Nørb, Kelley O'Death, The Lord Kveldulfr, Candace Hansen, Tim Brooks, Vincent, Madeline, Matt Average, Ian Wise, Kevin Dunn, Jim Joyce, Adrian Salas, Tricia Ramos, Michael T. Fournier, and Sal Lucci.

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)

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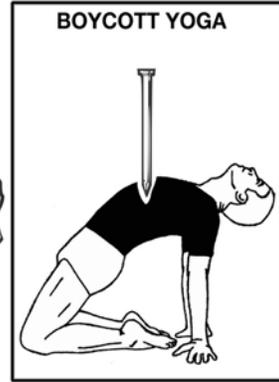
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Issue #93 Aug. / Sept. 2016

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

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Rishbha Bhagi, Chris Baxter, Phill Legault, Steve Couch, Megan Pants, Jimmy Alvarado, Josh Rosa, Madeline Bridenbaugh, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, James Hernandez, Alice Bag, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "gluggin' Dr. Bronner's" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Adrian Chi, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztlil Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Vee Liu, Laura Collins, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, Samantha Mc Bride, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Clara Acosta, Camyle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Cahnne Galletta, Jon Mule, Chris Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Rosie Goncse, Alex Cady, Aaron Zonka, Rick V., Kelly O'Grady, Pete Stapleton, Rachel Gouk, Alex Harris, Rodrigo V., Jack Fallows, Cathy Hannah, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Jim Kettner, Ollie Mikse, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Gabby Gonzalez, Keith Rosson, Megan Razzetti, Paul Silver, Julie A. Ferguson, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, David Ensminger, Kristen Thomas-Pedler, Danny Rust, Daisy, Erin Schultz, Adel Souto, and Griffin Wynne.

Razorcake is bi-monthly. Yearly subscriptions (six issues) are \$17.00 bulk rate or \$23.00 first class mail. Plus you get some free gooch. These prices are only valid for people who live in the U.S. and are not in prison. Issues and subs are more for everyone else (because we have to pay more in postage). Visit razorcake.org for a price. Prisoners may receive free single issues of Razorcake via Prison Lit. Project, c/o Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight St., SF, CA 94117.

This issue is dedicated to Annie Bridget McKenna, who turns thirteen next month and still doesn't like punk.



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Enriching Lives



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



NEVER LET
ME FORGET

DONNA RAMONE

**I would
have been the
easiest target.**

Murder, She Wrote

My bio for Razorcake simply reads, “Donna Ramone is really into murders but not murdering.” I cannot conceive of an instance where I would murder anything besides the occasional trespassing spider. The idea that people murder other people all the damn time is overwhelming. It’s simultaneously horrific and unbelievably fascinating. I stay up late reading about murders and then barricade my house before I eventually fall asleep with all the lights on. However, there was only one time where I *genuinely* thought my chances of being murdered were likely and it was awful.

In September of 2001, I had just turned eighteen and started my first semester of big-girl school. I commuted to California Polytechnic University in Pomona, which was only about twenty miles from my home. I drove a 1989 Honda Civic that in a pinch even I could break into. The parking lots for the school were like massive asphalt seas surrounding the campus and, this being California, finding parking was always a losing battle. The walk from my car to my classes was anywhere between ten and twenty minutes, and averaged about half a mile. All of this would have just been an irritating necessity if a woman hadn’t been kidnapped and murdered three weeks before I got there.

Christina Burmeister was a co-ed, commuting to Cal Poly just like the majority of us. One of the fraternities was throwing a back-to-school party, so she drove up to Pomona from her home on August 17, 2001. Her mom said she couldn’t go but Christina begged, swearing she would only be gone a couple hours. The fraternity and sorority houses are located in old homes in the residential areas south of the school, a place even less secluded than the actual campus. But Christina never made it to the party. She stopped at one of the many liquor stores bordering the campus for cigarettes—something I also did frequently. And then she was gone.

Around midnight, security cameras showed a woman using Christina’s ATM card at a bank in Montclair, a city just east of Pomona. The bank was located next to the mall where I had spent the prior four years of my life aimlessly wandering. The suspect woman’s hood was up as she made three withdrawals, one of two hundred dollars and two more for one hundred dollars. At

9:30 the following morning, police found Christina’s pickup truck on Highway 39 in Azusa, about twenty miles north of Pomona. Highway 39 is the winding road that goes up into the San Gabriel Mountains. Lots of people would drive up those mountain roads at night to drink and fuck around in the woods. There were always random cars on the turnouts and we used to joke it was people having affairs. Christina was found inside her truck in one of those turnouts. Her throat had been slashed open. Twenty-year-old Christina had been viciously killed, seemingly for four hundred dollars.

Three weeks later, when the fall semester began, the police didn’t have the suspect. A sketch was made of the woman’s face from the ATM camera and posted around campus. The actual camera footage was too dark and blurry to look like anyone specific. It was a black woman. Wasn’t it only deranged *men* who kidnapped and murdered young women? I had watched every single episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* and never remembered a black woman being arrested for murder being part of any of Robert Stack’s “Updates.” Rumors spread that police knew the woman in the camera hadn’t worked alone. Paranoia gripped everyone. The killers were somewhere, and they could be anyone. The semester continued into autumn. The days grew shorter and colder. The walk from a student’s last class to their car only became scarier. The cheap streetlights in the parking lots were sparse. Many walkways to the lots didn’t have lighting at all. Students either waited for classmates and walked in large packs or called campus security to escort us by golf cart to our cars. We still insisted on going with security in pairs. Police still didn’t have a suspect. The sketch of the woman’s face was still up on bulletin boards.

That winter Southern California had an energy crisis. Much like the current water crisis, electricity rationing was enforced beyond turning out the lights when leaving a room or keeping the fridge door open for too long. Power companies had implemented rolling blackouts, a last resort to prevent a complete power shutdown. Different regions for specific amounts of time would be completely without power. Institutions of higher learning were not exempt. With the sun setting around five each day, many students were in complete darkness as they found their way to their cars some nights. It

didn’t help that I have always been terrified of the dark. I was sure my eventual murder was in that darkness.

People started to forget about Christina. The suspect sketch posters were sun bleached, torn, or gone. A year passed and power was on its way to being normal again. An older man had let himself into a woman’s car in the middle of campus and attempted to beat and sexually assault her. She kicked and screamed. He ran off. Campus police eventually caught and arrested him.

The next year, a former student came to campus one morning, took the elevator to the fifth floor of the admissions building, climbed over the railing, and jumped. He jumped feet first and didn’t die when he hit the ground. Witnesses through the large glass windows said his legs collapsed like Jell-O and he just screamed and screamed until he was airlifted to the hospital. I walked past the cleanup scene later that morning, wondering if I really heard that worker say “blood” over the sound of the pressure washer, not realizing anything had happened.

The next year, a student went into one of the twenty-four-hour computer labs with a shotgun. A janitor found the aspiring engineering students at 3:00 AM, and he thought they had just fallen asleep until he saw all the blood. The lab was closed for a while after that.

Then, after three years, the police had a suspect in custody for Christina’s murder. When they found her body in her truck, their best evidence was the end of a cigar found on the floor. In 2004 California passed Prop 69, the “DNA Fingerprint, Unsolved Crime, and Innocence Protection Act.” It allowed officers to take DNA from every arrest and add it to a databank, which could then be used to solve other serious crimes where DNA evidence was found. Christina’s case was the first time Prop 69 was used in court and made headlines. Her case didn’t go to court until 2007. Two accomplices to the murder plead guilty. Harry Singer and Markeisha Cummings-Dixon both admitted they helped Markeisha’s husband James Winslow Dixon, Jr. in the kidnapping of Christina. Both said it was James who took the knife and killed her. Markeisha was the woman in the police sketch. They each received a life sentence.

I’d gone to that same courthouse for a handful of traffic tickets over the years. James Dixon’s trial was in 2008. He pled not



JACKIE RUSTED

Thing is, any place I wander is going to have some history of violence. Every city, every street, every public building.

guilty to all charges. He was finally caught because DNA taken from an arrest matched the cigar tip in Christina's truck. His DNA was also matched to the scene of a 1996 home invasion and rape of two college students in West Covina, the city just west of Pomona. There was controversy about Prop 69 being an invasion of privacy, many comparing it to "Big Brother," so prosecutors brought in a long list of experts and thirty witnesses. One witness was Henry Singer, already in the process of serving his life sentence. He cried on the stand, saying he wished he had done something to help Christina.

That same year I returned to my alma mater and continued my education. Most of the younger students didn't know about Christina's abduction and death; they were worried about the newer violent incidents I had missed in my absence. There were new

halogen streetlights everywhere so even the parking lots were bright at night. There was a little police station on campus strictly for student protection (they didn't issue parking fines or weed tickets, but did handle assault charges). Cell phones were now ubiquitous, and the campus had implemented the technology to send out alerts similar to Amber Alerts. Once, while I was walking between classes, an alert was sent out that a man with a weapon was seen on campus. He was in custody by the time I finished reading the text. Turns out, some guy was walking around with a katana the same time I was walking around in flip flops, carrying an overstuffed backpack. I would have been the easiest target.

Thing is, any place I wander is going to have some history of violence. Every city, every street, every public building. So unless

I plan on nailing myself shut inside my apartment, that's just the risk I take existing in a world with other people. I still like to learn about murders, but the fascination comes from a place of empathy. Because in all those murder cases, it could easily have been me who was abducted and found dead after buying a pack of cigarettes from the liquor store on the corner.

In the end, after deliberating for only two hours, the jury gave James Dixon the death penalty. He's still currently serving out his sentence. California hardly ever executes anyone, so there's a good chance he'll die alone in his cell in San Quentin.

At least I've never been there.

—Donna Ramone



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

**My boot
was covered
with blood.**

Paint and Preservation: *Keeping it Reo in Paradise Hills*

This spring I helped paint a wall.

Enrique Lugo, a longtime friend who is also an artist and an educator at the school where my wife teaches, has been trying to bring murals into the community where he was born and raised. He's from a part of south San Diego located east of National City, north of Chula Vista, and not far from the navy base known as Paradise Hills.

After months of meeting with business owners and community members, he was finally able to get a design approved.

The mural would appear on the side of a building owned by La Palapa, a local market on Reo Drive. The design featured a giant stylized sunrise over rolling hills with the store's logo in the upper left-hand corner.

For the last ten years, Paradise Hills has been my home too. The Rulands live a little less than a mile from the Lugos and a little more than a mile from La Palapa.

When Enrique asked me to help out with the mural, I hesitated.

If you want someone to lay down a base coat of primer, I'm your man, but asking me to paint something with the expectation that it will resemble a person, place, or thing, simply isn't reasonable. I'm a writer who thinks of himself as an artist, but not *that* kind of artist. My visions appear on the pages of books, newspapers, and zines—not on walls.

I've been to Mexico City and gotten lost in murals by Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Closer to home, I've long admired the ongoing mural project at Chicano Park in Barrio Logan, painstakingly preserved and occasionally enhanced by talented artists in the community. These murals are more than works of art: they are living documents that tell the story of a struggle.

I wasn't qualified for a project like that.

When I was in the navy I painted a lot of walls, only they weren't called walls, they were called bulkheads.

Four bulkheads formed not a room but a compartment. The floor was called the deck and the ceiling was rather sensibly referred to as the overhead. If those decks, bulkheads, and overheads were made of metal, and on a warship almost all of them were, painting them was a painstaking process.

We didn't just slap a fresh coat of paint on them. When a rust spot appeared on the paint it meant that the metal underneath had oxidized. We had to strip away the corroded paint, eliminate the rust, cover up the bare metal with green primer, and then apply a fresh coat of paint, which was almost always gray.

Eliminating the rust was the tricky part.

If the spot was small, a wire brush and some sandpaper would do the trick. Larger spots required a paint scraper or a chipping hammer. Spots that were hard to reach or especially resistant called for a pneumatic-powered needle gun. Large areas of rust would get blasted away with a disc sander. And if a large section of the deck was corroded, we'd have to drag out the deck grinder, which produced an unholy shrieking sound that could be heard a mile away.

There isn't a noise metal band on the planet that can compete with the sound of those wheels of steel teeth chewing up an iron deck at several bazillion revolutions per second. I loved the deck grinder but it did a number on my eardrums.

A spot of rust was rarely an isolated incident. Sometimes I'd chip away at a small speck of rust on a stanchion or watertight door or a section of the bulkhead below an entryway and huge chunks of paint would flake off, revealing large sections of the surface that were completely corroded.

As an enlisted seaman assigned to First Division, I was a non-rate, which meant the bulk of my existence as a sailor was dedicated to eradicating rust, which was no easy feat on an ocean-going vessel made of metal.

Sometimes it felt like my whole life was nothing but paint and preservation.

On the second morning of the mural project, my wife Nuvia and I were running some errands and we swung by the site on our way home.

There were ladders, scaffolding, and canopies to keep the sun from drying out the paint. Music played through portable speakers. Enrique had fired up the grill to cook some carne asada. Many of the artists were Enrique's students. Some were people from the neighborhood who wanted to know what was going on and then pitched in to help. They mixed paint, threw primer on the walls, and covered up graffiti. Little kids were running

around and suddenly this barren, fenced-off lot next to the market was full of life.

These weren't "artists." They were volunteers.

I wanted to participate.

I went home, changed clothes, and since Nuvia had work to do, I went back to the mural site alone.

Enrique put me to work filling in the rays of the run with bright orange paint. Some of these rays stretched to the highest part of the mural where others couldn't reach. I climbed up on the scaffold and went to work, happy to be of use.

Soon all the old lessons I'd learned doing my paint and preservation days came back. I loaded the brush with paint and cut in around the outlines. I marveled at how the surface was so much more porous and rough up close, which is true of most surfaces. The smell of paint and being outside in the San Diego sun helped bring me back. The only thing missing was a crew of petty officers standing off to the side, smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and calling everyone within earshot a lazy cocksucker.

I couldn't believe how much hotter it was up on the scaffold than it was on the ground. I was maybe six or seven feet closer to the sun, but the heat was intense. I was getting hot. I felt like Daedalus up there. Sweat was dripping into my eyes and there was nothing I could do about it unless I wanted to smear orange paint all over my face. It was time to take a break, but I only had one more ray to go. I started to feel a little light-headed. Spots danced in front of my vision.

And then it happened....

I wasn't on a scaffold in a dirt lot anymore. I was standing on a paint float tied up alongside my ship. It's 1987 and I'm wearing coveralls over my uniform and an orange kapok life jacket. I have a brutal hangover.

Our ship is going to undergo some strange test that requires two-inch circles of bare metal every six feet. I powered up a pneumatic-powered disc sander and went to work.

The paint float had three levels. I'd start at the bottom and work my way up, grinding away circles with the sander. Sometimes I'd stand on my tiptoes. Sometimes I'd sit and stretch my arms as far as they would go. When we had several neat columns and



BECKY RODRIGUEZ | INK-SKETCH.TUMBLR.COM

The only thing missing was a crew of petty officers standing off to the side, calling everyone within earshot a lazy cocksucker.

orderly rows of circles, we'd shift the paint float aft to the next part of the ship.

It was exactly the kind of stupid, pointless task that makes military life so exasperating.

The disc sander was kind of fucking up. The trigger was catching so that even after I released it the wheel kept on spinning.

We'd reached the end of a row and I was leaning over as far as I could, holding the sander with one hand and a stanchion with the other. The sander was heavy, designed for use with two hands, but I was just able to finish. I released the trigger and brought the pneumatic sander back to me so I could control it with two hands, but my arm gave out and the wheel kept spinning. The knife-edge of the sander bounced off the fleshy part of my knee.

The eyes of the guy I was working with told the story: Oh shit.

I powered down the sander and set it down. I poked by coveralls with my finger and it came back bloody.

Not good. I told my shipmate I wanted to finish the job and then he could take me to sickbay. If I went to sickbay now, the job would turn into a clusterfuck and they'd send in safety officers to ruin everyone's day.

My shipmate didn't think that was a good idea.

I shook him off. I didn't think it was a big deal because I didn't feel anything. After a few seconds, my shipmate elbowed me and pointed at my foot. My boot was covered with blood.

This was serious. I went to sickbay and they stitched me up. I was back at work the next day. I ripped open the stitches almost immediately and I still have a gnarly scar.

* * *

Up on the paint scaffold, no one was telling me to keep working, no one was calling me a cocksucker, blood wasn't slowly filling my boot.

Instead, Enrique was telling me to come down, drink some water, and eat a few tacos, which is exactly what I did.

While I cooled off and the paint dried, Enrique gave me my next assignment: blend the base of the rays with the blood red sun and the bright orange flares so that there is a gradient.

"Are you sure?" I asked.

He explained it to me again and I told him that I understood what he wanted me to do, but if I went back up there on the scaffold, I was fairly positive I was going to fuck it up.

"Then go up there and fuck up," he said.

So I did. And I didn't fuck it up, or at least not too badly. Because the next person who came along brightened the colors, and the next person after that tightened up the lines, and so on. Everyone contributed. It was amazing to step back and admire what we'd accomplished together with the work of our hands. It was something I hadn't felt since I left the navy, something I didn't even realize I'd missed. A new day was dawning in Paradise Hills. A new story was being told with fresh layers of paint. A different kind of preservation.

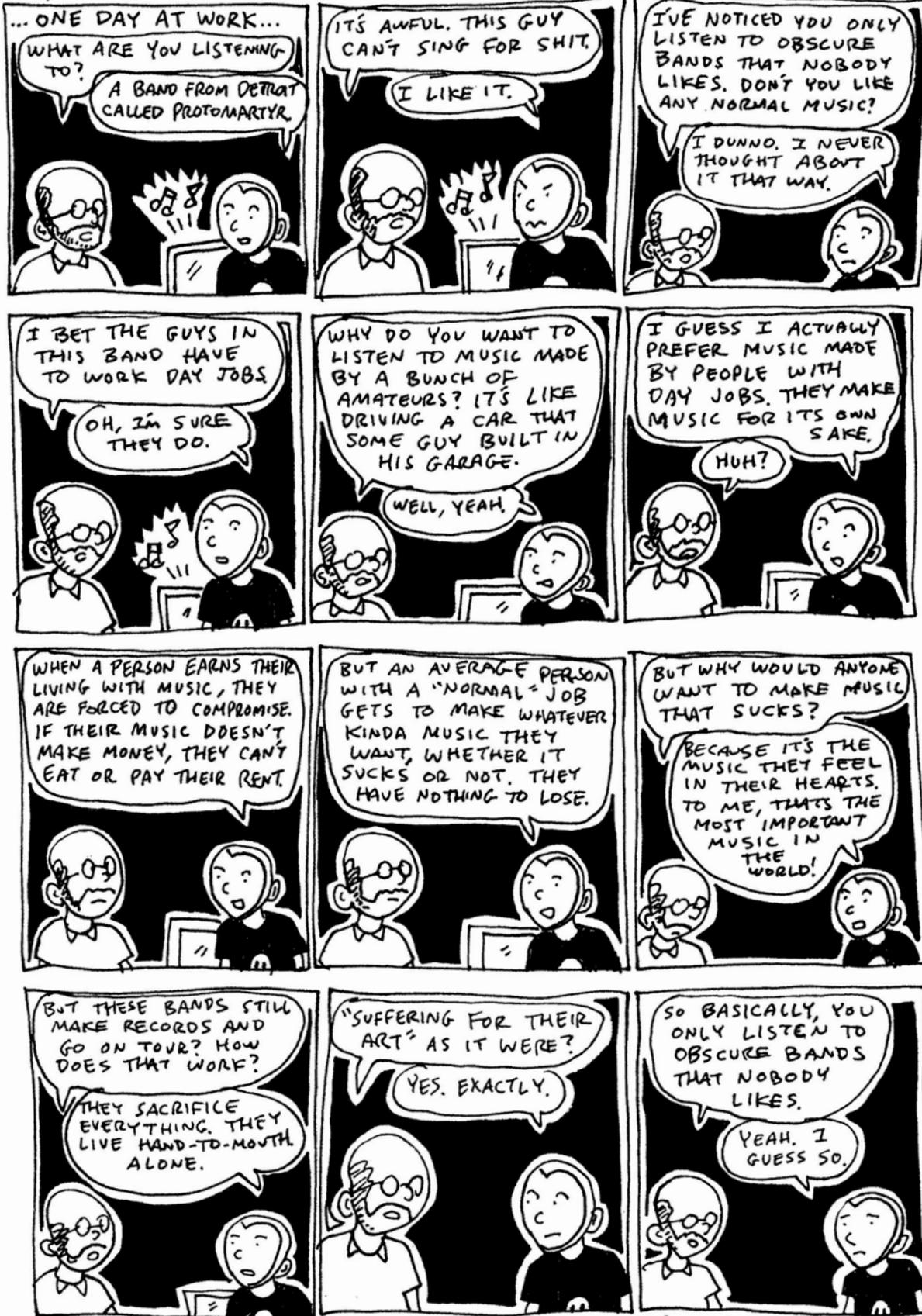
When I went to take a photo, someone driving by stopped his car to check out the work.

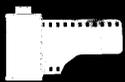
"What is this? What group do you belong to?"

"We're not a group," I told him. "We're your neighbors."

—Jim Ruland

MY SEVENTY-SIXTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT





Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

Bernie Sanders at The Wiltern



All jobs should pay based on how demoralized you are.

Slowride

I answered an ad in the *PennySaver* for “home companions needed,” assuming I would be paired with somebody who was very old and very lonely for an inspirational made-for-TV-movie dynamic. In this scenario, they would impart sage advice to twenty-year-old me as we sipped sweet tea on their porch, growing closer as the years wore on, the talks getting deeper until they eventually died in my arms as I whispered, “It’s okay to let go, Gertie.” Only after the funeral, would I discover they had left me their entire estate and I would live out the remainder of my days in their home, shuffling around in a bathrobe, talking out loud to them as though they were there and filling the rooms with ALF collectibles I bought on eBay.

“The name of your charge is Wayne,” the woman from the agency said. She paused to swallow something, but it was still in her mouth as she continued talking. “He’s forty five and was paralyzed in a motorcycle accident. Really whatcha you need to do is just take him to the mall so his mother has a chance to get out of the house.”

Already, in my imagination, Wayne and I were popping wheelies together.

“Let’s see how fast this baby can go!” Wayne says, laughing and feeling truly alive for the first time since the accident.

“What are we going to do at the mall?” I asked.

“Oh, I dunno,” said the caseworker, still chewing. “Usually everyone just goes to the mall and wheels around for a few hours.” This didn’t sit right with me. Wayne, or at least the Wayne of my imagination, was a young hellion cut down in the prime of his life. I was sure the last thing he wanted was to be wheeled through crowds of shitty teenagers to get to a Spencer’s Gifts. As I took down their address, I decided that we were going to go record shopping.

**

I knocked on the screen door of a run-down house where a moss-covered camper was taking up most of the driveway.

“Just a minute!” I heard from the other side of the glass. “Wayne! Your new friend is here!” The door swung open and I was looking into the sweet face of an old woman in a housedress. I introduced myself and Wayne wheeled into the kitchen. A curled hand held a bottle of urine in his lap and his hair was a pure and true mullet, so rare it was

like seeing a white buffalo in the wild. His mother fiddled with the wheelchair, loading the back pocket with a bottle of Poland Spring and a wrinkled ten-dollar bill. I introduced myself and reached to shake the hand that wasn’t gripping a bottle of warm piss.

Wayne grabbed my wrist and pulled me in. “You got tattoos?”

“Well, yeah,” I said. Wayne’s arms were covered in bled-out prison tattoos. I tried to discern one from the other to make conversation. “Are those lightning bolts?”

“Nah,” he said. “It’s for the swastika.”

My eyes narrowed and relaxed as I looked at the Magic Eye of Wayne’s body modifications. He was one hundred percent covered in hate tattoos.

When you are an adult and something like this happens, you have the life experience and boundaries to say, “No thank you, Wayne. My Jewish grandmother would probably not want us to be friends, so I am just going to go home and continue to look through the classifieds for another minimum wage job.” But instead, as a twenty year old, I said, “I was thinking maybe we could go to Tower Records today and get some stuff with my friend’s discount.”

“Oh, well isn’t that nice for a change!” Wayne’s mother said. “Usually they just take him to the mall.”

“I wanna go to the mall,” Wayne said, now agitated for some reason.

“But Wayne,” his mother said, “you always go to the mall.”

“*Smithaven Mall!*” he yelled, thumping his crippled arm in his lap.

The jury had spoken. Together, we lifted Wayne into the passenger seat of my Toyota and loaded his wheelchair into the back. I buckled my seatbelt. “Well, I guess it’s just you and me and the open road, Wayne.”

“You taking me to buy cigarettes?”

“Uh, I guess so. If that’s where you want to go.” I pulled into a 7-Eleven around the corner.

“Money’s in the wheelchair,” Wayne said. “I want m’change back!”

“Uh, okay.” I took the wrinkled tenner that his mother had lovingly folded into the pocket and emerged two minutes later with a pack of Camels and a few singles. “So, Wayne. What do you want to listen to? I brought some Tom Petty, some Alice Cooper, some Aerosmith...”

“Aerosmith? I saw Aerosmith with Foghat at the Commack Arena once. Best day of my life.”

I took *Toys in the Attic* out of the jewel case. “Aerosmith it is.”

“You got a boyfriend?”

“Uh, yeah,” I said, confused as to what direction this was going.

“Where’s he live?”

“Uh, King’s Park. Most of my friends live there or Commack.”

“Commack? I saw Aerosmith there with Foghat once. Best day of my life.”

“Uh, cool.”

For the first twenty minutes of the car ride, I tried my best to find some common ground for conversation, but every time Wayne found a way to bring it back to that fateful day many years ago when Aerosmith and Foghat joined forces on Long Island soil. I eventually stopped talking, and Wayne just stared out the window, chain-smoking the cigarettes I bought him out of the passenger side of my non-smoking car. Once we got to the mall, I asked Wayne where he wanted to go, and we ended up wheeling through the aisles of the Sears tool department for an hour, stopping once to look at Craftsman chainsaws in silence until Wayne spoke up.

“My daddy and I were gonna take a road trip.”

“And?” I asked. “What happened?”

“Motherfucker died.” There was a pause.

The Piña Colada song played over the silence on the overhead speakers. I was sad for a second, until Wayne demanded we move on by yelling “*Grills!*” and pounding a fist in his lap. We rolled onto the next aisle, through propane tanks, car airbrushing kits, and finally treadmills where Wayne announced he was done.

“So where to now?” I asked with false optimism, praying he’d just say, “home.”

Wayne paused thoughtfully, struggling to light a cigarette as though he were trying to do a Cat’s Cradle with one hand. “Jimmy’s.”

“Uh, okay. Who’s Jimmy?”

“M’friend. Motherfucker never visits.”

I let my mind become a paint-by-number of what Jimmy might look like. I settled on the idea that he probably looked like Willie Nelson in a Roadkill Cafe shirt. I turned onto a major highway, and Wayne gasped and grabbed my right arm.

“*Cassie...*” he said, breathy and desperate, as if the life was leaving his body.

I tried to recall what I remembered of the CPR I had learned in high school. “What???”

“*Kiss me!*”



STEVE THUESON

My eyes narrowed and relaxed as I looked at the Magic Eye of Wayne's body modifications. He was one hundred percent covered in hate tattoos.

I wrenched my arm away, trying to steer and protect my honor at the same time. "Get your hands off me, motherfucker!"

He grabbed my arm again with his good hand. It was surprisingly strong. Clearly this was his wheeling hand, his wiping hand, and now his sexual-assaulting hand. "KISS ME!" he said again.

I pulled back and punched him. "If you touch me again, I will kill you and leave you here!"

"I'm sorry," he said. "You're just so damned pretty I can't control myself."

"Fuck you! Shut up!"

"We still going to Jimmy's?" he asked, struggling to light a Camel.

"No, and shut up! If you say another word, I'll kill you!" When we got back, his mother wasn't home and the door was locked.

"You don't have a key?" I asked, exasperated.

"Not like I fuckin' go anywhere." I helped him into the wheelchair, and he used his good leg to drag himself up the ramp. We sat in silence, except for once he said, "Sorry about what happened back there," and once I said, "Fuck you. Shut up," and once he took a groaning, cathartic pee into a planter off the side of the ramp.

"Does your friend Jimmy have a phone?" I asked, desperate after an hour.

"If he does, motherfucker sure doesn't use it to call here."

"Do you think he's home now?"

"Motherfucker's on disability. Course he's home." With that, I loaded Wayne back into the car. I left the engine running when we got to Jimmy's, jumped out, and rang the doorbell. I heard signs of life and the door swung open. The man who answered looked like Woody Harrelson playing a dirtbag running out of luck in a small town.

"Uh, hi. You don't know me but I've got your friend Wayne in the car. He's had a little trouble keeping his hands to himself and I was wondering if you wouldn't mind hanging out with him until his mother comes home."

"Wayne? Well, I'll be! Let me put my pants on!" Jimmy disappeared and emerged wearing a pair of Champion sweatpants cut into shorts.

"You don't visit me, motherfucker!" Wayne began screaming.

"I got kids, Wayne. I can't visit every damn day."

"You ain't visited me in a year, motherfucker!"

"I got caught up in plans, Wayne. Tell ya what. This girl's gonna take you home and then I'll be over later and we'll settle this with a pizza and a case of Pabst."

"That's what you said last time, motherfucker, and I'm still waiting on that motherfuckin' pizza!"

**

Wayne lit the last Camel on the drive back to his house. "Motherfucker's not gonna come."

I was experiencing a breadth of feelings as we drove away from Jimmy's. Sure, Wayne was a disgusting creep covered in hate tattoos, but he also led a pathetic life that made me deeply sad on an existential level. I was being paid eight dollars an hour plus mileage, but it seemed to me that all jobs should pay based on how demoralized you are when the workday is done. By this logic, I would have been able to pay my full car insurance bill for the year after only five hours with Wayne.

"But the agency said you'd be back tomorrow," Wayne's mother said when she got back, pulling his chair out of the backseat and helping him into it.

I didn't have the heart to tell her what happened. I mumbled something about other responsibilities, said goodbye, and peeled out. Aerosmith was still playing, but I turned off the stereo, opting instead for the comfortable silences I have with my own brain when my imagination has been outdone by reality.

—Cassie J. Snider

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*not that way you percvs, but I respect the double entendre.



**THUDWHACK
and the CHORD,
CHORD, CHORD
business.**

ASSHOLE ASSHOLE, LOOK AT ME

I've done a lot of fucking stupid things in my life (if you don't believe me, ask your mom [if she's even still speaking to me]), but rarely, if ever, have I pulled so big a boner—so vast a gaffe—so voluminous a goddamned blunder—as this: In my review of the Dirt Bike Annie/Unlovables *Reunion Show* split LP last month, I boneheadedly attributed the Unlovables songs to Dirt Bike Annie, and vice versa. It takes a special—very special—brand of fucktard to commit a botch of such egregious dimension, and, what's worse (well, if you're me) is that I can't think of any clever way to song-and-dance my way out of this one. I just have to submit myself for pummeling. *This is actually worse than the time I used a pretzel STICK in lieu of a pretzel ROD on the cover art for the Ergs DorkRockCorkRod album!* Thus do I duly report for my assigned pummeling! I throw myself upon the mercy of the court and can only say, in my behalf, that although a right and just society will duly shish kabob me for this heinous botch, this inaccuracy, this tragic miscalculation, this misstep, this oversight, this snafu, this blooper, this colossal boo-boo, this bungle, this erratum in the annals of an annal-retentive society, this flub, this barefaced misapprehension, this muddle, this slight, this faux pas, this Maldición de la Momia Azteca, this cab-over-Pete-with-a-reefer-on-and-a-Jimmy-hauling-hogs, THIS VERITABLE BAD RELIGION INTO THE UNKNOWN OF UNFACTUAL UTTERANCES—well, at least I'm not one of those dumb fuckers who doesn't think Government Issue's *Legless Bull* EP is a great record. Because THAT would suck. That record is fuckin' GREAT, and if you don't think so, you don't know fuckin' nothin' about nothin', which makes you a Double Nothin', which is *the worst kind of nothin' there is* (it's worse than even a Triple Nothin', which are kind of sexy in their three-way nothingness). It has come to my attention that age and infirmity have oozed their way so deeply into the rock'n'roll thing that one could spend damn near every column from here on out either writing about recently departed punk rock icons (local or global) (case in point, the now-late John Stabb of Government Issue), or recently departed rock stars one never really gave much of a fuck about (case in point, The Artist Formerly Known As a Squiggly Line). And, whilst this is a fairly reasonable way to carry on in the face of an ever-increasing amount of

Rock'n'Roll Grim Reaping, this plan seems to lack a bit of the essential derring-do so critical to proper execution of the Punk Rock Thang. Ergo, in lieu of talking about dead folks (and, heck, I never met Stabb anyway, although we were occasional pen pals in the early '80s when snail mail and flyers were punk), I'm a just talk about records: In this case, the *Legless Bull* EP (although, in light of recent events, I suppose this record was really released by Minor Threat and I goofed that up as well). That record is fucking great (wait, I said that already. Well, it bears repeating). Ten songs, nine minutes, seven inches. *Legless Bull* was the fourth release on Dischord Records; arguably my favorite release on what was inarguably my favorite record label from about 1981-1983 (the other record that might be my favorite was the SOA *No Policy* EP, although the Teen Idles *Minor Disturbance* EP had the best cover. Oddly, the one record in Dischord's initial salvo of seven-inch mayhem that definitely *isn't* my favorite [unless you count that Youth Brigade *Welcome to Washington* EP, and why would you?] is probably the best-known: the first Minor Threat EP, with the red cover, because you could probably argue that the second Minor Threat record is better than the first one, and where's the joy in the second Minor Threat record being better than the first Government Issue or SOA record? That would contain an implicit omission that progress is cool. SUH, I'LL BROOK YO' INSOLENT NO FURTHUH!). Perhaps historical perspective is necessary to adequately stake my claim without speaking in a Foghorn Leghorn voice. In the summer of 1981, I saw a few reviews for the Teen Idles EP in what I suppose would now be called "indie rock" mags like *Trouser Press*. Eight songs on a seven-inch; it didn't sound like you could beat that particular deal. There wasn't any mailorder information associated with the review, so I guessed about \$2.50 seemed like a reasonable asking price, shoved two dollar bills and two taped quarters in a letter, and sent it to the address at the end of the review. I got a letter (but no record) back the next week from Ian MacKaye, who told me the Teen Idles record was sold out, but they were pressing more, and that State Of Alert and Minor Threat both had seven-inch releases in the works, so if I sent him another five bucks, he'd send me all three of Dischord's releases when they came out. I stuck a five-dollar bill in an envelope and

mailed it off to the same place the \$2.50 went, a fucking black hole in the middle of Washington D.C., for all I knew. Sometime in the fall, my records came, and I was proud owner of the entirety of the Dischord catalog: all three records. It was a bit much to process, initially. I kinda assumed the Teen Idles would be... I dunno... *poppier* or something. I figured they'd sound like "Wild Weekend" by the Zeros or whatever. They did not. The bass sounded like a funnel in a popcorn popper, the guitar sounded like someone was throwing it in a wood chipper a block down the street, the drums went THUD WHACKTHUDWHACKTHUDWHACK as fast as they could, and the singer bleated out lines that were clearly lacking all the required syllables. It wasn't so much a mind-blowing moment as it was a "what the fuck IS this?" moment. SOA played these tight little chord progressions—chord, chord, chord, chord, chord, chord, chord, chord—with this little buzzy guitar sound, and the drummer beat along double-time like a wind-up monkey toy. Minor Threat showed some maturation, which was troubling—*how can there be maturation when I haven't even figured out what the fuck this IS yet???*—but I lived through it. I had to give the records a few more spins before I figured out if I liked them or not—like, do I buy into this whole deal, the THUD WHACK THUD WHACK THUD WHACK and the CHORD, CHORD, CHORD business? Eventually, I decided I did, and sent off another \$2.50 for Dischord's next record—the *Legless Bull* EP. As opposed to the original trio of Dischord releases, this new one didn't sound like wood chippers and space martians to me—it sounded like punk rock. It was sped up and ragged and half the songs were under a minute long, but, by gadfrey, *those were real songs in there*. The songs were all as long as they needed to be. The playing is fucking fantastic on that record; listen to those drums! That guy is not just seeing how fast he can go THUD WHACKTHUDWHACKTHUDWHACK (or, in Minor Threat's case, OOMPTAY OOMPENTAY OOMPENTAY OOMPENTAY) he's going BOOP-TITTY, BOOP-A-TITTY, BOOP-A-TITTY, BISH-BISH! Well SHUT YOUR FESTERING GOB, THAT'S THE SHIT!!! The guitars are great, with little "REE-NEE-NEE-NEE-NEE!" parts thrown in if the guy gets a free second, and the vocals are World Class Snot, in the grand tradition (sorta) of Keith Morris and Johnny Rotten! And the lyrics! "I went to school to learn how



ALEX BARRETT

HONK IF YOU ARE SOMEWHAT PARTIAL TO THE *LEGLLESS BULL EP*, R.I.P. STABB.

to cheat, all I got were words on a sheet,” that’s fucking brilliant, man (I went to ITT to learn how to cheat. All I got were pen marks darkening in a corresponding oval. No wonder I can’t bust a rhyme). “Used to listen to the Clash, now they suck like all the trash, the Ramones used to be a hit, now they’re just a pile of shit!” If you don’t like that, you’re a fucking clod (although I will freely admit that record cover sucked, bigtime. PLEASE DO NOT DRAW SHIT WITH BALLPOINT PENS FOR YOUR RECORD COVERS, NOW AND FOREVER, AMEN). My adoration for the *Legless Bull EP* (and my desire to quickly change the subject from the Unlovables/Dirt Bike Annie fiasco ASAP) knows no bounds; thus, this past Memorial Day, in the waning sunlight, I clambered atop my roof with a beer, my cell phone, a purple saxophone, and a sign that read “HONK IF YOU ARE SOMEWHAT PARTIAL TO THE **LEGLLESS BULL EP**, R.I.P. STABB, SAVE THE TEXAS PRAIRIE

CHICKEN,” with my stated intention to play my new saxophone along to this classic, on behalf of a grateful nation (the record should show that I don’t actually know how to play saxophone. I used to play clarinet when I was a kid, so I can supply the air just fine—but I’ve never really figured out what the keys do. It doesn’t really seem like they do the same thing twice, like there is just some pre-atomic airflow randomizer and you just honk and toot and hope for the best. I think you play a saxophone like a theremin, really—just bullshit your way through it) (I ruled out playing in the park because of the guy who sits on a bench there holding up a “pray to end abortion” sign who looks kinda like amnesiac Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner). I press “play” on my phone, and the introduction to “Religious Ripoff” begins. After the stick clicks, I’m on: **HONNNNK! TOOT, TOOT! HONNNNK! TOOT, TOOT!** I flail a bit on “Fashionite,” but I know the thirty-eight second song so well it

cannot be denied I stop and start at the right times. With me on sax, “Rock ‘n’ Roll Bullshit” lives up to its name, and then some! “Anarchy Is Dead” becomes madcap one-handed flailing, as I wave my sign with the other, but I actually kind of find a part for “Sheer Terror” that works. A lady out walking her dog pauses to look at me, and I realize that I have forgotten my Star Trek fez, and am clad in but a fedora, making me appear like some manner of ska turd. *Don’t look, ma’am! Pretend it isn’t happening!* A few minutes later, my sunset sonata is concluded, and I yell “THANK YOU, ASTOR PARK! THERE WILL BE NO ENCORE!” and creep back down off the roof. I have played for nine minutes. No one has honked.

Good. It means you’re all stupider fucks than I am.

Love,
—Norb



At least I wasn't in the back of some thermonuclear deep fryer kitchen.

Teenage Working Class Shenanigans

In 1985, I was just about to be legally old enough to get a bona fide paying job. Most people around my age started working. Many of them were employed in some kind of hellish fast food situation, but my pal Randy from high school hooked me up with an interview at Gemco where he was already working as a courtesy clerk. Gemco was a chain of West Coast department stores that also featured a full-size grocery. Lucky Stores, the grocery chain that owned Gemco, had its vast supermarket aisles located in the rear of each and every Gemco. The rest of the store stocked just about anything and everything you needed or wanted, including records, making it a popular one-stop shop for a shit-ton of customers.

My interview went well, especially since the store manager Rick saw that I was being recommended by Randy. I was brought on as part of the sled dog team of courtesy clerks. In California at that time, you had to be at least fifteen and a half years old to work. The minimum wage was \$3.35 an hour. Even though I was making what others were in fast food, I quickly came to dig my job. I reminded myself that at least I wasn't sweating my nuts off in the back of some thermonuclear deep fryer kitchen.

The role of courtesy clerks at Gemco was standard task work: emptying the numerous trash bins all around the store, keeping knee-high ashtrays empty and clean (remember, this was 1985), cleaning up spills, and at closing, straightening/facing shelves and sweeping the entire floor of the store with those wide-ass mop-sweepers. More than anything, though, we were constantly shagging rows of shopping carts from the parking lot. The grocery department always seemed to be low on carts—often because most of their baggers saw shagging carts beneath them, even though the lazy fucks were supposed to back us up, especially when it got really busy.

When I say shopping carts, I don't mean these plastic deals you roll around at Target. I'm talking about those old stainless steel sons of bitches, the kind of carts that could (and did) do some damage to the side of a car out in the parking lot. Not only were rows of these things pretty heavy, but there was also no such thing as those electric cart pushers to fetch rows back into the store. It was all arm and leg power, and the courtesy clerks soon started to goad each other into seeing how long of a row of carts we could snake

down the main aisle of the store to the back grocery area.

The rows of carts started getting uncontrollably long. Some of the other employees in the store laughed at us, wondering what the hell we were doing. There were a few other clerks besides Randy and me who started having too much reckless fun doing this. We sideswiped some shoppers' carts. End displays facing the main aisle started getting, how do you say, "displaced." I was going on sixteen years old, for chrissakes! A few employees of the store were entertained by these shenanigans. Others, not so much.

Rick, the store manager who hired me, thought we were crazy, especially since customers could be bone-jarringly hip checked if they didn't pay attention to our winding, steel anaconda of carts approaching them. Point taken, but that didn't hamper the dedication of the cart arts. That is, until after closing one night during the Christmas season. Rick wanted to help us get the last of the carts to the back of the store that night, thinking he'd like to give it a go with an extra huge row of carts. Laughing, we told him to leave it to us professionals, to which he replied, "This ain't so hard!" and started rolling the oversized row down the main aisle. He went too fast. Within a few seconds, Rick yelped, "*Shit!*" and wiped out a huge console television on an end display, sending it crashing down to the linoleum floor with a loud *POP*. That TV was through.

The other courtesy clerk and I looked at each other and tried not to laugh, but I couldn't hold it in and started busting up. Rick, looking at what he just did, turned around, and trying not to laugh, said, "See what fucking happens? No more. Got it?!" I stifled my laughter as much as I could and replied, "Got it." Sweeping the store that evening, I couldn't stop laughing at what happened, especially because it wasn't one of us clerks. I always remember Rick handling that rather coolly and owning his fuck-up, instead of being a dick and flipping out on us.

Lucky Stores entirely liquidated all Gemcos a year later, and I soon found myself looking for another job. I lucked out, landing a checker gig at Michaels, the art and craft joint. After being there for a few months, I got a couple of my high school buddies, Tony and Sean, jobs there. I'm surprised that this store location didn't implode when

we worked there at the same time. Debi, the manager of that store, wasn't a people person at all. Her miserable disposition only complemented her complete lack of mutual respect towards the employees. This fueled the fire of disregard amongst the employees, so you can pretty much guess how great an example she was with leading her store.

Tony and I often had fun singing on the P.A. system, as well as calling for price checks on items Michaels didn't stock (like cigarettes, liquor, or condoms). Tony's rendition of Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night" with his own racy lyrics, as well as us yelling, "Sing it, Frankie!" always got a guffaw or two from someone shopping in the store. My favorite zinger for the P.A. was "*SCREAM FOR ME, LONG BEACH!*" (If you're not a Maiden fan, look it up).

There was a separate room in the back warehouse that held the overstock of piñatas, piled up everywhere all over the floor. Tony and I would go in there and start vicious slam pits, barking out S.O.D. or Slayer songs and stage diving off boxes onto the piñata participants, leaving behind piles of crepe paper and papier-mâché. Just two high school idiots, killing time on their breaks.

Besides helping himself and treating everyone else (including customers) to the candy displays at each register, Sean had the best comeback lines for people who came through his check stand. When there were huge sales on artificial flowers and plants, droves of people came in to buy bags of that stuff. Getting fed up of having to scan each stem, Sean would scan every third or fifth item. There was one lady who told him at the end of her ring-up that he didn't charge her for some flowers. "Oh, those?" Sean asked, looking her up and down, "Those are free today for women with blue dresses and white purses!" Not saying a single word, she just stared at him like a deer in the headlights and rolled her cart away. I was one check stand over, cracking up. Sean turned to me and exclaimed, "Free goods!"

There was also another time that Debi, for some reason or another, grunted out the words, "forks and knives," referring to the plastic silverware we stocked at the store. Sean, keeping up with the obnoxiously humorous spirit and not letting it go by a long shot, kept imitating her, repeatedly rasping out, "*FORKS AND KNIVES!*" Debi soon started to get really pissed, often hearing Sean cawing it out across the store



Customers could be bone-jarringly hip checked if they didn't pay attention to our winding, steel anaconda of carts.

like some deranged crow. She finally flipped out when he did it over the P.A. He got on the store loudspeaker, all professional, "Can I please get a price check on," then his voice switched back, "*FORKS AND KNIVES!*" All the employees completely lost it. Needless to say, Debi freaked out on Sean, real bad. It didn't stop him, though. It was his long-winded, never-ending closing announcements that eventually got him banned from using

the P.A. Other people from our high school got jobs there a little later. That's when the Michaels Mafia (as our friend Mike called it) started to *really* get outta hand. It was time for me to beat it.

Look, I'm not condoning this behavior in the workplace. I would've slapped the high school me upside my head for these kinds of hijinks. Really, I would. Teen Dale better hope I never, *ever* get my hands on a

time machine. All kidding aside, I can't help but think back to the different workplace dynamics that my first two jobs had. Both experiences were proof positive that people in charge should lead by example, and if you're unable to do so, hit the bricks and let someone who can.

—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com



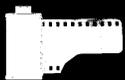
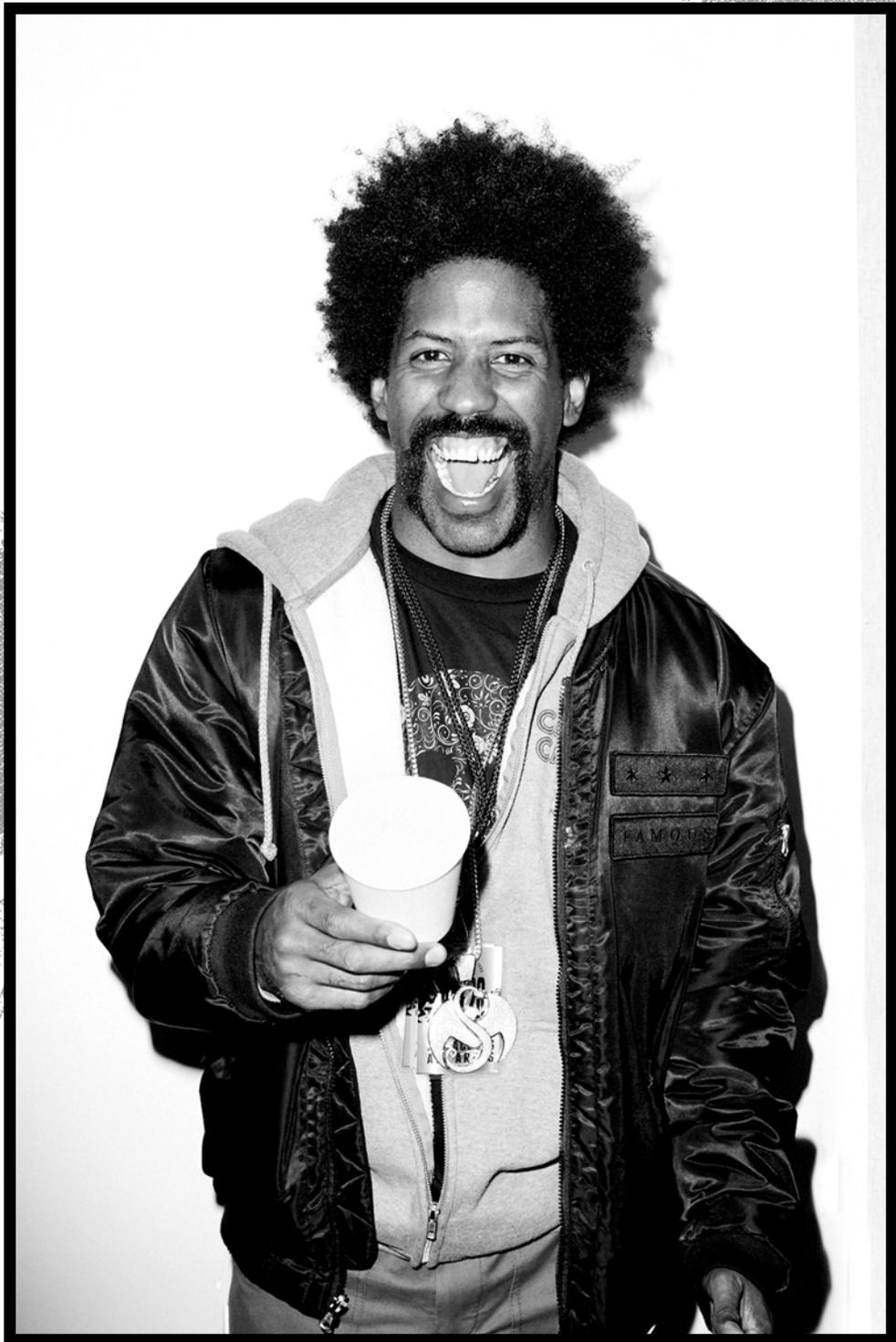
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"THE STARS
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Update #2: She did.



Dan Monick's Photo Page

MURS, Minneapolis, MN 12/04/15



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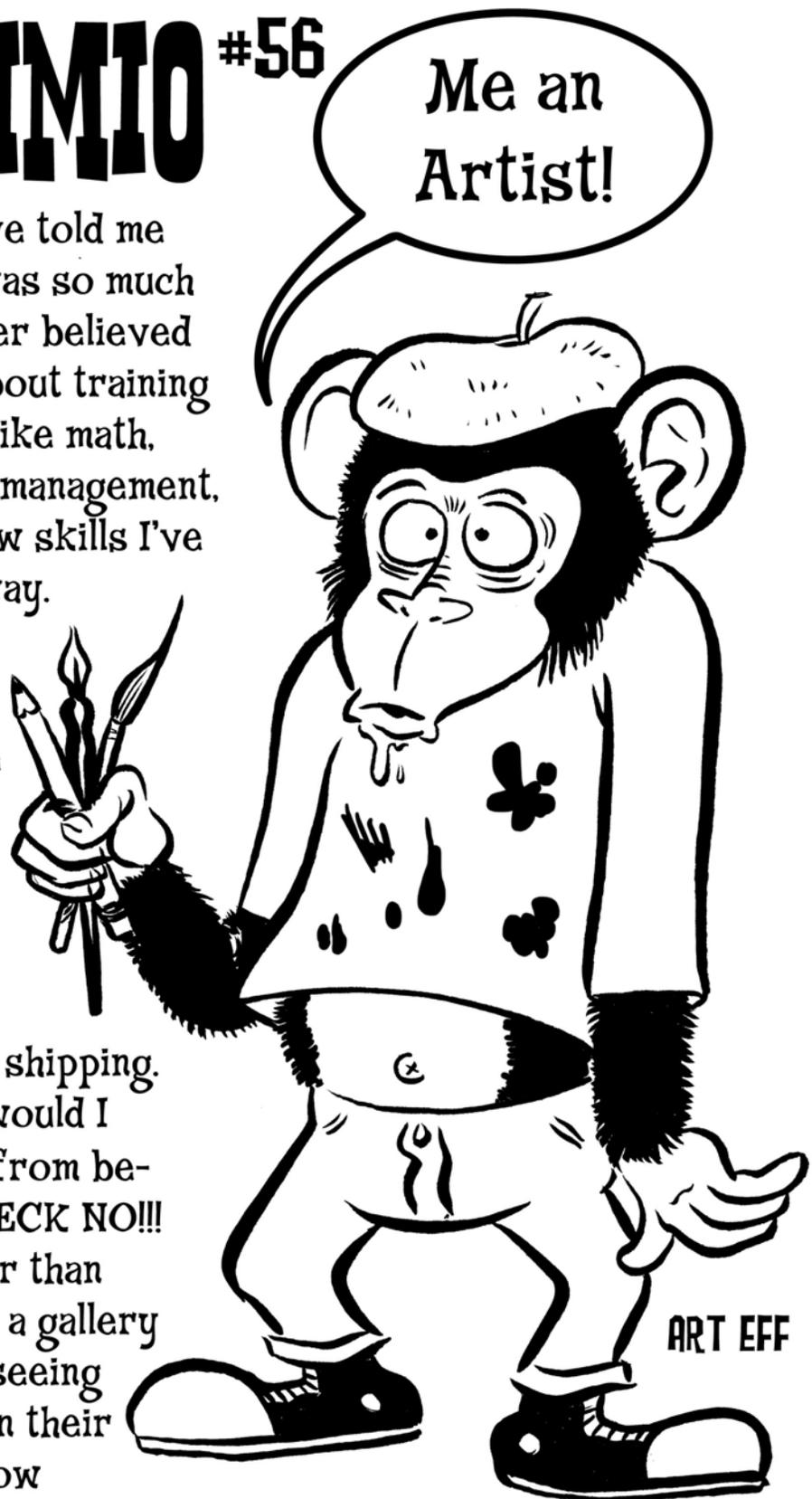


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CHICO SIMIO #56

Man! If you would have told me that being an Artist was so much work, I would've never believed you! I'm not talking about training or skill, I mean stuff like math, networking, and time management, to name just a few new skills I've picked up along the way.

I've had to learn on the fly how to manage clients, hustle up new work, keep my art out where it can be seen, update social media sites, and learn how to package artwork for shipping. Phew! Knowing this, would I discourage someone from becoming an "Artist"? HECK NO!!! There's nothing better than seeing your art up on a gallery wall, or even better, seeing it on someone's wall in their home! Keep it up, fellow Artistes! Art rules!! The world needs it, and us!





**GO WHITE BRONCO
POPULATION: GHOST TOWN LP**

Five years in the making, *Population: Ghost Town* is the first LP from Long Island lifer-band Go White Bronco. A lineup of musicians culled from 20-year collaborators and friends from local bands like Iron Chic, Fellow Project, Deep Pockets, Splurge, and Ancient Tongue, this nine track debut full length is a mostly bleak, sometimes triumphant existential meditation led by three acoustic guitars and soaring multi-part harmonies. Crosby, Stills, Hash, and Old.



**BOILERMAN
FEEL WAYS ABOUT STUFF LP/CD**

With four EPs, an LP, and a slew of cassettes and compilations released since their 2010 demo, Boilerman has played over 170 shows across the US and Canada. The band's sophomore full length is 12 new songs using a sonic pallet drawn as much from bands like Leatherface and Articles of Faith as it is contemporaries like Canadian Rifle, Tenement, and Witches with Dicks. The album is rounded out by a faithful cover of The Mice's 1986 "Not Proud Of The USA" and illustrations by Shannon Thompson.



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As Boyz II Men sang, "it's so hard to say goodbye to yesterday." It's hard to say goodbye to love, to friends, to ourselves. Our identity is a myth we make. GOOD-BYE is comprised of three vignettes: A myth about polyamory, a parable about real punks, & an argument for aging gracefully or killing yourself. 88 pages, 4 x 5.5 inches.

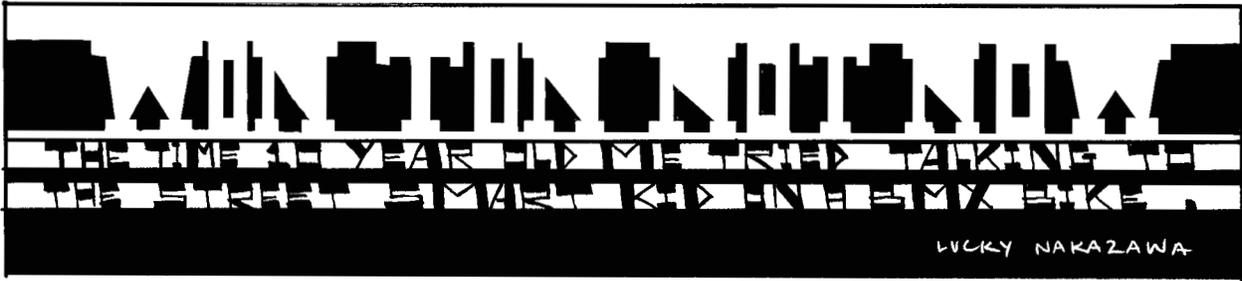


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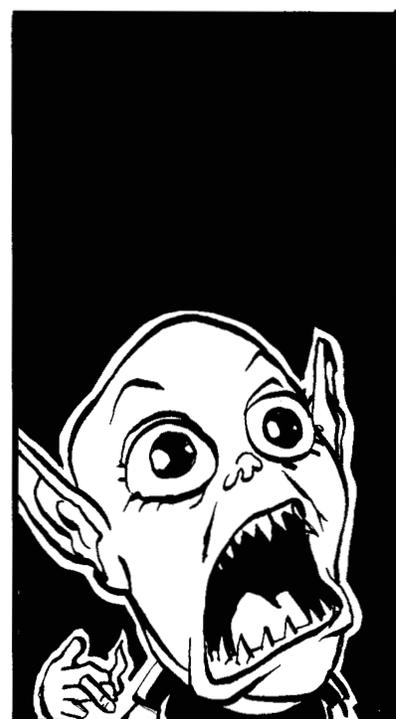
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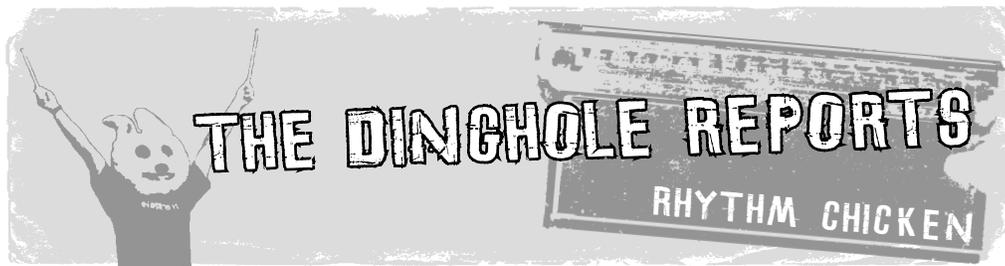


MOM'S BOWL CUT



2ND MOM'S CIGARETTE





My X-ray looks like a Voivod album cover.

Bone Slurry

I called it my *last meal*. I was going in for major surgery the next morning and I figured it may be my last unobstructed creature comfort for a while. My Hen and I drove across the peninsula to the AC Tap, a nearby, backwoods watering hole. The AC Tap parking lot has farmers' tractors in the summer and some snowmobiles in the winter. As we bellied up to the bar we were immediately served two pickled eggs, our usual appetizer. I went with the patty melt, fries, and a cup of chili. I was already on my pre-op alcohol ban, but my Wisconsin belly was happily full of greasy meat and cheese. The next morning I re-read my pre-op instructions on the two-hour ride down to the hospital. It said to make your last dinner light and healthy. *Oops*.

The only other surgery I've ever had was getting my tonsils taken out forty-one years ago. I really didn't know what to expect. Once the procedure was cleared and approved by my insurance, I just didn't think much about what they were gonna do to me. Soon I was wearing nothing but a thin, backless robe. One nurse concealed my chicken legs in thigh-high surgical socks while another jabbed some tubes into my arm. A large square area was shaved on my back, the point of entry. Then the neurological team came in and covered my body in electrodes so I could be wired into their mainframe. The hospital pastor came in and gave me the "hope you make it" prayer just before I was wheeled off to the cyborg transformation chamber.

Once in the operating room, I saw two new nurses arranging all the sharp and stabby tools under bright lights. The neurological team leader introduced himself. I told him he looked like Milo from the Descendents. A new drippy bag was hooked up to my I.V. and the room got a little bendy. I kept waiting for the instruction to count backwards from ten, but it never came. I vaguely remember asking Milo for a cheeseburger before the bright, bendy room wrapped its warm tentacles around me and my world stopped spinning for about four hours. At this point a room full of strangers did bizarre things to my body.

While my soul was blindfolded and suspended in Milo's computer, they put a tube up my urethra all the way to the bladder. *Dinghole assault!* They put a tube down my throat so a machine could do my breathing. All my electrodes were wired up to Milo's computer and I was one with Skynet. They called in some big hospital thugs to pop

my body face-down on the cutting board. Then, my back was slashed open, parts of my vertebrae were sawed off, and my spinal nerves were pushed aside so they could pull out my bum disc. The sawed-off bone material was put in blender with some bone marrow from my hip bone (still not sure how they got a hold of that) to create a cement-like bone slurry which was quickly spackled into the space where my bum disc used to be. An erector set of screws and rods were fastened into the two vertebrae. Now my X-ray looks like a Voivod album cover. I'm feelin' pretty metal.

Milo's computer later dumped my mind and body into the post-op room where I soon came to. This is where things got interesting. A grumpy guy's face came into view just as he asked me, "Want some ice chips?" My mouth felt like dry, rough leather luggage. I replied, "Yeth, and a cheetheburger pleathe." Those first ice chips were *the single greatest things I've ever tasted*, which is rather astounding since they were only flavorless chips of ice. I began to notice a dull pain in my back, but my attention was riveted on more and more ice chips! They asked me to wiggle my toes. I got more ice chips. They quizzed me on my name, birth date, and why I was there. I got more ice chips. I started to realize that the surgery was indeed over. It seemed to me that I probably lived through it, so I again asked for a cheeseburger. I got more ice chips.

Once my mouth was able to pronounce "s"s again, I asked for a cheeseburger. I heard a nurse say, "Yeah, he's ready to ship out." They wheeled me into the hospital room where my Hen and parents were waiting. I asked for a cheeseburger. The next four or five hours were a blur of constant nurse visitations. My savior Hen fed me more ice chips. Then I noticed again that dull pain in my back. Oh yeah, I just had back surgery. I inquired about the available ways to kill such a pain. My Hen (also a nurse) introduced me to a small hand-held clicker laid across my lap. It had one glowing green button. I stared at the button for a while. My dull back pain was becoming more pronounced. I pressed the button. I didn't want a cheeseburger anymore.

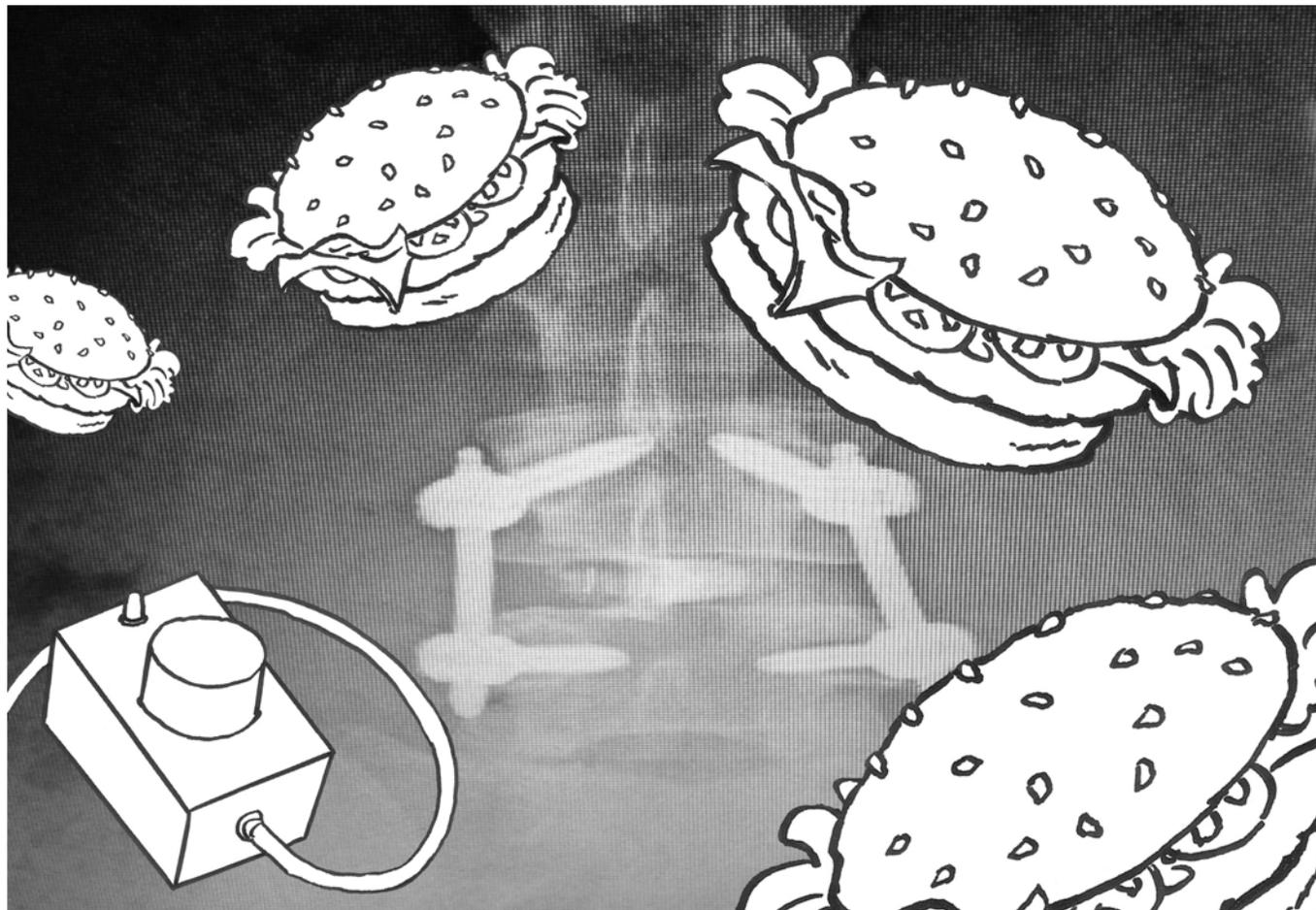
Once I was in the gentle lull of the glowing green button I began to notice what seemed like two invisible angels massaging my legs. I couldn't see them, but *someone* was massaging my legs! I later learned that two robotic sleeves had been alternately squeezing and releasing my calves since

before the surgery, a precautionary measure to prevent blood clots. People of earth, there is an ultimate form of human bliss. I call it the green button with robotic alternating leg massage. Cloud nine? *Ha!* I was on cloud nine hundred ninety-nine... point *nine!* To the outside observer (namely my Hen and my parents) I became a loopy cartoon chicken with his *finger on the button*.

They soon left for the evening, leaving me alone with Dr. Green and the Magical Leg Hummers (and now that I think of it, my surgeon's name is actually Dr. Greene!). I stared at the ceiling for a minute, or an hour, whatever. Then I flipped through ten thousand channels on the TV, but every single one was showing an orange-skinned raccoon they called Trump. Then I stared at the button as the angels continued their leg worship. Every time I pressed the button, the green glow disappeared and I felt fine. Fifteen or twenty minutes later the button would glow green again and I was free to press it again. This dosing delay keeps one from OD'ing on morphine, I surmised.

I know what you're thinking. *When does this story get more punk?* Well, every time the magic green glow returned to my button, that particular shade of green seemed more and more familiar. Finally, after a few more dances with Dr. Green, a punk rock memory nugget was dislodged from the back of my brain. It's been hidden back there for about thirty years, but now I remember it like it was yesterday! *Doggy Style!* It was the summer of '86. Doggy Style were a newer band from California whose sugary sweet punk pop hit "Donut Shop Rock" was all the rage on Green Bay's college radio station. That summer Doggy Style played at an old ballroom just outside of town. They were *fun!* They were *green!* They wore green grass skirts and green body paint. The drummer wore a fake green mohawk wig/cap. Everything was a happy, bright green!

It's funny how my morphine-soaked mind randomly dug up that memory. Now "Donut Shop Rock" was stuck in my head. I just remember that show being *so much fun*. Then I slowly recalled how that band broke into two different bands, *both* named Doggy Style! Was this a false recollection brought on by Dr. Green? *No!* There *were* two Doggy Styles! The original singer and drummer formed the "rap" Doggy Style, while the original guitarist and bassist formed the "punk rock" Doggy Style. This strange punk band splicing occupied my cartoon mind for



BRAD BESHAW

My back was slashed open, parts of my vertebrae were sawed off, and my spinal nerves were pushed aside so they could pull out my bum disc.

a minute, or an hour, whatever. Wow, there were *two* different Doggy Styles over two possibly overlapping time spans!

Suddenly, one by one, the songs from the “punk rock” Doggy Style entered my head. That album was called *Doggy Style II*. That album was *amazing*. The “punk rock” Doggy Style played at a different rural ballroom just outside of Green Bay a few years later. They were *great!* One of my high school punk bands had the honor of opening that show up for Doggy Style and D.I., our first show! This time, however, the green was gone from the band’s image, but the songs were incredibly better.

I clicked my green machine, the invisible angels kept milking my legs, and my Loony Toon mind dug deeper. What about the “rap” Doggy Style? That’s right; they got Brian Baker to play guitar and Doug Carrion to play bass! Wait a minute (or an hour, whatever)... so the “rap” Doggy Style got a guy from Dag Nasty *and* a guy from the Descendents? Meanwhile, the singer from

Dag Nasty went on to sing for All (a form of the Descendents, one could say). Then Brian brought Doug with him over to team Dag Nasty (or something like that)? For as awesome as the “punk rock” Doggy Style album is, I found the “rap” Doggy Style album (*The Last Laugh*) to be rather boring. Then it occurred to me, my high school punk band that played our first show with the “punk rock” Doggy Style *also* played our last show opening for the latest version of Dag Nasty with Brian and Doug fresh out of the “rap” Doggy Style’s lineup! *Do you ever really get into your head, man?* I floated into the night on a sea of green.

Around 3:30 AM, I awoke to a growing dull pain in my back. Seeing as how the green button got me into the Descendents/Dag Nasty/Doggy Style mind trap, I called in a nurse to help ease me down to a milder level of punk rock revelation enhancer. I began my two weeks of gulping down pills—no more green machine. The pills helped with the pain, but they also made me extremely

constipated. Remember that last meal from the AC Tap? It hesitantly crept through my intestines like a stone football for *five days*. *Come on everybody and do the donut hop!*

Future Dinghole Report #1: Ruckus From the Future!

(Rhythm Chicken sighting yet to be numbered)

So when my back finally heals enough to get me behind a drum set again, I’m gonna play a show. It’s gonna be a great show. I’m gonna play a show so big—I’m talking *big, big*. This show is gonna be incredible. Believe me, it’s gonna blow your mind. And the ruckus? It’s gonna be *huge*. Drum beats? I know a lot of big drum beats. I’ve got the *best* drum beats, believe me. My ruckus is gonna rock the house down, down to the ground. It’s gonna be *great!* *Believe me!* And *who’s* gonna pay for it?... USA! USA! USA! USA! USA! USA! USA! USA! USA! USA!

—Rhythm Chicken



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FUCK YOU, DALE



Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

Ryan of Off With Their Heads at the Echoplex, Los Angeles, CA May 27, 2016

DOOP
DOOLA
DOOT
DOO...

DOOP
DOO!

WHO ARE YOU?

How the fuck do
you dress like
this for your
album cover?

Nardwuar vs. Snoop Doggy Dogg

The Human Serviette

Nardwuar: Who are you?

Snoop Dogg: My name is Snoop Dogg. West Coast, hip hop, gangsta rapper, actor, father, football coach, philanthropist.

Nardwuar: The best of all time.

Snoop Dogg: Believe it.

Nardwuar: That's what usually you say in the seven other interviews that we've done. Seven plus one; this is the eighth interview.

Snoop Dogg: It's the eighth wonder of the world, man. Any time you can do eight interviews with Nardwuar, you must say that this is the eighth wonder of the world.

Nardwuar: Ba-boom.

Snoop Dogg: Bam, bam.

Nardwuar: And right off the bat, Snoop, to celebrate our time together, we have a little gift for you right here: an Ike and Tina Turner poster. [Nardwuar hands a poster to Snoop Dogg.]

Snoop Dogg: Oh man, this is going to go on the wall on my studio ASAP. I'm going to put a frame around it and I am going to let everybody know where I got it from.

Nardwuar: I was curious—Ike Turner, did he at one time want to do a collab with you?

Snoop Dogg: Yes, I kept his voice message on my phone for about eight months after he passed away. He called me and wanted me to come down and get on a record with him, so that was in effect.

Nardwuar: Now Snoop, I was also curious about this record right here, Sheep Doggy Dogg, the female answer to...?

Snoop Dogg: Snoop Doggy Dogg.

Nardwuar: [Nardwuar hands a Sheep Doggy Dogg 12" to Snoop Dogg] What can you say about Sheep Doggy Dogg?

Snoop Dogg: I never heard about it. This is the first time. This is news to my ears and I'm anxious to hear what it sounds like. Sheep Doggy Dogg—give a doggy a bone. The female answer to Snoop Doggy Dogg. Oh my god! She had a cassette?

Nardwuar: She had a whole album.

Snoop Dogg: The female answer to Snoop Doggy Dogg. I've never heard of this.

Nardwuar: I was curious about novelty rap, the Waistline Connection and "Chow Down." [Nardwuar hands a LP to Snoop Dogg]

Snoop Dogg: [Laughs] Are you serious? This is a real record that came out?

Nardwuar: Created by your friend, DJ Big Boy.

Snoop Dogg: Oh "Chow Down." "Chow down. When we come to your town, chow down." I remember this record right here. Big Boy did do that. He was tight.

Nardwuar: The Waistline Connection.

Snoop Dogg: Yeah, the Waistline Connection. He got his waistline together. Me and him wear the same size pants now.

Nardwuar: Ba-boom. Well, actually, kind of ba-boom. But here we have another novelty rap, Chunky A. [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg]

Snoop Dogg: Oh this is Arsenio Hall's alter ego—Chunky A, you know the rapper—he had a record out. He had an alter ego. He was large and in charge.

Nardwuar: And you were on his show quite a bit Snoop. Check out the back—is that what it was like looking at Arsenio's butt?

Snoop Dogg: I wouldn't know, man. I don't know. You can have this album. I don't want this album. This is one album I'm going to give back to you. I usually steal from you. I don't want this shit. You can have that one.

Nardwuar: Well, actually, right here we have a record you do care about: the Roaches. [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg.]

Snoop Dogg: Oh wow, Bobby, Jimmy and the Critters! [Snoop sings] "Look at all these roaches surrounding me every day / I just need some time / some time to spray away." Yeah, I think this was Russ Parr.

Nardwuar: This is Russ Parr. What can you say about Roaches?

Snoop Dogg: I grew up with roaches. Shout out to all the roaches I left behind when I got money. It is a hard life. You know, I wish I could have brought y'all with me, but they didn't accept y'all in the neighborhood I moved to.

Nardwuar: One of the people in the Critters was the Arabian Prince.

Snoop Dogg: He was off the hook. Arabian Prince was one of the original West Coast pioneers of, you know, hip hop music.

Nardwuar: Snoop Doggy Dogg, I would like to ask you about Jazzy D, *A Wack Girl*. [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg.]

Snoop Dogg: Yeah, this was on Techno Hop Records. *A Wack Girl*, Tony G makes this, mixmaster. This is Julio G's brother Tony G from the original mixmasters from KDAY, so

this is O.G. right here. You're definitely not getting that back.

Nardwuar: Actually, I'm not sure about that one Snoop Doggy Dogg.

Snoop Dogg: No, that one's going with me. I've been trying to find a copy of that label right there because I'm doing a documentary based on West Coast hip hop and I need that for the documentary.

Nardwuar: But that is Unknown....

Snoop Dogg: Thank you, I appreciate that.

Nardwuar: ...DJ.

Snoop Dogg: DJ Unknown, that's my homeboy. I work with him. I used to do....

Nardwuar: Can't you get one from him?

Snoop Dogg: No I can't. I'm getting it from you. Thank you. This is a Bloods and Crips, *Steady Dippin'*. I think Battlecat produced this right here.

Nardwuar: [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg.] What can you say about Bloods and Crips, this LP?

Snoop Dogg: *Bangin' on Wax*. This was when we tried to put some peace in the community. Before the riots they made a record when they were dissing each other, but at the same time it was a record bringing both sides together. DJ Battlecat, yep, told you. He was the one that produced the whole record.

Nardwuar: Snoop Doggy Dogg, I wanted to ask you about this particular gentleman right here, Arnold... [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg.]

Snoop Dogg: Schwarz-nigga. I don't like this punk right here.

Nardwuar: Turn it over. You're really going to like the back.

Snoop Dogg: Look at how this motherfucker dressed for his album cover. Look at this soft-ass shit. Look at this. How the fuck do you dress like this for your album cover? This is some bullshit. *Total body workout*. I'm taking this back to the house and making a mockery of this shit.

Nardwuar: I thought you hated him.

Snoop Dogg: I do, but I've got to...

Nardwuar: You can't take that one.

Snoop Dogg: Yeah, I do. I need it. I've got to take a mockery of him.

Nardwuar: Snoop Doggy Dogg, I wanted to ask you about this gentleman right here, Kobe Bryant. [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg.]

This is one album I'm
going to give back to you.
I usually steal from you.



DANNY RUST

I don't want this shit.

Snoop Dogg: This motherfucker went and got Kobe Bryant's album, featuring Tyra Banks. This is bullshit at its finest.

Nardwuar: What can you say about Kobe, his last game? Tyra Banks? Kobe's rap career?

Snoop Dogg: We're going to leave those two worlds separate. His basketball career was phenomenal. His last game was exceptional. I'm a big Kobe Bryant basketball fan.

Nardwuar: Did you ever see him rap?

Snoop Dogg: I'm a big Kobe Bryant basketball fan [laughs].

Nardwuar: And right underneath that we have? [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg]

Snoop Dogg: Shaquille O'Neal, *You Can't Stop the Reign*. I like this song right here [sings] "You Can't Stop the Reign." Shaq. Now Shaq was hard as a rapper.

Nardwuar: He was pretty cool. He did stuff with Biggie.

Snoop Dogg: Yeah, he was dope. Shaq was a dope rapper. I've got a song with Shaq.

Nardwuar: Amazing, and right underneath it, *B-Balls Best Kept...* [Nardwuar hands an LP to Snoop Dogg.]

Snoop Dogg: ...*Secret*.

Nardwuar: The Kidd, Jason Kidd.

Snoop Dogg: Jason Kidd was on here rapping? Cedric Ceballos featuring Warren G? J.R. Rider, "Funk in the Truck," Dennis Scott, "All Night Party," Gary Payton, "Livin' Legal and Large," Dana Barros. Oh my god, this album right here is going home with me.

Nardwuar: I'm not sure. That is like all basketball rappers.

Snoop Dogg: No, but I need to laugh. I need to laugh.

Nardwuar: And why should people care about Snoop Doggy Dogg? Why should people care?

Snoop Dogg: I don't know. Just because, you know, just because caring is loving and loving is caring.

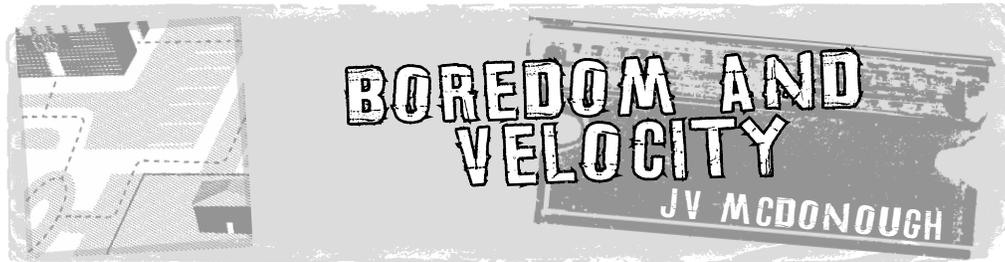
Nardwuar: Well thanks very much Snoop Doggy...

Snoop Dogg: Dogg.

Nardwuar: Keep on rocking in the free world and doot doodle doot doo...

Snoop Dogg: Doot doo. Nardwuar, one day they're going to put you on a real TV network. You deserve it. Every time I do an interview with this motherfucker, I'm like, "What network is the motherfucker with?" The nigga's on his own network. Well, what time does he come on? Shit, whenever he want to. Well, what channel is he on? I don't even know, like the motherfucker don't have a channel, listings, nothing. Coming up this week on the Nardwuar show! Who?

To see this interview hop to nardwuar.com



What it is about international potty-mouth that appeals to so many of us?

Universal Mangleage

Madame Williams was an elegant, slightly past-her-prime living Barbie doll with tasteful fashion choices, a head of lush dark blond hair, and a honeyed alto voice in which she instructed French to the slack-jawed suburban wastrels of Weymouth North High School. For all I know, she could have been a raging alcoholic or a delusional cat lady, but to the fifteen-year-old me—outcast, awkward, and knowing I belonged elsewhere—she was an exotic beacon of hope. My shitty public high school only offered French and Spanish as language courses. The “cool” kids took Spanish. So I took French.

For forty minutes every morning I lost myself in the world of linguistic luxury that soothed ears accustomed to the acidic harshness of Irish-Yankee Bostonese. And because I actually cared about it, I really *learned* the language. I began to think in it. I wasn't going to cram for my Humanities midterm in the library; I was going *étudier en la bibliothèque*, keh. I loved speaking in French, reading in it, hearing it, even as my brain, on a three-second delay, scurried to decipher the words being spoken. I learned how to say fun, dumb things like, “*Je suis un pamplemousse*,” and “*Vous avez un morceau de porc dans votre barbe*.”

Meanwhile, I had picked up some “Dog German” from one of the guys who trained dogs at the same club I did as a kid. I learned how to say a few things I needed to say but never too much. The rough demands of “*Fuß!*” and “*Platz!*” made perfect sense in their clarity to both me and the dogs. If someone told me I was the worst mistake of their life (in French) or that I was a tremendous letdown in their old age (in German), I wouldn't have understood.

I understood English all too well, though, so I left my home and then my high school; for a few years I learned the language of desperation and rebellion that goes along with being cast adrift before you're ready. I also picked up phrases in Egyptian Arabic from my boss and co-workers, Korean from my best friend in Philly, and Japanese—or at least the pages-long meditation I chanted twice a day when I had a brief fling with Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. Of course, none of what I learned could really be used conversationally. If anything, one could examine the snippets I committed to memory and tell a lot about my work life (the words for “nervous” and “hurry up” still rattle

around in my brain) and my general state of mind (somewhere there's an early '90s-era notebook with a few Korean words spelled out, one of them being the expression for “wasted potential”). But I never really dove in and tried to learn any of it for real. I was just a parrot, mindlessly making the noise that got me the most attention. Somewhere along the line I lost huge chunks of the French I had learned. I blame alcohol and other recreational distractions for this as well as the stress from the emotional and financial roller coaster I rode throughout my twenties. I could still tell you that you had a piece of pork stuck in your beard, but I wasn't really sure how to explain what time it was anymore.

My first trip overseas was when the River City Rebels returned to Europe with me as their new bass player. We started in Germany and were touring with an Italian band that had relocated to Berlin. Nearly everyone we spent time with spoke excellent English. My modest dream of dusting off whatever residual French I knew collapsed like a pretentious soufflé when I tried to ask an Italian restaurant manager in Venezia about lunch specials and ended up ordering a nice plate of gnocchi with meat sauce for my strictly vegetarian bandmate. After that, I limited myself to the usual linguistic pursuit of the Ugly American: swear words and curses.

What it is about international potty-mouth that appeals to so many of us? “Everybody Is an Asshole,” a joke song that I remember hearing a lot on the radio as a kid, was funny precisely because the outro taught us young listeners how to say the titular insult in various languages even though the English word was bleeped out for airplay. I can still remember gleefully singing “In Korean! Everybody is a *byung-shin-a!*” When I first met my Korean friend, I remember being really proud to tell her that I knew a word in her language. I don't recall if she was as impressed with this as I was. Probably not.

It was after playing a show in Berlin for Texas Terri's birthday party that I came to appreciate the most poetic profanity of all: Italian. While there are the expected slings and arrows to direct at one's mother, one's

lack of testicles, one's stupidity, there are also some downright beautiful blasphemies that involve saints and angels and, natch, la Madonna. Texas herself tried to teach me an intricate insult that didn't even involve any dirty words. It basically consists of the aggrieved person asking their tormentor if he likes to swim. If the answer is in the affirmative, the curser hocks a throat oyster onto the ground and commands “Then swim!” I mean, come on. *That's* a curse. That night I could actually say it, fueled by bourbon and the enthusiastic encouragement of the Italian crew. But like a delicate mayfly, my fluency died by morning and I have only the fond memory of repeatedly spitting on a floor and trying to get the accent right.

When touring with M.O.T.O. took me overseas, it was in a big way. My first international tour as Paul's bass player was a trip to China that lasted the better part of a month. After an endless flight, we landed in Shanghai and spent about an hour dealing with customs and immigration. By “dealing with” I mean “standing in a line with five hundred other people from around the world.” In the cavernous expanse of the customs center, the murmuring of our fellow travelers was amplified into a confusing auditory soup; we were standing in the midst of a sort of bureaucratic Tower of Babel. This may have been the first time I genuinely realized how far from home we actually were.

Unlike western Europe, where anyone with a fair grasp of English might be able to pick up some root words and where most people seem to speak some English as a matter of course, the Chinese doesn't seem particularly concerned with understanding it. People in Shanghai and Beijing were more likely to speak English, but as we traveled inland, that became rarer. Thankfully, our guitarist and main “fixer” Lao Bi spoke Mandarin and English with equal ease. This was incredibly impressive to me since Lao Bi is actually an American-born person of European heritage who just decided to really learn the hell out of the Mandarin language. He had been living in China for twelve years when we met him, and our Chinese friends often said that he spoke better Mandarin than many natives.



RYAN GELATIN

I was going *étudier en la bibliothèque*, kehd.

French is soft and seductive. Italian sounds like an opera even when you're calling someone an asshole. German is commanding and angular. But Mandarin is something else. Being immersed in a Chinese-speaking environment and calibrating my ears and brain to the language that washed all around me, I found myself really desiring to learn at least a bit of it. The strange sibilance of the "x"s, the harsh "b"s, and all of the "r"s that went missing from my Massachusetts childhood came at me from loudspeakers, overheard cell phone conversations, neighboring tables at restaurants. Listening to Lao Bi converse so confidently with native speakers, protecting us from predatory merchants and ordering us the best food, I felt like Frankenstein's monster stupidly grasping at the notes from the old man's violin. Even if I could just learn a couple of phrases, I'd be happy. But all I managed was "hello" and "thank you" and "waitress!" My husband, on the other hand, stayed with his usual habit of thanking everyone in French, regardless of their own native tongue. It took a few days for Lao Bi to figure out why so many Chinese people were

looking either amused or offended when Paul expressed gratitude. Apparently, the word "merci" somehow phonetically resembles an expression in Mandarin that roughly translates into "your mother's genitals."

Language is funny. And when we try to communicate in a language that isn't ours, we are making ourselves vulnerable to misunderstanding and possibly even ridicule. That's why I am always so humbled in our travels by how many people around the world speak English so well, whether through official schooling that makes it a compulsory foreign language or through a simple desire to learn on their own. Traveling as a musician has allowed me to meet both varieties. Perhaps one of the most telling examples of the latter was the young man I met in a bar in Venezia. The Rebels had just finished a great set and we were all enjoying that post-gig euphoria in the warm southern Italian air outside the club when this fellow in his late teens joined my bandmates and me in conversation. He had a fairly thick accent and sometimes struggled to find the exact words he wanted, but when he got going, he transcended this

and whole sentences emerged with a slangy ease and a tone that sounded more Verrazano Bridge than Venetian Canal. I praised him on his English and asked him where he had learned. His face lit up at the compliment and he replied: "The Ramones."

In Japan, when I responded to the questions about where I was from in the U.S. with "Boston," I was met with enthusiastic exclamations of "Real Kids!"

Best of all, when playing in a jam-packed sauna of a club located on the outskirts of Shanghai, I looked out from under my sweaty bangs to see dozens of Chinese students jubilantly singing along with "I Hate My Fucking Job."

Maybe I'd apply myself more to learning a foreign language if all of the people I've met overseas would stop making it so easy for me to get by. Someday maybe I'll actually take those Mandarin classes. But in the meantime, I'm just going to try to listen close and sing along.

—J.V. McDonough



COMETBUS

**INTERVIEW BY
TODD TAYLOR &
MADELINE
BRIDENBAUGH**

**PHOTOS BY
MADELINE
BRIDENBAUGH**

**LAYOUT BY
LAUREN
DENITZIO**

Aaron Cometbus has been putting zines together for thirty-five years. The bedrock influence of *Cometbus*, the zine he founded and helms, is undeniable. His writing has helped shape how many DIY punks see themselves. The East Bay in Northern California during the early- to mid-'90s, was an electric time for punk rock. Aaron did more than document that time and place: he created enduring archetypes still present in the scene. Of course, he didn't *invent* drinking coffee, dumpstering, riding bikes, sleeping rough, scamming, Greyhound bus rides, or punk love that includes makeout sessions under bridges, but he surely stitched these things together into a powerful pattern on the vest of punk's subconscious.

For better or worse.

Aaron reached out to me several years back after we had both been interviewed for the book, *Beyond the Music*. He was interested in learning about Razorcake's processes; the things that keep it alive. I enjoy talking shop with fellow long-timers, comparing notes and scars on shipping, distribution, layout technique, mechanical failures, editorial throughputs, wrangling contributors. It's nutsy-boltsy, real-world zine survival stuff, so I was happy to talk with him. Around this same timeframe, Aaron co-authored an eponymous book about Radon, one of my favorite bands, with my friend Travis Fristoe.

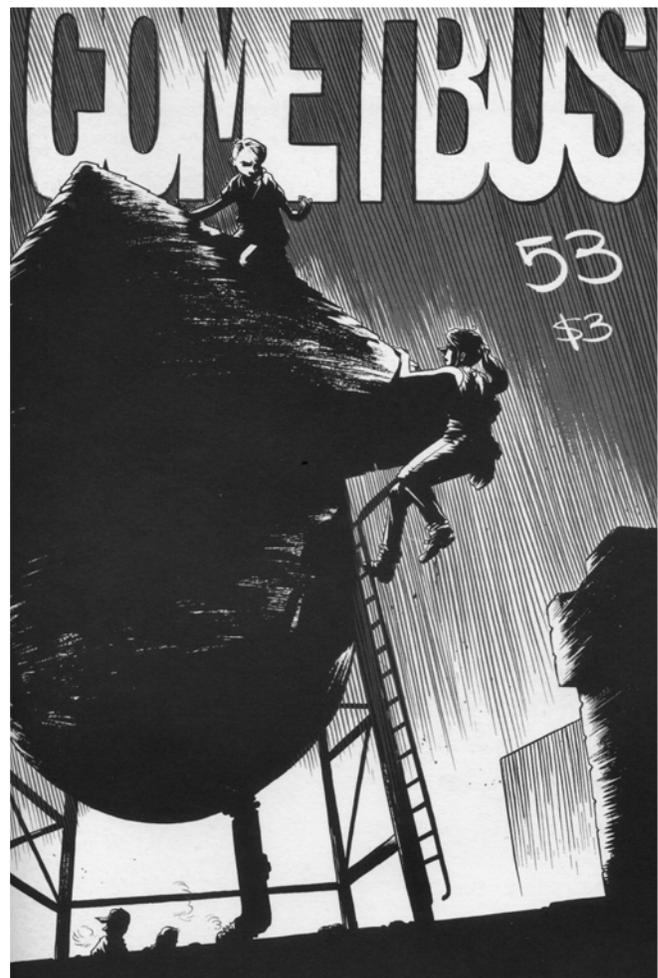
So Razorcake contributor Madeline Bridenbaugh and I headed east.

New York's subway system had me turned around. I wasn't one hundred percent sure I was in front of the correct building until I recognized Aaron's distinctive handwriting next to the button of an apartment. Madeline and I were invited down a narrow hallway, past a narrow bathroom and kitchen. We sat down at a table with cement blocks under the legs to make it taller. We were flanked by an entire wall of books, floor to ceiling from the front room to the bedroom. Two cats without names visited us.

Aaron is intense, I was told. He's opinionated, particular, and isn't afraid to disagree. The conversation that transpired was personally inspiring. The three of us talked about punk, but we also talked about writing—capturing both the light and the dark to display honest human experience. Aaron admitted that through growth and age, he doesn't agree with all that he's written. We talked about the death of expectations and the power of reevaluation.

Aaron could have easily become a parody of himself, a headstrong elder punk on an endless Greyhound bus to nowhere, romantically dumpster diving recycled stories in issue after issue of *Cometbus*. Instead, he's a contemporary, relevant punk of modest means and desires who continues to carve out stories, boxing his own issues before standing in line at the post office.

**THIS INTERVIEW IS DEDICATED TO THE
MEMORY OF TRAVIS FRISTOE.**



Todd: Aaron, why are you always “X” when interviewing, and not “Aaron”?

Aaron: Because interviews are about the other person. I don’t think the conversation is the important part.

Todd: If it is a conversation and we’re trying to make less of a separation between interviewee and interviewer, why wouldn’t you have them equal?

Aaron: But I’m saying I don’t want that. I don’t want to be equal. I’d rather read about the person being interviewed. I think you should focus on other people, even when you’re writing fiction. When I’m writing, anything good I have to say about myself, I’ll attribute it to another character. Someone’s likable when they say, “I have this friend. They’re so great! Here’s why.” When you take the focus away from yourself, you become a more likeable narrator.

Todd: I’ll accept that. So, what do your parents do?

Aaron: Not much. They’ve been dead for fifteen and twenty-five years. But don’t worry, it’s not a horrible, awkward question. Dead people—not just my parents, but other friends and mentors and people who I know that have died—have a way of being pretty

active in my life, still. Not only do they exert an influence, but it’s only later that you come to an understanding of who they are to you. Or you see the mystery in the fact that you won’t ever understand who they were.

As for what they did, my dad was a professor of economics. My mom was a textile and fiber artist. They moved from Berkeley from Detroit because they had the first integrated schools in the country. I’m so much like them both and they were very different. I carry so much of them with me. I used to mourn them, but I don’t anymore.

There’s always this punk worry that you have these ideals, but you have a backup and you’re not really “in it.” Not only are there accusations of that, but there are your own fears of it. So, for me, even though I liked them and I was sad to see them go—and it was brutal for me—it is actually very liberating to not have parents.

I was at a Bananas show and a friend of mine said, “Hey, this will seem like a terrible thing to say, but there’ll come a time you’ll be thankful you don’t have parents anymore.” Both her parents had died. In the course of the last fifteen or twenty years, a lot of friends of mine; first they lose one

parent, then they lose both. And it’s actually been really incredible—the bond that has come from that. When I look across a room at a show now, and I see someone else who is on their own in that way, it’s one of the strongest bonds you can have. As the punks get older and go through this, it’s been very comforting to feel like now we’re really becoming a family.

Madeline: Did your parents spark your interest in reading?

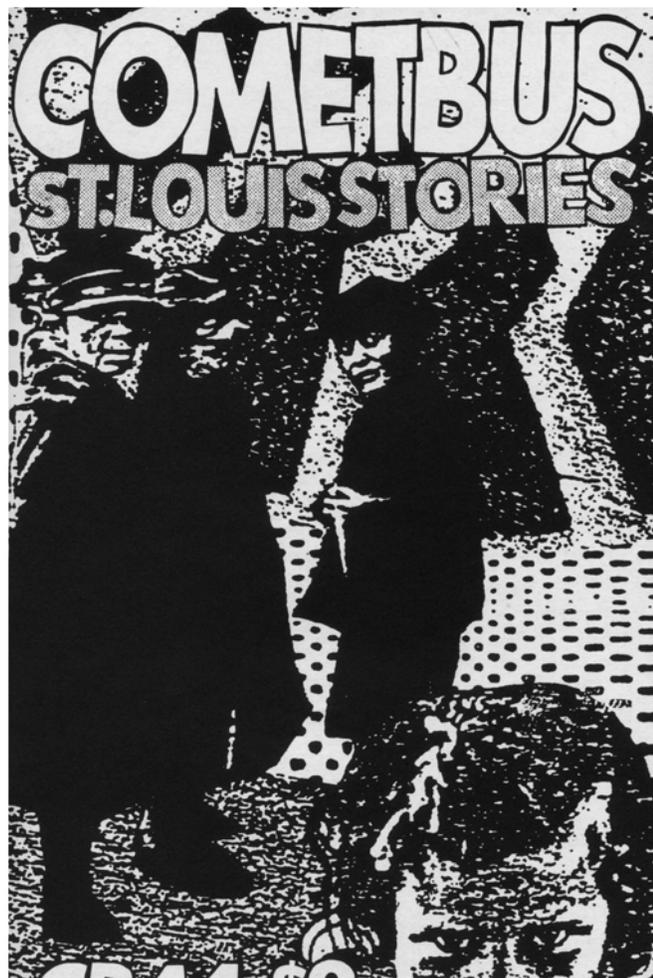
Aaron: Not at all. The whole house was filled with books, but I only read fanzines and small newspapers. I was very late in coming to other reading.

Madeline: What made you want to start writing?

Aaron: I didn’t ever want to write. I just wrote about the scene and bands. I didn’t consider it writing. But the bands become less important; the bands break up and you still want to tell those stories.

Todd: Where did your love and respect for libraries come from?

Aaron: I moved around a lot. Not as a kid, I was lucky to be very stable as a kid, but it also made me completely anxious to get the hell out of Berkeley and to get out of the



BUT UC BERKELEY—I HAVE YEARS AND YEARS OF ARCHIVES OF CRAZY, COOL STUFF THAT I CONSIDER A NATIONAL TREASURE FOR NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND THEY WERE BARELY INTERESTED. IT'S JUST A SHAME THAT THERE'S NOT MORE OF A BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE INSTITUTION. THERE'S ALMOST NONE, IN FACT. ONLY IF IT'S THE SIXTIES DO THEY WANT IT.

house. Yeah, I just spent a lot of time living in cities where I didn't know anybody well and spent a lot of time at the libraries. They were a respite.

I kind of planned to go to college. It just didn't quite happen. In Berkeley, there is a culture of people who are somewhat affiliated with the university. Not in any official capacity, but they are either living in the steam tunnels underneath it or are using the bathroom or hanging out at the café or walking up and down the avenue while everyone whispers the rumor that they were a professor who took too much acid and went crazy.

So it always seemed normal; those were sort of my role models—people who hung around the university but didn't go there. When I moved to other cities, I continued doing that.

Madeline: You didn't audit any university classes when you were at Berkeley?

Aaron: No. I even meant to do that, but I never did. [laughs] I should have. It's a huge resource. Us Berkeley kids certainly knew the campus and a lot of us had family who were faculty of one kind or another. Of course, there's a little bit of a class system

in academia. Some people's parents taught at UC Berkeley. Mine taught at Cal State Hayward, which is a long way down. [laughs] But UC Berkeley—I have years and years of archives of crazy, cool stuff that I consider a national treasure for Northern California and they were barely interested. It's just a shame that there's not more of a back and forth between the community and the institution. There's almost none, in fact. Only if it's the sixties do they want it.

Todd: Did you have any Square John jobs for more than a couple months besides your several stints at Kinko's?

Aaron: I had other copy shop jobs. I did shipping and receiving at a warehouse. Little odds and ends of things, and then I started working in bookstores.

Todd: Did you actively avoid employment?

Aaron: The magazine was the job. It didn't pay, but it was just a matter of getting by enough to keep doing it. I worked a little here and there. Right after high school, I worked at a place six days a week for a couple years straight. That was the money that got put into my first band. The money from the first band came back and got put back into the magazine. My whole thing has always been

to work a ton, save up some money, put it into projects, and try to keep it cycling.

Todd: Where did that impetus come from?

Aaron: When you grow up in a culture, you don't notice its affect on you. There were always weird adults around who were just scraping by. Plus, I grew up when everyone had rent control and was on SSI. So there was a feeling that you could get by, one way or another. You'd think that would be a bracing illusion to grow up under and then not be able to get, but it was good for me. I was lucky. But I feel like everyone was waiting to see me fail. Well, wait a little bit. It'll come.

Todd: Why do you say that?

Aaron: I believed that if you lived by your wits and pursued what you liked and lived kind of cheaply, you'd probably be okay. I was just really lucky in that I also didn't worry about it that much. Things didn't always go very well. [laughs] But there weren't really any other options, so it wasn't a choice. What can you do besides pursue one hundred percent the thing that you love? In a way, as a role model, my mom was well-known. But being a textile artist paid almost nothing; and all of her artist friends, it was the same thing. They had to teach. They were barely scraping

by. They worked all the time, and that was fine. There was no idea of success and there was no idea of giving up. Neither one was really a possibility. There was this thing called tenure—it was our earthly heaven. But that was just a dream. She didn't complain about not being able to break in. She just did her work and luckily had a peer group who were critically supportive and responsive.

It isn't a model for everyone to follow. It just happens to work for me. But I also should say that I was lucky in that the music did pay for a little while. East Bay punk had a little bit of a gold rush and that paid my rent, which at the time was two hundred dollars a month for a whole house. The music helped me pursue the writing more. I moved to a lot of places that were cheap, and that's why. I lived without much security. I had a lot of security as a kid. I didn't need as much as an adult.

Madeline: Did you live in collective houses?

Aaron: I lived in whatever. I lived in a hearse. I lived with a lot of people in a lot of crappy environments. I would have actually liked more stability, but you take what you get.

Todd: What band?

Aaron: The band at the beginning was Crimpshrine. That didn't help pay anything. [laughter] We came back from the tour with a \$1,400 phone bill and no one else in the band had any interest in paying it off. It wasn't our phone bill—it was Kamala's, who booked the tour. So I had to pay it. I like the heroic narrative, but often underneath the heroic narrative is the one guy or woman who works all the time and saved their money and then when things go wrong, they...

Madeline: ...manage to save everybody.

Aaron: [laughter] Yeah. You don't mention that when promoting the myth. Working at the Iranian copy shop six days a week wasn't part of the heroic Crimpshrine narrative, but that was part of the deal. So I went back to work to pay that phone bill. It's fine. I've never been too worried about money, and that's lucky, because sometimes when there is money it's worse than having none. It was bad blood with that band, so when we repressed the records it felt good to give the proceeds away. All the record proceeds went to Food Not Bombs, the Berkeley Free Clinic. I was like, "What do we need? We need to get fed, and if we can ever find a place to live, we need a tenant organization to support us, and we need to go to the free clinic to get our scabies taken care of." [laughter] "This album, as long as it sells, will help take care of those needs." Later, Pinhead Gunpowder sold more records and that paid the rent for a bit.

Todd: In *Despite Everything*, you said there was an event where you got the guts to do what most people know you for—traveling, living all over the United States. What was that specific event?

Aaron: You know what? I think again it might just be this heroic narrative.

Todd: In the omnibus, it mentions Florida.

Aaron: Yeah. I know. But my perspective on this stuff has changed. I don't do the things

the way I do out of some deranged morality like most people think. We just are who we are. You listen to your heart.

That Florida story gets overplayed as this pivotal moment. It is fun when you take a chance, I guess, when you find yourself surprising yourself. I was always around people who were bold, but I was not a bold person. I'm pretty methodical. I was always pretty scared and would hold back. When you stop being that way, it's exciting, like beginning your life again. Basically, the people in my stories who are doing the cool stuff are not me. Somebody else is a little

have liked to have taken it out. [laughter] It's too much there. So that's just what happens. You overplay your cards and then you have to do something really different to avoid that typecast.

Todd: So, especially after the re-launch in '89, is largely devoid of typos.

Aaron: Thanks.

Todd: Such a large portion of it is handwritten. Can you take us through the process?

Aaron: [Pulls out lined graph paper with handwriting on it.] I've got the brush with one hair. [Meticulously blots out mistake.] Wait, wait. Just before I forget. Compressed

LIKE, "WHAT DO WE NEED? WE NEED TO GET FED, AND IF WE CAN EVER FIND A PLACE TO LIVE, WE NEED A TENANT ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT US, AND WE NEED TO GO TO THE FREE CLINIC TO GET OUR SCABIES TAKEN CARE OF."

wilder, taking more chances. But eventually, you're close. You're right next to them. One step behind them.

Of course, when you find yourself on tour with no equipment and no van, it's easier to keep going if you've saved up a couple grand first. It was that combination of pragmatic and foolhardy that made the difference. I'd always been afraid that if you were pragmatic, you wouldn't be able to dive in headfirst and take risks. Turns out it works pretty well.

Madeline: Do you feel that your readers overplay certain things at the expense of others?

Aaron: No. It was my own fault. I overdid it. I always overcompensated for what I thought was missing. Like in the early '80s, this sounds weird, but there just was no "I" in punk. If you look at the fanzines, you think, "Where do these people work? Where do they live? Who were they going out with? What do they do besides their bands?"

No clue. I don't know what neighborhood they live in. I don't know what family they come from. What their hopes are. What their fears are. So I was like, "I must put the 'I' into punk." Well, after a few years, I would

air. I usually have a sock over this as soon as it gets ice cold. There's a special way to copy it. I have like a thousand lights and find the little, tiny dots. [He blots them out one at a time.] So, in terms of typos...

Todd: How long does it take to hand write a final page after you've done all of your editing?

Aaron: Maybe two hours. Issue #31 took me two months just on the handwriting, working six, seven hours a day. It's very time-consuming. The problem is, the weather will change, and your moods will change. You'll be morbidly depressed one day, you'll be excited some other day. And you'll often have to throw away pages and pages of handwriting because it won't be consistent. It looks weird if it changes.

Madeline: The energy changes.

Aaron: Yeah. And there's a vitality that I'm trying to have in the writing—in the writing, I mean, but also in the handwriting. I have a relationship with the characters, I'm trying to make the letters feel open—almost in bloom—and the curves look sexy. Trying to make the letters bold and authoritative, but a little bit playful. At the same time, not have

the R's look like A's, or the V's look like U's. There's this whole dialogue you get into, like any artist gets into with the thing they do most. But it's a little bit weird, the arguments you have with the ink you put on the page. The cursing, the begging and pleading. The accumulated pile of crumpled paper under the desk.

But I don't actually hand write the magazine anymore because I don't think it reads well. Sure, it looks lovely. It's good for lyrics. It's good for small things, but not long blocks of writing. It's the Polish-polish problem, too. In all caps, a lot of things don't

make sense, so I had to write in a different way to compensate.

Madeline: Different editorial rules.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah. But it's too bad that the widespread use of computers happened at the same time that I went to being typeset. I still use an old-fashioned typesetter. It's still a fight with the lettering. There are certain words which don't work well broken up. Orphans and widows, the density of the print, and all that. When I switched from handwriting to typeset, people said, "Oh, now it's computerized. It's not as personal as it was." Well, I still do it by hand. It's

certainly not laziness; I just prefer the type. And I like italics.

Todd: Razorcake relies heavily on the computer for text, but we pay a lot of attention to leading, tracking, and kerning.

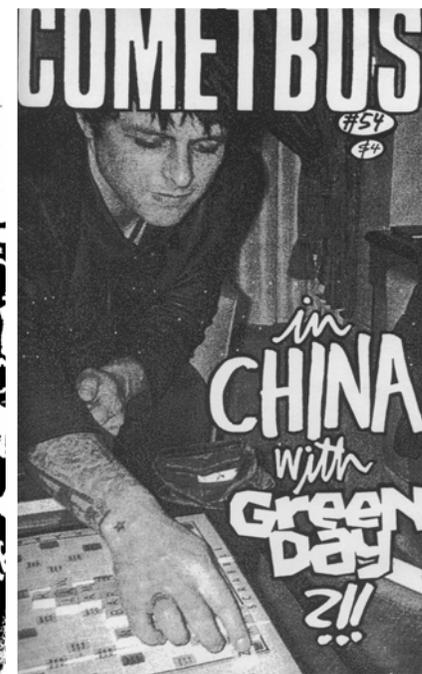
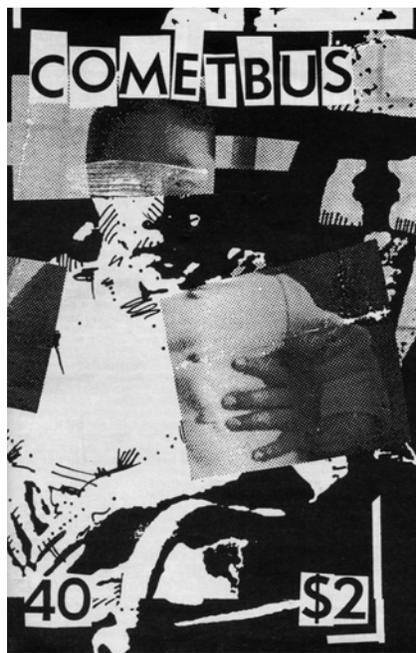
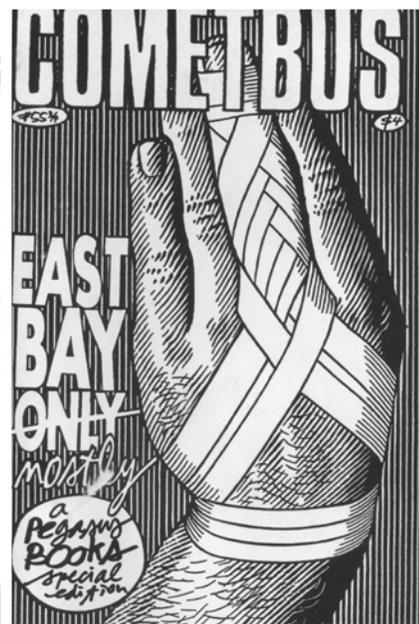
Madeline: A lot of jargon that a lot of people—they don't know what they see as wrong when they see it. They feel "off" about it.

Aaron: You want it to feel natural, but in fact it takes a lot of behind-the-scenes adjusting to get that effect.

Todd: That goes from the writing to the editing to the laying it out, being conscientious of every step and having all of them interlock and support one another.

Aaron: The larger moral is that it's good to put stuff out. I was not a good speller, I was barely literate when I started the mag. I used to get letters complaining about the spelling. But when you keep putting stuff out, you see what you do wrong. You also see what works. I had a couple of really talented friends growing up, while I was not particularly talented in any way. But my one talent is that I finish things. And when you finish things and put them out, you find out what's wrong with them right away. That's the response you get—everyone tells you what you did wrong. I can complain about it, but that's how you learn. You become a better speller. You become a better storyteller. And I think you actually become a better person because you're aware more of how other people see you; what makes sense to them, what they're interested in, what they're offended by.

I'm also less scared because of that. Because the first couple of times you cut your hair stupid, everyone gives you shit. And then they don't any more. They don't even notice. I look back at issues and I can't believe some





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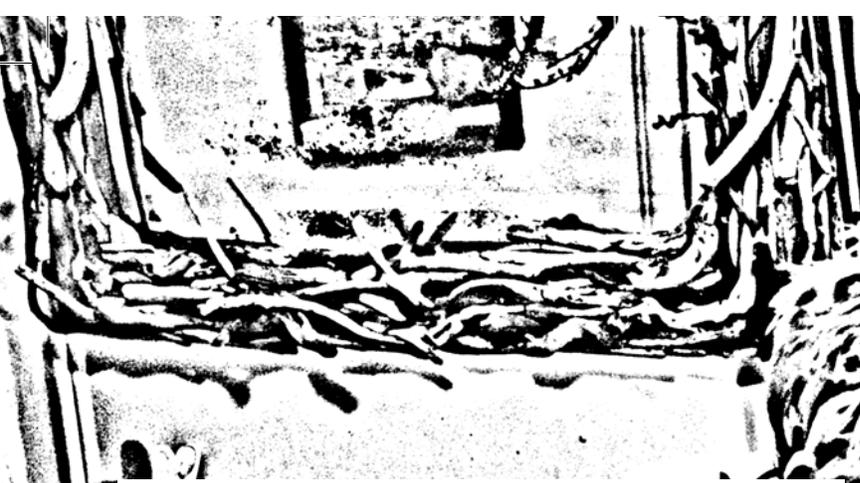
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HEAD



Emiliacs



**ALL THE PEOPLE WHO WERE
STANDING NEXT TO
ME FIVE YEARS AGO, I
WANT THEM TO STILL BE
STANDING NEXT TO
ME IN THESE PAGES.**



of the things I said. Stuff I would never admit to anyone.

Todd: This is a question you posed: "It isn't enough for punks to just survive. You have to ask yourself, 'What do you want?'"

Aaron: Did I say that?

Todd: Yeah.

Madeline: What do you want?

Aaron: What do I want? It might be enough to just to survive, honestly. [laughs]

Todd: Another quote. "I admit to being somewhat of a parasite. Actually, I brag about it."

Aaron: Did I say that?

Todd: Yeah.

Aaron: None of these sound like me, but that's nice.

Madeline: It was a long omnibus.

Aaron: That stuff is so long ago. Everyone thinks they haven't changed. That they're the same exact person as they always were. But that doesn't sound like me, you know? Which is nice. No idea. "Punks, it's not enough just to survive." Huh.

Todd: What has been the largest shift in punk culture during your time doing *Cometbus*?

Aaron: I've seen a lot of people answer that question over the years, about how punk has changed, and what it is today. And none of them had a clue. Some dinosaur at the Q and A saying that punk is just an attitude. Meanwhile you're trying to get people to

come to the gig. So I think I should probably just say I don't know. There was certainly a time when I thought that being a punk meant going to shows and being punk most of the day, and that's not what I'm doing. Although I like the music, what I am now is what we considered an "ex-punk" then. Someone who has the records and goes to a show every once in awhile. Looks a little bit weird and reads a lot. That's an ex-punk, who we respected, more or less, but we didn't want to hear them give an opinion on what was happening.

Todd: So, have you ever run your own distribution?

Aaron: Sure. I run all of my distribution now.

Todd: When did that start?

Aaron: It always was.

Todd: I remember so many *Cometbuses*: "Do not send me money in the mail. Go through Last Gasp."

Aaron: Well, my magazine was free for the first four years, and I hoped people would send a fucking stamp when they ordered it, but usually they wouldn't. So it's true, I avoided selling single issues through the mail for years, but I handled most of the distribution to stores. Last issue I even got out the map and the push pins. "I'm going to open up North Dakota!" Me and the folks from Slingshot will talk, "Do you have anything in Wyoming? There's got to be

something in Cheyenne." It's like early SST, trying to build up the networks.

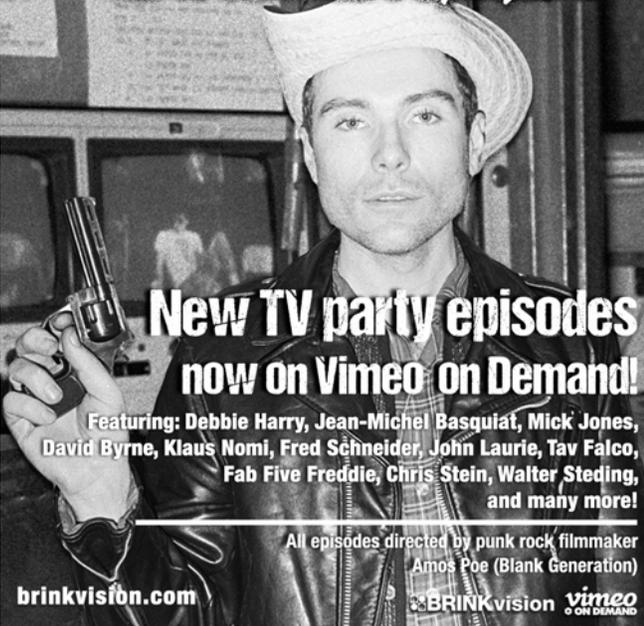
Of course, the new issue comes out and people ask, "What are you writing now?" What a question. Invoices, of course! [laughter] Packing labels. Customs forms. And that's what I'm going to be doing for the next six months. Then you start all over again.

Madeline: Who or what are you interdependent on as a writer or an editor?

Aaron: Well, you're dependent on your audience. [chuckles] You have to interest them—and they are looking for any excuse to get rid of you. They want to show that they've moved on and matured, while your magazine or your music is deeply intertwined with the old self that they're trying to leave behind. They will do everything they can to distance themselves from you. So I'm trying to say, "Look, you're changing. I am also changing. This magazine is changing. The scene is changing. Bring us with you. And send us a report from wherever you go."

When I started the magazine again in '89, the whole idea was, "Okay, the people I care about most I'm not going to see at shows anymore. They're leaving. All the people who were standing next to me five years ago, I want them to still be standing next to me in these pages. How can I maintain the spirit but increase the scope and the discussion?"

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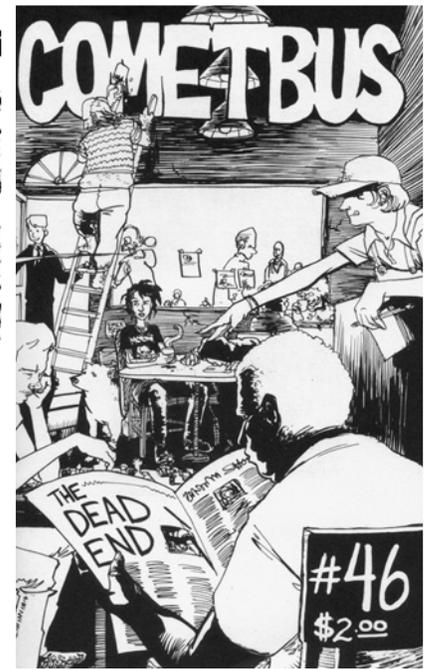
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Now the main problem is how it's perceived. When you've been doing something a long time, it's easy to seem like you're stuck in the past. Fuck, I was stuck in the past in the past. But it isn't just my past. I wrote about '60s undergrounds, I wrote about San Francisco in the 1850s! I've always been more curious about the past. But writing about the past now feels loaded in a way that it didn't before. When you're a young person obsessed with the past, resistant to technology and to some change, you appear very different from an older person who's resistant to it.

Crimpshrine had a song, "Fucked Up Kid." You sing the song and everyone cheers. "Yeah! Fucked up kid!" Well, I got a call recently. It's my old friend. His marriage is falling apart. He can't really hold a job. But he's a really sweet, sweet, sweet guy. Well, guess what it is—and no one's going to sing along. It's "Fucked Up Man." Same guy I wrote the song about, but no one is going to be cheering. Just me and him at the diner. No one's going to be dancing to that one.

I spent a lot of the early issues putting away my anger or my bitterness—and there was a lot. The worse it was, the more I pretended to be optimistic instead. And, in the end, I realized: this isn't what I enjoy reading. What I enjoy reading is the unvarnished truth. The truth is sad and the truth is interesting. It can be funny too. But it's hard to write the truth because you come across sounding like a gump and a jerk.

Madeline: So as you've aged and transitioned into the older punk group, has your approach to music and writing altered a lot?

Aaron: Well, that's very delicately put. [laughs]

Madeline: I thought maybe I was not delicate enough.

Aaron: I'm not sure I was ever as into the music as other people were. I loved the local bands. I loved the demo tapes. But a lot of my favorite records, I still haven't listened to the second side.

Todd: Really? [laughs]

Aaron: I'll listen to a few songs over and over and over. But I don't think I ever cared about the music as much as everything else going on, as the art and the literature, and especially the fanzines.

Madeline: Are there new releases that you particularly like?

Aaron: Sure. I take so long to warm up to new music that by the time I realized how great the Frozen Teens were, they were breaking up. Maybe because they're everyone's friends and they're such nice guys, people don't realize, "This is one of the best bands ever." I love Sharkpact's first record and seeing them live. Everyone is so used to this idea that the good stuff happened in the past, but when you see something mind-blowing now, it's more special than it was before because it's slaying you against all odds.

Todd: I call them Confederate Punks. Anything after 1982 cannot be better. That war has been fought and lost.

Aaron: We fought that battle then, when people thought it was all over and nothing was happening. Twice, actually—once in the early '80s, and again later on. I was seeing these bands in small rooms that I knew people would consider classic later on. That's good because then you get that nice, elitist feeling. It's great to feel like everyone else is wrong. "You know what? You're missing out." Except it's a little sad when you're like, "The people who are missing out are my friends."

But I wanted to say, and this might sound a little messianic, but I think you come into the world and you come into a scene, and you have a duty to save it, change it, and keep the best parts. I came into this world in Berkeley that was pretty special and then I came into this world in punk that was really special. Then you have a duty to preserve it. You know, someone else made this thing that you inherited.

I always remember my first show and think, "That was somebody else's last show. There were a lot of people. That was the last show they ever went to. Who were they?" The flyer doesn't say, "Passing of the torch. Come here." But that's what happens. Just the minute you're in something, there are the pleasures and responsibilities that come from being in it and that come from being accepted. From getting this gift. So I think that everything else is sort of secondary. You have this mission that you're not even exactly sure when you remember signing the papers for. But you've already set down on that road before you realize it. And you could leave it. But it feels like yours.

Lenny Lashley

PHOTO by Paul Coalfield

Lenny Lashley is a busy fixture of the punk rock community. He plays guitar for the Street Dogs. He is the frontman of Darkbuster, a band now over a decade old, and one of my favorite punk/ska bands of all time. Gang Of One showcases his songwriting abilities with acoustic and rock songs. Lenny & The Piss Poor Boys is an achingly good Boston-Irish country band. These are only a few of his projects.

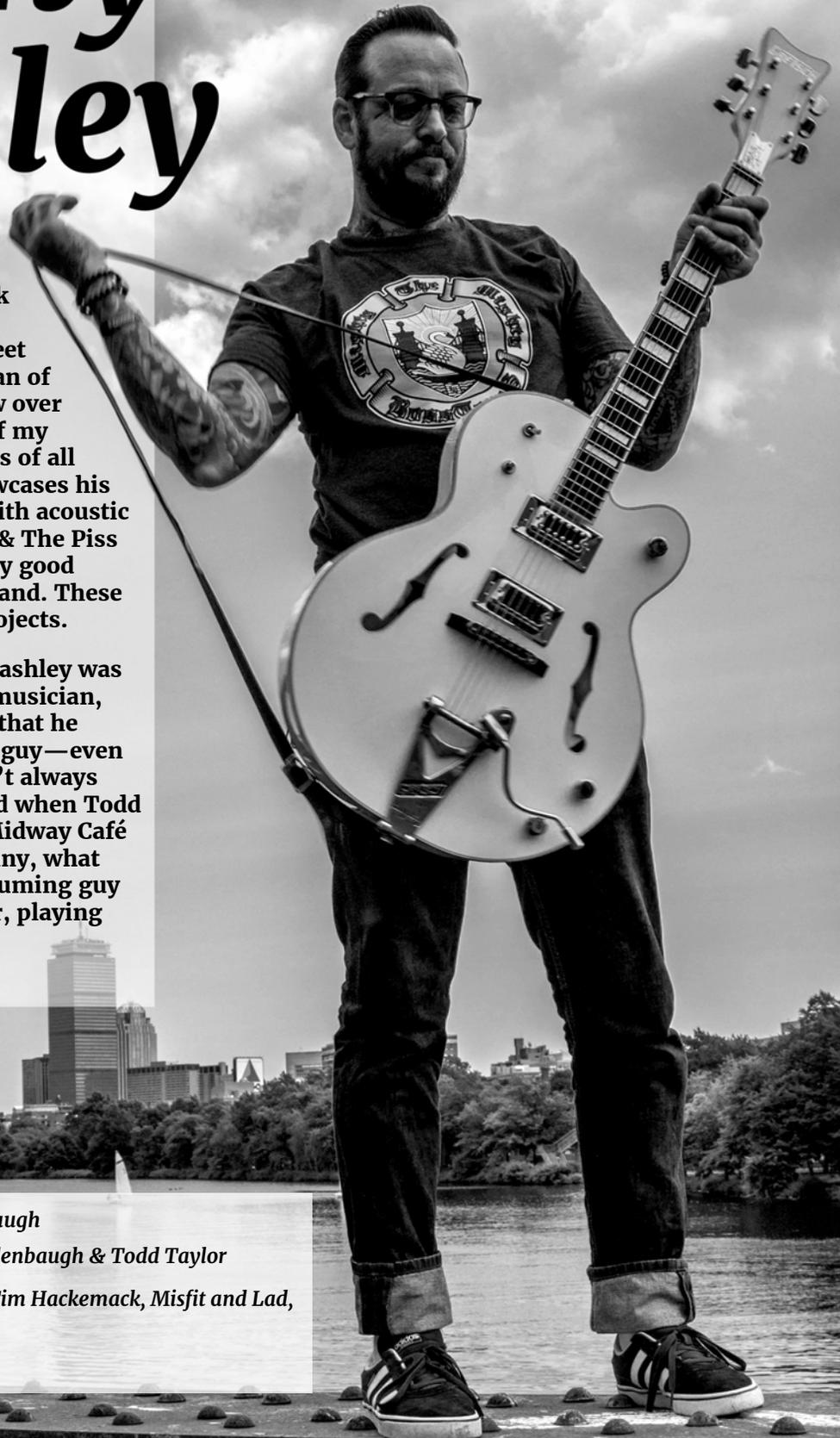
I already knew Lenny Lashley was an incredibly talented musician, but I more often heard that he was just a wicked good guy—even though he knows it isn't always easy to be that way. And when Todd and I walked into the Midway Café in Boston to talk to Lenny, what we found was an unassuming guy sitting at the empty bar, playing his guitar.

Intro by Madeline Bridenbaugh

Interview by Madeline Bridenbaugh & Todd Taylor

Photos by, Paul Coalfield, Tim Hackemack, Misfit and Lad, & Todd Taylor

Layout by Dylan Davis



Madeline: So you grew up in Kingston?

Lenny: Kingston, Massachusetts.

Madeline: And that is a neighborhood of Boston?

Lenny: South Shore, technically is what we call that. Anything south of Boston on the coastline is South Shore, anything north is North Shore.

Madeline: I don't know much about the area. What was it like growing up there?

Lenny: It was quiet, a little coastal town. I think when we moved there, maybe fourteen thousand people total. Kingston is the gateway to Plymouth, where the pilgrims landed. That's the only way I can describe it; it's like a non-descript town from the area. It was fun place to grow up.

Madeline: Who or what first got you into music?

Lenny: Oh geez, I played some flute I guess, in Tri-Town band and that kind of stuff. Like Buddy Rich said, "flutes don't make sounds," you know? But actually there was a band, a bunch of brothers, the O'Hallorans, down the street from where I grew up. They had a band called The Dogmatics. In the '80s they were playing with SS Decontrol and had a loft on Thayer St. and those guys were really cool. They would show me some chords on the guitar. They were a big inspiration.

Madeline: The O'Hallorans. Was it an Irish neighborhood?

Lenny: They were an Irish family. They had moved from Southie when all the bussing started and all that. A lot of families moved to cottages they had out of the South Boston area. It was a safer environment for families.

Madeline: But you also have dirge and Irish influences in some of your songs.

Lenny: I do. My mother's birth mother was one hundred percent Irish so that's probably where that comes from. My father's side was Dutch and my mother's other side was German, so it's a hodge podge. My mother used to sing a lot of the Irish stuff to me, to put me to sleep.

Madeline: So what is the Boston DIY scene like now? I've heard a lot of those places just get shut down by police and are pretty limited.

Lenny: As far as the DIY scene, I think that is probably going to keep going. I'm a little out of touch since I am fifty going on fifty-one in a month, but I think it will keep going as long as people keep it underground.

Madeline: How did you come into the Midway Cafe?

Lenny: I've played here for years and years. I think my first gig here—there's a picture on the wall from like, '97. I've known Jay and the former owner, his brother Dave, for years and years. About five years ago they needed someone to tend bar here in the afternoons and I just kind of fell into it.

Madeline: Were you playing the flute your first gig here?

Lenny: No, no, no. That was many, many years before. [Laughter] I haven't seen a flute

here yet, in five years. Although I have seen some pretty wacky instruments.

Madeline: So did you form Darkbuster to play Rock & Roll Rumble, the battle of the bands?

Lenny: No, we formed in '97 as a three piece. I had been playing in a grungy band at one point out in Derringer's in Brockton. Shit, they had everything there—metal bands coming from the North Shore, Peabody, that area. I wanted to go in a more punk direction. Mike, the original bass player, and Eric were in other bands that played Derringer's. We got to talking at shows. I had the one band; they had the two separate bands. I had some ideas for songs. We figured we would get together and make some punk rock.

Madeline: But you guys did win the battle of the bands, right?

Lenny: That was 2000, yeah. The Rock & Roll Rumble. The curse of the Rumble became real.

Madeline: What is the curse of the Rumble?

Lenny: A local Boston legend. Any band that really won the Rumble, nothing ever really happened with the bands.

Madeline: Darkbuster was primarily a

[Laughter] This month coming up is a year anniversary that I was staying with those Flix guys in Europe. Katrin Whipper was a tour manager for a solo tour I did over there, and that was just the best time I ever had in my life touring. Lake of Constance, where her family was from, was just phenomenal. Italy was just awesome, the Swiss Alps. Europe is fantastic, man.

Madeline: You prefer touring over there?

Lenny: I would say I prefer the vibe. And they generally seem like a lot more accepting of people who are doing music rather than here. If you're fifty years old and still playing punk rock and trying to tour, you're pretty much insane, is how people think of it. [Laughter]

Madeline: Absolutely. So the latest record Darkbuster just put out (*No Revolution*), that was just a one-off? Did you already have those songs written?

Lenny: Before we left on that tour that I lost my noodles on, we had been in and had some basic tracks kind of done: drums, bass, scratch vocals, and that stuff. It sat for whatever it was, like eight years. I got the idea that it would be

"I am trying to become a kind of gentler Lenny."

drinking band, right?

Lenny: That is a good way to describe it. We were primarily a drinking band [Laughter]

Madeline: How do you interact with the project now that you're sober? I mean, you put out *No Revolution* and did some reunion shows pretty recently.

Lenny: The reunion shows were me and a couple other guys behind. We had a falling out; couldn't make reparations with the other guys for it to be a full-on reunion, regrettably. But I deal with it how I deal with everyday life, I suppose. You know, life doesn't change because you don't drink. I don't drink anymore. I look back at it as part of the past that I can't change. And actually I don't regret it too much either. It was what it was. It got me to where I am.

Madeline: So drinking isn't what you guys had a falling out over?

Lenny: The drinking, no. I mean I had a significant breakdown on the tour in Europe. We never really made proper amends I don't think. It's a long, long—we can write a book about it probably. [Laughter]

Madeline: Did you have any favorite places in Europe?

Lenny: Well on that tour, my favorite place was probably the plane ride home.

cool to finish the project. Leaving something unfinished doesn't sit well with me. I enlisted some folks including Paul Delano, who was in a band Mung from around here. He was a member of Darkbuster for a number of years so he came in and helped write a lot of guitar parts for it. Bosstones guys came in and did some horns. It wasn't easy, it was a year-and-a-half, two-year process to get everything nailed down and make a full album of it. So it is a little of then, a little of now, I guess.

Madeline: Has your sobriety changed how you write music in an overarching way? I mean, because you still run a bar venue?

Lenny: Truthfully, I white knuckle boozed for like two years. I have only been dead ball sober now for about a month. I don't know how it's changed but, actually, the writing seems to come from a more pure place, if anything. I have a lot of ideas. Last time I got sober I had a real writer's block. I had a feeling like I was disconnected and I couldn't get a vibe for that. It doesn't seem that way now.

Madeline: Did you have a lot of support in the community going into being sober?

Lenny: I mean, people are what they are. I'm not very vocal about the thing, that's just kind of what I've been doing. I don't even think that people notice there is anything different

in the past month for me. I looked at things a bit more seriously this time.

Madeline: So how did you get into working on your solo project?

Lenny: Ah geez. Well, we were taking a break and I had a bunch of stuff that I was working on that maybe didn't fit into one project or another. And being the overachiever that I like to think I am, I reached out to some folks. Joe in the Bosstones, to see if he would be interested in playing drums. A friend of mine, Joe Kookis down in Asbury Park, has a record store—Hold Fast Records. He put out a three- or four-song 7" that Pete Steinkopf of the Bouncing Souls produced. And immediately when I got in with Pete to do that, I was like, "I have a ton of material for a record if you would be interested in doing a full-length with me," and, fortunately, he was.

Madeline: Does the title of it—*Illuminator*—refer to anyone or anything in particular?

Lenny: No, I just thought it was a clever kind of play on words. I got a lot of paranoia about the Illuminati. Truthfully, now, if I look at it, that was something I came to write after that mental break. So it seemed like I had a new perspective on life, you know? An illumination, so to speak.

Madeline: And you also started to play with the Street Dogs?

Lenny: Yeah.

Madeline: And you didn't have to try out for that?

Lenny: No. I think if I had, I probably wouldn't be in the band. [Laughter] Mike (McColgan) and John (Rioux)—I had done a ton of work with them in Darkbuster as a support act—and even in the Gang Of One thing I did. That was the tour we were talking about where I was hanging out with Brandon and the Teenage Bottlerocket guys. So when I reached out to John—I knew that Tobe was going to part ways—I expressed interest in doing it. I said, "Hey, I will fly down to Texas and do a proper tryout if you want." And he said, "If you want the job, you got the job," basically.

Todd: Did that you make you feel good? Was it humbling?

Lenny: I was astounded that he was willing to do that but John and Mike and everyone in the Street Dogs showed immense support for me as a person, first and foremost. Sometimes I still scratch my head and can't believe it, you know?

Madeline: So have you known them for a long time; they have supported you personally for a while?

Lenny: I have known them a long time through gigs around town and all that, but just in passing. And then the significant touring we did, we got to know each other much better. I have a pretty strong work ethic and I think they saw that, and how I try to conduct myself as a person. And that was big. I am trying to be involved in everything that I can right now, bring that work ethic to just about everything I do.

Madeline: Right. Speaking of touring schedule, we interviewed The Bombpops recently and they told us a story about the Street Dogs playing in SoCal.

Lenny: That was last Saint Patty's Day, yeah.

Todd: What happened?

Lenny: We were in the middle of that song "Final Transmission." It is a slower song dedicated to someone who was killed in action. There was some roughneck—you see this extraneous stuff when you're playing and it just seemed like a real kind of violent thing going on. There was a couple of guys just popping off some "Heil Hitler"s, and at one point the guy came right up to the mic in front of John. John turned around to deal with him and put his face in the drum riser at that point. And you hear that saying, "everything kind of went black." I just wasn't really thinking about it at all. That was a leap before you look type of situation, you know?

Madeline: Yeah, they said blood was like gushing down your shirt.

Lenny: Oh I got whacked with a chair. There was a chair up in the balcony somewhere that clocked me. I actually got pretty lucky 'cause it could've taken out an eye. Hit me two inches above my eye.

Madeline: Do you notice that a lot in your guys' crowds, that people tend to be more aggressive like that?

Lenny: That was the first time I'd seen anything like that kind of activity. In every band I've been, I have seen some pretty active pits and people generally police themselves. That was the first instance I had seen something that overt.

Todd: All the Nazi stuff.

Lenny: Yeah that, and the headhunting. Here in Boston we've had some pretty active pits over the years. You'll help the guy up. There always is that going on. This was more like, what we would call it, headhunting. People who look for an opportunity to take someone out in a pit. That's a totally different vibe. There's not really any sense of community in waiting to line out a guy who's had a couple of drinks and not lookin', know what I mean?

Madeline: Would say that Boston is a close-knit community?

Lenny: By and large, the punk rock community I would say, yeah everybody. Boston, for the amount of people who play [chuckles] and the amount of people who live in the city, it's a tight, little, insular thing. Everybody knows everybody.

I would say a lot of kids are playing out in the 'burbs, like I did. The only chance they get to come out to play is either a house party where they live or when they start to come into town.

Todd: Did you ever play house parties that got broken up by the police?

Lenny: Oh, geez. Oh yeah, almost every one. Almost every house party we played would get broken up by the police at one point or another.

Todd: Yeah, because Boston has a reputation for the police not really allowing shows to go on.

Lenny: Well, I think for the safety of keeping the underground thing staying underground. I've heard reports about that, investigations through Facebook, someone trying to say,

"Hey, where's the show tonight, eh?" I have no relationship with that. Where I grew up, playing outdoor shows out in the 'burbs, it was generally a neighbor calling for noise violations. They don't show up to break up a party just to break up a party. Punk rock is just young people who are outraged with the conditions of the world and want change. It was the same with my mother's generation and the one before that. Oh, watch out for the fly.

Madeline: Oh.

Lenny: I can't kill it because I'm practicing Buddhist kind of mentality, but I'll shoo it away.

Madeline: You are practicing Buddhism?

Lenny: I am trying to become a kind of gentler Lenny, yes.

Madeline: How long have you been trying to do that?

Lenny: My whole life. [Laughter]

Madeline: How's it been going? [Kills fly.] Oh sorry. I guess I don't practice it. Gut reaction.

Lenny: No, to each his own. Get that thing out of here. I'm a hundred percent with it.

Madeline: So on your album *Illuminator*, one of the songs is called "Hooligans." Is that about your time growing up in Kingston?

Lenny: It is kind of euphoric recall I guess, because I was not listening to much punk rock at that time, except for the Ramones. I just thought it was a nostalgic time related to everyone, universally, as a time when you were hanging out with your friends, summer night, listening to your favorite tunes, and running around the neighborhood breaking windows and stealing TVs. [Laughter]

Madeline: Did that kind of stuff happen a lot?

Lenny: More than I'd like to admit, yeah. Just enough, just enough.

Todd: What do you consider a hooligan?

Lenny: Hooligan, so that was another thing. When Darkbuster wrote the tune "Skinhead," I wrote it because in the 'burbs where I grew up, we had no proper back story of what the skinhead movement was. We thought everything was a skinhead on Maury Povich (A host of a tabloid talk show). That was our idea of it.

So with hooligans, kind of the same vibe. After I started meeting some skins—when I started hanging out in Boston more—I realized they weren't really very different from me. And politics aside, there are people from all walks of life with different belief systems. So long as everybody hung out, and there was a camaraderie in the fact that we were all human beings—you know? I had no real concept of what a hooligan was. In Europe, a hooligan is a whole different vibe. They are more decidedly out there in the shit. Here, a hooligan is a twelve-year-old kid who's skipping school. It's a different thing.

Madeline: Definitely. So what bands first kind of got you into punk rock? I know you mentioned the Ramones, and there is a reference to "California Über Alles" in one of your songs.

Lenny: Well, geez. I think the Ramones was one of the first national punk rock bands I had seen, and had heard, but there was a tremendously good scene going on in Boston



“I think that it’s been the only way that I’ve been able to deal with inner conflict, is through the music.”



PHOTO courtesy of Lenny

at the time when I dove into it. You had Gang Green, SS Decontrol, and I just dove into it full. Once I realized—see I think I have a learning disability or something—because when I realized I could play three chords in punk rock then I really identified with that immediately. That was how it developed. And it was like—there were so many bands you could name, everything in the genre—I soaked up everything like a sponge those days.

Todd: Do you feel lucky growing up in this area?

Lenny: Oh, yeah. Historically, look at how many punk rock bands did I get to see over the years, or even more so was lucky enough to share bills with. It's still pinch-me moments. I can't believe playing a KFC in Hyannis and hanging out with Clif Hanger of The Freeze. I never would have thought.

Madeline: So on your song "U.S. Mail," you talk about going out and touring, leaving behind someone you are in a relationship with. Did the U.S. mail system, in particular, fail you?

Lenny: No, I think that again I have this nostalgic—like I'm a little older, so it's like

the world nowadays is e-mails. I see the mail system as becoming obsolete eventually. And that just seemed like a good tie because it was a love story or a break-up story between someone not being able to communicate properly. It flowed, as a result. It's obsolete, much like the Pony Express was. Nobody uses it anymore.

Madeline: So you would say you're a nostalgic person?

Lenny: Oh yeah.

Madeline: Yeah?

Lenny: [Chuckles] Oh yeah.

Madeline: Does that reflect itself outside of writing your music?

Lenny: Always. All the stuff I write is on a personal level, so nostalgia is a big part. The older you get, the more nostalgic you become, naturally.

Todd: Why is that, for you?

Lenny: Well for me, it's days gone past and I feel like the clock is ticking a little bit. And time is a little bit more important.

Madeline: Is that why you have a bit more, almost Catholic themes in your songs talking a lot about the afterlife?

Lenny: Oh you're probably talking about "Heaven's Gate."

Madeline: Yeah.

Lenny: My view is kind of agnostic—a belief, but not really sure of what. And not being able to live up to organized religion's idea of where you end up in an afterlife. That kind of stuff I never really thought of as that. That was me screaming out at a higher power, "Please let me in." It's not as easy as it seems.

Todd: So faith versus dogma?

Lenny: I guess that's what that song is really what I was trying to get at. A lot of times when I'm writing stuff, I don't really realize it until I go back and look at it years later what I was really trying to say.

Madeline: So now that you've been with Street Dogs for about four years and you've mentally recovered from when you, uh—what'd you call it? Lost your noodle?

Lenny: Lost yours noodles, yup.

Madeline: Where are you at mentally with your solo stuff?

Lenny: Right now, as far as music and stuff goes, I am just taking it like I do everything: one step at a time. Whatever is put in front of me. I try not to put too much expectation on anything. I have a bunch of material. I am



“When I realized I could play three chords in punk rock then I really identified with that immediately.”

Lad and Misfit Photography

hoping to record a solo record. I am hoping to record a full-length solo record. And then The Street Dogs are talking about going in and recording a full-length record, too.

Todd: How has your approach to music changed over time? Your solo records are decidedly different from Darkbuster.

Lenny: It wasn't a pointed thing. It wasn't like I said, "I'm going to go in this direction." Lately I've been listening to a lot of music. I'm trying to fall back in love with what I fell in love with music in the first place. I'm going through my mother's albums collection and finding things that I hadn't been exposed to and finding what I love about them; whether it be Cat Stevens or Black Sabbath or a whole gamut of stuff. And that's where I'm at with the songwriting, too. Wherever the muse takes me. That's what I'm going to write, wherever it fits in. Who knows?

Madeline: Have you ever considered not continuing with your music?

Lenny: In regards to?

Madeline: In regards to the amount of time you commit to it.

Lenny: I have to take that into consideration now with the lifestyle change. For my

personal life and my recovery, I have to focus on putting that in the front. And that had never been the case for me. Music has always been the most important thing to me. So there's a little dilemma, to be honest with you, because I think music is—I think one without the other is very difficult for me to discern but that's just it. I just kind of take it as it comes.

Todd: Do you find music to be therapeutic?

Lenny: That's the whole. When I look back on it, sure, everyone wanted to be in a band, get a little pat on the back, that kind of stuff, but really I think that it's been the only way that I've been able to deal with inner conflict, is through the music. Hopefully, that's what I've been trying to do is relate to people going through the same thing.

Todd: And relate to yourself, too.

Lenny: In hindsight. It takes years and years. Years and years I go back and go, "Oh, that's what I was trying to say. To myself." But I wasn't listening to what I was trying to say to myself.

Madeline: Do you think you would want to be involved in the writing process if you guys were to put out another Street Dogs record?

Lenny: That's the whole point. That's the hope. I can't put words in John or Mike's mouth but, I've heard John and Mike both express that that's a valuable asset that I can bring to the table. You want to talk about humbling? That's the most humbling statement I can get from those guys. They write some pretty freakin' good songs.

Todd: They do.

Madeline: When we walked in and you were holding that guitar, did you work on anything today?

Lenny: No, I just brought it, just in case. If I have some time or something. I'm turning into the sixteen year old who brought his guitar everywhere.

Madeline: At least it's not an acoustic guitar or ukulele.

Lenny: I have it and I would, but there's too much shit that can happen to it. This thing is a hunk of wood. You can drop it and nothing is going to happen to it.

Todd: Who do you look up to age-wise to continue playing music and continue doing music? Because when you tell someone you're fifty-one, playing punk rock, they probably think you are insane or a little

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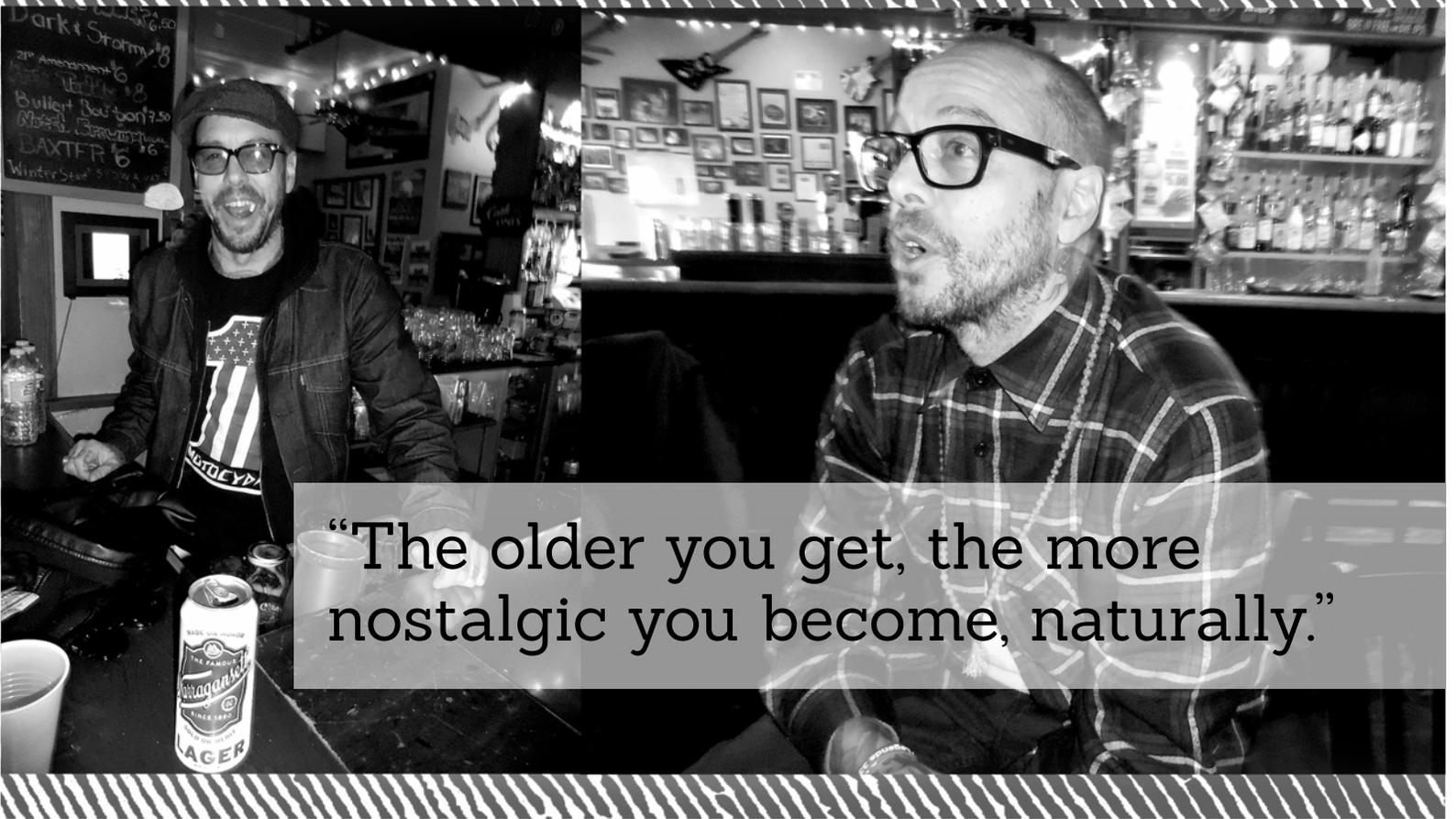
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PHOTOS by Todd Taylor

stupid. But there are people older than us that continue to make music.

Lenny: Well, that list is endless. On a touring level and all that, look at Lemmy. Pissing in the wind and doing it his way right until the very end. I think there is something glorious and something to be said for that. And so many people into the music business go before their time, so to speak. I want to make music. I want to continue to tour and play music for as long as I'm allowed and it's a possibility in my life. I get along pretty well, for a fifty-one year old, physically. I pride myself in the fact I can move just as fast if not faster than some twenty-one year old.

Todd: It seems kind of ironic that when punk rock was first coming out, most people saw it as nihilistic and short-lived, but it's one of the only communities—besides maybe hip hop—that has a really long shelf life for the performers and for its audience.

Lenny: Yeah, look at Rancid. Look at the longevity and the quality of the level of the music that keeps coming out of those guys. And at Lars with Old Firm Casuals, he's got so much stuff still pouring out of him that's just mind-blowingly good. How can you put a limit on it?

Madeline: So did you enjoy playing Fest this year?

Lenny: I had a great time at Fest. I really enjoyed it. I tried to go into that with no

expectations and just enjoy myself. That's exactly what I did.

Madeline: Because you had never been down there before?

Lenny: I hadn't been in Florida before.

Madeline: What'd you think?

Lenny: I liked it. I found a gator of my own, wanted to go back and make a pet out of him later. [Laughter] But decided that probably wasn't going to be a good idea. But I found a gator.

Madeline: Where did you find a—did you go looking for one?

Lenny: Oh yeah. [Laughter] But this one was actually pretty easy to spot. There was a Starbucks on the campus. I was staying there. They had a pool of still water that was a drainage system. I was eyeballing it just every time I walked by.

Madeline: Just waiting for one.

Lenny: And sooner or later, I went by one afternoon and was just thinking to myself, "Wouldn't it be cool if there was a gator right in there?" Sure enough, there was a six-foot long gator sitting in there. I was looking for holes in the fence I could possibly get it, but better judgment kicked in.

Madeline: I hear they train up pretty well.

Lenny: Yeah. Well, the humanitarian or the Buddhist in me says, "Don't kill gators for sport."

Todd: Or for shoes.

Lenny: Yeah. I don't think the locals liked it because I kept saying, "Hide yer gators!"

They're like, "What is this fucking lunatic talkin' about?"

Madeline: Florida is a crazy place. I didn't like the humidity.

Lenny: You know, the weather was pretty cool. That's funny because I was just saying to my ex-wife, "Oh, Florida." 'Cause the cost of living is kind of low and it seems like there was a good community going on down there in Gainesville as far as music went. It seemed like an affordable place to live and the weather being not so severe as it is up here. I always get the idea that would be a cool place to hang and live but I'm a geographical cure guy, though. I told it to my ex-wife and she was like, "It's just old people and blah, blah, blah down there." And I'm like, "No, it's not like that! It's a college town." She had her own experience down there for a while.

Madeline: Do you still interact with your ex-wife a lot?

Lenny: I do, yeah. We're still good friends.

Madeline: Did that fall apart because of your touring?

Lenny: Oh, so many things.

Todd: That's the third book.

Lenny: I think it was by-and-large my fault, overall for not doing enough to keep that relationship together.

Madeline: Well maybe you'll be able to convince her to move down to Florida, with all the old people and the gators.

Lenny: Well we're getting to be old people, ourselves. She a hairstylist, so she can just

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“Time is a little bit more important.”



PHOTO courtesy of Lenny

dye her hair a little gray and fit right in. [Laughter]

Madeline: Have you seriously considered moving away from Boston? It seems like it's such a huge part of who you are.

Lenny: You know I love it, but the interim I was over in Europe during that run, if I could figure out a way to live in Europe for the rest of my life, I would certainly give that a go.

Madeline: Any particular place?

Lenny: I loved Germany and Austria. Germany would probably be the easiest, because they're very accepting of it and I think even secondary education they are offering on a free level.

Todd: One of my friends just moved to Leipzig.

Lenny: Leipzig was great and very cutting edge; still not far from the Iron Curtain kind of stuff. I love the fact that people are a little bit more socially conscious in Europe and the level of harmony. They are light years ahead of us in the U.S. in that regard. They've had longer to work on it, I suppose.

Madeline: But we had a better example to start from.

Lenny: Well, every country's had its own thing. The government is run in their own ways in their countries, but everyone works for a unified goal. They have the same problems we have over here—there are extremists everywhere in the world—but

the way they focus on really being happy, and exercise. Things that are important to life. I guess it varies—but to me it seemed like that. With the arts and all that, people were supportive of it. They look at it as like, an asset.

Todd: Yeah. Music is a real, functioning part of society.

Lenny: You go and you can get a secondary education. You can decide you want to study ballet, or painting, or music, and they will send you to school as long as you like. No one says, “Well, why do you want to learn to play the guitar? You already know how to play the guitar.” They don't do that. And as a result, I think everybody who does that—that isn't their sole purpose—but I think the other things that they have to do, they are much happier doing.

Madeline: Right. Did you get a lot of that growing up? Were your parents pretty supportive of you learning to play guitar?

Lenny: My mother was. My father I didn't know very well. My mother always said, “I'd really love for you to do the music. Do whatever you want, but you have to have something to fall back on.” Which is pretty sound advice, but there's also part of me that says that is a weird thing when you tell a kid in the United States, “Well, you can grow up to be whatever you want. The

President of the United States if you want, but have something to fall back on.” Because if you have something to fall back on, you really can't...

Todd: So did you have something to fall back on?

Lenny: Oh yeah, I did construction. I've always had a job. I kind of consider myself as pretty blue collar. I am not complaining about that. I think it was great advice, but there's a double standard. If you can be anything you want to be, you should be able to concentrate one hundred percent on being what you want to be. No President of The United States got to be president by going, “Maybe I'll flip burgers and that'll get me into office.”

Todd: Well that's all the questions we have.

Lenny: Thanks for the opportunity.

Todd: It was a pleasure.

Madeline: By the way, do you follow any Boston sports teams?

Lenny: I'm not dying because the Patriots lost, put it that way. If the Bruins were in the playoffs and lost, I would be a little bit befuddled.



BASEMENT BENDERS



Punk is a youth culture if you believe the packaging on the box that's still being sold forty years after the term "punk" was coined and attached to music. The box is bullshit. Punk is what is made of it. To me and many around me, it continues to be an examined life. Punk's a constant thread in the thick rope of all our lives, not a button that falls off after a couple of years, rusty after going through the wash.

Basement Benders are a DIY punk band in the grand Southern tradition of the Grabass Charlestons, Bitchin', and The Tim Version. As points of helpful musical reference, members have been or are in The Future Virgins, This Bike Is A Pipebomb, Black Rainbow, and The Stun Guns. The music they play is comfortably well-worn but not threadbare, well used but not used up. It isn't boastfully shiny. It's scuffed, repaired, and

patched. Lived in. Cared for. Familiar but not predictably rutted. Their songs sound like joy tinged with the sadness of loss. In their debut LP **Lydiad**, they sing of overcoming cancer and celebrating a friend's wedding—the dappled light of melancholy and the redemptive small triumphs that come from living in the present.

I had the chance to hang out with them and we talked—among other things—about police interaction in Mexico, massive grease traps, plant taxonomy, smoking in Japan, ghosts, and hidden mathematics. The form of DIY punk I believe in is based on self-devotion, not shameless promotion. When I listen to the Basement Benders, I hear nothing less than the grand egalitarian spirit of punk spreading its wings.



ROBERT IBARRA

Introduction and interview by **Todd Taylor**
Photos by **Robert Ibarra** and **Jen Shagawat**
Transcription by **Griffin Wynne**
Thanks to **Replay Dave** and **Matt Seward** for questions
Layout by **Eric Baskauskas**



Morgan—drums
Terry—bass
Ashley—guitar
Buddha—guitar

Todd: Buddha, you graduated from UT Chattanooga on May 17 with a 4.0 GPA.
Buddha: 3.899 GPA.
Terry: No one likes perfect people.
Todd: And you got it in Social, Cultural, and Justice Studies?
Buddha: That's the department name, yes. My major is sociology.
Todd: Do you go by the nickname Bing Bong at all?
Buddha: I would like to take this moment to say hello to my friend Amy Nelson. [laughter] And the answer to that question is, "Hell, no."
Terry: Although, we could start calling you Bing Bong.
Buddha: See you guys later.
Todd: With all that in mind, did you use your education to get out of the situation where cops in TJ tried to hijack you?
Buddha: No, because I plan on still going to places like Tijuana and getting drunk no matter how educated I am in the future. That part won't stop.
Todd: What happened in TJ?
Buddha: We had just gotten there. We were walking down the street. A friend of ours, Mike Wilson is filling in, touring with another band. His show was about nine blocks away, so we were walking towards that show to go say "hi" and get something to eat on the way.
Todd: Two different shows?
Buddha: Yeah, two different shows in the city at the same time. We'd been in the town fifteen minutes. We'd walked five blocks. I



* * * * *

The only reason we've been able to do all the things that we've done is because we're all still excited to be alive and hopeful about what the next year is gonna bring.



was behind everyone and before I know it, there's a cop near the curb, waving me over. So I'm like [points to himself] "Me?" He's like, "Yes." So, he pulls me over. I talk to him for a minute. He asked for my ID. I think the question he asked me was, "Do you have any problem?"

Todd: Whoa, that is a broad question.

Terry: "Is there a place we could sit down?" [laughter]

Buddha: So I told him, "I've got nothing but problems." But, no, what I guessed what he meant was, "Anything illegal?" Umm, so yeah, he asked to search me. "We'll look through your stuff. If there's no problem, you can go." So, I of course, am like, "Yes, sir. No, sir." Nothing but one hundred percent cooperative.

Todd: Cops aren't your friend but they hold the power at that moment.

Buddha: I'm in another country. I just want to show them all the respect I can. Do my best to get out of there without any problem. So I'm against the car getting searched. Guess the only weird thing about that was he pulled a lighter out of my pocket that I didn't recognize. So I was like, "Oh, this is where they start to plant something on me." At that point, I get really scared. "I have never seen that before," is what went through my mind. Like, "Oh, shit." And I imagine the next thing that pops up is an eight ball of cocaine.

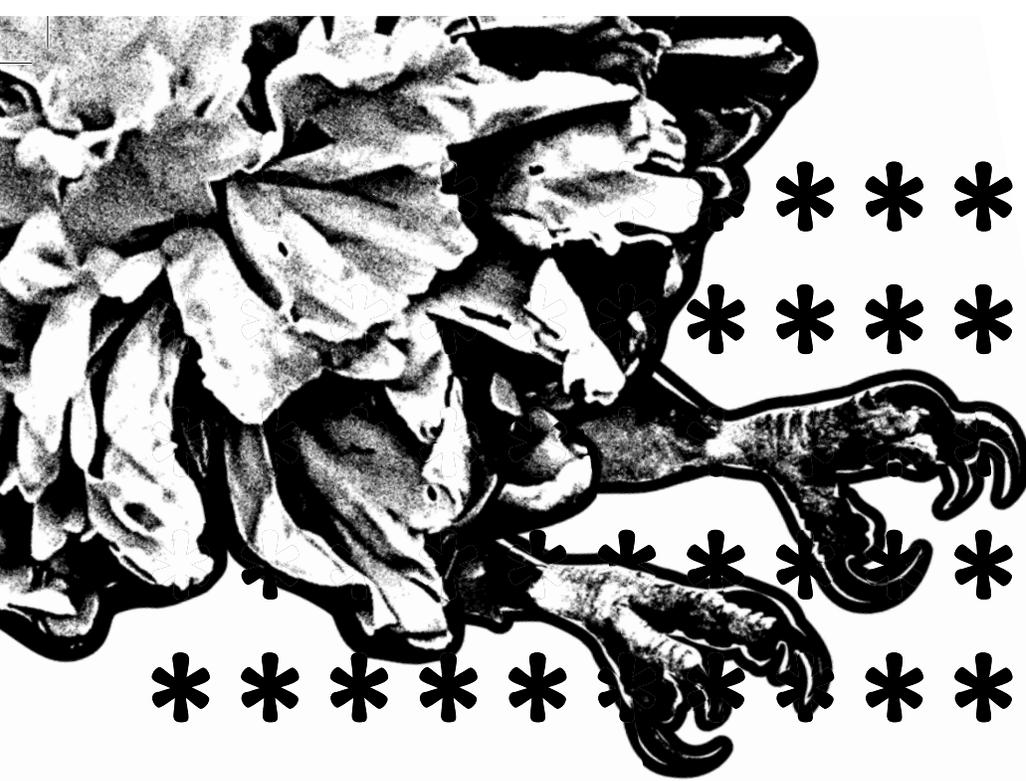
Terry: "Do you recognize *this*?"

Buddha: And then I would have to give him my bank account information so I can get home. So, basically, they just searched me. It was scary. At one point they took out handcuffs.

Todd: They just showed them to you, "This is the next step."

Buddha: Yeah. The guy who booked our show, whose name was Anibal, he came over when he saw this happening and he wasn't kissing as much ass. They were a little tougher on him than they were on me. They were all arguing in some language I couldn't understand... [laughter] They let

ROBERT IBARRA



us all go, but it was scary, especially just pulling into town.

Ashley: While the rest of us are walking down the street.

Morgan: Went and got a beer.

Buddha: "We'll meet you at the bar."

Todd: So Morgan doesn't get away very lightly, either.

Morgan: [whispers] Fuck.

Todd: Lord Buttstick?

Morgan: Aww. C'mon. Where are you getting this shit?

Todd: A defunct MySpace page.

Morgan: You'll have to ask Greg Harvester. That's all.

Todd: This kinda actually ties into that. How old were you when you first started going to shows and getting involved in San Francisco/East Bay punk? Because it seems like—I was trying to do the math—you started when you were six years old? Not that exaggerated, but early, early on.

Morgan: Eleven.

Todd: With Hickey and Matty Luv, your name starts coming up really early on.

Morgan: A bunch of friends got into skateboarding super young. I had a lot of cousins who were into punk rock up in Oregon who got me interested in music early on. Friends started skating with other people who were punks and involved in the early Mission stuff that was going around the city at the time. It was a gradual, easy introduction to that sort of thing. We were like, "Holy shit." We thought what they were doing was fucking rad. So we started getting involved over there. My friend Will and I started volunteering at Epicenter, the old space over on 16th and Valencia around '97. We were both thirteen.

Todd: I was kinda joking about six, but eleven is still really early. It's an amazing time and place to evolve from.

Morgan: For sure. I feel fortunate that all of that was going on right then. It was nice to

get immersed in something early on that felt so urgent, exciting, and had the right kind of energy for what I wanted to be a part of.

Todd: You've been involved on a continual—maybe cyclical—basis. When Starcleaner started releasing records that weren't their own bands, Tulsa was one of the first ones. *Sour Digs* in 2007 or so.

Morgan: Some time around there.

Todd: Ten years later from your initial involvement... Are you a research technician at Alliance for Saving Threatened Forests?

Morgan: I was. [laughter]

Todd: Do you focus on ecology, ecosystem restoration, and plant biology?

Morgan: Yes. Plant biology, ecosystem restoration, habitat restoration, that kind of work. I went to school for that and I'm trying to continue.

Todd: Where did your interests first start coming from for that?

Morgan: It's hard to say. I've always enjoyed being outdoors and a lot of punks and other friends I grew up with dabbled in herbalism, where there's a background interest in the natural world around you. There's all this amazing potential around us that you don't even think about growing up in a city. I started volunteering over at Redwood Creek, in the Muir Woods area, trying to do Coho Salmon restoration. I just did it as a volunteer. Some friends I knew through punk were getting involved with it and were like, "We need some extra hands. It's real basic stuff."

I started going out there and realized I knew nothing about the science or any of the logistics. That sparked me going back to City College in San Francisco, taking some basic ecology and biology courses, and realizing that it was something I was really interested in. I tried to use that knowledge towards real practical applications. It's massive, as far as looking at habitat restoration, damaged ecosystems, restoring stuff for the sake of itself.

Todd: I'm just glad you didn't say, "I'm just really interested in weed." [laughter] You moved back to California and you're pursuing a Ph.D. in Plant Systematics?

Morgan: Yeah...

Todd: What is that? [laughter]

Morgan: Classical plant taxonomy and classification. On a global scale, the full understanding of plant evolution over time—plant families and distribution. How it's influenced by regional ecology, climate and climate variation. And then through that, using those applications in specific regional plant community restoration or understanding. You can use that knowledge base for multiple applications in the field.

Todd: Is it a large field?

Morgan: Sure. I mean, maybe more so fifty years ago. Now with the advance of technology, there's less incentive for people looking for an "actual career" to actually take the really slow and grueling time of going out and manually analyzing plant structures on hand and really understanding what it means, evolutionarily; recognizing a specific plant family onsite in the field.

Todd: I'm fascinated by stuff like that.

Morgan: It bores my friends to death. [laughter]

Terry: It doesn't bore us to death. It's just fun when we're in the car and we're like, "Oh my gosh! Look at that really beautiful flower!" and Morgan turns around, "Actually, that's an invasive species. It's probably gonna destroy all the natural ecosystems in this area." [laughter]

Morgan: But it sure is pretty...

Terry: "But you agree it's pretty, right?"

Todd: Can we say it's a metaphor for something? [laughter] I don't want to lump you two together but Terry and Ashley, do you co-own and operate Sluggo's in Chattanooga?

Terry: What does your paper say?

Todd: [laughter] It says that.

Terry: Okay, it's correct.

Todd: I didn't get anything definitive. I didn't get your business papers. But you both mentioned you're owners of it.

Terry: Oh yeah.

Ashley: And did you say Chattanooga and Pensacola?

Todd: No I did not... My next question is, there's Sluggo's North and Sluggo's South?

Terry: Uh huh. That's us.

Todd: And South opened first?

Ashley and Terry: Yeah.

Todd: I think where you are in the geography of America and what kind of food you're serving is very indicative of you both as people.

Ashley: Yeah, it's a vegan restaurant and both of them have show spaces as well. It's in the South, the deep South. In Appalachia.

Terry: We're serving vegan food and doing punk shows in the deep South. That's the most ridiculous business model that we can offer to the youth of today! [laughter]

Todd: But it's been around for a long time. When did South open?

Terry: We opened in 2004. In a high crime part of town where no one really wanted to come.

Ashley: Four hundred dollar rent, I think.

Terry: We hung out there for a few years until we moved the Pensacola location to a nicer spot downtown. Actually, when our landlord rented us the building, he was like, "I don't think it's fair that those kids are standing on a sidewalk in a really bad neighborhood. And this is a safer place."

Todd: You don't hear that from landlords very often. [laughter]

Terry: But we did that at the same time that we came to Chattanooga.

Ashley: That was a terrible summer.

[laughter]

Todd: You two started it together?

Ashley: Since it's been a restaurant, yeah.

Terry: In the nineties I had a bar also called Sluggo's. I was doing a lot more "indie bands." It was a two-fold situation. I was doing indie bands because I could make some money but also doing an all-ages DIY space there as well. And then I kinda left and went to the West Coast and lived in Alaska and came back. When we reopened, I was like, "I'm not gonna do it unless we can serve vegan food." [laughter] So that's what we've been doing.

Ashley: In terms of the menu, we didn't have a game plan when we started. We just cooked all the food that we made for bands on tour. Whenever they stayed at our place, it would be vegan. So we'd make a whole bunch of stuff. The food is—it's not "health food."

Terry: It's kinda "tour food."

Ashley: It's comforting tour food.

Terry: We'll throw some raw spinach in there for good measure.

Ashley: You could probably sit there with the menu for an hour and a half and find something healthy on it. [laughter]

Terry: Our first menu had a picture of the back of *The Stranger* album, Billy Joel and his band hanging out in an Italian restaurant.

Ashley: It's become accessible for a lot of people who, in the South, didn't grow up eating that way—vegan—who weren't exposed to it. So they can look at a lot of stuff that's supposed to look like chicken-fried steak. They're supposed to look like regular mashed potatoes but they're actually evil mashed potatoes. [laughter] But it's helped a lot of people make the transition.

Terry: Yeah, transition into it.

Ashley: I feel a lot better about that than any great culinary feat.

Todd: So what happened with getting the fifteen hundred gallon grease trap?

Ashley: Aw, man. [laughter] Legally...

Terry: Well... I've got to call my attorney... If you'll just stop recording. [laughter] Actually we're just getting back into this.

Ashley: I guess the EPA doesn't read *Razorcake*.

Terry: The story with our traveling life is we always have to go back into town and deal with some crazy/maniac situation. We basically convinced the city of Chattanooga to give us a little time on the grease trap. So we have to get back and convince them to give us more time. But I think it will be okay.

Todd: Fifteen hundred gallons seems a little excessive for a restaurant that isn't using lard. At worst you're using vegetable oil.

Ashley: We don't even have a fryer. We don't fry anything.

Terry: I did some crazy math, and after we put this fifteen hundred gallon grease trap in, the first time that it will need cleaning will be 2037.

Todd: Thinking in hot tub terms. That's pretty big.

Terry: The problem is, in the city of Chattanooga there was a crazy flood and they had to build a city on top of the old city. There's been a lot of infrastructure problems. Essentially, the waste water system and the sewage system share drains. The water runoff is a real problem, in terms of the sewage lines. Basically, they had to do something really drastic, so it comes back on small business people. And, honestly, if I hit the lottery, I would buy a fifteen hundred grease trap for everyone. I think it's a great idea. I started looking at what those things do and looking at pictures of grease residue inside and what those poor guys in the pumping stations have to deal with. It's gross. It's terrible.

Todd: Can't you get a fleet of people who drive biodiesel and have them pump it into their cars? It'll be "Sluggo's BioDiesel and Vegan Food!" [laughter]

Terry: It's really funny doing business there in the city of Chattanooga, because they treat us like we're normal people, and I feel like we're just odd. If you stick around long enough, people go, "Huh, okay, we don't need to put you in jail." They've kind of shifted positions and now they're kind of on our side.

Todd: So shifting gears, how do you four stay in contact with each other, musically, when you all are scattered and really busy? How do you communicate? Basement Benders have been a band for two years. How is this different from the other bands that you're currently in, or were in, or bands that are maybe on hiatus? [laughter]

Terry: How do we communicate psychically? [laughter] One thing that I think we'll all agree with is that we've been a band for two years and we've produced over four times more music than a lot of our [other] bands did. We have the original 7", *Lydiad*, and while that was going on we recorded a split 10" with the band Impossible Vacation from Nashville. They're amazing. That's coming out pretty soon. And then, we just wrapped up our second full-length which Var from No Idea will have out by the end of summer. Isn't that crazy?

Todd: That is crazy! [laughter]

Terry: We're crazy people! And we've been to Japan. And we've been to the U.K. And Mexico and Canada.

Ashley: Well, we would travel up to Asheville, or Morgan would come down to Chattanooga and we would have epic practices. So that's mostly where we had songs. There's been some time that either Terry or myself would do some recordings and send them over to

him to give him an idea. And he *actually* listens to them. It's amazing.

Buddha: The three of us [pointing to Ashley and Terry] live less than a block away.

Terry: We're neighbors.

Ashley: We're also pretty accustomed to playing together, so it helps.

Todd: When somebody told me the makeup of the band, I thought, "I'm gonna like it. I like everybody in the band. I kinda know what's gonna happen, but I kinda don't at the same time." So, it was cool. No wheels need to get reinvented.

Terry: Same wheel, along a different tread.

Todd: That's what gives it character. [laughter] So this question is from Replay Dave...

Terry: Hi Replay!

Todd: Replay's amazing. "When's the last time you made a meal from dumpstered food?" He said, "When This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb toured the Southeast with the first Grabass Charlestons/Billy Reese Peters tour, This Bike used our gear and in exchange they fed us every night. They knew the spots with good dumpsters and friendly homes to cook."

Terry: Oh my god, that tour was so fun.

Ashley: We just steal from co-ops now. [laughter]

Terry: I'm sad to say, it's been a while since I've actually been in a dumpster handing somebody a bunch of whatever I found at the bottom. We still get to cook on tour a little bit. Find the easiest door to escape out of a wherever—Whole Foods.

Ashley: Oh in Japan, some of that stuff...

Terry: Yoichi (Snuffy Smiles Records) brought us back to our roots.

Ashley: The guy who took us on tour in Japan, our good friend Yoichi, had a situation where they would pull out a propane heater. They have a broth and you throw things in there, and I think there could have been some dumpster stuff in there.

Terry: Oh I promise you! He's like, "Have this wine." And it's like, "Where did you get that wine?"

Todd: So you all have been around for a while. You've been active participants in DIY punk rock for more than twenty years. '96 is twenty years ago. What are some of the major changes that have happened for you, as the kind of person who makes music and tours? What's one flashback you've had recently? I just remember phone calls used to be super expensive and I just recently retired my Rolodex, which I don't have to use anymore.

Terry: *Book Your Own Fucking Life*. The little machine that you made from parts at Radio Shack to stimulate the sound of coins dropping into a payphone.

Todd: I have one!

Terry: Oh that's awesome you still have yours! He's opening a drawer right now.

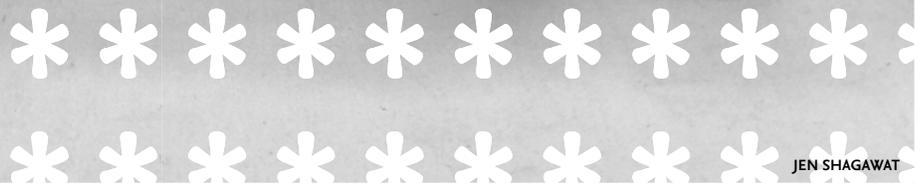
[Todd opens drawer and pulls out the "33 Memory Pocket Tone Dialer."]

Terry: Ohhhh yes! That's amazing!

Todd: There's the tone machine.

Terry: And punks would know the payphones in any town that that would work on. 'Cause some of them—it wouldn't work so you

We actually hold each others' hair while we're vomiting and we pee on the side of a building and hope we don't get arrested together. It's pretty magical.



had to go to the right one. In Pensacola we all lived in this punk house 309, and the Civic Center was built across the street. The payphone right in front of the Civic Center worked on the machine. The first Pipe Bomb tour was a two month tour and a lot of it was booked on that payphone. We just stayed there clicking the thing. [laughter] I think about that stuff a lot.

Todd: I think the internet is a double-edged sword. A lot of information is accessible but there's so much more static now. And there's the ability to share music but the ability to be compensated for the amount of effort that you put into it is very difficult.

Ashley: And a lot of the quality of those interactions and personal relationships that you build over time, part of that can get compromised or minimized in that medium of dialogue—because of the internet.

Todd: I agree with that fully. I'm still trying to negotiate that on a daily basis too. There are people I don't know who I've conversed with for ten years or so, but it's a very surface level or project-based interaction, where I'm like, "I don't know if I even like you as a person. Working together is great, but..." And also being able to suss out people within ten minutes of meeting them face-to-face, like, "Oh, they're nice. They're just quiet."

Terry: Or just the sound of someone's voice on a telephone. You get to hear their voice and know if they're *actually* stoked. And now it's...

Ashley: Exclamation point, exclamation point, emoji!

Todd: Thumbs up, penguin.

Terry: "My fingers are fried. I meant to hit something else, but I got exclamation point by mistake. Sorry, I'm not that stoked."

Ashley: Yeah, strike the last "!"

Terry: Older punks talk about that stuff all the time. I still don't have a Facebook—we have Facebooks for our business that our names are attached to. But I think of the conversations over so many years, stalwarts like Aaron Cometbus and folks, and all of us just trying to fight it, "I'm not gonna get a Facebook!" and it's like, well, you're probably not going to talk to your friends 'cause this is how the world communicates now. Sometimes I question myself, about why I avoid it, but it's exactly what you're talking about. I have spent so much of life dealing with friendships and all the stuff that comes with it. It's really hard for me to give into the idea that I could make a friend just by pushing a button. I just can't.

Todd: It's "friend" with heavy quotes around it.

Terry: I can't connect those two ends. It just doesn't work for me.

Todd: I feel the same way, and I know I'll sound like an asshole, but I have a lot of friends, real friends. A lot of them live around here or they come through. I'd rather spend the time with them than keep checking some electronic device and be obsessive and compulsive about it. I'm making no judgments about people who do that.

Terry: No, me neither. I think it's amazing.

Todd: I just don't have that personality. I'm kinda like a crockpot up here [taps head]. I

have to slow cook things, to be like, "Okay, that's cool."

Terry: I'm really just talking about me. I think it's amazing, I just can't do it.

Todd: How bout you guys? [Asking Buddha, Ashley, and Morgan] What is something that has developed over time? It doesn't need to be necessarily good or bad but what has fundamentally changed for you in touring, recording music, or playing music? Today from Chickenhead or Stun Guns or...

Buddha: Well, you mentioned recording music. The digital recording format is often seen as inferior to analog and there's a good reason for a lot of that. You have to be careful that it doesn't come out sounding all clean. But, at the same time, you can record a vocal part from across the country and send it to someone and fix that, instead of having to fly back out and fix the part of the recording that came out wrong. And that's amazing to me. In a way, it's kind of ridiculous to spend the money to record analog when you have so many options with digital. I've spent a lot of money insisting on recording analog in my life. Those tapes are around four hundred dollars now. There are so many advantages to digital. And people can get them sounding just as good if they know what they're doing.

Terry: Think about all the recordings that just never came out, because of analog mediums.

Todd: I think East LA is a great example of that, as there's a real big division of bands that actually recorded and released something on vinyl versus those that didn't and the legacies are completely different. The Brat released songs on vinyl and their position is pretty set. They're remembered. And then there are *hundreds* of bands that never did that.

Buddha: Oh my god.

Ashley: It's terrifying.

Todd: And they're gone. It's thorny. There's a lot to be said about both sides. Also with digital, I'm gonna be an asshole here: "I just farted! I recorded it. I'm sharing it with my friends. Isn't it rad?!" No, you just farted into a microphone.

Terry: "I'm six in a basement and I just went viral on YouTube," or whatever. [laughter]

Ashley: With all that extra static that you were talking about and how much more there is—that's one thing I notice being on trips. Just, "God, we're really lucky." And I'm saying this as the person who's toured the least, but when you actually see those people again on the road who you've known for so long and had relationships with, man, the amount of hospitality they put into it, and the real—cooking a meal for you and actually treating it like it's a special thing that you're coming through, seeing an old friend. Whereas, I think, now, it just gets kinda swept under the carpet, 'cause there are so many bands coming through.

Morgan: Slight deviation from the question, but one thing I've thought about a lot in the past couple years—just with touring, being involved in a DIY scene, and community—is realizing the importance of constantly looking at new things going on all over the





place. Look into *how* people are doing stuff. Nothing's static. It's constantly evolving. People move in and out of their energy and their dedication to something. It can be really inspiring to actually get out of your comfort zone and realize that just because something is outside of this particular zone you've been a part of, doesn't mean there's not amazing stuff happening.

Terry: A hundred percent.

Ashley: It can be hard to go there.

Todd: That stuff's a balance. With people you're familiar with, you're like, "Yeah, they've got it locked in. They're *doing*. They're still engaged. Great."

Morgan: It can be easy to get jaded and get burnt out. You forget that there's a whole new generation of people who are dealing with the same shit that you were dealing with when you were there. They're evolving in their own way and finding their own pretty amazing ways to create a really awesome, energetic, inspiring, and encompassing scene. It's been a good reminder over the past few years—the importance of seeing what other people are doing everywhere and how punk is evolving on their terms.

Terry: The energy level is definitely—with a few exceptions—going to be with a younger crew.

Ashley: I wonder if that has anything to do with living in the South. The towns we've lived in, it was really easy, 'cause the scenes are so cloistered down there in terms of punk rock. It can be detrimental, to stay glued into that small, small scene. So trying to spread yourself outside of that socially, and then applying that to touring would be healthy, I think.

Todd: With age comes erosion of the original people who were involved. It just happens. People have different interests or different lives, there's more stuff involved: families, jobs. You all sound highly reasonable about this. [laughter]

Ashley: We have low expectations.

[laughter]

Terry: If you set the bar really low, you'll always win! [laughter] We've got a few beers over there in the cooler. We're fine. [laughter] That's one of the cool things about going overseas so much, with this group of four. We are four people who collectively

probably know half of the punks in the country on some level, and it's nice just to step into a scene where it's like, "Whoa!"

Buddha: Talking about getting older, punkers kinda fade out, or aren't as involved, because they have responsibilities and things like that. But all of us are very busy. These guys are running two restaurants [points to Terry and Ashley], me and Morgan are working full time, going to school full time. And I think we've just made room for it. We've made it happen, despite everything. I've had people tell me, "Oh, you're going on tour? I wish I could afford that." [laughter]

Terry: We're the poorest four people.

Morgan: I was just about to ask if I could borrow twenty bucks.

Buddha: We've made a lot of sacrifices and, just out of determination, we've made it work. It's just the will to do it.

Todd: I don't know how you graphically put your brain together, but I have a pie chart, and a little bit of that pie chart is punk rock. Every single time. I'm fortunate to do what I do, but I put a lot of time and energy into it.

Buddha: I wouldn't say, "We're not lucky."

Todd: There's a lot of fortune and a lot of persistence. But I know so many people who had a brilliant five years. I'm hoping to just keep the door open, so if people want to have just some access to it, they do. If someone is like, "Hey, I want to listen to five good records now. What should I listen to?" Simple shit like that.

Ashley: I got a lot of friends who actually have so much time for social activism on top of all of that.

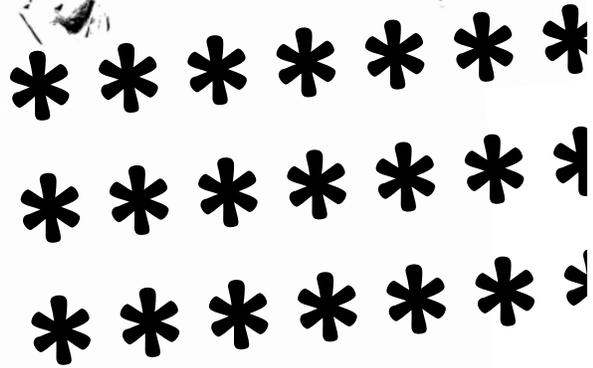
Todd: I still have a powerful memory of first listening to This Bike's A Pipe Bomb, when you [pointing to Terry] sang "Body Count." Because I'm taking it, that when you were a child you were actually watching those on television in real time.

Terry: Yeah. I'm old enough. [laughter] I grew up, in the era where, locally, you had three television stations and TV went off at night. There was a line on the screen and a little dot and then it went away. Then you and your brother had to sneak out of the house to find something fun to do. But, yeah, I watched that growing up. I was a little kid, and the news would come on and there would be the number on the top of the screen of how

"Look at that really beautiful flower!" and Morgan turns around, "Actually, that's an invasive species. It's probably gonna destroy all the natural ecosystems in this area." [laughter]



I feel like there will always be ghosts on all our records. We've experienced in the last few years a lot of death. The best way to deal with that is to make it something beautiful.



JEN SHAGAWAT

many people died in Vietnam that day. It's crazy, too, because all that's still happening. We just don't address it anymore. And I don't know why. I don't know when that corner was turned.

Todd: I think it's just that super saturation again, because the spectrum just got so large and so overwhelming. It's an endless media buffet. Some people will stop eating all together. It's so much chatter, too. It's hard. It's kinda like the modern condition.

Terry: Hulk Hogan's son is running into a telephone pole on some reality show. There's like eight thousand interesting things. Who cares?! It sucks. I also don't have cable. My brain would explode.

Todd: I've never paid for cable in my life. Not to say I don't *have* cable. [laughter]

Terry: I paid for a week. I got the *American Movie Classics* channel and I actually lost my mind. I was in my room for two weeks, watching some film festival. I was like, "I got to call and get it turned off."

Todd: Let's talk about *Lydiad*.

Terry: Okay! You start.

Todd: What's it in reference to? Is it "Lydia D" Or "Lydiad"?

Terry: Lydiad.

Todd: And what's that in reference to?

Ashley: I mean, there's the song "Lydia,"

Todd: But that's "Lydia," not "Lydiad."

Ashley: Right, the *Iliad*, the journey, the poem. We just kind of put those two things together. [laughter]

Terry: That's how we do it in the South!

Ashley: I remember at one point, because I had thought of that, then I brought it up, and I was like, "Isn't it better to make up a word than to put a bunch of pretentious words together?" And so we made a word and it turned out to be pretentious. [laughter]

Todd: You did score a touchdown with that, because if you put "Lydiad" in the internet, you come out right at the top.

Ashley: There's nothing else out there?

Todd: There's completely random stuff that always shows up, but you're not in competition. If the title was "Lydia," you'd be screwed.

Buddha: Like trying to find anything about the band X on the internet. It sucks.

Todd: You have to go to "Exene," "X John Doe Punk Band" or "Unheard Music, X"

Terry: And don't ever Google "Dog Sex #1." [laughter]

Todd: What about the *Iliad* do you like?

Ashley: I actually didn't like it that much. Now that I think about it. The *Odyssey*, I enjoyed, but the *Iliad*, there's parts of it that are really beautiful.

Todd: Yeah. "Lodyssey" doesn't sound as good.

Terry: I think it would be, "Lydiodysey."

Todd: So when you recorded *Lydiad*, you slept in the studio?

Terry: Oh yeah. It was great.

Todd: Why'd you do that? Is it a cost thing, or just a "Let's get it done" thing?

Terry: I think it was more, "Let's just concentrate. We have three days in this studio. Let's wake up here and get to it."

Todd: Either when you were actively recording or when you're listening to it now, what music were you channeling through yourself that you recorded in *Lydiad*?

Terry: We're probably a group of people who don't do that. [laughter] I've never heard a song in my head that was my song and went, "Oh, I'm gonna try to make this sound like..." or I've been listening to something and I like that style.

Todd: Matt Seward says that he hears things in *Lydiad* that reminds him of the Ace Frehley solo record. [laughter]

Terry: And by the way, that's the best Kiss solo record! Whoa, now this is our afternoon. Now we're gonna go listen to that record.

Buddha: My mind is blown. That's awesome.

Todd: Does classic rock have any bearing on this whatsoever?

Terry: That's really cool that he heard that, but I'm at a loss. I will say, we do a lot driving and listening to weird classic rock stations.

Todd: In his defense, he said it might be "the syllables."

Terry: The *syllables*?

Buddha: Everything I play just goes back to Black Flag. That's it.

Todd: I have a philosophical question. When's the last time that you've held a ghost?

Terry: When you asked about the "Lydiad" name, I didn't really want to start talking about—our album is lyrically dark. For the lyrics that I wrote, as I get older and older, losing more and more friends—it's generally the sadness in life that brings music out of me. A lot of the stuff on the 7" and on *Lydiad* deal with suicide. There are a lot of ghosts on that record. And I feel like there will always be ghosts on all our records. My friends are dropping like flies. We've experienced in the last few years a lot of death, really close to us. The best way to deal with that is to make it something beautiful.

Buddha: An old friend of mine died years ago. Well, over ten years ago now. He was a fantastic musician. His name was Andrew Powell. He played in the Stun Guns and Creamy 'Lectric Santa. He would sit around with a guitar all day and make shit up. On almost every record I've been on, I take a little lick or something that he would play all the time. I try to put it on there.

Todd: That's awesome.

Buddha: I don't know if that relates to your question.

Todd: Absolutely. It's "How do you remember and honor people?" The ritualized process of going to someone's funeral or their memorial is just a small bit of that. How do you continue their legacy? How do you continue your friendship with these people?

Terry: We're really lucky 'cause we're in bands. We can just deal with it all the time.

Todd: There's definitely a therapeutic vehicle in music for that, for creating. Even for me just as a listener. I don't play any music. Music still means something to me. It's thoughtful, it's thought provoking, it's engagement. It's a two-way street. Continuing on the "bummer road" for a bit, can we talk about the song "Modern Medicine"?

Terry: I love talking about it because I lived. So that's pretty cool! I could talk about it all day. I want to start this answer by saying our good friend Amy Nelson is having her last chemotherapy treatment today. She's undergoing treatment for breast cancer. We're gonna put on a bunch of funny hats later and walk around L.A. and probably get arrested for it. [laughter] So, one time a long time ago, I had cancer. [Laughter] The end.

Todd: But there's the Pipe Bomb song, "Better off Dead," right? And there's a lyric in there: "You shouldn't have lived past thirteen." Is that referring to cancer or something else?

Terry: That's a different friend with a different disease. That was a friend of mine and a great night with Will Thomas in Gainesville, where this friend, who will remain unnamed, his whole life had this condition. The disease. And so he was super protected. His band ended up on tour with Pipe Bomb. We get to Gainesville and I'm making him wild out everywhere. He's like, "Uh, I don't know if I can do that!" and I'm like, "No, get in the dumpster! Climb the fence! We're going to the roof!" 'Cause I'm a maniac. One night we had this amazing night where we stayed up drinking with Will, listening to old Radon records. Then I was like, "Let's ride bikes!" and he's like, "I only have two," and my friend got on Will's handlebars. It was the wildest night he'd ever had. He's a maniac now. Will broke him, like a wild stallion.

No, but "Modern Medicine" is really more—I feel like cancer treatment is changing now. I think that the condition of the medical community in America is much worse than it used to be. So as treatments are getting better, the way people are getting treated is getting worse. It's such a huge industry. It's owned by corporations that have nothing to do with healing people. It's terrible. And that's what that song is about. Based on a situation that I had a long time ago. I'm—let's see, I don't even know the numbers now—twenty four years in remission.

Todd: Wow. Great.

Terry: Yeah. I'm okay. Feeling good.

Todd: The song is new to me, and listening to this I thought it was more recent. My mother had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer but was treated.

Terry: That's exactly what I had.

Ashley: That's crazy.

Terry: It killed Joey Ramone though. That's what he died of. Long-cell lymphoma. Yup.

Todd: I have a theory about *Lydiad*. There's another contextual thing. It's about repair. There are vehicles that get repaired, like the Chevy Nova. There are things that are well past their prime being used, both literal vehicles and metaphoric vehicles. Is that a correct assessment?

Terry: [To Ashley] I feel like we're both guilty of that. Again, it's weird because we were just talking about lyrics. I think, obviously, the reason that some of these or all of these songs are so affecting is because of the force of the music. I think the force of that music is the force of four people who

have seen some crazy shit, have gone to some pretty extreme places, and still remain hopeful. That's what you're looking at here. The only reason we've been able to do all the things that we've done is because we're all still excited to be alive and hopeful about what the next year is gonna bring. Buddha went back to school.

Buddha: I'm an eighth grade dropout.

Terry: By the way, Buddha went to high school for six days. [laughter]

Buddha: I was busy getting drunk and playing in punk bands.

Terry: The words on this record—not so much the next record; it's broader on the next record—these are lyrics me and Ashley wrote. We share this idea that, “Things get pretty fucked up. We've seen terrible stuff. But there's always tomorrow. There's always hope. The sun's still shining.”

Ashley: I also think one of the simple answers is that we started this band out of a bunch of other bands that were breaking up or going on hiatus. I don't know if that was why *these* lyrics came out *that* way, but I could say that the amount of urgency that we put on the touring and recording that we've done probably has to do with that and has to do with things falling apart really easily. Maybe we do want to repair them. I'm not sure yet. [laughter]

Terry: I want to throw in one other idea, because some of us are just barely over thirty, some of us over forty, some of us over fifty. I won't say that name. But none of us have kids. I wonder sometimes if our need to keep on creating vinyl, which will last forever, is our way of leaving, and the feeling—“At least I left something behind.” Maybe thirty years after I'm dead, someone will put this thing on a record player somewhere, and that's pretty cool. I love listening to the music of old dead people. It's one of my favorite things. It resonates. It's like, “Wow, somebody is speaking to me from some crazy faraway place and I love that feeling.” And I love that idea.

Todd: Going back to something that Morgan just said, is that the older you get, the more powerful you realize the status quo is and just how much of a big weight it is. And as soon as you go into more mainstream culture, how prevalent it is. Like, “How you *should* live your life,” and most of these people are fucking miserable. It's interesting being able to take a couple of steps back and go, “My kid is this piece of vinyl. My legacy is going to be this music that other people will hopefully takes bits and pieces of and carry on.” And they may not know, “Oh yeah, that's the Ace Frehley solo record.” [laughter]

Terry: Okay! We admit! We listened to that record a whole lot and we copied it. Okay? [laughter]

Todd: So when I've traveled, especially in a land that I didn't speak the language, I spend a lot more time thinking, because you can't even zone into other people's conversations. What did you contemplate the most, time-wise or depth-wise, when you were on tour in Japan?

Terry: Interesting. [long pause] I'm kind of a weird math guy. I'm really obsessed with numbers and number systems and how things work on that level. So not speaking the language—because I'm such a social person, in general—when I'm somewhere I can speak the language, I'm just talking to people or making jokes. I like people. But there, I can't really talk to anyone. We're making friends, but it's more just hugs and drinking drinks. You're not really communicating, so your mind's just wandering, and when my mind wanders, it's like me, counting spaces. I'm just counting things all the time. If there's free psychiatric help here, you can talk to me after this is over! [laughter]

Todd: I have no help. I remember as a kid trying to think that I was counting upwards all the time, and so was my brother. We would be trying to get to bigger and bigger numbers in our heads.

Morgan: It's incredibly humbling and rewarding in its own way to not be able to communicate directly with ninety eight percent of a country, whether it be reading signs, asking directions, doing simple things. I came over there a few days before they got to Japan. I spent a lot of time by myself walking around and it forced more engaging and specific observation of my surroundings. Thinking about the neighborhoods, the architecture, the people, watching everyone, and really honing in instead of just fazing out the ambiance of my surroundings, which is easy to do if you're comfortable. “Safe” is a relative term, but when you have an idea of what's going around you.

Ashley: Another funny thing. We had two other drivers and people traveling with us. As far as actual verbal communication goes, we maybe shared three words.

Morgan: Two consonants and a verb.

Terry: *Syllables*, if you will! [laughter]

Ashley: We spent close to ten days with them and by the end of it, I felt so close to them. We're giving each other hugs and it's like, “This is great. You're so awesome,” and we never even had a full sentence.

Morgan: “I wonder if you had a good time on tour with us.”

Terry: I won a dance contest when I was in Tokyo. And when I was performing, before I was awarded the award for being the best, one of our drivers—he was one of the few men who came down and did this traditional dance—the way that he and I communicated for most of the rest of the trip, if he was really stoked about something, he would break into the specific dance that we did. We would just do the little dance. It was great because we couldn't talk to each other, at all.

Ashley: There was also concentrating on those things that are non-verbal, in terms of how you were fitting in with people. Another thing that impressed me was that I feel like, here, you can be having a rotten set—where you're playing and you're having a few songs that are going south—you kind of know it, everybody knows it. But there's still usually polite clapping or you're getting heckled. I can live with both of those—they're great.

In Japan, they just won't clap if you kinda suck it up. We had a couple shows where we kinda blew it. We'd just gotten these guitars five minutes before we started playing. The equipment and everything was nice but we were just getting used to it, jetlagged and everything. Our first set we're stopping and trying to fix everything. That first set, man, there was no polite clapping. Silence. I knew exactly what they were thinking, whether they communicated it or not. Our handler was really great. No lack of honesty.

Terry: “Stop talking. They don't know what you're saying anyways.”

Morgan and Terry: “Just play.”

Ashley: And then it started going well. He was hilarious, too. We did our first couple shows in Tokyo. We hit our stride after that and had a couple really great shows. We were playing one song after the other. And when we were back in Tokyo. We asked him, “It's such a big city. Do you think some people are still going to come across town, or are we going to see so-and-so that we met the other day?” And he's like, “Well, I went ahead and wrote an email to everybody who came to the first couple shows to tell them that you all are a lot better now, that you didn't suck as bad, and to please come back and check you out.” [laughter] There was a lot of communication that was very clear.

Terry: That involved no words at all.

Todd: Terry, I have something that you probably don't remember.

Terry: I'm sure I don't already.

Todd: This is an early Fest—three or four. Pipe Bomb played around two or three in the morning, and you called somebody out because they had brushed their teeth. You were playing and you were saying, “What kind of fucking punk-poseur just brushed their teeth?”

Terry: Like, in the front of the show?

Todd: You were really put off by it.

[laughter]

Terry: The effects of alcohol are damaging. I think that's what we're really trying to talk about here.

Todd: I didn't know if it was an anti-cleanliness thing?

Terry: “I hate cleanliness!” No, I own a restaurant for Christ's sake. I don't remember that at all.

Todd: My friend Matthew Hart says, “She kind of shamed me but it was awesome at the same time.” And he just put in gum!

Terry: And by the way, I'm a microphone hog, as you can tell right now. So if there's any dead space, if a turd popped out of my brain, I would spit it on the audience. That's just my style. I apologize, Matt.

Terry: By the way, why are you minty-fresh at two am?! Actually, I don't apologize Matt. What's wrong with you?

Ashley: *Narc!*

Buddha: What's this guy's name?

Todd: I can call him up. He can probably come over.

Buddha: I've seen enough cops. [laughter]

Terry: I think they call it diarrhea of the mouth. A friend of ours one time, Chris

Clavin at a Plan-it-X Fest, brought a ton of beer to our dressing room, made us go on last. Everybody had a thirty-minute set, and he gave us an hour and twenty minutes.

Todd: For what? [laughter] "For the first hour we're gonna sit on stage and drink beer in front of you."

Terry: It's a Pipe Bomb set. We're only gonna play for thirty minutes! Our friend Ryan Greensburger recorded the whole thing, and I was like, "How did we play for an hour and twenty minutes? I don't understand how that happened!" And he was like, "Check this out. I pulled out the thirty minutes of music that happened and here's the rest of it." He put it out as a comedy tape. I'll never live that shit down.

Buddha: I'd love to hear it, I'm sure.

Ashley: You bought every copy.

Terry: I like to take this moment to apologize to everyone I've ever insulted or embarrassed. I'm really sorry.

Todd: I have one more anecdote for you, Terry. And this is via Matt Seward's partner Jenna. She said that she peed in the corner outside an area of the side bar with Terry at Fest 4 because it was so crowded, and then proceeded to have a two-minute conversation with you of, "I love to pee outside. It's so much better than going to the toilet. It's just like being free."

Terry: It is!

Ashley: By all means!

Terry: Who doesn't love to pee outside? You're a creepy person: "I'd rather sit on a piece of porcelain than just pee in the grass." Peeing is great, outside.

Todd: Yeah, it is. This is the final thought and final question for the interview—that another great metaphor for celebrating these small things that most people would disregard or not think about, and having some sort of sharing with them and then having them resonate with people. Jenna remembers this. It was over a decade ago. Real connections. And that's what I think about with bands like Basement Benders. I think of all these small moments that build up. I was wondering if you all have any small things—something you remember that has stayed with you for a long time.

Ashley: If we listed those, I'd be putting out a book.

Terry: We could just start now, and go backwards from the last week.

Ashley: I'm just going to start remembering things.

Terry: It's crazy because this is year forty for punk rock, officially or whatever, and we could have that conversation, too. But we're in our forties, punk rock. And you know, the DIY punk scene is gonna last forever because of moments like that. We actually hold each others' hair while we're vomiting and we pee on the side of a building and hope we don't get arrested together. It's pretty magical. We had an amazing week this week. We could start with talking about Vancouver and move forward. It's amazing.

Buddha: Something weird that's stuck with me—when I was a kid, in Boca Raton,



Terry: We're serving vegan food and doing punk shows in the deep South. That's the most ridiculous business model that we can offer to the youth of today!
[laughter]

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Florida—the Dead Milkmen came to play on the FAU campus, Florida Atlantic University, three blocks from my house. We bought tickets on Ticketmaster or whatever, I guess it was too early for this [motions to cell phone]. [laughter] We went to the mall and bought tickets from the record store. We went over there and it turned out to be an eighteen and older show and we were thirteen, so we hung out outside. The Dead Milkmen came out there and they were just killing time. They were *super* cool to us. We got them to autograph stuff. They convinced the people who ran the club to let us in for their sound check. They did a little set for the four of us and we were moshing around. They did all sorts of ridiculous banter between them. They were so nice and we hung out with them *all* day, hours and hours.

I remember specifically watching two of them chase each other in circles and being like, “What the fuck is wrong with these guys? That’s so immature!” [laughter] Now I’m like, “Oh, they were in a van for eight hours. You do weird shit.” That was great, and they were so nice. And then they told us they were playing in Miami the next day, which was about an hour away. We’re like, “Yeah we can’t get down there...” And they’re like, “Well, we’re gonna put each of you on the guest list for that show with a plus one, so maybe you can use the free entry to bribe someone to give you a ride.” And we did it. We all got rides. And we went down there and we were all on the guest list.

Terry: Wow, that’s amazing.

Buddha: More recently, Joe Jack Talcum came into Chattanooga. The Miami show meant so much to me. It was a super cool thing that happened. And I talked to him about it, and he’s like, “Uh, I don’t remember that at

all... I can’t believe we were nice to you. We were never nice to anyone.” [laughter] Cool.
Terry: Winner.

Morgan: Not to jump on the broad stuff, but it’s every time we go out and every time we’re interacting, doing these kinds of travel and engagements—friends. It’s inspiring. Terry just mentioned Vancouver from this trip. For that scene it’s always been special. In brief, we roll into town, our friends Legs, Nathan, Karmin, and Alicia are all cooking food and hanging out. They run a pretty amazing and inspiring DIY venue over in the East Hastings neighborhood. They run into obstacles—like a lot of punk spaces do—dealing with issues of gentrification and being involved in a neighborhood where, essentially, *you are* the gentrifiers. You are part of the issue. How do you confront that and deal with that in a way that you’re respecting the people in the neighborhood, involving them, creating a dialogue, and if you can, contributing to the neighborhood in a positive way, that’s not displacing?

These are some of the nicest people, and most accommodating punks; fucking die-hards who have been doing it forever, will continue to keep doing it. You’re having a casual conversation at the space and meanwhile your friends are showing up to the punk show and then running across town to go help with doing an OD reversal in the neighborhood. They’re involved in harm reduction, a lot of pretty badass community-oriented social work and stuff like that—really involving themselves in the neighborhood and community in a way that’s really inspiring. Going in there, hanging out with them, staying up all night, and then having them go to work immediately after, not missing a step, and just still so excited and positive about it.

Ashley: And being in great bands.

Terry: And, P.S. they play killer sets. It was amazing.

Morgan: There are examples like that all over the place. But, seeing stuff like that, just getting reminded of—this shit’s important.

Terry: When you can wake up in *that* much pain and still say to yourself, “I’m doing the right thing. This is awesome.”

Buddha: What I thought was really cool about the other bands, not only were they great, but were fun and wild. They were down to earth. Extremely cool people.

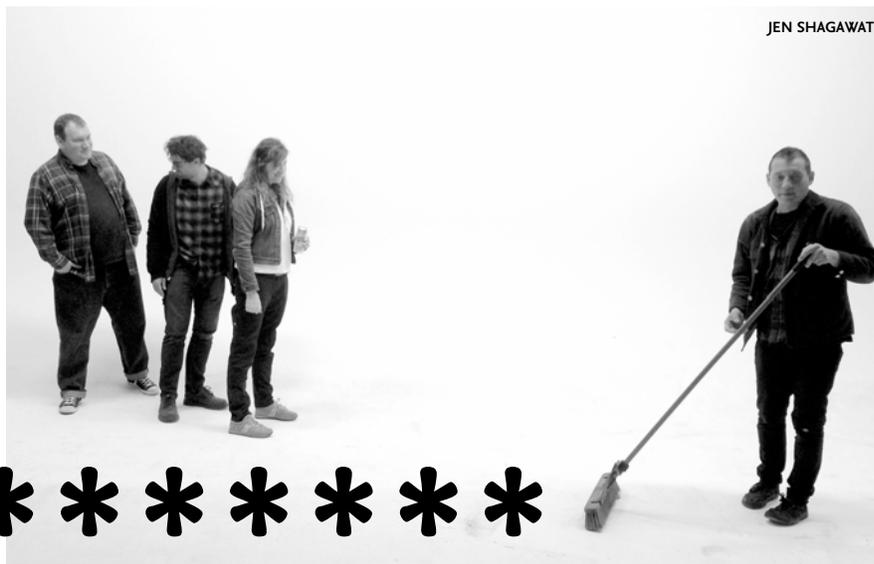
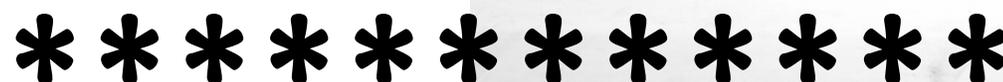
Terry: And their lives are intense.

Morgan: It’s real and it’s powerful.

Terry: It’s constantly inspiring. We talked about luck earlier. We’re really lucky to be a part of all of this. I feel like now, the circle is complete and I’m revisiting it, which is a weird feeling. Make sure you get old. Don’t stop that shit, ‘cause it gets better. And now, to go somewhere and be like, “Oh my god, thank you so much for cooking food.” And they’re like, “Well, okay, twelve years ago, I was at your house...” And it’s like, “Oh, wow. This is amazing.” We’re really fortunate and people are constantly inspiring.



Terry: If you set the bar really low, you’ll always win! [laughter] We’ve got a few beers over there in the cooler. We’re fine.





Eureka california

Photo: Stacey Piotrowski

Interview and introduction by Will Fitzpatrick
Photos by Stacey Piotrowski and Mike White
Layout by Becky Bennett

Jake Ward - vocals/guitar
Marie A. Uhler - drums

I didn't mean to fall in love. One minute I was flicking through a stack of 7"s a mate from Athens, Ga. had sent over to my Liverpool home (a cultural exchange, of sorts; you send me your buddies' bands, I'll send you mine). Next thing I knew, I'd fallen head over heels in that gloriously exciting way that only pop music can do to you—a sharp kick to the head, a deft squeeze of the heart, an electric shock to the hips. Gorgeous, garagey slop teemed out of the speakers, coated in fuzz and resplendent with glistening melody. Eureka California's *Modern Times* EP had found me, and I was utterly smitten.

Fast-forward five years, and if anything the feeling has only deepened.

The trio's 2012 debut album *Big Cats Can Swim* was a riot of sunny melody, Guided By Voices clunk, and sassy-smart lyricism. Within a year, they'd lost bassist Charles Walker but gained a certain rough-edged chutzpah that justified Jake and Marie's decision to carry on as a duo, as their sophomore effort *Crunch* turned up the hooks and stopped sandpapering the corners. Eureka California toured the shit out of those records, embarking on a virtually endless trip that's brought them to the U.K. on three occasions. They're probably trying to book a show in your town right now. Hard work isn't a real reason to fall for a band, but it's a good way to catch 'em in the first place.

I've toured with Eureka California (twice), my own band's shared a slab of 7" vinyl with them, and I'm lucky to count them as friends. But that doesn't mean I'm exempt from awe, and their latest LP *Versus* is going to make a lot of people feel the same way. It's not so much a step forward as a stratospheric soar. Bigger, better, and brighter than they've ever been, it's one of the best noise-pop records you'll hear this year; Pollard plus Malkmus multiplied by McCaughan, all to the power of Chapel Hill's groundswell of '90s super-shonk. I caught up with Jake and Marie to find out a little more about the record and the band itself. Once again, my heart skipped a beat.

Will: Your new album is entitled *Versus*. I guess the most logical place to start would be versus what?

Marie: The machine? Each other?

Jake: No, not versus the machine! I think *Versus* was one of the ideas that was thrown out that just made the most sense. It was a short title, which we liked, but then it was also us versus... uh...

Marie: The machine.

Jake: [laughs] Versus the machine. It was us versus each other to a certain extent, versus things going on in our own lives... versus everything.

Will: It's quite a confrontational title; not like *My War* or anything, but still.

Jake: Yeah. Looking at the songs, they are sort of combative: "Sober Sister" is versus alcoholism, "Ghost" is versus fair-weather friends, "Realizing Your Actuality" is versus social anxiety... so it is confrontational, but not in the same way as Black Flag is confrontational against people. This is about more specific subjects.

Will: There are a lot of instances in the lyrics where you're answering or correcting other people's songs—for instance, "Sober Sister" references Springsteen's "Atlantic City" ("Everything dies, baby, that's a fact / Well, not everything that dies gets to come back"), among others.

Jake: I've always enjoyed doing that and I've always really liked that in other people's songs, where I could tell what they were listening to by the lyrics that they stole or altered. I've always liked that in the books I read, when there are little hints or allusions to what the artist is reading. I don't know; it's just a fun thing for me to do to get the overall point of the song across—to use someone else's words in a way that they become my words. It's really easy to tell what my favorite songs are 'cause I copped lyrics from 'em.

Will: In terms of recording, *Versus* was made with Matt Johnson—how was that?

Marie: It was like a dream....

Jake: It was great. Normally we've done 'em where either of us were living, and it was always super-stressful because I wasn't very good at it. But MJ's like this sonic wizard. Stuff that would've taken me hours—very tiny things, like moving a flubbed note or something—he could do instantly. He was really patient with us and wanted to try out different things. He took us out to get lunch every day at Morrison's (British supermarket). It's so good!

Marie: It was amazing!

Jake: They have this sandwich counter thing where you can go get falafel wraps... so good. And when we had downtime, he had coffee for us, we watched *First Dates*—oh my god, you guys are killing us on TV! You got *First Dates*, *Ex on the Beach*....

Marie: But the recording itself was super great. He came up with very good suggestions and he was very honest when he thought a take wasn't the best one.

Jake: He didn't settle for anything. If he knew we were capable of doing better on a song or a take, he would not really *push*, but keep on it 'til we got it. He has a real good

ear, but he was also really encouraging about it. He was good at not just recording us, but telling, by our personalities, how to get the best performances out of us, which I think was a big thing.

Marie: And he was the *nicest* dude.

Will: Did you have any concerns about relinquishing control of recording?

Jake: Well, I remember when we got back and we were listening to the rough mixes. They sounded great but I was talking to Mike (Turner, owner of Happy Happy Birthday To Me) about it and I had this weird issue where I was like, "It almost sounds *too* good." But I could never make us sound that good. The issue went away almost instantaneously.

Will: Had you intended to move to a more polished sound?

Jake: Yeah. Well, I think it was a heavier sound, too, 'cause somewhere between the last record and when we were writing the songs for this record, I started playing through a guitar amp and a bass amp at the same time. On the very first record we were listening to a lot of Guided By Voices, so the lo-fi sound was maybe a conscious thing. But lo-fi wasn't by choice; it was just us working within our means. That was the best I could make it sound. But I think we were transitioning and I think this fits. This is the sound that I wish *Crunch* had.

Will: Speaking of sounds, you guys are based in Athens, Ga., which is possibly more famous for Elephant 6 and post-punk than the garage-styled noise that you make. Does the reputation of the town's music weigh heavily on people trying to make music there now? Does it make a difference?

Marie: Not really. People just do what they want to do.

Jake: Yeah, I don't think anybody holds the stuff that the town is famous for as a blueprint, or as a standard.

Marie: There might be a few people who are really into that stuff and want to emulate it, but I think that's a minority.

Jake: Athens is really good about being a town where you can just do whatever you want musically and there's some sort of audience for it.

Will: What about from an external perspective—when people find out you're from Athens, does that seem to color their expectations?

Marie: Sometimes. There are three or four band names that they know from Athens, like REM, B-52's, Neutral Milk Hotel... they don't sound anything like each other.

Jake: Yeah, that's true. I think it's pretty common though, even when we were touring in England, for people to be like, "Oh you guys are from Athens. Are you guys huge REM fans?" And we would just go, [adopts blank expression] "Yes, we're from Athens."

Marie: But that didn't invite any expectations of our music.

Jake: I think sometimes people think that because we live in Athens, we're massive fans of these bands, which doesn't occur within the city.

Marie: There's a small number of people that are big fans.

Jake: But I assume that's the same for everywhere; those are your reference points. If you go to Minneapolis, you're like, "Oh my god, are you guys huge Replacements and Hüsker Dü fans?" I imagine there's a certain level of that; in Athens maybe more so because there's a broad spectrum of music. There's also Widespread Panic...

Marie: Of Montreal...

Jake: Danger Mouse...

Marie: None of that stuff sounds the same.

Will: Marie, I know you're from Eatonton, which is further into Georgia, right? What made you move to Athens in the first place?

Marie: It's where I got into school. I didn't really know where to go to college, but I knew I could get in there. And I'm still here.

Will: So was the music scene an attraction?

Marie: Nope. I didn't know anything about it. This is going to be real uncool—I didn't know any of those bands. I mean, I knew The B-52's. I had never listened to REM, which I've still never done on purpose. I hadn't played music for a really long time at that point. I just had to go to school.

Will: But you were already playing drums?

Marie: Yeah. I didn't really like playing much, though.

Will: I'm just interested in what you were listening to that informed the way you play—you hit *hard*.

Marie: Well, I was in marching bands during high school. Before that, I was very shy and quiet about playing drums—in marching bands you have to play as loud as you can, so I just got into that habit.

Jake: Led Zeppelin, too!

Marie: I guess.... I like Led Zeppelin, but it didn't make me play louder.

Will: Did they make you want to play drums though?

Marie: No, by the time I figured out Led Zeppelin, I was a teenager. I started playing drums when I was eleven 'cause I randomly picked it in school band. There wasn't a cool story about it. I play these tiny drums, so me hitting them hard still isn't *that* loud, objectively. I feel pretty wimpy about it.

Will: And Jake, you're from Raleigh, right? I know you're influenced by people like Squeeze and The Kinks, but the sound you make is somehow more reminiscent of '90s indie rock. Do you think your North Carolina origins may have filtered into your songwriting?

Jake: Yeah, I think it does play a part in it. All the different things that I try and emulate, or that I'm listening to, it sort of goes through this weird North Carolina indie rock filter. But it's not intentional. Maybe I'm really bad at impressions or something. One song on *Crunch*—"Edith"—I wrote that after watching a Tom Petty documentary and I was like, "Oh, this is just Tom Petty," but it wasn't. When I first started listening to music it was all Metallica, Black Sabbath, and Led Zeppelin, but that was just learning how to play guitar. When I started writing songs, that's when I got into Superchunk and Guided By Voices and bands like that. Maybe I never got past there.

Will: So do you think that geography plays any part in the way Eureka California sounds?

Jake: Yeah, to some degree. I don't really feel like we're a Southern band...

Marie: What does that mean?

Jake: Well, I don't feel we're in the same vein as Lynyrd Skynyrd or 38 Special, but I do think that where we are does influence the band or the mentality.

Marie: Being in Athens is kind of low-stakes sometimes, in that you can try what you want even if it's weird or stupid. If it doesn't work, it's no big deal 'cause there's a show every night at every venue, and you can just try again tomorrow.

There was a period of time where I was in a bunch of bands, just trying all kinds of different styles and being able to filter what I

going. That definitely helped us because the songs tend to change when you play them in front of crowds, and get some sort of instant feedback. So, yeah, geography did play a part.

Will: While we're on the subject, I was gonna ask about your nickname: Potomac Jake Ward.

Jake: Well, you know, I am Potomac Jake Ward.

Marie: No one calls you that!

Jake: People do call me that and they have on multiple occasions. My parents live in Washington, D.C. I don't have any family here in Athens, so to me D.C. is kind of home.

Marie: Even though you've never actually lived there!

Jake: Well, home is where the heart is.

time where I was like, "I can't call anyone, I'm just in an airport wandering around, sleeping at gates that aren't boarding yet."

Marie: Cool.

Jake: I'm being honest! In a broader sense it's about depression, but that was the story of what the song was written about.

Will: Musically, both that and "Realizing Your Actuality" are a lot more intense than anything you've written before. Why do you think that is?

Jake: There was really a conscious effort this time to do something a little more honest than trying to write like Squeeze or another band. To just write as Eureka California. The songs are more personal. I think that was just the logical progression. Before we recorded this record we went on tour for two weeks in

Being in Athens is kind of low-stakes sometimes, you can try what you want even if it's weird or stupid. If it doesn't work, you can just try again tomorrow.

like into something that I really enjoy doing. And maybe I wouldn't have been able to do that somewhere where it's harder to play shows and to join bands. Athens is so small, everyone lives so close together and you can just practice at your house. So it's easy to just make a band and say, "Let's meet up. Three weeks from now we'll play a show." It's just what happens; it's the smallest county in Georgia. Where I'm from, I would have to drive fifteen miles to get anywhere I wanted to go.

Jake: But you can drive from one end of Athens to the other in thirty minutes.

Marie: If you want to practice with someone, they might live four blocks down from you and they have all the gear there and you just play. You don't have to drive to someone's practice space, unload all your stuff, and then wait for everyone else to get there. It's so simple.

Jake: A lot of the clubs here are willing to just book anything, or give you a chance. It's not like some cities where it's like, "Well, you'll come and play a battle of the bands, and if you win that then maybe we'll have you play again." It's real casual, real easy-

Will: This was supposed to lead effortlessly into a question about your new song "I Will Write Mine over Potomac."

Jake: Well, that song and two of the other songs were written in a twenty-four hour period. My birthday's in the beginning of May, and we had set the date to go record in August of 2015, but the record wasn't completely written. We had some songs that were coming together, like "Realizing Your Actuality" came around from just playing together one day. It was really spontaneous; just came out of nowhere.

Marie: *Jamming.*

Jake: Oh yeah, we dabble. We had some songs that I kept trying to force but they weren't really working, so I decided to leave town for a long weekend and go visit my parents in D.C. for my birthday. I wasn't going to do anything band-related, music-related, or anything like that. When I left Athens I had to stay up all night, take the shuttle at four in the morning from Athens to Atlanta, and just kill time until my flight left at eleven AM. So I was just drinking tons of coffee, walking around in a zombie state, and that's what that song was about, just that real weird

England, and because the subject matter was really personal they became more intense.

Will: There are a lot of songs about staying home, or avoiding crowds, or anonymity... and yet the record sounds much more open and energetic than your first two albums.

Marie: Staying home doesn't mean lazy.

Jake: It does have some of the slowest songs we've ever done too, on the second half of the record, but that first half *is* really energetic. I think a lot of that just evolved from touring a lot, because the demos of these songs are all considerably slower, and then you listen to it four months later, after we had played them live over a dozen times, and they're just at breakneck speed.

Will: I know you also like non-linear song structures—you've mentioned Kleenex Girl Wonder as a reference point before, where it's not just verse-chorus type stuff. But there's a lot more in the way of choruses or repeated motifs this time.

Jake: They may have more conventional pop structures, but the lyrics don't follow that normal conventional pop structure of just repeating for the sake of repeating. I'm not really a fan of that lyrically; to say something



Photo: Mike White

just to say it again. Everything is very carefully written or planned out, to where I feel like my whole thought has been perfectly said.

Will: And as you mentioned, the songs were honed on your U.K. tour—your third trip over, right? What have those experiences been like?

Jake: Oh, just great. I love touring the U.K.

Marie: People are nice and shows are over early and the food is awesome. Those are all good things. Sheep and cows are everywhere.

Jake: Stone circles, Beatles landmarks.

Will: Food in the U.K. being great goes against conventional touring band wisdom.

Marie: Well, people conventionally are dumb.

Jake: The weird thing is I have a much more fun time touring England than...

Marie: Dude, don't say you hate America!

Jake: ...Than I do touring America. People are really enthusiastic about us over there. They want to talk to us. They actually respond to banter. It's really weird, in the U.K. people *love* it when we banter onstage and stuff, but in America...

Marie: Nobody interacts with you.

Jake: It's just like, "Play the next song." It's really bizarre.

Marie: You should come over here and see how awkward you feel at the silence.

Will: The first time you came over to England, you went to Europe, too.

Jake: We did go. We were physically there.

Marie: We played one show in two weeks.

Jake: We played one show in Prague, and nobody really spoke English but everybody sang in English.

Marie: But we didn't really have a lot of money.

Jake: We're not trust fund babies. Marie and I both work multiple jobs. We're very poor.

Marie: We stayed in hostels. We split some 7" subs, which were more like meats wrapped in breads.

Jake: You want to make money as a band? Become a two-piece band! You'll split everything, you'll shed pounds. It'll be great.

Marie: It was actually pretty cheap. I think our whole trip for two weeks was like five hundred dollars, including renting a car.

Jake: We did a lot of sightseeing, we went to a lot of free museums, we cooked a lot of meals ourselves. It was a lot of fun—even that show, looking back on it.

Will: Can you tell me a little more about that?

Marie: It was in this club. The show was in the basement—on the ground floor it was a dance club/bar and upstairs were apartments and stuff. We played with two local bands. They sang in English but they couldn't speak English, and we didn't know any Czech, so it was kind of tough. But they were really nice and we got to stay in an apartment above the venue overnight.

Jake: I think we made the equivalent of fifteen dollars, which we spent on...

Marie: Bacon-flavored crackers!

Jake: And one slice of pizza. One of the bands covered a Radiohead song, the other band sounded like Blink-182. It was a really bizarre experience. At that point we didn't know where we were going to be the next day, so we were just going to go on our phones and find out where to go. But we couldn't get on the Wi-Fi at this place and we were just going crazy. And we ended up finding this one girl who lives an hour away from us here!

Marie: And she knew some of the people we knew!

Jake: I had a lot of fun on that trip. It was a good time. And then we went to England and it was great.

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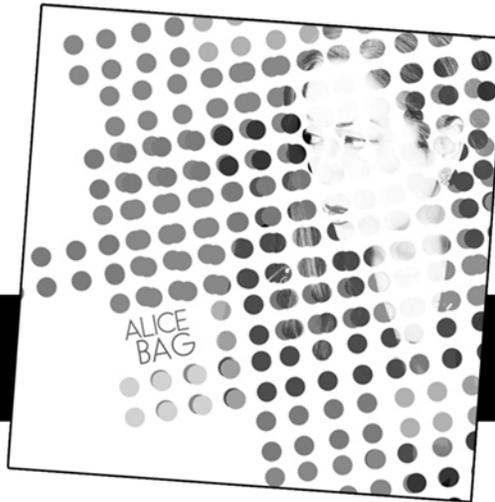


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Will: That was the tour that was sorted through HHBTM—how did you hook up with the label?

Marie: In 2010, Eureka California was accepted to play the Athens Popfest. Mike saw it and asked if we wanted to do a 7". So we did, and then we did some other stuff, and here we are.

Jake: Whenever we would say something like, "Yeah, we're thinking about recording another record," he never said anything like, "Oh, who's gonna release it?" He's accepted us all the way and stood by us. It's been great.

Will: Three albums in, I guess you guys are one of the more established bands on the label now.

Jake: Oddly enough, yeah.

Marie: We've been on it for five years. But Bunnygrunt's (labelmates) been a band for so long and so has Marshmallow Coast.

Jake: Yeah, we're just a rag-tag bunch of dreamers.

Marie: I don't think two is a bunch.

Jake: We're a rag-tag...pair of dreamers.

Will: Does it feel like a family label?

Jake: Yeah, I would say so.

Marie: It's kind of spread out. I feel like everybody is really supportive of each other on the label, and it can be really nice going to another city and having that "automatic friends" thing. We've bonded with a lot of people who we wouldn't have otherwise met.

Will: You were a trio when you first hooked up with HHBTM. How has becoming a duo changed the focus of the band?

Jake: It's made it a lot easier for us to do the band; to get together, to try new things out musically, to get songs together. It's definitely easier for us to tour and supplement some income so we can at least break even.

Marie: Yeah, it's cheaper.

Jake: It's also been one of those "adapt to survive" situations, where we became a two-piece and we just kept going because that was the only option.

Marie: We tried to replace our bassist and nobody really fit. It just wasn't working. Charles was irreplaceable. We couldn't blow off the shows we had booked. We didn't stop

at any point. So it wasn't intentional, we just couldn't find anyone else. Now I don't know where they would even fit in.

Jake: Yeah, now it doesn't seem like there's really a place for them.

Will: You must have a pretty solid friendship to be a duo; there's no space away from each other.

Marie: Yeah, I guess so.

Jake: We live literally a mile away from each other, three blocks away. We see each other every day. But because we've been doing the band together for so long, we can definitely be more direct with each other.

Will: And with the band having been together for so long, what are you most proud of since you started Eureka California?

Jake: I think I'm most proud of *Versus*. I think it's the best thing we've done. I'm really happy to have it be released, and I'm proud of the artwork, the way that it sounds.

Marie: I'm proud that I've made more friends. [Laughs]

Jake: Marie Uhler: "I've made more friends." Print it!



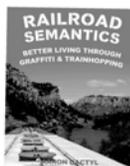
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Photo: Mike White

Jake: Yeah, we're just a rag-tag bunch of dreamers.

Marie: I don't think two is a bunch.

Jake: We're a rag-tag...pair of dreamers.

Marie: Yeah, I never thought I'd be in a band that made records and went on tour. It's pretty cool, altogether. I'm proud of everything. I like all of our releases. They're unique and special, and I think this record's the best one so far. I'm proud that we've been able to *keep* coming up with stuff and going out on the road. It's a lot of work and when it all comes together, I'm proud of that.

Jake: Yeah, it's really surreal to think that we're in a band that hasn't released just one record, but at this point three records and

we've toured another country more than once. We've been to England every year for the past three years. We're giving an interview right now to you in Scotland. It's crazy to think about. It's really pretty cool.

Will: And once this bit's over, what's next for Eureka California?

Jake: Our album of Martha covers.

Marie: Our photo album of Martha magazine covers.

Jake: [Laughs] Our scrapbook collage of Martha!

Marie: We have a tour in March, and in

April, and in May. Three different tours.

Jake: Witching Waves (London indie rock trio) is gonna come over and tour with us in May, we're gonna go to New York Popfest, we're gonna hopefully be back in England in the fall, we're playing Athens Popfest...

Marie: We're just gonna try to tour wherever we can.

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE



Aphid Peewit

- *Cosmic Trigger 1* (Hilaritas Press edition) by Robert Anton Wilson (book)
- *The Damned: Don't You Wish We Were Dead* (DVD)
- Pears, *Green Star* CD
- *The Color of Noise* (AmRep doc) DVD
- *Articles Of Faith, Complete Vol. 1, 1981-1983* CD

Art Ettinger

- Toys That Kill, *Sentimental Ward* LP
- No Time, *You'll Get Yours* LP
- Yellow Stitches, *Sick Mind 7"*
- Anti-Nowhere League, *The Cage* LP
- Direct Hit, *Wasted Mind* LP

Bill Pinkel

- Pup, *The Dream Is Over* LP
- The Falcon, *Gather Up the Chaps* LP
- Pinned In Place, *Ghostwritten By* LP
- Spokenest, *Gone, Gone, Gone* LP
- Dillinger Four, *Night Birds* and *Toys That Kill*, live at the Echoplex!

Billy Kostka

- Foster Care, *Sterilization* LP
- Prison Moan, *Parasite Hole 7"*
- Sick Thoughts, *18 and Free 7"*
- Lumpy And The Dumpers, *Huff My Sack* LP
- Angry Angles, *Goner* comp. LP

Candace Hansen

- Top 5 Shirts I Considered Wearing to the CA Primary Poll*
- HIRS: No Gods, No Cops
 - Vintage "Mujeres Por Justicia" activist shirt I bought at a Savers and cherish.
 - Leftover Crack: Police: Shoot Drugs, Not People
 - A tank top my mom gave me with a cat on it.
 - Monsters Outside's Descendents "I Don't Wanna Grow Up" parody shirt featuring Tommy Pickles.

Candice Tobin

1. Martha, *Blisters in the Pit of My Heart*
2. My Martha: RIP Rancho Relaxo tee
3. Basement Benders, *Lydiad*
4. *Chainmail Bikini*, lady gamers comix anthology
5. Donna Ramone and Steve Thueson for bein' best long-distance pals <3

Chris Mason

1. Meat Market, *Dig Deep* LP
2. Lenguas Largas, *Abba Daddy* LP
3. Witches With Dicks, *Not Just a Passing Season 12"*
4. Audacity, *Hyper Vessels* LP
5. Tacocat, *Lost Time* LP

Chris Terry

- Pressing On, *No Defeat, No Capitulation 12"*
- Culture Abuse, *Peach* LP
- Kamaiyah, *A Good Night in the Ghetto* mixtape
- Chance The Rapper, *Coloring Book* mixtape
- A fuckton of Prince

Craven Rock

1. Tie: Seeing my first pun slam, with competing in my first pun slam
2. Tie: *Gimme Something Better* by Jack Boulware and Silke Tudor, with *In Dubious Battle* by John Steinbeck (books)
3. Tie: Sole, *A Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing*, with Sole & DJ Pain 1, *Death Drive*
4. Tie: *The Blue Suitcase #1: Deconstructing the Writing of an Angry Hermit* by Joseph Carlough, with *Behind the Wheel 2: Notes of an Uber/Lyft Driver* by Kelly Dessaint (zines)
5. Tie: *L'an 1* (1973) (movie), with 3-2-1 Battle! Wrestling at The Battle Palace, Seattle, WA

Designated Dale

1. Dillinger Four, *Off With Their Heads*, *Toys That Kill*, *Night Birds*, and the *Rough Kids* at the Echoplex in Echo Park, Calif. 5/27/2016. Holy fucksticks.

2. La Tuya's live maiden voyage with *Our Band Sucks* and Scott Rodarte at Cafe NELA in Cypress Park, CA. 6/3/2016. No way! Yes, güey!
3. Much love and congratulations to Andrew Hida and Jenny Moncayo who recently tied the knot on 5/7/2016. Glad we were able to share your special day with you two!
4. Danny Fields' personal photo book, *My Ramones*. The early manager of the furious four published a limited edition hardback with a selection of his fave photographs with essays that span the golden years of the Ramones. Fucking amazing.
5. *Marvelous Darlings, Single Life* CD. I simply cannot get enough of this collection of gems from a band that should be punching anyone who loves a rocking good time in the ear dick (you heard me).

Daryl Gussin

- Taxpayers, *Big Delusion Factory*
- Bullnettle, Self-titled
- Rough Kids, Self-titled
- Sculpture Club CS, tie with Okay Urge, demo, and both live
- Big Star

David Ensminger

- Top 5 Underrated Michigan Garage Punk Bands with Women*
- The Paybacks
 - Gore Gore Girls
 - Laughing Hyenas
 - Demolition Doll Rods
 - The Gories

Eric Baskauskas

- Ajax, Impalers, S.H.I.T., Mirror, *Triage* at the Acheron in Brooklyn, 4/15/16
- Power Trip, Vanity, Aggression Pact, Razorheads, Outskirts at the same venue the very next day
- Mean Jeans, *Tight New Dimension*, and live at the East Room in Chicago, 5/18/16
- Condition, *Actual Hell*
- Blackball, Self-titled 7"

Gabby Gonzalez

- Pedal Strike (LA)
- Spokenest (LA)

- DIVORCE (LA)
- Friends W/O Benefits (SF)
- DFMK (Tijuana)

Jimmy Alvarado

- Alice Bag, Self-titled LP
- Hate, Self-titled demo
- *Going Underground*, book by George Hurchalla
- *Children of Paradise*, film directed by Marcel Carne
- Spending Summer 2016 spreading sonic mayhem throughout Los Angeles with the boys in La Tuya

Jim Ruland

1. Savages at Wonder Ballroom
2. The Cure at the Hollywood Bowl
3. Bad Future, Self-titled
4. The Dabbers, *I Am an Alien Now*
5. *The Hepatitis Bathtub* by NOFX and Jeff Alulis

John Miskelly

- Top Five Best Sets of Primavera Sound Festival, Barcelona, 2016 Plus One Accompanying Bad Thing About Primavera Sound Festival 2016 Because I Am a Malcontent Incapable of Enjoying Anything on Its Own Terms.*
1. Ty Segall And The Muggers / Insane beer prices
 2. Drive Like Jehu / Ludicrous levels of corporate sponsorship
 3. LCD Soundsystem / Other British people
 4. Dinosaur Jr. / Confiscating bottled water off half-cut sun-baked northern Europeans then charging two Euros for a tiny bottle and keeping the lid so we couldn't refill them, you unapologetically capitalist ass hats
 5. Titus Andronicus / "You are nothing but a wallet with legs to us, now drink your five Euro lager and please wear Ray Bans."

Jon Mule

1. Muhammad Ali, 1942-2016
2. Fr. Daniel Berrigan, 1921-2016
3. Rough Kids, Self-titled
4. The Deadly Vipers at Hyperion Tavern
5. Big Baby, *If You're Not a Baby Then You're Too Old*

Juan Espinosa

- Rough Kids, Self-titled LP
- Dillinger Four, *Off With Their Heads*, *Toys That Kill*, *Night Birds*, and *Rough Kids* at the Echoplex, L.A. surrounded by so many good friends

Best John
Stabb Songs,
R.I.P. My Friend

- Blazing Eye, *Lonely Corpse 7"*, tie with Mystic Inane, *Eggs Onna Plate 7"*
- The Repos, *Poser* LP, tie with Absolute Power LP
- Cannibal Corpse, *Tomb of the Mutilated* LP reissue, tie with Nailbomb, *Point Blank* LP reissue

Kayla Greet

- D4, OWTB, TTK, Night Birds, Rough Kids at The Echoplex, L.A.
- Pinned In Place, *Ghostwritten By*
- Red Dons, complete discography
- *Manor Threat*, by Ben Snakepit
- *Cat Cave Cinema* podcast (horror movie talks from punks)

Keith Rosson

- Dark Thoughts, Self-titled LP
- Taxpayers, *Big Delusion Factory* LP
- *All My Puny Sorrows*, Miriam Toews (novel)
- *Is That You, John Wayne?*, Scott Garson (story collection)
- Finally selling my novel! Yes! Comes out Feb. 2017!

Kevin Dunn

1. Sean Carswell, *The Metaphysical Ukulele*, (book)
2. Bullnettle, Self-titled LP
3. Blodad Tand, *Control Alt Delete 7"*
4. Future Virgins, *Late Republic* LP
5. Sean Carswell, *The Metaphysical Ukulele*, (book)

Kurt Morris

1. Nails,
2. *You Will Never Be One of Us*
3. Hum, *Downward Is Heavenward*
4. Mike Adams At His Honest Weigh, *Casino Drone*
5. *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (TV show)

Louis Jacinto

- My Top 5 Punks in Post-Punk Success*
1. Screamers' K.K. Barrett: Oscar Nomination 2014
 2. Punk Photographer Dawn Wirth: Smithsonian Collection 2015
 3. X's John Doe: Memoir Published 2016
 4. Alice Bag: New Album 2016
 5. Edward Stapleton: Nervous Gender Art Retrospective at MOCA 2017

Mark Twistworthy

- Medication, *Warm Places* LP
- Spray Paint, *Feel the Clamps* LP
- Dan Padilla / Prince, *Split 7"*
- Cherubs, *Fist in the Air 2 x 7"*
- Amygdala, *Population Control* LP

Marty Ploy

- Post Life, *Living Can Wait*
- California, Self-titled
- Great Apes, *California Heart*
- The Lippies, Self-titled
- Decent Criminal, Self-titled

Matt Average

- Peter Brötzman, live at the Echoplex
- BBC Radiophonic Workshop, *21* LP
- Rough Kids, Self-titled LP
- Bremen, *Eclipsed 2 x LP*
- Wicked Lady, *Complete Recordings, 1969 - 1972* box set

Megan Razzetti

- Top 5 Bands I Can't Stop Listening to Right Now*
1. Pedal Strike
 2. Adam And The Ants
 3. PUP
 4. Worriers
 5. Shellshag

Michael Fournier

- Ben Snakepit, *Manor Threat* (book)
- Betty Machete And The Angry Cougars, *Angry Cougars* LP
- Daylight Robbery, *Accumulated Error* LP
- Michelle Gonzales, *The Spitboy Rule* (book)
- Bob Mould live at Pearl Street, Northampton, Mass., 4/30/2016

Mike Faloon

1. Sean Carswell, *The Metaphysical Ukulele* (book)
2. Sam Kulick, *The Broadcast* download and baseball card set (!)
3. Survival Unit III, *Barrow Street Blues 2 x LP*
4. Rebecca Stead, *When You Reach Me* (book)
5. Kamasi Washington, *The Epic 3 x LP*

Mike Frame

1. Sin Cave, live and demo tape
2. Dan Lilker, *Perpetual Conversion* (book)
3. Dyke Drama, live and 12"
4. The Obsessed, live
5. Bonnie Jo Campbell, *Q Road* (book)

DJ Naked Rob Radio Valencia, SF, Calif.

1. Rathaus, *Rathaus Rathaus Rathaus* LP
2. Necrot, *The Labyrinth* LP
3. Hesitation Wounds, *Awake for Everything* LP
4. Weekend Nachos, *Apology* LP
5. Sarabante, *Poisonous Legacy* LP

Nighthawk

- Larry Livermore, live in Saint Louis
- Black Sabbath, live in Kansas City
- DJ Quik, live in Saint Louis
- Vacation, live at Chill Dawg Cove
- Parasites, live at Chill Dawg Cove

Paul Comeau

1. Andy California, *My Dying Bed* EP
2. Spit Vitriol, *The Blood It Takes to Make the Breaks* EP
3. Vaaska, *Future Primitivo* EP
4. Bane, *Don't Wait Up* LP
5. Bane, *Give Blood* CD

Paul Silver

1. Refused, The Coathangers, Plague Vendor at Belly Up, Solana Beach, CA
2. Dillinger 4, Toys That Kill, Off With Their Heads, Night Birds at The Casbah, San Diego
3. The Dirty Nil and Muncie Girls at Orangehouse, Munich, Germany
4. Beach Slang, Potty Mouth, Dyke Drama, California at The Casbah, San Diego
5. toyGuitar, Plane Without A Pilot, Squarecrow at Soda Bar, San Diego

Replay Dave

- Mercury Program, *New Myths*
- Reigning Sound, *Abdication...for Your Love*
- Shallow Cuts, *Empty Beach Town*
- Pink Floyd, *Meddle*
- Ted Leo & Pharmacists, *Shake the Sheets*

Rich Cocksedge

- Night Birds, Auf Bewahrung, Kick It!, live at ExSezz, Frankfurt
- Wild Animals Basements, *Music to Fight Hypocrisy* LP
- Rotten Mind, *I'm Alone Even with You* LP
- NASA Space Universe, *70 AD* EP
- Hot Mass, *Nervous Tensions* LP

Rosie Gonc

1. Mercy Music, *When I Die I'm Taking You with Me* LP
2. VLHS 5th Anniversary Show in Pomona with Winter Break, Turkish Techno, Horror Squad, toyGuitar and Bad Cop/Bad Cop, 6/03/16
3. The Frights, *You Are Going to Hate This* LP
4. American Death Ray, *Smash Radio Hits* LP
5. One Man Army, *She's an Alarm* EP

Ryan Nichols

1. Don The Beachcomber
2. Budos Band
3. At The Drive-In
4. Charles Bradley
5. White Lung

Sal Lucci

- Spray Paint, *Feel the Clamps* LP
- Lost Balloons LP
- Marked Men, live 6/4/16
- Radioactivity, live 5/28/16
- Mind Spiders, live 5/13/16

Sean Arenas

- Spokenest, *Gone, Gone, Gone* LP
- Empty Markets, *Stainless Steel* LP
- *No Friends #3*
- Upsilon Acrux at The Smell, 5/27/16
- Birthday skydiving with Shelby Fujioka

Sean Koepnick

- Best John Stabb Songs, R.I.P. My Friend*
1. "Visions and?" by Government Issue
 2. "Swan Song" by The Factory Incident
 3. "Club Pretentious" by Betty Blue
 4. "The Hurting Closet" by Emma Peel
 5. "Strange Wine" by Government Issue

Simone Carter

- The 2016 *Doom* game soundtrack
- Donald Trump Says "China" YouTube video
- Eagles Of Death Metal at House of Blues in Dallas, 5/22/16
- Melvins at Trees in Dallas, 3/03/16
- Power Trip at Red Blood Club in Dallas, 4/23/16

Toby Tober

- Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed*
1. *I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney*
 2. *1971*
 3. *Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead: The Story of the National Lampoon*
 4. *12 O'Clock Boys*
 5. *Touched with Fire*

Todd Taylor

- Spokenest, *Gone, Gone, Gone* LP
- Taxpayers, *Big Delusion Factory* LP
- Sean Carswell, *The Metaphysical Ukulele* (book)
- Kevin Dunn, *Global Punk* (book)
- Louie Cronin, *Everybody Loves You Back* (book) tie with Idra Novey, *Ways to Disappear* (book)

Ty Stranglehold

1. Big Boys and The Dicks, *Live at Raul's Club* Split LP (Finally got a copy!)
2. Dysnea Boys, *Forgot How to Read*
3. Bad Future, Self-titled
4. Maniac, *Midnight Kino 7"*
5. Riverboat Gamblers, *Massive Fraud 7"*



ABSOLUTE POWER: Self-titled: LP

A debut LP on Youth Attack from a band with a "members of" list that goes on and on and on (Failures, Charles Bronson, Aerosols, Cut The Shit, Bones Brigade, Orchid, Ampere...); so it's easy to assume a lot about this record. Most of the assumptions will probably be correct, but, honestly, in this case that's not a bad thing. The record is more accessible and straightforward than previous efforts from affiliated bands, but still retains a clean and clearly intentional presentation. The music doesn't point to one direct influence, with heavy nods to classics like *Get It Away*, *My America*, and *Condensed Flesh* being offset by a very modern approach. The songs are short—but each move in different directions—and the guitar captures this perfect, just slightly overdriven tone that I love. The main riffs are fairly straightforward but there are a lot of very cool angular breakdowns that italicize sets of lyrics in the song structures. What makes this record work best is the fact that while there is a very dated influence, you get the impression that the individual members are so beyond trying to define what the aesthetics of hardcore are—that they are no longer trying to impress themselves by trying to cop the sounds of others—and have simply moved in a different direction. —Ian Wise (Youth Attack, ihateyouthattack.com)

ADAM HEALTON & THE SITUATION: III: CD

Remember when Van Morrison pooped out that utterly bizarre, nearly unlistenable *Contractual Obligation* session for Bang Records? The one with cuts like "Ring Worm," "Want a Danish," and "The Big Royalty Check"? Yeah, Adam Heaton & The Situation's album, *III*, is a lot like that. With nonsensical lyrics, out of tune guitars, antiquated synths, and schizo samples, each ear-grating track is certainly memorable, albeit difficult to digest. Adam Heaton specializes in a far-out, lo-fi style à la Ariel Pink, and ups the creativity ante with each preceding song. Love it or hate it, *III* is an album that's unlike any other. —Simone Carter (Pure Fucking Gold, pfrecords@gmail.com, pfrecords.bandcamp.com)

ADULTS: Black Bile: 7" EP

Mix of garage, punk, art damage, and maybe a smidge of proto-hardcore influences. Songs are short, loose, and just the right kinda sloppy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Toxic Pop)

ALICJA-POP: Rats (Home Recordings 2009-2013): LP

This is another synth project of Lost Sounds' Alicja Trout. I haven't been following her career at all, but this is as good an introduction as any. At its most rambunctious, it's sweet and hook-heavy garage punk; sparkling pop melodies over lo-fi programming. But many of these tracks are more subdued—pleasant synth pop with enough post-punk grit to keep it from falling into that mind-numbing twee



Worst band name ever.

—Keith Rosson

HOT MAYONNAISE, *Heavy Moments* CS

hole that so often swallows bedroom recordings. Not that I'm coming into this with any kind of personal bias. The songs and performances are fully formed, "home recording" or not, and Alicja's buoyant songwriting really drives this. This is party music for a very chill grown-up party. I can get behind that. —Indiana Laub (Certified PR, thickbootyhos@yahoo.com, certifiedprrecords.com)

ALTE SAU / LIME CRUSH: Split: 7"

I've read good things about Lime Crush and all those things were right—they're good. "Never" bops along in basement show mode with Veronika Eberhardt singing just a hair off-key before unleashing a brief, screaming hell. Believe me when I tell you it's a hit. I wish my high school German skills were stronger, but I do know that Alte Sau's "Becki Hat Ein Pferd" translates to "Becki has a horse." Whatever else they're saying, I'm not sure. There is an organ sound running through it and that's enough for me. —Matt Werts (fettkacao.com, fettkacao.com)

ANDY CALIFORNIA: My Dying Bed: 7" EP

Proclaimed by his label Black Gladiator as the "last true savior of rock 'n' roll," Andy California, nee Andy Macbain of Tunnel Of Love and The Monsieurs, has unleashed the first recordings of a new solo project with this 7". Fusing rock 'n' roll with a bit of bluesy folk troubadour stylings, this immediately conjured vibes of late '80s to present-era Tom Waits. With more jangly guitar stylings and less jazz influence than Waits, California is certainly hitching a ride on a similar train and crashing in some of the same hobo camps as Waits. It's weird, it's dissonant, but it's really damn catchy. If Andy California is

able to craft some narrative structures and stories into his future material, he could very well achieve Waitsian levels of artistry. —Paul J. Comeau (Black Gladiator, slovenly.com)

ANGRY ANGLES: Self-titled: LP

Angry Angles was Jay Reatard's post-Lost Sounds/pre-solo career band, along with Alix Brown and a couple of different drummers. They managed to release a few singles before disbanding, which are collected here along with a number of unreleased tracks (and a live set if you use the download card included). The music sounds appropriately transitional—a distillation of both the dark new wave terrain Lost Sounds mined so well, albeit sans synths, and the blown-out, shattered garage pop of his later work. If you're looking for a quicker reference, one need look no further than some of the covers they drop here—tunes by the Urinals, Devo, and a great take of Wire's "The 15th"—to suss out the parameters they set out for themselves. Lots of good ideas fly past as this spins, some that are pretty stunning, some that probably could've used a few more weeks of gestation, but nothing that results in an embarrassed wince. All told, this is a fine closing salvo and a bittersweet rearview glance at what one could easily see as growing into one of the great bands of the last twenty years. —Jimmy Alvarado (Goner)

ARCTIC FLOWERS: Remix: LP

One of those bands I've heard much ballyhoo about but haven't actually heard. Three tunes showcase a deft ability to mix punk and death rock influences, which is often harder than it would seem at first blush. Songs are punchy, full of drive, and yet danceable.

This latter trait explains the several remixes, predominantly of the opening track, "Technicolor Haze," that make up the remainder of wax time here, each of which takes the track(s) in new directions. Daryl expressed some concern when I plucked this from the pile, saying they were a good band but that maybe a remix record might not be the best place to start my acquaintance with them. He was right, but I don't think for the reason he might've thought—the remixes don't bother at all, but I do wish there were more tunes on here, 'cause this is quite good. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

ASOUND: Self-titled: CS

On the bright side, this sounds a tiny bit like the first Aerosmith album played on the wrong speed, although I am currently unsure what speed that would be. 16 rpm would be my best guess. It also sounds a bit like my Black Sabbath 8-track, but with a boy singing. There is a drawing of a big hairy monster on the cover. He may be the singer. Today's best and brightest clearly prefer the cassette format. BEST SONG, BEST SONG TITLE, and FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Moss Man," "Moss Man," and my friend's dad used to be in a band from the '60s called Lord Beverly Moss And The Moss Men. —Rev. Nørb (Tsuguri)

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT: Terrorize: LP

For those not keeping score, Attitude Adjustment were one of the more venerated bands out of the 1980s Bay Area scene that was mixing prodigious amounts of metal into their hardcore thrash, ultimately resulting in their inclusion with similar bands into what became known as "crossover." Their *American Paranoia* album is considered a classic of the genre, and rightly so. This latest release by a reformed lineup apparently active since 2007 sees them working at the same velocities as during their heyday, with maybe a smidge more of the hardcore ingredient in evidence here. Tunes zip by, are well executed, and show that age hasn't mellowed these cats one whit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

BACKSLIDER: 2008 - 2013: CD

Collection of their EPs, *Reality #5* comp track, and the *Skull Fracturing Fastcore* demo. There are fifty-one tracks total, so you can either listen the whole way through, or for maximum effect, bits and pieces at a time. This wonder duo cranked crushing powerviolence kind of music—plodding tempos, a ton of low end, and drums that sound like they're going to bust with every hit. I hear some Man Is The Bastard in their sound, but this is played with more urgency and has a better groove when called for. Then they mix in the likes of Infest and Crossed Out for extra sonic brutality. —Matt Average (To Live A Lie)

BAD BREEDING: Self-titled: LP

If Bad Breeding is railing against life in Stevenage (U.K.) then it must be one

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hell of a dreary shithole to bring forth an outpouring that reeks of such despair and wretchedness. Blending together Discharge, Black Flag, and Crass into a brutal and uncompromising delivery, this four-piece comes across like it has the power to wipe the town off the face of the map with its explosive offering. I was taken aback by the sheer might of the sixteen tracks on this album which left me reeling from the aural equivalent of assault and battery. To be fair, Chris Dodd's lyrics pick on more targets than just the band's hometown as the Tory destruction of the U.K. comes under fire, too. His vocals possess a palpable sense of anger as they are spat out over a cacophonous musical carnage lasting just over half an hour. —Rich Cockledge (Self-released, badbreedingband@gmail.com, badbreeding.com)

BAD MECHANICS: Demo 2015: CS

I can't believe these words are springing from my lips, but this swarthy duo sound like a cross between Boris The Sprinkler, They Might Be Giants, and Ministry. THERE. I REALLY SAID THAT. The dude's voice sounds so annoyingly like my own in places that I don't know if I should slap him or give him a piggyback ride and yell "wool!" Maybe I should just slap myself and have the pig yell "wool!" Either way, this is clearly *cassette of the year!* WOO! BEST SONG: "S5 Haircut" BEST SONG TITLE: "Adults with Wine." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This is the first cassette I've ever obtained that

came packaged with a download card. —Rev. Norb (HeWhoCorruptsInc., hewhocorruptsinc.com)

BARDUS: Stella Porta: CD

Dooooom! Full disclosure: doom, stoner, and sludge metal have been on heavy rotation in my life for the better part of the last year. And while Bardus is not The Melvins or Conan, *Stella Porta* hits all the right proverbial buttons for me: the psychedelic artwork, the droning guitars, the fantastical subject matter all rounded out by drums too heavy for Sisyphus himself, and echoes upon echoes of vocals. Fuck, I like this music a lot. In another five years, *Razorcake* will probably be sending my mail to a monastery in Iceland or a smoke-filled van in Seattle. —Jon Mule (Solar Flare, solarflarerds.com)

BASEMENT RAT: Pura Mujer: CS

I can't remember if someone told me this was a riot grrrl band or if it was implied because they're mostly female and noisy. What they really do, live and on this brutal cassette, seems outside category, or I guess in between genres. When Basement Rat is catchy, they're catchy. And when they're gnarled and slow and thoughtful, they remind me of Fisticuffs Bluff and the good, underappreciated mid-'90s screamo highlights. More of this, please. —Matt Werts (Drug Party)

BERNAYS PROPAGANDA: Politika: CS

Bernays Propaganda is a Macedonian band that makes synthy, melodic post-

punk with drum machines, angular guitars, and dynamic bass lines. Like if Suicide was fronted by a woman and made pop songs, or a more electronic Wire. Thankfully, this cassette seems to have nothing to do with Bernie Sanders or his propaganda; it's intense, sometimes dark, but ultimately danceable. Definitely recommended. —Lyle (Land Animal Tapes, landanimaltapes.bandcamp.com)

BIG BABY: If You're Not a Baby, You're Too Old: CS

Dyana and Madison make up Big Baby and Big Baby is surf rock drums nearly drowned out by big, post-punk guitar riffs and the formerly mentioned band members conversing with one another about the everyday life that we live while we think about bigger, supposedly more important things: feeding the cat, grocery shopping, and online shopping. The sounds of this album are exactly what you would want from a punk band on a cassette. The non-essentials are stripped away and the music hits you right between the eyes. This is especially true for the dual vocals that show no sign of echo or reverb. Back to my waxing poetic about the everyday versus the delusions of grandeur—it is music like this that makes the everyday bearable. We should all be so lucky to be able to interpret our lives through art like this. All experience is front and center and the two-minute song is queen. Long live the queen! —Jon Mule aka Juan Burro aka Jonny Thrash (Deli Boy)

BILL BONDSMEN: Until the Razor Cuts: LP

I lucked out in managing to catch the Bill Bondsmen at the ground level, beginning with their first demo and, while I haven't been able to amass all their oeuvre to date, I've followed along closely enough to be able to track their progression from an ace thrash unit into an entity much more singular. This latest release shows the band expanding on the more mid-tempo forays of recent releases, peppering their brand of pummeling hardcore with drone and psychedelic influences into an unrelenting assault on your eardrums that recalls greats like Die Kreuzen while sounding nothing like them. Believe me when I say that you're truly missing out if you haven't caught onto these cats yet. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mastermind, mastermindrec.com)

BRAIN VACATION: Head Cases: LP

The first song on this record, "Pre-Apathetic" starts off with the academy fight chant of, "Eat, sleep, fight, eat, sleep, fight... fuck and die." It's a dirge of an introduction to an otherwise punk rock record exploring themes of death and everyday life. These guys have a straight forward, power chord, punk rock sound with some pissed-off vocals that remind me of the singer from Fucked Up. —Ryan Nichols (Wall Of Youth)

BULEMICS, THE: Something Wicked This Way Comes: LP

The Bulemics have been around for nearly twenty fuckin' years now and



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like a good brisket, these Texans have smoked for so long that every morsel is tasty, tender, and ready to tear *you* apart. In fact, they've seemed to reach that optimal stage in a band's existence where they still have the bile, bite, and balls of youth, but gained the chops and writing skills of experience. I mean, let's face it, the Dwarves/Zeke brand of four-on-the-floor, sleazy punk rock'n'roll has its limits. This is a very small box to work within. With *Something Wicked*, The Bulemics are busting that box at its seams. This record is faster, dirtier, and heavier than anything they've done, but played and recorded so clearly that all the tasty little nuggets of riffery and vocal nastiness are on full display. —Chad Williams (Slope, sloperrecords.com)

BUMMER'S EVE: Self-titled: CD

Very potent mix of echoey, surf-styled guitars and distorted vocals from this Cincinnati, Ohio based trio. Production is almost the fourth member here as the band uses the aforementioned effects to great use without (thankfully) overdoing it. There is an anthemic quality to most of the songs that cannot be ignored, most apparent on the delicious "I Want Your Drugs," which reminds of me Joy Division's "Walked in Line" crossed with Devo's "Gates of Steel" as hammered out by a U2 *Boy*-era Edge playing guitar. Here's to hoping they make it out West on their upcoming tour. —Garrett Barnwell (Almost Ready, almostreadyrecords.com)

BUMMER'S EVE: Self-titled: LP

I was initially turned off by the band's name (a pun on a douche, if you didn't know) and the remedial watercolor painting that occupies the front and back cover (as well as the lyric insert); but, being the good reviewer that I am, I reserved (most) judgment until I actually heard what Bummer's Eve had going. I was pleasantly surprised when the record started off with a dark, driving bass line. Then the guitars and vocals kicked in, and I realized that the intro was a major misdirect. What we have here is some lo-fi punk with a pop bite and heavy effect on the vocals. Overall, they've got a good sound, but I don't think they wield their power too well. Unfortunately, the album lost my interest and seemed to drag on. The songs, while somewhat distinct from one another, all seem to blend together. Furthermore, the songs are way too long. Songs like these should rarely pass the two and one-half minute mark. Yet, not one of these songs is under that duration. Some of them cruise along to the four-minute mark, and one passes the five-minute mark. A bit of editing would have gone a long way here. —Vincent (Almost Ready)

CHAD FREY: Open.Play.Rebel: CD

For every quality this record has an aptitude for, there's another quality it severely lacks. Dynamics and song flow are apparent, but an ear for choruses and adequate vocal lines is missing. That's not even getting on the record's odd variety of genres. I can

enjoy some metal tinge every now and then, but a radio *nü* metal song in the middle of a punk record kind of ruins the whole thing. Then there's the issue of the record's pretty atrocious lyrics. I can't tell if the songs are supposed to be satirical, but a cursory glance suggests they are not. "I want sex so bad" is never, ever a line I want to hear in a song. I can't in good conscious recommend this to anyone. To the creator of the record, I recommend reconsidering placing all of your genre songs on the same album. The number of people interested in the record greatly diminishes with every other genre you add. —Bryan Static (Frey Nation)

CHAOS UK: Shit Man Fuckers: 7" EP

One would figure, given the pattern of diminishing returns with regards to new releases by "old" bands being what it is, that a band this long in the tooth would be cranking out steaming mountains of crap by now. Not only is that not the case here, they've turned in one fucker of a scorcher here—manic tempos driving one propulsive track into the next, with virulence just dripping off the wax. Fuck yeah, this definitely hits the spot. —Jimmy Alvarado (540, chaosintejas.bigcartel.com)

CHESTNUT ROAD: LP II: LP

Staring at the Rubik's Cube painting on the front cover, I was just hoping for a post-punk record that would have some distinguishing characteristics. On the record sleeve, Tim PopKid had scrawled "Bivouac Jawbreaker and

Minx Leatherface" with a question mark. What my earholes were more happy to welcome in was what I imagine three kids from the Mission District from '86-'88 with too much time on their hands and not enough cigarettes or oz. of malt liquor would bang out in their practice space, but with a fresh enough 2016-spin to not get bogged down in nostalgia. Mix the grit and shadow of a warehouse district with the sincerity of handwritten correspondence, throw in a dash of the Allied Records catalog and the bizarre future of have tiny smartphones constantly at our fingertips, and you're left with a new album almost instantly familiar. And covering Cringer well is an almost instant coup. —Matt Seward (Pop Kid / Brassneck / Snuffly Smile)

CHOKO CHAINS: Self-titled: LP

Garage punk that's melodic in the guitar lines, but blown-out fuzz in the vocals. Hell, the vocals get to noise rock proportion levels of distortion. They remind me of the Germs more than any other band. There's a certain apathetic casualness to their approach to music that's reminiscent of the early punk scene. Unlike the early punk scene, there's a build and release to the tension of their songs—a care to the album as a whole rather than just releases of thought; an album that revels in the intensity of ages past without dwelling in the short game. Worth it, if you like your fuzz-to-melody ratio at about a 75/25 split. —Bryan Static (Black Gladiator / Slovenly)

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CRETINS: *Meat: 7" EP*

One of those raged-out "infecteds" from the movie *28 Days Later* howl-vomits wholly unintelligible lyrics over an unrelenting, redlining engine, all glowing pistons and on the verge of blowing up. Put another way: Negative Approach on a heavy steroid bender. One of those rare instances when having your ear repeatedly bludgeoned is a good thing. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

CRUSTIES, THE: *Crustunes: LP*

I remember looking through *MRR* awhile ago and seeing something about the Crusties in a Wisconsin scene report. It had me on the hunt for this album for decades. Learning that this was originally a cassette-only release explains why I never saw this in any used bins or in the *MRR* collection. So, here it is, first time on vinyl. Well worth the wait and hunt, for sure. The Crusties played intense, wound-up hardcore punk, but like any good band from that era, they mixed in some other musical influences, like metal, jazz, and some touches of funk—(not in that cheesy Red Hot Chili Peppers that way, though—more as though they're taking cues from Beefeater) that kept them from blending in. Plus, they may be the only hardcore punk band ever to use a trumpet in their songs (though very sparingly). It's actually pretty cool how it's utilized in the song "Sloppy Seconds." The songs move at a quick pace, but never go full-on thrash. Instead, everything is kept at

a watched boil to keep the urgency constant. Check out "Horton Hears a Who" with its fast-paced tempo—that drum break without losing any power. Then they tear into the instrumental "Your Own Words." The guitar at the start of "Ratz" reminds me of Die Kreuzen. Then there's the lurking-to-racing tempo of "K-9 Cadaver / Final Regret" that pulls you further in. Worth picking up, for real! It's a limited deal, so get it! —Matt Average (Beer City)

DALI'S LLAMA: *Dying in the Sun: CD*

It's a funny thing when you do reviews for a while and get multiple albums from the same band. This is at least the third album I have reviewed from this desert riff rock band and they continue to crank out fantastic heavy music. They don't try to be "scary" or to be "tough," they just blast out cool, heavy riffs with excellent vocals. The song "Claustrophobic Blues" has one of the best riffs I have heard in years and vocals that bring to mind David Thomas on the more recent Rocket From The Tombs stuff. Anyone who is even a casual fan of Kyuss, Desert Sessions, Fu Manchu, or Monster Magnet will absolutely love this band. —Mike Frame (Dali's Llama, dalisllamarecords.com)

DARK BLUE: *Vicious Romance: 7"*

Excellent, straightforward songwriting and dirty production pair perfectly together in this ace 7" by Philly rockers Dark Blue. Anthemic, catchy, and cool as hell, *Vicious Romance* should be

nominated to be dubbed The Summer of 2016's Official Soundtrack. Taking cues from Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and Interpol, Dark Blue's execution of the grimy-chic has hit the pinnacle of perfection in this EP. Suffice it to say, Dark Blue's future shines bright. —Simone Carter (12XU)

DARK THOUGHTS: *Self-titled: LP*

Super fun, buoyant, snotty punk that reminds me of going to shows at EJ's and Satyricon, bands in skinny ties and sunglasses in a dark bar, guitarists with wide-legged stances, downstrokes so fast their hands are blurs. The singer's a pretty dead ringer for Joel Jett of the Flip-Tops and the Minds, and the whole thing is infused with a wonderful sense of joyousness and urgency. This is a cool record. —Keith Rosson (Space Bag)

DAYGLO ABORTIONS:

Amageddon Survival Guide: LP

Feel like I have to provide a caveat here: Outside of one atrocious album I heard in the mid-'90s, I haven't heard a damned thing by these cats since 1985 or so. That said, the last time they made any impact on my eardrums, they were an ultra-obnoxious to the point of being amusing punk band with the type of lyrical content that would have most parents quietly giggling to themselves whilst beating the shit outta you for listening to such "filth." Their *Feed Us a Fetus* album garnered a lot of airplay in my "teenage angst" years, and my copy still gets an airing whenever

I wanna see people wince and get uncomfortable. This Dayglo Abortions is a different beast, and rightly so, considering some thirty years has passed since last we danced together. Musically, this is pretty good—zipper tempos, considerably more metal in the guitars—but you can hear the natural progression. Lyrically, they've traded in wanton obnoxiousness for a bit more paranoia, anger, and quasi-political ire, largely airing out grievances and things that piss Cretin off—social media, Obama, the Left purportedly taking our rights away, lies, bullshit, and so on. Fans will no doubt dig it, which I'm guessing is all they pretty much care about in the end, anyway. More power to 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (Unrest, unrestrecords.com)

DEAD GHOSTS: *Love and Death and All the Rest: CD*

Nostalgic for an era my parents were barely alive for, Dead Ghosts channel the spirit and energy of rock'n'roll from that time period where it was basically country music. Be prepared for swing beats and desert guitar twang. The song writing is good but uneventful. At its best it sounds like a Black Lips record. At its worse, eh, I've still heard worse. There's nothing to really fault Dead Ghosts with, but it's not as if they're reinventing the wheel either. If you have any desire to listen to sloppy cowboy rock, this is a pretty good record. If you don't, then it isn't. Simple as that. —Bryan Static (Burger, burgerrecords.org)

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DEFECT DEFECT: Deefography: CS

Deefography is a kind of discography for Portland-basedpunkquartetDefectDefect put out by Japanese label Snuffly Smiles. I'm pretty sure this band disbanded, it's hard to tell for sure though. Their cassette is ambiguous and they have little to no internet presence, with the exception of a few record nerd blogs, German label Taken By Surprise's Bandcamp, and a Facebook event from 2013 that promised a good time and a BBQ. Some serious off the grid shit. If you like Black Flag and a big chunk downstrokey pop punk from the '90s and '00s, you'll probably love this cassette. Its really bass heavy, which I love since some of the bass chords and runs made some predictable tracks way more exciting. Though it goes through the motions like lots of punk does, this cassette is upbeat and melodic, with a taste of dark guitar work in that I-listened-to-Darker-My-Love-for-a-year-straight kind of way. If that's your thing, find it if you can. -Candace Hansen (Snuffly Smiles)

DEPOSIT MAN: EP: CD

Deposit Man are from Olulu, Finland and play a cross between pop and street punk that is reminiscent of '90s bands like Reducers SF and The Bodies, or other bands from 1999's TKO Records *Punchdrunk* compilation. Songs are fast and catchy and have a thin vein of international political commentary running through them. You can find an impressive DIY video for their song, "Tyranny," online. -John Mule (Self-released)

DESGRACIADOS:

Humanidad en la Oscuridad: 7" EP
Some flat-out scorching hardcore en Español coming at ye from, of all places, Canada. Even at its fastest here, the band keeps the tempos within the "human" range, yet delivering the goods in such over the top fashion they end up hitting that sweet spot that makes ye wanna bounce off the walls, drool uncontrollably, and beg for more than the four blasts of tuncage offered up here. Here's a chance to get in on the ground floor 'cause, if they keep things up the level of quality in evidence here, I'm predicting they're gonna be fuggin' huge. -Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

DEVIIOUS ONES:

From the Stylus to the Speaker: 7"
Detroit's Devious Ones exploded onto the scene recently, with this two-song 7" as their second release. Playing power pop with a new wave slant, they are like a less-contrived version of The Briefs, not that there's anything wrong with The Briefs. The production is flawless on these two tracks, well showcasing the punchy fun. It's time for an LP! -Art Ettinger (Rust On The Blade, deviousones.bandcamp.com)

DFMK: 7 Canciones Sobre un Individualismo Radical: 7"

After about two years of hearing the praises of the Tijuana superstars known as DFMK sung by a large swath of friends, I finally got to see them last fall during the Razorcake residency at Pehrspace. I was blown

away both by how great the band is musically, and also by the completely visceral and engaging performance, led by the extraordinarily animated and charismatic frontman Mr. Cap. And the greatness of the band is fully captured on this here slab o'wax. Here you'll find an incredibly tight and focused band that's firing on all cylinders and delivering a ferocious, bombastic, confident, and swaggering blend of punk and rock'n'roll. To my ears, I'm hearing a nod to early '80s Southern California hardcore pioneers, a la the Circle Jerks, with heavy heapings of blistering rock'n'roll in the vein of Mudhoney and New Bomb Turks, however, with even bigger, beefier, guitars. This is some crucial shit that you're going to want to own. -Jeff Proctor (La Escalera / Get Better)

DIRTY FENCES: "Tommy & CC" b/w "I'm Here": 7"

I was really excited to give this single a spin because of its immediately recognizable queer BDSM leather daddy imagery on the back cover. Given the art, I had high hopes it would boast hardcore Gravy Train vibes, but alas, another rock'n'roll single. Although, it's a pretty good one. Lots of '70s sad boy rocker feels. Kind of glam, kind John Cougar Mellencamp, kind of Ramonesy. There is a Man on the Run reference. They ask the listener to "Telephone" them. It's cool. I'll probably listen to it again because I love the art and sometimes I'm a little bit of a sucker for campy

shit that sounds like old denim. -Candace Hansen (Die Slaughterhouse, dieslaughterhouserecords.com)

DISSIDENT CLONE:

Creating the Consumed: 7"
Is it possible to play bass while simultaneously using the strings to strangle people? Because that's what this sounds like. Heads just locked against the fretboard while faces turn red and eyes pop out of their sockets. Rumbling. And I'm sure the guitar is slick with blood. Are those drums or electric skulls being beaten with severed arms? The singer's voice is like the howl of a yeti, blasting out words and the undigested bones of his enemies. I just listened to this record eight times in a row and I'm not entirely sure where this pig carcass came from. And that's definitely not my blood. -MP Johnson (FTWNU2)

DIVERS: "Achin' On" b/w "Can't Do That": 7"

A-side's a raucous, upbeat original that frustratingly devolves into an intentional record skip/sound collage thing halfway through. B-side's a way subdued cover of Dead Moon's "Can't Do That" that's disappointingly over just when it reaches its crescendo. Band's definitely capable of some good stuff, but all in all this was a little disappointing. -Keith Rosson (Dirt Cult)

DOKUMENTIA: Susi Sol: CD

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and intention in the records I cover. Since the only Finnish word I can think of off the top of my head is Helsinki, music-only review it is! Though I did use ye ol' Google translator for the song titles, it didn't provide much insights besides that the record is called *Wolf Sounds*. These guys are from Lapua, with all the songs in their native language. It's pretty hardcore punk for the majority of the record, though there was one track that struck me by surprise: "Paikka Varattu (JazzClubMix)." This has stripped-down drumming with a jazzy lead on the electric guitar and an acoustic in the background. I'm guessing it's pretty tongue in cheek, like the Dead Milkmen's "You'll Dance to Anything," but who knows. Otherwise, the rest of these songs sound like they could have been on an early Epitaph comp, or *This Is Finland, Not Boston* if that were something that actually existed. All of their tunes are available on their website where they encourage people, in English, to "Click picture, download, burn on CD, and print covers," which I think is pretty cool. —Kayla Greet (Mankat Vastakkain, dokumentia.net)

DRUNK IN A DUMPSTER / NO ANGER CONTROL: Split: 12"

Drunk In A Dumpster are doing some pretty convincing thrash with punk roots like Common Enemy or early Municipal Waste. They're old enough to remember the late '80s (the singer was in Order Of Flagellants and some other bands you've never heard of) so there's

not really a lot of posturing. There's a little too much tongue-in-cheek for me on songs like "Thrasheville," but they're having a good time so I supposed it can be forgiven. The riffs are good, the recording is big, and the vocals are energetic enough to keep you paying attention. No Anger Control are doing more of an old school East Coast hardcore thing with some metallic tendencies on the breakdowns. The lyrics for both bands are pretty simple with a lot of singalongs. The structures are also simple. This split works because a fan of either band would probably easily get into the other side, but each band has their own style. —Ian Wise (No Profit, noprofitrecords.com)

DYSNEA BOYS: *Forgot How to Read*: LP

It may seem like I'm splitting hairs, but hear me out. "Skate rock" is not the same as "skate punk." The former was a movement in the late '70s and early '80s spearheaded by *Thrasher* magazine and a number of bands who rode boards, like Big Boys, JFA, Drunk Injuns, The Faction, and others. Skate punk, on the other hand, is more of a '90s-centered thing (think big pants and chain wallets). I like skate punk just fine, but skate rock is where my heart is. Dysnea Boys know exactly what I am talking about. They are a band that would fit seamlessly onto any of those early *Thrasher* compilations. You can feel the same hit of adrenalin listening to this that you would when discovering an untouched skate spot—anticipation, aggression, and joyous freedom coming

together to an explosive moment in time. Canadians, Americans, and Germans came together to make what I would consider a damn near perfect album. Vocalist Jason Honea (formerly of Social Unrest) reminds me so much of Restless Spirit from Drunk Injuns at times it's uncanny as he powerfully drives the songs with his distinct voice. I hope to the almighty concrete skate gods that Dysnea Boys will make the trip over to North America sometime soon. This band has become essential to my life. —Ty Stranglehold (Take It Back)

EMPTY MARKETS: *Stainless Steel*: LP

Hailing from Austin, Texas, Empty Markets is noisy and energetic, but somehow restrained; there is a defiant logic to the chaos, like a less drone-y Lungfish or a more frenzied Nation Of Ulysses. Lead vocalist Drew Schmitz (bassist for the excellent Hex Dispensers) belts over his atonal riffs, while bassist Wendy Wright contributes full-bodied backing vocals. Drummer Jordan Rivell deserves a medal for making sense of the discordant riffs. I'm always impressed by three-pieces that sound just as full, if not more so, than most four- or five-piece bands. Ultimately, Empty Markets delivers addictive earfuls of genre-defying anti-melodies. —Sean Arenas (12XU)

EPIC PROBLEM / THE SLOW DEATH: Split: 7"

One band from each side of the Atlantic Ocean, both with a penchant for gruff,

melodic punk rock played with plenty of gusto. Epic Problem packs more of a punch on its two songs, both of which have a cleaner sound than The Slow Death, whose offerings contain a bit more grit along with the slightest of nods towards country/Americana. A match up of rambunctious proportions. —Rich Cocksedge (Brassneck, brassneckrecords.bigcartel.com / Rad Girlfriend, radgirlfriendrecords.com)

FACTION, THE: *Dark Room*: 12"

While most folks know them as the mid-'80s skate punk band that Bones Brigade legend Steve Caballero played in, San Jose's The Faction weren't just a side project or a band of skaters playing in a punk band just for fun. Mixing up the tempos and incorporating a darker edge, they also weren't a typical skate punk band. In fact, they resembled the 1983 iteration of their contemporaries D.I. in vibe and vocal delivery, much more than any skate punk band of the era. And while D.I. largely opted to lose their slower, darker songs in favor of faster and more melodic tunes in 1985, The Faction doubled down. Pushing the boundaries of solid, mid-tempo punk into the metal realm with scorching riffs, solos, and an even more sinister vibe (notwithstanding the all-time thrash-punk rager "Tongue Like a Battering Ram"), this EP ranks as one of 1985's best punk releases, now thankfully available on vinyl again, courtesy of Milwaukee's best! —Chad Williams (Beer City, beercity.com)



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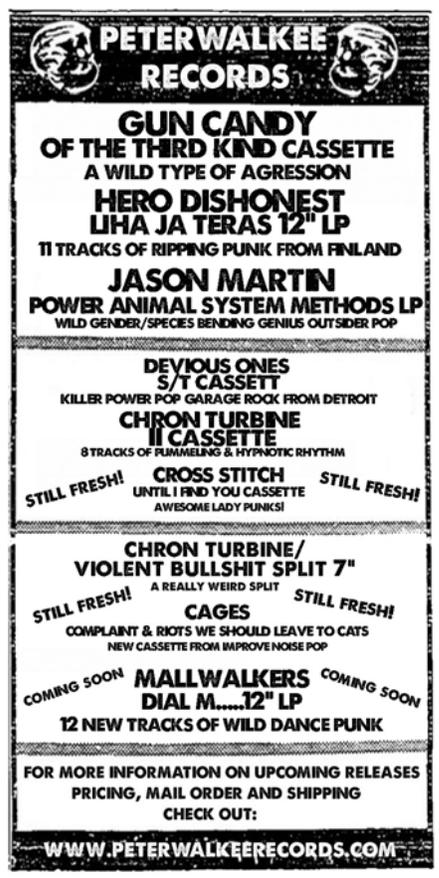
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FACTION, THE: Epitaph: LP

Re-ish of the final breaths of the most crucial skate punk of all time. Seems like all their gear is being faithfully reissued (at last) by Beer City. This band is famous for leading the skate punk pack with Steve Caballero on guitar, but that aside they were a classic left coast hardcore punk band. I guess they have a sorta L.A. vibe going on (even though they were from San Jose), not unlike the Adolescents. While I would lean to *No Hidden Messages LP* or *Dark Room 12* for their absolute crucial jams, this 12" is no slouch. The fucked up version of "California Dreaming" is boss. Wish the cover was an exact repro instead of a bastardized version. Still a worthy re-is. -Tim Brooks (Beer City, beercity.com)

FACTION, THE: Yesterday Is Gone: 12" EP

Beer City kicks down with a couple more punk obscurities for Record Store Day 2016. The Faction were one of the premier "skate rock" bands making the rounds in the early '80s, and even included bona fide pro skater Steve Caballero in their ranks. Both records were originally released on IM Records in 1983. *Yesterday Is Gone* is a 12" version (white vinyl) of their debut 7" EP, and is rife with the quintessential "thrash" sound of the time: most of the tunes zip on by in short order with lyrics addressing both the political and personal, and a clean, tight sound reminiscent of bands like Code Of Honor. The Beer Boys have seen fit to

include the band's two tracks originally on *Thrasher* magazine's old *Skate Rock Vol. One* comp for good measure. *No Hidden Messages* (clear green vinyl), their first full length, travels much along the same path with more tunes opting to shift into comparatively lower gear, and the lyrical subject matter starts to incorporate some horror elements and the occasionally more mundane woes of the early '80s teenage male. Nice reminder of a time, attitude, and style that one doesn't come across quite as often these days. As an aside, some of the lyrics, like those for "Why Save the Whales," cracked me up. To wit: "Funds collected in a humane cause / to rescue a mammal with enormous jaws / one ate Pinocchio, but you don't care / solicit money using solemn stares..." Ah, '80s punks. We were a fuggin' funny lot. -Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

FALCON, THE: Gather up the Chaps: CD

Oh man, how do I approach this CD subjectively? I will shamelessly admit that I have been a Brendan Kelly fanboy since the days of Slapstick, eagerly lapping up most everything the man has been involved with. That said, for being a side project kind of thing, this—as with past Falcon releases—freaking rules. What really stands out to me this go round are the strong vocals from the whole crew—Brendan and Dan specifically. Song craft and performance are, as usual, spot on. Go on, go get you some! -Garrett Barnwell (Red Scare, redscare.net)

FANTASY ARCADE: Self-titled: 7"

Debut release from this San Diego trio, featuring a gaggle of longtime scene veterans who've cut their teeth in a plethora of punk, hardcore, and metal bands over the last thirty years or so (past bands include Life Crisis, Death Crisis, Titanarum, October Allied, amongst many, many others). Fantasy Arcade rips through a half dozen quick, pummeling blasts of incredibly tight, intricate, and complex hardcore with heavy-as-fuck guitars, monstrosly pounding drums, dizzying time signatures and tempo changes, plus healthy amounts of doom and thrash mixed in to satisfy the cravings of your inner heshier. Also, the fantasy in the band's name is no coincidence, as song titles, such as "The March of the Gnome Army" and "The Dwarves Are Missing" are found here, along with other lyrical themes, such as wizards and warlocks. The fantasy game is strong with these dudes. This is a fun listen. Blast this shit at your next D&D game or *Game of Thrones* watch party. -Jeff Proctor (Too Old To Die, fantasyarcade.bandcamp.com)

FLINGUE, LA:

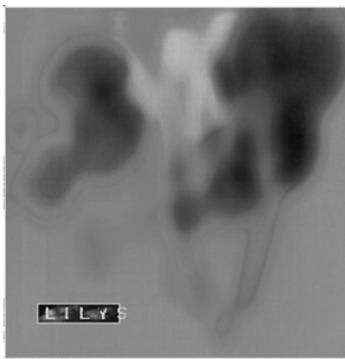
Piss-Tape Zéro-Quatre: 12" EP

I kind of like the idea of this mob's stiff, haranguing Euro punk being a perennial emission—kind of like reading *Superman* comics; you can check out for years and check back in and not have to worry too much about having lost your place. In terms of a more local yardstick, this is probably

more or less like what the Briefs would sound like if the Briefs sang in English. Well, that and German. Throw in the occasional Shane-White-esque lead and I stick a sock in my long-standing complaint about how French bands ought to let 'er rip *en Français* more often. I miss the 999 cover on the other record but the song about the hamster sounds about right. *Faire l'andouille!* BEST SONG: "Tanz auf dem Müll." BEST SONG TITLE: "A-N-G-S-T." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: What appears to be a record jacket is just a square piece of cardboard printed on both sides. It's always something. -Rev. Norb (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

FLYING OVER: We Are Outsiders: LP

Flying Over are a French garage punk band who take major cues from mainstays like the Buzzcocks and the Ramones while mixing in a bit of '90s garage rock attitude. In fact, the very first few notes that come from the turntable upon putting this on immediately makes me think of the intro chord progressions from "You Tear Me Up" off of the first Buzzcocks LP. There are certainly worse records that a band could take influence from, so you'll see no complaint from me. Overall, this is a solid, no-frills, fun rock'n'roll record, which, while not breaking any new ground, still mixes up enough swagger and catchy hooks to keep me interested. -Mark Twistworthy (Adrenalin Fix, adrenalinfixmusic.com)



Out of print for twenty years, LILYS' etheric second full-length LP, *Eccsme The Photon Band*, has become a Shoegaze collector's favorite.

PASS THE DUST... was the only LP released by legendary Dangerhouse Records in late '79-- BLACK RANDY's funky revue-style songs are tight and yet loose, and he is still without peers.

BLACK RANDY AND THE METROSQUAD



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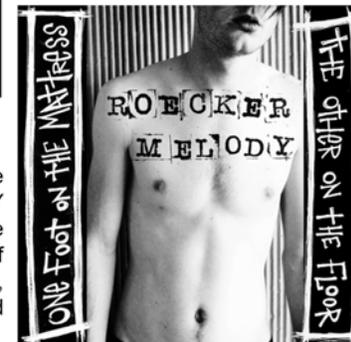
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It's hard to categorize ROECKER | MELODY because it's so—like the artists—bipolar, a mash of distortion, power chords, hooks, crooning vocals and unrivaled lyrical content.



CALIFORNIA is a Bay Area supergroup with Adam Pfahler (drums) from JAWBREAKER, Jason White (guitar & vocals) from GREEN DAY and Dustin Clark (bass) from THE INSIDES.



FREEZE, THE: *Someone's Bleeding*: 7"

Been a good long while since I last heard anything new by the Freeze, and this wasn't a disappointment. Dunno the vintage of the four tunes here, but by the sound, I'd guess two come from an older session and two of more recent vintage. Three are bang-on mid-tempo tunes with the band's prototypical mix of hardcore and oddly poppy sensibilities. The closer is a different rendition of "Sacrifice Not Suicide," a tune some might remember from the *Boston Not L.A.* comp. Nice to hear they're not only still kicking around, they're still coming up with quality tunes, too. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

GAS STATION OF LOVE / DEAD PAWNS: *Split*: CD

Badly recorded generic punk on side A, badly recorded Ween rock on side B. I hate to decry a release on recording quality, but sometimes the lo-fi is much too lo. More to the point, there was a way this could have been recorded to make it listenable, but it wasn't. Lo-fi can be a tool, an aesthetic which the music travels through. This is annoying. The difference between the two is all in how the artist controls the aesthetic to their advantage, which is an aspect that this record clearly lacks. No bueno. —Bryan Static (8 Up)

GENOCIDE PACT: *Forged through Domination*: LP

I had a theory that grind got big for a while because, similar to psychobilly,

the nuts and bolts seem easy to break down. Get a fast drummer and have your friend growl and you've got a grind band. I'm grind suspicious, but I love early Earache records, Napalm Death, Carcass, et cetera... Genocide Pact's *Forged through Domination* is one of the best grind albums I've heard in a long time and shows when it's well done, it has power. I've had a fan-like obsession with this record. I can't get enough of it. If you think grind is just something you do with blast beats, this album is an education. It has heavy production, Bolt Thrower fury, and great art. If you're into Earache '88 or Assück, this is a winner. Really essential. —Billups Allen (A389, a389recordings.bandcamp)

GIZ MEDIUM: *Waiting for the Fall*: CS

Giz Medium is another offering in today's seemingly endless panoply of cassette-issued scrap punk. (Or so I take it, for good or ill.) The songs rock to a certain degree, but the musicianship got just a bit too sloppy for me at times. I feel like I've heard all these songs before. Thus, I tuned out kind of quick. Not bad, but I'm suffering from a glut of this sort of thing recently. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Bus Stop Press)

GROWN APART: *Fun Extractor*: CD

Eleven tracks of melodic Ameri-punk by way of the U.K. I have to say there is some very impressive bellowing going on here to match the muscular guitar crunch. What's that? Some singalong-y gang vocals? Sign me up,

captain. Bonus points for the awesome package art courtesy of Iron Chic's Jason Lubrano. —Garrett Barnwell (Self-released)

GROWWING PAINS: *I Always Know*: 7" EP

Lo-fi poppy, surfy, post punk cowboys? A little sunny, simple, and sweet, Growwing Pains brings the charm. *I Always Know* is the sound of a summer fling, a budding romance, and your toes in the wet sand. I heart Growwing Pains. Swoon! —Jackie Rusted (Volar, volarrecords.bigcartel.com)

HEAVY TIMES: *Self-titled*: 7"

Picture a long shot. A cloud of dust breaks on the horizon. A speeding vehicle comes closer and closer, its image distorted by a mirage. It's hot. It's really fucking hot. Cut to a close-up on the driver. He's wearing a bandana around his mouth to protect from the desert elements. His windshield is gone. There are bullet holes in the seat cushions and a torn and taped picture of someone very important on the dashboard. Whoever wrote this Heavy Times EP should be doing film music somewhere. Think of car chases and dystopian nightmares. Killers with mechanical body parts and antiheroes with a soft side. Heavy times is part synth throwback, part gothic club music, part post-punk daydreams. The standout track for me is "Coptic Rot." —John Mule (Randy, randyrecords.bandcamp.com)

HIGHER STATE, THE: *27*: LP

This latest release from The Higher State is another solid load of *Back from the Grave*-inspired, pre-punk fuzz. Their fourth album shows the band has it down without losing the chaos. The keyboards are ethereal and the distorted guitars are driving. A lot of these types of bands seek out the vintage equipment that helps create the sound, but there's some magic in this record that can't be created by scanning Craigslist obsessively. The vintage sound creates a din, burning off the hot sidewalk into a haze of Hollies-inspired vocal harmonies. It sounds old but moves like a teenager. It's a winner for fans of Teenage Shutdown, Texas psych, or desert sunsets. —Billups Allen (13 O'Clock)

HOT MAYONNAISE: *Heavy Moments*: CS

With a band name so gag-inducing it would make the most vile grindcore act nod in grudging respect, Hot Mayonnaise has a pretty convincing swamp-boogie '70s thing going on here. Bluesy and swaggering, solo-heavy, with a gravel-voiced guy behind the mic; the whole outfit reminds me of that time The Heretics covered "Mississippi Queen." Worst band name ever, but a decent—if a little paint-by-numbers—rock/blues band. —Keith Rosson (Jelly)

HUNCHES, THE: *Self-titled*: LP

Almost Ready pulls outta the ether an aborted 2001 album session from these

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Portland malcontents, and it's a doozy. I vaguely remember being unimpressed with something else I'd heard from them, but this bad boy comes off like a long lost Dead Boys session, had they survived into the '00s with some nasty speed habits intact. Untamed, caustic, and up to its eyeballs in attitude, this'll do you solid, punk. -Jimmy Alvarado (Almost Ready)

**IMAGINARY SONS:
Don't Impress Me: CD**

Though they dip their toes in a variety of influential pools—rock, psychedelia, swampy rock, a bit of punk, even a tinge of rap—at their core Imaginary Sons is a rock band, and a solid one at that. Meat and potatoes delivery masks a level of musicianship that sometimes seems ever more rare the closer one gets to crossing over the "mainstream" line. The diversity of sounds lends the whole package a bit more wings to keep the listener holding on for the ride just a bit longer than they would if things were kept in the same gear. Gotta admit, I was a bit skeptical when it started, and they're swimming in tides I don't usually sun next to these days, but they've handily, and rightly, earned a nod of respect here. -Jimmy Alvarado (Bossy Lil Thing, bossylilthingrecords.com)

**INCREDIBLE KIDDA BAND, THE:
"Bullet in My Heart" b/w "The Girl Said No": 7"**

The legacy of The Incredible Kidda Band remains clouded in obscurity.

Kidda burned brightly and quickly in England during a relatively short period of time in the late '70s and early '80s. Most of the material remains unreleased. Last Laugh has been slowly putting out 7"s of their material over the years. Each one makes you want more if you have ears for power pop. If you're a fan of Plimsouls and The Real Kids, Last Laugh should be your next stop. The solid material keeps coming. This recent release is infectious and raw. It's an essential soundtrack for Friday nights after eleven, or if you ever get that date with Jennifer Jason Leigh. -Billups Allen (Last Laugh)

**INFERNAL DIATRIBE /
SLOW CHILDREN: Split: 7"**

Infernal Diatribe is the new name for the well-established Dover, NH hardcore band The Nasty. Their side of this split features four new recordings of old Nasty hits. They play fast New York hardcore, replete with slowed down breakdowns for clomping around. It's about as good as this subgenre gets these days. Slow Children are anything but slow, with a similar vibe, plus the addition of a bit of a more contemporary influence. All three of their songs included here are also on the new Slow Children full-length. There is nothing earth shattering about this record, but it's fun enough for an outsider to envision fans of either of these bands going crazy over it. -Art Ettinger (Pine Hill, pinehillrecords.com)

ISOLIERBAND: Kontrolle +: 12"

Isolierband is the synth-pop brainchild of Bernd Zimmerman whose musical career spanned two decades ('79-'99). That's about as much as I can tell you about the man since there isn't much information printed on the album's gatefold other than a year-by-year timeline of the groups he was involved in. The internet yielded limited results, as the name Bernd Zimmerman appears to be quite common in Germany with much more information available on the neo-classical composer and architect of the same name. The primitive-sounding nature of the recordings seems to indicate that these tracks have been pulled directly from the source of rehearsal and demo tapes. Musically, it certainly falls somewhere in between English post-punk stalwarts Joy Division and German avant-garde pioneers Kraftwerk, although much more minimalist in delivery. Admittedly, my knowledge and appreciation for post-punk is limited at best. However, I have a sneaking suspicion that there are some diehards who are going to be thrilled to finally have access to these songs on vinyl. -Juan Espinosa (Red Lounge, redloungerecords.com)

**IVAN THE TOLERABLE:
Gentle Blood Blue: CS**

Ivan is getting at something that I wholeheartedly believe punk is in desperate need of: imagination. The second this cassette started to play, I immediately thought of Captain Beefheart then, naturally, Frank Zappa.

And while this cassette pushes limits that need to be pushed, it doesn't sit well with me. I highly encourage fans of the formerly mentioned legends to give *Gentle Blue Blood* a listen on bandcamp or by purchasing a copy of this cassette. For me, this cassette is a heavyweight in imagination and a featherweight in application. -Jon Mule (Forward Fast Tapes)

**JEFF RUNNINGS:
Primitives and Smalls: CD**

Has the umbrella term "underground music" expanded too broadly? I can't make that call, and maybe someone more open-minded would describe this as melancholic electronic dreampop and leave it at that. But it kind of just sounds like Enya without the ethereal pop sensibilities to me. Sorry, wrong audience; can't do it. -Indiana Laub (SaintMarie, wyatt@saintmarierrecords.com, saintmarierrecords.com)

JONI EKMAN: Self-titled: LP

Joni Ekman is a Finnish punk and the man behind a laundry list of bands I'm not at all familiar with. Here, on his debut solo album, Ekman plays every instrument on an album of raw, garage rock'n'roll tunes. Guitar is clearly Ekman's strength, as the Chuck Berry riffs and leads are written and played to perfection. Ekman's entirely Finnish lead vocals alternate between a nasally Leonard Phillips thing and a falsetto style. While odd at first, after a couple songs it feels right for the lo-fi music surrounding it. From

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straight-up rock 'n' roll to jangly power pop, and ending on what sounds like a traditional folk song (reminiscent of AC/DC's Scottish-style B side oddity "Fling Thing"), this is a solid debut solo outing. —Chad Williams (Blast Of Silence, info@blastofsilence.com)

KILLER BEES: *Buzz'n around Town: 7"*
Generic by-the-numbers glam punk. Then you read that it was recorded in 1979 and you have to reconsider the whole time frame. But even comparing it to its contemporaries, it's hard to take it as anything but a cheap Johnny Thunders riff. This is no lost masterpiece. —Bryan Static (Windian)

KITCHEN'S FLOOR: *Battle of Brisbane: LP*
An Aussie band stripping things to the bare minimum structure-wise, at times going the dirge-punk route a la Flipper with clean channel guitars, and at other times flirting with a woozy, almost psychedelic shoegaze hybrid sound. Then just when you think you have 'em pegged, they break out the acoustic guitars. I've said it before: dunno what the fuck it is about Australia as a country, but the bands that come out of that part of the world have an uncanny knack of making the most musically with very little, and this is no exception. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

KLAM: *The Concrete Vagina: CS*
Shoegaze meets post-punk in this spacey, reverb-drenched daydream

of an EP. Heavy on the lo-fi '80s key effects and doom-laden minor chords, *The Concrete Vagina* offers plenty of pleasant, yet unimaginative doses of droning nostalgia in its five original A side songs. Fittingly, the triteness continues on side B with six syrupy, saccharine cover songs. Mimicry is the best form of flattery, but if Klam can break free of their idols' influence and focus more on honing a sound of their own, their next EP will be something worth purchasing. —Simone Carter (Land Animal Tapes)

KNEST: *Honorary Bachelors of Arts: CD*
Dissonant and minimal, each completely improvised song of Knest's debut album perfectly leads into the next. *Honorary Bachelors of Arts* was recorded in (what must have been) one incredibly exhausting day, and the fourteen free-form jazz-inspired tracks take you on a journey through a dense and treacherous sonic forest. Impressively, Knest is comprised of only three members. Piano, saxophone, guitar, cello, vibraphone, and marimba make up just a few of the fourteen instruments used to build their eerie, shadowy tone. At times veering toward the modern and groovy, like current reigning jazz lords BadBadNotGood and The Bad Plus, and at other times reminiscent of Jonny Greenwood's cinematic solo work, Knest has a scarily keen knack for composition. —Simone Carter (Self Sabotage, knest.bandcamp.com)

LAST CHAOS: *Only Fit for Ghosts: LP*
Blown-out, reverb-drenched, gloriously sloppy hardcore straight outta Brisbane. A Discharge influence is present, but the band is so spazzed out, odds are you won't really notice unless yer paying attention. Tempos range from mid-gear to gallop, but man, what a racket they make. —Jimmy Alvarado (SPHC, sphcrecords.bandcamp.com)

LAURICE: *G.A.Y.D.A.R.: LP/CD*
The back cover of the LP states that Laurice is a pioneer of gay activism and music, and that this LP "is totally gay from the first track to the last." I can't speak to Laurice's status as a pioneer (though have no reason to doubt it), but I can attest that this is record is gay from beginning to end. Every song has a strong male-on-male sex theme, tackling topics such as large wieners likely to destroy assholes, fisting, future oral sexcapades with current lovers, lost love, and more. The music is electronic and dance-y, falling somewhere between a minimalistic Helen Love and a minimalistic Divine. With multiple listens, the record gets kind of catchy, in part because of Laurice's vocals attempting to match the music. However, overall, the record is a bit too minimalistic, as it falls short of hitting the level of catchiness of the two previously mentioned artists, or the level of intrigue that Suicide managed to pull off. Still may be worth checking out if any of this sounds appealing to you. My copy came with a page torn out from a male nude mag (with full

nudity, but of only one dude) and promo photo of a (younger) Laurice. —Vincent (Mighty Mouth)

LENGUAS LARGAS: *Abba Daddy: LP*
Tucson's legendary Lenguas Largas back it again with their follow up to 2014's critically acclaimed *Come On In*. Traversing musical influences into a complex web of sounds is what the group has become known for—while defying genre classification and definition, even in the minds of the group themselves. So although it's easy to describe them as an "indie-psych-soul-garage" band, it's nearly impossible to find just one song that encapsulates the band's sound as just that. That being said, this is perhaps the first Lenguas record that I have listened to that has a much more straight-forward approach to accessible songwriting without diluting any of the layers upon layers of musical influence. And yet it's puzzling why these guys aren't featured on any hip web-only music blogs or magazines which claim to support the alternative. Be that as it may, I'll continue to support the Lenguas whether they're playing a dank bar show surrounded by friends or opening up for a better known (but usually not better) band. —Juan Espinosa (Red Lounge)

LIPPIES, THE: *Self-titled: CD*
I couldn't help but think that The Lippies is comprised of band nerds. They are super precise, don't skip a beat, the vocals are incredibly skilled,

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and it's completely by the playbook. Pop punk melodies are trite with cheap frills and slick riffs. Jagged edges? Please, just one? I was bored. Plus, with songs like "Friend Zone," "Fuck the Customer," and "Basic Boy," I was thinking that these must be young people problems. But really, I wanted to like this. There's a menstrual cup that is gushing and overflowing on the back cover... unfortunately, The Lippies don't deliver any blood, guts, or glory. —Camylle Reynolds (Red Scare, redscare.net)

LOCK: The Cycle: 7" EP

Straight-ahead, gruff-vocaled hardcore—zippy beats, muscular delivery, and requisite Negative Approach influence not too far under the surface. At certain points it was kinda fun to pretend the singer was a pro wrestler delivering a withering rant about some faceless nemesis. Not intended as a dis, merely an admission that sometimes shit like that happens. —Jimmy Alvarado (Iron Lung)

MAD DOCTORS / SUN VOYAGER:

Split: 7"

Brooklyn's Mad Doctors join forces with fellow Brooklynites Sun Voyager for this split single. Mad Doctors craft a blend of punk'n'roll with a hint of surf on the A Side track "Rusty Knife." There should be a warning label that you must like reverb to listen to this, because if you don't, this song will surely cut your eardrums until they bleed. If you're like me and love jangly

guitars, then you'll be sure to check up on whatever experiments the Mad Doctors unleash next. I wasn't as much of a fan of Sun Voyager on first listen. The more I listened to it, the more it grew on me, to the point that I think I prefer Sun Voyager over Mad Doctors. While "Ghost Valley," starts out a bit slow, when it crashes into full gear, it's quite a psyched-out burner. The Mad Doctors track was good for what it was, but didn't hold up as well after repeated listens. —Paul J. Comeau (King Pizza, kingpizzarecords.bandcamp.com)

MANIAC: Midnight Kino: 7"

Maniac are back with another two-song blaster, and on my favorite record label no less! They may be based in Los Angeles, but there is no denying that Maniac is a Pacific Northwest band at their heart. In the post-grunge world, the Pacific Northwest (or Pacific Southwest to me, since I am just above the border) has made a name for itself for amazing, snotty punk rock that gets you moving. From The Briefs and Exploding Hearts, to The Girls and Clorox Girls (both of whom have members now in Maniac), there is a steady stream of killer bands cutting a swath or radness through the rainforest... And yeah, Maniac is a part of that even though they live way the hell down the I-5. Anyways, they are continuing on with the sound that made their debut LP *Demimonde* one of the best albums of 2015. It is frustrating to no end that years go by between releases on Modern Action, but they

can be somewhat forgiven when they jump back in with a Maniac single. Do what you have to in order to get a copy of this. Sell an organ. It will be worth it. —Ty Stranglehold (Modern Action)

MAX LEVINE ENSEMBLE, THE:

Backlash, Baby: LP

I'd seen The Max Levine Ensemble's name around for seemingly forever, but I have no recollection of ever knowingly listening to them. I had associated the band with Plan-It-X and thought they would be folky pop punk. Well, now I feel as though I've maligned The MLE. Within moments of the record's start, they hit on the Ergs side of pop punk the spectrum, and definitely call to mind the Ergs themselves. Although the band contends they're biting Paul Simon and Pixies, I still hear Ergs. That said, you'd be hard up to find your typical (or atypical) pop punk songs about girls and love herein. Rather, the lyrics are contemplative, tending to reflect on the inner turmoil that occurs when trying to find a fair way to live in the exterior political and social climate. For sure, positive vibes throughout, despite the struggle presented. Maybe it's just because I got something I didn't expect here, but I found *Backlash, Baby* to be a refreshing take on the genre (save for the upstrokes on "Shadow of Death"). The record also features guest appearances by Jeff Rosenstock and Sheena Ozella. Mine is on pinkish-purple colored vinyl. There's probably a color that more accurately describes the vinyl's appearance, but I don't

work for Pantone, so I ain't knowin' stuff like that. —Vincent (Rumbletowne / lameorecords.limitedrun.com)

MDC: Elvis in the Rhineland—Live in Berlin: LP

If you think you can't be bored by a band called Millions Of Dead Cops singing "John Wayne Was a Nazi" to actual Germans a year before the Berlin Wall came down then, sure, you can think that. Maybe it's the late '80s power snare/crossover sheen that I can't hang with. At one point Dave Dictor says, "A lot of smart people try to tell you there's not enough food in the world and I think they're chock full of shit," and the audience has no reaction to that, then MDC plays "Chock Full of Shit." Was this an issue in 1988? One side said we need more food and the other side says no, we have plenty? Many years later this moment is remastered and pressed onto very nice red vinyl, along with about five hundred riffs and one cover of "Jailhouse Rock" with the chorus changed to "Dead Cops Rock." Scandalous. —Matt Werts (Beer City)

MDC: Hey Cop! If I Had a Face Like Yours: LP
MDC: Shades of Brown: LP

Fully admit I didn't keep up with MDC from tail end of the '80s through the '90s, largely 'cause I found myself focusing more on the local underground music scene than the greater punk scene during that period, so there's a chunk of their discography between *This Blood's for You* and *Magnus Dominus*



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Corpus that is wholly new to me, including the two albums under discussion here. *Hey Cop...*, their fifth album, sees them frequently ratcheting back from the wild tempo, free-jazz-inflected thrash that quickly became their trademark in band's early years. The lyrics remained topical as ever—"Millions Of Dead Cops" even references the then-recent killing of Circle One vocalist John Macias by the Santa Monica Police, as well as inflected with doses of sly humor. The song structures themselves are still fairly complex, and blasts of speed still pop up throughout. But you also get a song like "Black Christmas," which sounds like a (Canadian) Subhumans outtake, and the downright anthemic "Moneypile" mixed in with ragers like "Crime of Rape" and "To Gig and Die in L.A." *Shades of Brown*, their sixth album, continues along the same lines, with consistently stronger songwriting in evidence and a bit more eclecticism in delivery. Production is spot on and I'd venture to say it's now my second favorite MDC album, after their debut. Based on both these releases, it's pretty clear they were still on point long after hardcore's supposed "salad days." Kudos and thanks to Beer City for getting these out to the masses once again. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

MDC: Millions of Damn Christians: LP
Yet another crucial Beer City re-issue of a bygone classic. Listen, do I need every MDC LP from the last thirty years? No. Do I need to go see the

scab MDC play in Oakland in 2016? No. Am I happy that one of the more crucial political hardcore bands of the last thirty years is still active and still playing parties and backyards? Yes. This LP is their third and the last I actively listened to. It fully holds up some twenty-eight years later—fierce, breakneck hardcore chock full of anti-religious, anti-state, and anti-police rhetoric—definite stable mates to the Dead Kennedys et al of the day. Back in the late '80s, I had Millions Of Dead Cops on the back of my studded jacket in rural England and that caused a stir. Imagine that shit in Reagan-era America?! Yikes (the track "Bye Bye Ronnie" is a personal fave). Along with the recent reissues of their first LP and the *Smoke Signals* LP, this is a crucial addition to your collection if you aren't old as fuck and bought it back in the day like me. Must have. —Tim Brooks (Beer City, beercity.com)

MEAN JEANS: "Night Vision" b/w "Now I Wanna Be Yr Dogg," "69 Tears": 7"

Said it before and I'll say it again, while not completely derivative of the Ramones, Mean Jeans are the band that I think Joey and the gang would be playing in if they were still around today. These three tracks are the precursor to their first Fat full length, *Tight New Dimension* (full disclosure, I did just interview them about this for *New Noise* magazine). This band out of Portland, Ore. has never operated in an expected fashion, and their signing to

Fat came about with just a simple email to the label. This carries through to the packaging, which is only a 7", small lyric sheet, and a cardboard sleeve. All the rest of the effort is shoved into the grooves of this record. "Now I Wanna Be Yr Dogg" is an exclusive, sandwiched between songs from the LP, and while the title is reminiscent of The Stooges, that's the only thing the two have in common. It's a speedy, power pop anthem with backing vocals and an undulating cadence, sprinkled with a sweet solo in the middle. Every song is emblematic of being young, eating pizza, drinking, and pogoing. A surefire dance record. —Kayla Greet (Fat Wreck)

MEAN JEANS: Tight New Dimension: CD/LP

I have loved Mean Jeans since the first time I heard them. They've always taken that irreverent, have fun at all costs attitude to the next level. I like stupid fun, because I am a stupid fun kind of guy. Every time I hear they're putting out a new album, I get excited. This was no exception. I will admit I was a little shocked at how clean the production is. That quickly wore off when I realized that the Jeans are as hopped up on goofballs as they ever were. They just seem to have spent a little more time in the studio. No matter what, the end result is the same. *Tight New Dimension* is a Friday afternoon of a long weekend kind of album. You'll be jumping up and down with a grin splitting your face and not a care

in the world for at least two days. This is Mean Jeans' *End of the Century*. —Ty Stranglehold (Fat)

MIKE ADAMS AT HIS HONEST WEIGHT: Casino Drone: CD/LP

Mike Adams is a musician who has always been on the periphery of my musical spectrum. That's changed with his latest album, *Casino Drone*. He is now squarely in my sights. Despite the odd band name, Mike Adams At His Honest Weight plays totally serious, blessed-out indie pop. The biggest influence I hear is Starflyer 59, but there's also a healthy dose of Beach Boys and the Cars. Adams is great at throwing down some legit melodies and grooves. Most of the album is cool, genuine, and relaxed, but not boring. The wailing, pleading guitars on "Underneath the Door" are killer, while the chugga-chugga guitar riff on "Diem Be" sounds like it might've been taken from a hardcore song (although this is surely the heaviest the band gets). This is certainly the band's best album, and should be in the collection of anyone who likes strong melodies and music made for driving around in the summer with the windows rolled down. —Kurt Morris (Joyful Noise)

MISCHIEF BREW: Smash the Windows: LP

Mischief Brew has been kicking around their folk-circus-gypsy-punk long enough to see this, a beautiful 180 gram, well-packaged reissue of their first LP. Petersen's Brew crew has been



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kicking around the scene, bouncing from involvement in Food Not Bombs and other protest movements to supporting rags (such as this one) through consistent advertising, as often and reliably as they change genres musically. Scattered and not for the myopic at worst; expansive, idealistic, and a grand musical journey well deserving of a fresh look after too long out of print at best. —Matt Seward (Fistolo, fistolo.com)

MITYLION: Nite Flite: LP

Chilled-out dance rock brought to you by Lifetime vocalist Ari Katz. Boy, do I feel outclassed by the music. Is it well written? I certainly don't have any complaints. How many Lifetime fans will be willing to brave this transition? Probably a sizeable enough number. I can't really recommend this on a personal level, but if you're a diehard Lifetime fan it's interesting to see a well-known voice stretch their legs in a different direction. Where would we be as a species if we didn't know that Greg Graffin from Bad Religion liked to folk rock out sometimes? —Bryan Static (Don Giovanni)

MIZZERABLES, THE: As I Am: CD

As I Am from Chicago's The Mizzerables feels like the musical incarnation of a shitty boyfriend. It reels you in with some low-hanging social awareness, but offers only Peter Pan fantasies, self-righteous defensiveness, arrested development ennui, you're-crying-but-let's-talk-about-my-feelingsnarcissism,

equivocation and condescension, femme fatale reductionism, and... I don't even know, you guys, things got really weird around "Second Hand Lover," and I didn't feel safe, so I spent the night at a friend's house. Adhering to pop punk tradition, women are omnipresent on *As I Am*, but exist only as dehumanized bodies crammed inside wicker men and set ablaze to appease emotionally stunted gods. Musically, while all twelve tracks show potential, when grouped together, they sound like the product of a band trying to meet their quotas: pop punk, check; folk punk, check; ska punk, check; good time rock'n'roll, check; radio-friendly monster ballad, unfortunately, check. The whole endeavor feels suspiciously self-serving, promising listeners genre-bending and big ideas and compelling human emotion, only to decide it wants to "keep its options open" and navel-gaze. To be frank, I'm reticent to be this critical of it. I almost expect the digipak to look up at me, call me a "crazy bitter bitch" who just doesn't understand it, and storm out of the room. —Kelley O'Death (Whoa!)

MIZZERABLES, THE: Every Last Stitch: CD

You've got a dilemma. You want to listen to loud and angry punk rock. But when you do, your mom gets worried that you're going to hell. Well, have I got a solution for you: It's the Mizzerables! This disc has just enough sneer so you can still tell your friends that you listen to punk, but it's clean,

friendly, and catchy enough to get mom on board. No more child-parent shouting matches for you. The only shouting you and mom will do is when you sing along to the Mizzerables together! —MP Johnson (Whoa!)

MONEY SHOT, THE: Hard Roc: CD

Porn reference band name, ironic lame-o cover art, and song titles like "Raw Dog" and "My Cock"—things are not off to a good start. The music is dull and the kinda thing anyone who goes to shows regularly has suffered through many times. Their label says they are "loud, obnoxious, and offensive." I say they are dull and boring punk-by-numbers. —Mike Frame (Killing Horse, killinghorserecords.com)

MY MAN MIKE: I'm Pregnant: LP

"What the hell is this?" That's what I immediately said to myself once I put this record on. It started like some methamphetamine punk rock and then the vocals came in. The vocals are mixed in really low and juggle between a guttural yell and a high-pitched squeal. After a little research, I found out that these guys are from Seoul, South Korea. If you're a fan of thrashcore and want to branch out of the U.S., these are your guys. —Ryan Nichols (5 Feet Under)

NAILS:

You Will Never Be One of Us: CD/LP

The third album from Nails is their most brutal (and their lengthiest—clocking in at an impressive twenty-

two minutes). Most of the songs are under two minutes, but the three-piece has expanded their sound with the grinding, sludgy closer, "They Come Crawling Back." It's more than a third of the entire album length. For the majority of these ten songs, however, Nails play ferocious, short bursts of hardcore. They obliterate, they pummel, they burn, and then they're done—on to the next one. The sound is concise, ferocious, and filled with one emotion: anger. If you can get behind all that (and I certainly can) this is the album for you. —Kurt Morris (Nuclear Blast)

NATURE BOYS: Self-titled: CS

There's something so jarringly off-kilter and feral about this, and I love it. The warbling melodies somehow sound perfectly natural, but they're weird as hell. There's a twangy eeriness in this, like something out of a gothic Western. It's like X's lonesome highway desolation at breakneck speeds. Or maybe it's a more dangerous, unpredictable take on The Marked Men's raw-nerve pop. I said it was weird. Under the lo-fi murk of the recording, the performances are impeccably tight, just rollicking along like barely bridled chaos. Am I out of the loop or should more people be talking about this band? Nature Boys are bringing something strange and new to the table, and I'm in. —Indiana Laub (Self-released, natureboysrocknroll.com)

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NEUTRON RATS/ROTTEN U.K.: *Fathers Shite out the Sons Arse a Country Fit for Wanker Cunts: Split: Flexi 7" EP*

Fun little flexi with two solid covers of UK82 bands, the Mau Maus and Undead. Neutron Rats blast out an unrecognizable, maniacal hardcore take on "Society's Rejects." And Rotten U.K. covers the Undead's "Sanctuary," and you know what, I think it's better than the original. —Camylle Reynolds (Gremlin Pogo)

NIGHTMEN:

Fifteen Minutes of Pain: LP/CD

This is Swedish garage rock'n'roll with hints of power pop and glam which carries a strong 1970s vibe both musically and visually, the latter being highlighted by the picture of the band on the cover. I'll admit that on the first run through I was unmoved by this as it all seemed a bit messy, but when I was able to give it a more considered listen I was gradually won over. There are plenty of good hooks and tunes to be found—and with three vocalists there is plenty of variety in that respect—helping to add a few different flavors to a fairly basic musical approach. There is one blot on the landscape, though, in the form of some truly dire vocals on "I Need You," which ruin the song completely. —Rich Cocksedge (Lövely, info@llyrecords.com, llyrecords.com)

NOTCHES: *Huge: 7"*

Hey, this is pretty good! Pop punk by means of first wave emo and '90s indie rock. Think along the

lines of Summer Vacation or Salinas Records' catalog. There's a dual vocal underlining to the songs that lets the vocals swim and shine a little. Hell, if there were a little more dreamy haze to the production, this might almost be a shoegaze record. Thankfully, we live in a universe where Notches knew to use some restraint and gave us this little gem. I want an album now. —Bryan Static (Hip Kid, hipkidrecords.blogspot.com / Young Modern, youngmodern.storenvy.com / Cat Dead Details Later, catdeadrecs.org)

NOTHING BAND: *Infinity Style: CS*

A cassette fulla noisy, blown-out avant punk. They probably like the Screamers and Electric Eels a whole lot and do a good job with the style in general. Not the kinda thing I would sit around and listen to, but would probably be quite good in a live setting. The recording has the feel of the early, pre-LP era of the A Frames as well, so if you like your punk weird and noisy, you would probably really like this. —Mike Frame (24/7 Tapes, nothing-band.bandcamp.com)

OAF: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

Screechy, fucked up, and loud, these cats are doing to hardcore what Step Dads did for trash punk. Songs never get too fast or too slow, sound is blown out but not unlistenable, and the tunes themselves are riff-oriented, but know when to make a graceful exit. Thumbs way up. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

OIL WAVE SURFERS: *Oil Wave Surfers II: CS*

Originally recorded in 2006, this is an instrumental collage of sounds that range from industrial feedback to jazzy—at times grating and at times groovy—and consistently driven by sludgy, eerie riffs that make me think of nominally malevolent nightbreeds prowling the gutter. I don't listen to a lot of stuff like this, so it's difficult for me to come up with an adequate description or even an appropriate comparison. I guess the closest I can get is that it's like a more experimental version of the Tunnel Of Love, sans lyrics. —The Lord Kveldulfr (C/Site)

PEARS: *Green Star: CD*

NOLA's Pears are still a baby band—having formed in 2014, they are now in their "terrible twos"—but they've quickly become the unofficial darlings of the punk rock world. Well, maybe it's official now that they've signed to Fat Wreck Chords and delivered *Green Star*, their most Pears-y release yet. The sixteen blink-and-you-might-miss-'em tracks on *Green Star* are rife with catchy riffage, crushing metallic breakdowns, wonderfully weird interludes that would make Mike Patton proud, and existential musings so hard, they would break your hand if you punched them—just ask frontman Zach Quinn! It is difficult not to be seduced by the band's off-kilter humor, insanely frenetic live show, and charming shitbag personas, but those who submit to their siren call will be

rewarded, not punished. Pears may be the "hot new band on the rise," but sometimes, the hype machine don't lie. —Kelley O'Death (Fat Wreck)

PEARS: *Green Star: LP*

Pears have refined their songwriting, melding their fast hardcore and melodic skate punk parts into something insanely high energy and stop-on-a-dime tight. It's too spazzy for my taste, but if the idea of playing an old Propagandhi LP on 45 appeals to you, you're gonna wanna snap this one up. —Chris Terry (Fat, fatwreck.com)

PELUQUERÍA CANINA:

Jovenes Promesas: LP

For the most part, these Spanish (label's outta Bakersfield, but the band's Facebook page says they hail from Madrid) punkers are grooving on a clean-channel guitar, slyly arty U.S. punk vibe straight outta 1979. Think Generación Suicida with a little less grit. Right around the middle, though, they drop the tune "Hilda Zaude," which is easily the hottest track here—haunting, hypnotic, feral. While the proceedings on the whole are quite good, that one tune alone is worth the price of admission, friends. —Jimmy Alvarado (Going Underground)

PINK BOLTS: *"Sex Gym" b/w "I Just Called to Say I Love Me": CS*

Mike Judge's TV show *King of the Hill* once proclaimed: people gave up on the cassing way too soon. Being into records, it's hard for me to take

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this stance, but I think it's obscene how bands are shelling out money to get expensive records pressed. Nobody wins in this scenario. Many are selling their half-baked band to their friends for inflated prices. It's just true in a lot of cases. Your band might not even suck; it doesn't mean you're ready to put out a record. 7"s pushed punk forward in a time when it was cheap to press a single and make it look relevant. It's a shame so many bands write a few songs and rush to be validated by spending too much money on expensive record pressing. I understand the desire. The excitement. But part of the excitement should be finding new ways to get music out. I'm convinced it's a problem and it doesn't seem to be going away. The punk thing to do is to fix it. Here is a band that put together a really nice cassingle. This is a great looking cassingle. The music is Devo-inspired with sarcastic-sounding vocals similar to Jello Biafra imitating other people. It's a fine cassingle. If you're into Devo, you should check it out. And you won't spend nineteen dollars. I guess. Unless this cassingle is nineteen dollars. In that case, I wouldn't spend nineteen dollars on it. Otherwise, pull the trigger on this if you're a fan of solid, retro electronica. It's a fun listen. —Billups Allen (Volar, volarrecords.bandcamp.com)

POISON BOYS: *Headed for Disaster: 7"*
Rock'n'roll punk is something that I can be incredibly picky with. I think the main reason is that I don't really

care about the majority about it. I don't really care all that much about all of the New York Dolls and Dead Boys clones out there in the world. Hell, I can barely be bothered to put on the originals so why would I bother with some wannabes? Well, the good news is that Poison Boys are actually really fucking good—stripped-down rock'n'roll with a bit of a mean streak and no overtly cartoonish personas to be heard. I could see these guys fitting in with what was going on with Junk Records back in the '00s. No Front Teeth is still bringing the quality after all these years! —Ty Stranglehold (No Front Teeth)

PRESSING ON: *No Defeat No Capitulation: 12"*

Fuck! I'm trying to review this, but I keep flipping over my kitchen table and slam-dancing when a new song starts! Pressing On are gnarly looking older dudes who get right to the point with eight songs of marauding hardcore. From the lyrics to the riffs to the song lengths, everything is streamlined for maximum impact. I think those are d-beat drums, and some of it reminds me of Deaththreat or Copout. Pressing On are from Portland and feature members of Talk Is Poison, From Ashes Rise, and Raw Nerve. If you like those bands, or feel like rearranging your apartment, you'd be a fool not to throw this on. This is a remastered, vinyl version of their recent cassette. —Chris Terry (Deranged, derangedrecords.com)

PRIVATE ROOM: *"Life Com" b/w "Gourmet Pez": 7"*
Remember Walls? This is what they're doing now. Is it as good as Walls? No, it's better. They still bring aggression, noise, and fury, but Private Room leans more towards the hardcore punk end of the spectrum—the vocals even have a slight youth crew revival bent. "Life Com" is an original, which, after reading the lyrics, appears to be about smartphone/social media dependency. A definite ripper. The backside is a cover of Man Is The Bastard. Not only does Private Room do MITB justice, they may even show them up. This 7" appears to a teaser for a forthcoming full-length. Again, this features most of Walls and is on Iron Lung. You know what you'd be getting yourself into if ya pick this one up: good stuff. —Vincent (Iron Lung)

PSYCHIC TEENS: *Nerve: LP*
Mix of sounds from different regions of the underground's darker corners coupled in spots with poppier elements. Echoes of the brutal post-punk of The Mark Of Cain, Snake Corps' loud-guitar goth pop, My Bloody Valentine's howl, and even a bit of Iggy in the vocals can be heard clinging to the spine. I definitely can dig it. —Jimmy Alvarado (SRA, srarecords.com)

PUSSY-COW: *A Photograph of the Time We Laughed: 7"*
I absolutely adore this record! *Razorcake*'s own Joe Dana provides the vocals on these four new, hilarious

Pu\$\$y-Cow tunes about key topical issues like drinking at a straight edge wedding. Comedic, jokey bands can be hard to stomach when the music accompanying the chuckles can't carry its own weight, but that's never an issue for Pu\$\$y-Cow. Hopefully they'll put out another full-length soon, as these are some of the best songs they've delivered thus far. Catchy and spastic, this record might be brief, but it's long on talent. Plus, the packaging is beautiful, from the colored vinyl on down. It's definitely one of my favorite 7"s of the year. Do yourself a favor and check it out. —Art Ettinger (Chorizo Bonito, pussycow.bandcamp.com)

QUITTER: *Self-titled: 7"*
A Baltimore five-piece, Quitter is a loud, unrefined, and just plain old obnoxious post-punk synthesized nightmare. It's the type of ruckus that makes it impossible to think; even the liner notes look like a bad dream. I like it. Just not while trying to review it. Great stuff, so I think that'll do, pig. —Jackie Rusted (Blow Blood, blow-blood.bandcamp.com)

RALPH WHITE & THOR HARRIS: *Tossing Pebbles on the Sleeping Beast: CD*
"I'm sitting here thinking of a cure for my insanity," Ralph White sings on this album he's done with Swans percussionist Thor Harris. It's a tough listen and more likely to drive one to insanity than being any sort of cure. White (formerly of Bad Livers) has

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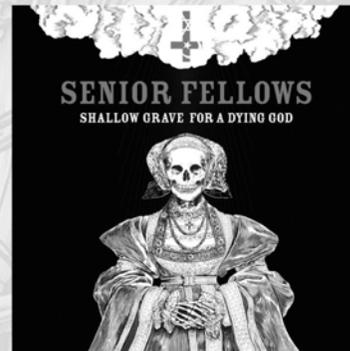
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an off-key yodel that accompanies his accordion and off-beat banjo playing. It's only when Harris is allowed to take front stage on the percussion (such as on the closer, "Canoe") that I was able to stomach this album. His marimba and vibes playing can be mesmerizing and serves as a welcome relief to the abrasive sound of White's banjo and voice. Not my thing but perhaps fans of the unique stylings of Bad Livers might dig this. —Kurt Morris (Self-Sabotage)

RAT TRAP: Constant Fear: 7" EP

Blistering, thrashy, political hardcore from Boston. Despite evident metallic influences, the songs are short and sweet, with lyrics explicitly decrying racism, religious fundamentalism, and governmental authority. Rat Trap seems like they'd be sick live but their Bandcamp page indicates that the group is now defunct, which is a shame. A choice lyric: "This nation is a nightmare ruled by a corpse." So true. This EP is tight. —Lyle (Pine Hill)

RAVI SHAVI: Self-titled: CD

Garage rock'n'roll with a bit of swagger to it, but nothing here quite manages to stick to the walls. —Jimmy Alvarado (Almost Ready)

RED KATE: Unamerican Activities: LP

The first thing that struck me about this release was Shaun Hamontree's cover art depicting three children using a bomb as a piñata, an image which is immediately striking and thought provoking. That alone allowed

me to enter the fray of Red Kate's sophomore album with high hopes. The opener "You Don't Speak for Me" didn't disappoint, with plenty of vigor angrily highlighting the gap between those in power and the majority of the population. Although some songs lean towards a more rock'n'roll sound, there's no lack of punch from start to finish either lyrically or musically. The final track is a really good version of "Heart of the City," originally a Nick Lowe B side from the first record released on Stiff Records back in 1976. —Rich Cocksedge (Black Site)

RED MASS: EP Rouge N.2: CD

This CD starts out on an old school industrial trip—the good stuff, before the sound got co-opted by metal in the '90s. Then it moves into more organic garage-y punk stuff. Soon it devolves into a bunch of banging and beeping and sexy French growling. That's when I realize that I'm staring at the guy on the cover who is painted silver and wearing an all-over-print tiger shirt while standing in front of a pentagram, and I'm totally hypnotized and the music doesn't even matter anymore. —MP Johnson (Mondo Mongo)

RED SQUARES: Modern Roll: 7"

A repress of the only single by an obscure Phoenix punk band, originally released in 1981 on Nanxiety. Both songs have subsequently appeared on different KBD installments, so I imagine an original copy is probably going for the same rate as a down

payment on a Tesla these days. The title track is a mid-tempo punker typical of the time, and the flip, "Time Change," is a tad zippier with more attitude, and definitely the pick of the two. Limited to five hundred copies, red vinyl, and a nice edition for those who care more about paying for the tunes than for status symbols collecting dust. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slope)

REPOS: Poser: LP

It's really hard for a hardcore band to put out a solid LP, and the odds are certainly stacked against being able to do it twice. I mean, if you really sit and think about it, the number of hardcore bands that put down two solid LPs is probably just a couple dozens, and it's not a list that's growing very fast. So, it's pretty crazy that the Repos are on their fourth full-length (if you count 2013's *Lost Still Losing*) and still seem fresh, relevant, and full of ideas. The last couple of years have seen the band put out several cassette releases and a couple of EPs that have all somehow consistently topped each other. I don't know how not to gush about this band, but their sound is constantly evolving and every release sees them playing with new ideas while still retaining the unique qualities that make them the Repos. *Poser* finds the band working within the riffs of mid-'80s USHC (think a little Poison Idea, a little early JFA, White Cross, and SSD) with some Japanese influence (Gauze), but not really sounding like anyone. It's clear they are fans of their

genre and constantly learning from it instead of aping it. They clean up ideas people had in the past and make them their own. The guitar on this record scorches through with a few frills on each song that pop in and out of the mix organically. The vocal phrasing, something I've always appreciated about the band, is top-notch here and accomplishes making the bleak, poetic verses that would otherwise feel pretentious or out of place sit right at home. The progression of ideas—both sonically and poetically—they've reached since just the last couple of 7"s is mind-blowing. Essential modern hardcore. —Jan Wise (Youth Attack)

RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS:

Massive Fraud: 7"

I have been a huge Gamblers fan for a long time. I have both my old pals on the Total Punk Radio message boards as well as this very magazine to thank for turning me onto what would become one of the most important bands in my life. Cheers, dudes! Here we are, more than a decade and stacks of records later. The boys have decided to do a 7" series this year with each one featuring an original tune and a cover on the B-side. This record is the third in the series. "Massive Fraud" is classic Gamblers. It's an up-tempo rocker with the hooks and leads that we've come to expect. It's very much in line with what was going on with their last LP, *The Wolf You Feed*. The cover this time out is none other than "Hate the Police" by The Dicks. Not only is this one of the

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most legendary Texas punk songs, but it has also been covered near perfectly by Mudhoney in the past. Does the Gamblers' version measure up? Like you need to ask. Their downright beautiful take on the song made all hair on my arms and the back of my neck stand up. It may be weird to hear from a Canadian like me, but Texas punk is the best punk. GFFG! –Ty Stranglehold (End Sounds)

RIXE: Les Nerfs a Vif: 7"

Four gritty foot stompers from this French outfit following on from last year's single released on the same label. There's a definite oi influence both musically and sartorially from this trio and despite a fairly straightforward approach, this record exudes anger and bile whilst remaining catchy and melodic. One of the best singles I've heard in a while. –Rich Cocksedge (La Vida Es Un Mus, lavidaesunmus.com)

SCENICS, THE: In the Summer. CD/LP

This is a collection of songs by the Toronto band, The Scenics, recorded in 1977 and '78. This was the kind of new wave/punk sound coming out of New York City at the same time but it appears it made its way to Toronto. These twelve songs haven't been released until now, and are an eclectic mix of what could be described as Canada's version of Talking Heads meets Television. The vocals are very reminiscent of David Byrne. I mean, like, really reminiscent. The music is kind of quirky but simple—it's as

though Talking Heads had a little more aggressive sound. If you have exhausted your collection of 1970s punk music, here's something new (so to speak) that would fit the bill. –Kurt Morris (Dream Tower, dreamtowerrecords.com)

SCORPION VS TARANTULA: Self-titled: 10"

This record starts off with a bang, offering two quick songs reminiscent of late-'90s Man's Ruin or Gearhead Records-style garage rock, bringing to mind something like the Hellcopters. That's where this record takes me after the first couple songs. Unfortunately, things get much worse with later songs regressing into an unwelcomed, mid-tempo bar rock territory that really emphasizes the "rock" side of the band causing me to lose any potential interest I might have in this release. The last song on the record almost reels me back in with its stereotypically garagy Farfisa organ which appeals to my deeply rooted "budget rock" leanings, but ultimately it's a case of "too little, too late" as the bad taste left in my mouth after listening to the previous trio of horrible bar rock songs is too strong to overcome. The three shortest and fastest songs on this release could make a killer 7", but we have an underwhelming six-song 10" record instead. –Mark Twistworthy (Slope)

SCULPTURE CLUB: A Place to Stand: CS

First the plug: if you are into DIY punk and indie music and you have

not downloaded Razorcake's Tear A Cognita series (for free!) then you are really missing out. I first heard Salt Lake City's Sculpture Club when they called themselves JAWWZZ!! and opened TAC #1 with their track, "Is Blooming Not a Sickness?" I like that track very much with its fuzzy bass lines, jangly guitars, and garage-goth appeal. Now I get to hear the full length under the band's new name and it does not disappoint. Great songwriting, solid musicianship, and thoroughly dark vibes make for one hell of a late night listening party. *A Place to Stand* is also the initial release (001) for Deli Boy Records whose online presence can be found on Facebook. Since when is Salt Lake City cool? –Jon Mule (Deli Boy)

SHADOW IN THE CRACKS: Self-titled: LP

Stompy, four-to-the-floor fuzz rock. A little Jay Reatard, a little King Khan and BBQ Show, a whole lot of swamp rock. It grows hypnotizing after a while. The beats dig into your brain and follow a simple melody. Time begins to lose meaning as the songs sprawl onwards. There's a bit too much echo in the mix for my taste, but, in general, the sounds resonate pretty well against each other. In the end, it's a minor nitpick, since the album as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Overall, worth a look. –Bryan Static (Goner)

SHEER ATTACK: Self-titled: 7"

Sheer Attack has that great early-'80s pre-hardcore sound when punk

was starting to get fast, but hadn't yet become an orgy of power chords and lightning-quick drumming. The lyrical content is rather conventional; titles such as "Bitter Seed" and "I Am the Nihilist" pretty much tell you what you're in for, but such conventionality was by no means a problem. Sheer Attack has the chops—my measure for bands such as this is whether or not they make me want to get into fights and/or break shit, and that's what Sheer Attack did. My only complaint is that one of the channels was recorded at a much lower level, so some stuff is almost impossible to hear without turning the volume way up. Which is fine, but then the rest of the mix kicks in and destroys what is left of my ancient, crotchety eardrums. Nonetheless, a good record—it grabs the gonads and doesn't let go. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Arkam)

SICKS, THE: Cutbait: 7"

I like this band. A whole lot. Catchy and caustic, the brief but memorable *Cutbait 7"* will leave you feeling feverish and ready to fight or fuck. With hooks sharp as tacks and a thudding, brash rhythm section, this EP is sure to leave a bruise. If this is what being sick feels like, I don't ever wanna get better. –Simone Carter (Mind Cure, thesicks.bandcamp.com)

SLICK: Self-titled: LP

There are a lot of bands coming from the San Francisco area using a variety of classic rock'n'roll tropes. I'm

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getting weary of the ones that “woo woo” as a party device. Not that I have anything directly against it, but it can get lost in the wash. *Slick* is tasteful. It’s a slab of punk’n’roll with the best of glam sensibilities. It’s a good record for both crowds. Are there crowds? “Dead in the Road” stands out with a catchy chorus and a solid guitar solo. “Your Band Sucks” is as funny as the title. “Telephone Tough Girl” has a rocking piano. The vocals are snotty and the album moves. There’s some Chuck Berry-style guitar chording. It isn’t afraid to be competent. It has everything I like. –Billups Allen (King Rocker)

SODA BOYS: Self-titled: 7”

Two tracks from a 4-track demo; I’m guessing of recent origin. The tunes are more on the “rock” end of punk rock, but the lo-fi sound gives the tunes a sheen that is sometimes reminiscent of Texas’s old school darlings the Hates. –Jimmy Alvarado (Total Punk)

SON OF A GUN: Self-titled: 7”

Son Of A Gun play punk music that you could dance to. Not run around and practice American football blocking techniques to, but actually walk up to someone and ask if they would like to cut a rug. Picture the party scenes in the 1979 film, *Quadrophenia*. Jangly guitars and howling backing vocals set the backdrop for really great, garage punk songwriting. This will be on heavy rotation for me. –John Mule (Lo-Fi Supply)

SORESPOT: Sewerage: CS

Weirdo “alt punk” from Chicago. I get the impression that these folks came of age in the early ‘90s because the songs have a lot of influence from early Weezer, Nirvana, and maybe a little Smashing Pumpkins. Lots of buzz on the guitars, slightly out-of-key vocals (doubled up on some parts), and pop hooks maintained in the instrumentation rather than the vocal melodies. They really win me over in sparse moments of outsider expressionism (“AM UFO Sighting”), but I’m assuming more people will find affinity in the melodic elements of the band. Recommended for fans of Pygmy Lush, Turboslut, and Torche. –Ian Wise (HeWhoCorrupts Inc., hewhocorruptsinc.com)

SOUPCANS: Soft Party: LP

Oddly inventive hardcore with a penchant for being a tad too noisy. Now, I’m no wimp when it comes to my noise levels, but there’s a certain point where my ears start to hurt. My complaint is only a functional complaint, because I find the actual content of the music to be quite interesting. If only all hardcore could be this diverse, maybe I could give a shit. It’s almost genreless, experimental at times in the way that the fringes of the ‘70s punk scene used to hit, but with dirtier production sensibilities. I wholeheartedly approve this weirdness, even if it physically hurts slightly. –Bryan Static (Telephone Explosion, telephoneexplosion.com)

SPAZZ: Sweatin’ to the Oldies (All the Out of Print Stuff ‘93-‘96): CD

A reissue of a long out of print CD compiling all or most of the Bay Area powerviolence band’s earliest recordings originally released by Slap A Ham Records in 1997. Spazz arose from the ashes of the first powerviolence wave and immediately reinvigorated it with a sense of humor (both about themselves and the underground music scene) not typically associated with the genre’s previous political and nihilistically charged themes. This collection includes songs from their debut 7” and a multitude of splits and compilations. Song lengths are usually anywhere from ten seconds to a minute, so naturally this disc features a whopping sixty-four tracks of their brand of “Satanic goofcore.” Speaking of which, the lyrical matter was most definitely lighthearted, with themes ranging from disdain for ravers (“Droppin’ Many Ravers”), emo bullshit (“Hug Yourself”), skateboarding (“Donger”), kung-fu and Asian action films (“Spazz Vs. Mother Nature”, “Hard Boiled”) and taking jabs at their friends (“Hot Dog Water Popsicle in the Hand of Eric Wood”). It’s song after song of powerviolence savagery with the occasional sludgy rager thrown in to perplex the purists. Subsequently, a few more albums, a barrage of even more splits, and an insane amount of compilation songs were later compiled onto even more CDs. The legend continued until 2000 when the band finally played their final

show at 924 Gilman in Berkeley, CA, which also marked my first pilgrimage to the Bay Area. My bias to Spazz is well known and my allegiance to them is forever, but it’s very nice indeed to be able to have this CD back in print so that future generations may too lick the cloven hoof of the masters of unholy Hong Kong core! –Juan Espinosa (Tankcrimes, tankcrimes.com)

SPENCER MOODY: Gothic Jazz for Shelley: 7”

Spencer Moody is best-known for doing vocals in the Seattle garage group Murder City Devils, and more recently, singing in the experimental/noise act Triumph Of Lethargy Skinned Alive To Death. Moody joins saxophonist and Constant Lovers frontman Joel Cuplin on this two-song EP, which doesn’t sound like any of the aforementioned bands except to the extent that it meanders across genres, with one side sounding like a poppier free jazz Tom Waits, and the other like a fragment of an idea with some shouted lyrics and a soft sax part. Neither goth nor jazz nor Shelley-related, but not at all bad. –Lyle (Let’s Pretend)

SPIT VITRIOL: The Blood It Takes to Make the Breaks: EP

Do you want a record that’s fast and heavy hardcore/d-beat with a hint of rock’n’roll vibe? How about produced and recorded by Toxic Holocaust’s Joel Grind? If you answered yes to these questions, look no further. This four-song rager opens with a long-ish

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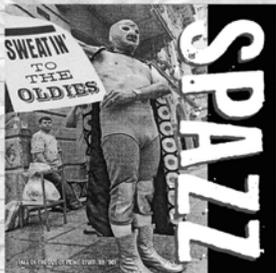
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intro into the ripping track "Shallow Grave." Confession time: I really dig long intros with lots of buildup, especially when the song they lead into packs a solid punch. "Shallow Grave" is like a Muhammad Ali right hook to the eardrums (I mean that in the best way possible), and the band doesn't let up from there. Featuring member(s) of Resist, Spit Vitriol is a rad new project and I'm looking forward to future recordings. —Paul J. Comeau (Insurgent)

SPOKENEST: *Gone Gone Gone*: LP

Gone Gone Gone is the first full length from L.A. two-piece Spokenest. I was so fucking excited to get this in the mail that my shaky hand slipped when I saw the screen printed insert, scratching the marble LP's surface (and causing a mini nerd meltdown) before ever touching my turntable. Despite a few extra crackles and pops on side A, the record still sounds great. Imagine if early Descendents and Grass Widow met up in some cramped basement space in North L.A. to craft a record that was tough and delicate, letting angst and shimmer grapple it out—smart, sweaty, scrappy, and urgent. Spokenest is serving those vibes. Definitely both late '70s L.A. punk and pop punk influences heavily peering through, with co-ed vocals that sound classic and new. Frenetic but driving guitar with that rad tone you can pretty much only get by being punk playing out of a keyboard

amp for at least a year of your life, not giving any fucks about posturing. Drums are tight and exciting. I can't believe Adrian can carry vocal melodies while hammering out fast sixteenth stroke notes flawlessly—it's not a studio trick, I've seen it, scouts honor! No overproduction bananas here, just straightforward melodic punk carried by intentional songwriting and performance. —Candace Hansen (Self-released, spokenest.org / Available through Drunken Sailor in Europe)

STEPHAN CHRISTENSEN: *Empty Continents*: CD

Starts off with a psychedelic Doors jam-out, and had me thinking, "Oh shit, this is going to be painful one." But each consecutive song slowly drifts into utter obscurity—strange, spacey industrial noise that's more art-house than punk. I found myself drifting in and out of focus with this cassette. It is always a good sign when you can get lost in something. Good stuff. —Camillye Reynolds (C/Site)

SUB K AND THE SAVAGE:

***Coffin Jukebox*: CD**
These eclectic covers seem to have been percolating inside The Destructors vocalist Allen Adams for some time. When it became clear his bandmates would never be as interested in them as he was, he struck off on his own and—with the aid of Tom Savage—created *Coffin Jukebox*, a collection of sixteen songs that he calls "a musical journey

of my life." Traversing terrain ranging from garage to glam to goth to indie, the record is slickly produced both sonically and aesthetically, including twenty-eight pages of full-color liner notes overflowing with back story and original artwork. While every song on the record has been tenderly chopped and screwed, whether these covers are worthwhile tributes to—or even improvements on—the originals will ultimately be up to the listener's individual taste. For my money, Sub K And The Savage's take on Devo's plea for Jimmy Carter to "Whip It" stands out as especially successful, while their choice to revive Slade's ode to gas lighting, date rape, and terrible spelling, "Skweeze Me, Pleeze Me," is even less excusable than the original was in 1973. If nothing else, *Coffin Jukebox* is clearly a labor of love from Adams, an echo of your own favorite high school mixtape that served as a soundtrack to your life... just with more creative control and a much higher budget. —Kelley O'Death (Rowdy Farrago)

SUBTRACTIONS: *It's Exposed: 7"* EP

Just when you thought the carcass of punk's past had been picked bare, HoZac comes along, again, with yet another find. Contained herein are four tracks from an aborted vinyl effort by none other than Fresno's alleged first punk band ("alleged" just in case, 'cause there always seems to be a band that pops up outta nowhere when one makes proclamations about

a "first" anything), active between fall 1979 and fall 1980. Tunes are mid-tempo proto-hardcore crunchers with buzzing guitars and teenage attitude to spare, not unlike their contemporaries residing further down the West Coast. Good stuff, as per usual from this label. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozarecords.com)

SUN CHILDREN SUN: *Self Fucking Titled*: LP

Sun Children Sun is an absolutely insane, crazy, wild, bizarre, goofy, nutso Japanese band. This LP is ultra-fast and ultra-silly, with high pitched kazoo-like noises permeating most of the tracks. I don't know what to make of any of it other than the fact that it's making me laugh thinking about what the neighbors must be going through as a result of it blaring from my speakers. Incredibly out there, there's a lot to enjoy on this wild, one-of-a-kind release. —Art Ettinger (SPHC)

SUN VALLEY GUN CLUB:

***Self-titled*: CD**
Four-piece band from Oakland, Calif. that makes me think of Evan Dando guesting with Dinosaur Jr.: noisy guitars, lumbering rhythms, and obtuse lyrics make this an intriguing listen. It's not punk but I still dig it. There are eight songs on this album, but two songs are over six minutes. So time-wise I think we will consider this a full length. Captivating and worth exploring. —Sean Koepenick (Transplant Sound, sunvalleygunclub.com)



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SURFBORT: Self-titled: 7"

I learned a few things while looking up information about Brooklyn's Surfbort. Apparently, that is how Beyoncé pronounces the word "surfboard," and that is what they named the band after. They also don't believe in Google and like to barf on things. It is refreshing to hear anger and humor being used simultaneously in punk rock. It has always been one of my favorite things and it isn't all that common these days. I am usually wary of bands with no bass, but the two guitars work together to make sure the sound is still full. Surfbort is scrappy, mean, and fun. The first two bands I thought of were Hickey and Lunachicks. Two bands I absolutely love. Surfbort doesn't really sound like either of them, but they kind of feel the same way. It works for me. —Ty Stranglehold (Slope)

SUSPICIOUS BEASTS:

Might Die Tomorrow: LP

Okay, let's get real here for a sec. The past forty-five years has seen no shortage of bands attempting a musical time travel back to the groovy psychedelic sounds of the mid-'60s, so it should come as no surprise that these Japanese kids are the latest in a very long line. To their credit, they are one of the better bands making said attempt. One reason is that they aren't wallowing in piss-poor attempts to replicate the same sonic conditions and output. Another is that they have the sense to filter later genres also influenced by the era back into their

sound—later era Beatles, hippie-dippy country rock, even a bit of shoegazy dream pop. The main reason, though, is that the songs they're coming up with are goddamned good, which, when we get down to brass tacks, is the only thing that really matters. Fans of the genre, and its related progeny, will find much to love here, and I'm glad I can count myself among them. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alien Snatch)

TAXPAYERS, THE:

Big Delusion Factory: CD

Glory be The Taxpayers, who have, for what ever reason, added a heavy pop-rock (ala Huey Lewis) element to their already unique sound. And somehow, despite all inherent logic: come out on top of it all. It's very good! It's a concept album about the trauma and healing a city must go through together after experiencing a large-scale disaster—the personal issues, systematic oppression, how it's connected, and how it divides us. It's a goddamn rollercoaster. It's music that's unsuspecting, is unexpected, and executed with unmitigated wingnut triumph. Taxpayers are the salt of the earth, while never dulling their vision or stifling themselves to fit into a predetermined idea of what their band should sound like—or even more basically—what is acceptable for a punk band. I recently listened to this album in a house that had construction going on in the other room, and I felt like I was *in the album*. It's not a necessary experience to enjoy it, but if

you're a super-fan like me: you might wanna give it a shot. —Daryl (Useless State, thetaxpayers.net)

TELEVISIONARIES, THE / FOX SISTERS, THE: Split: 7" single

This untitled split between The Televisionaries and The Fox Sisters (yet another band of all dudes appropriating femininity in some surely aesthetic-driven, perplexing choice) does that part Burger, part Big Bopper thing really well. I'm not sure if these dudes are trying to please their grandparents, get wedding gigs, or just have a good time doing stuff that has already been done. Their music is tight, the record design and layout is clean, and their songs are danceable, but I don't know how many more rock'n'rolly garage singles with tired tropes like "pretty baby," I can take. But people love this stuff, and these kids do a damn good job recreating that '50s magic people can't seem to get enough of these days. —Candace Hansen (Reel Time, reeltimecordss.bigcartel.com)

TENEMENT: Bruised Music Vol. 2: LP

Having never seen Tenement's apparently incredible live show, all I've got to go off of is this, their second collection of odds and ends. The band has long been lauded as amazing and as potent as the discovery of both pizza *and* beer, and they certainly do seem competent and willing to test the murky waters of genre. Buuuuut, apart from a scattering of tracks where they play a kind of self-assured guitar-

heavy pop, it's just not quite clicking with me. I don't quite get the allure. Extensive packaging—glossy poster, insert, download code—but not a single supposedly incredible lyric to be found anywhere, so I'm missing out on that element of it, and while they do have an interesting amalgam of genres sometimes going on (hints of soul, hardcore, pop, and punk all writhe in the structures), all told it's just a little lacking in ferocity and cohesion for me. Admittedly, it's a singles collection, maybe cohesion's beside the point, and maybe *Bruised Music Vol. 2* isn't the best jumping-off point. Hell, you already know you're getting this anyway, right? —Keith Rosson (Toxic Pop / Grave Mistake)

TODESKOMMANDO ATOMSTURM:

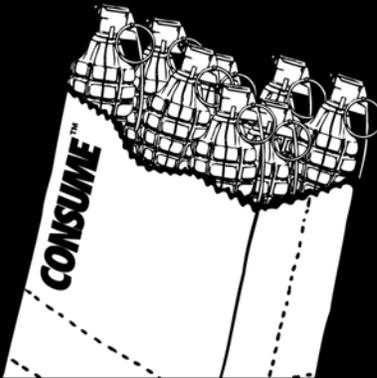
Hunger der Hyänen: LP/CD

This is quality melodic punk rock from Germany with some rough edges which give it a bit of a street punk vibe. Vocals are in the band's native tongue—resulting in me being at a loss as to the subject matter—but a bit of time at my computer has enabled me to discover the themes of the songs range from issues of a personal nature to those affecting society in a negative way. Those vocals are gritty and strong, fitting perfectly alongside the guitars which propel the songs along with a similar combination. The band has found at least one new fan with this release. —Rich Cocksedge (Twisted Chords, mailorder@twisted-chords.de, twisted-chords.de)

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TONGUE PARTY: *Tongue Party*: CS

This rips. The guitars are fuzzy, the vocals are faded, and the riffs are chunky and unrelenting. It got stuck in my head. It's fuller and more cohesive than what I would call straight-up punk (also it has guitar solos), but it nonetheless manages to lend a hardcore sensibility to its hard-rocking and sludge metal tendencies. Like if the Damned only played riffs and was fronted by a stoned ghost. It's tight. —Lyle (Lawn Chair)

TOTAL ABUSE: *Excluded*: LP

My initial reaction to this not long after needle hit wax: "Hooooooooh shit." I'm sticking by it. These cats have evolved from a particularly noisy, thrashy hardcore band to something much more feral and interesting. They keep the tunes mid-tempo throughout here, but ramp up the sonic virulence several notches above what would likely be considered healthy. The results recall the best parts of Black Flag's "pain" period without sounding like a direct rip off—exclamations of outrage and agonized desperation that'll likely become the soundtrack to many a fucked up kid. Right about now I wish I had extra thumbs to aim approvingly in the direction of this bad boy, 'cause it's more than deserving. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

TOWERS:

***Bel Air Highrise Plantation*: CS**

Harsh and atonal guitar parts cascading over plodding drums and multi-layered

vocal beratement. The best features combine the heaviness of bands like Botch, the schizophrenic time changes of Gasp, and the ear-shattering, non-musical classification of Realicide. I'm a little troubled by the song titles to "Orange County Final Solution" and "The Southern California Hajj," which offer no explanation, let alone lyrics, and appear to be surreptitious, so I'll hold onto my reservations about Towers intentions for the time being.—Juan Espinosa (Forward Fast / Sonic Mystics, sonicmystics.com)

TRANSISTORS:

***Cuppa Jarra Bossa*: CS**

Garage rock can go either way for me, though in practice it usually goes the way of the thumbs-down. But Transistors really turn on the charm with this one—maybe it's the New Zealand accents. This is dancey and cheeky in a way that calls to mind older U.K. bands on the jangly edge of new wave (I'm thinking The Jam and The Undertones) far more than the beer-soaked rock dude aesthetic I tend to associate with the genre now. It's shouty and raucous without losing the melody, especially the easygoing pop of "On Cashel St." Catchy, quick, and sensibly fuzzy. —Indiana Laub (Forward Fast, forwardfast.storenvy.com)

TRASHIES, THE: *Space Jam*: LP

Weirdo/outsider, art-damaged, garage-punk-noise of the highest order, courtesy of Max Nordile (of Uzi Rash) and Co., the Trashies are a band straight

from the Island of Misfit Toys. Here on *Space Jam* they've concocted a joyous, wild, rambunctious symphony of screeching vocals, tribal drumming, psychedelic and soulful guitars, and impish keyboards. The Trashies channel their inspired lunacy from a deep well of like-minded mutants, recalling in particular the Fall, Jay Reatard, Billy Childish, and Butthole Surfers. It's simultaneously delightfully silly, as well as challenging, puzzling, and rewarding. It all adds up to make an absolutely tremendous album. —Jeff Proctor (Minor Bird)

TRINARY SYSTEM, THE:

***Dave Davies*: 7"**

First official release from this new trio fronted by Roger Miller of Mission Of Burma. P. Andrew Willis handles bass while Larry Dersch pounds the skins. "This House," the actual B side, is noisy, chaotic, and right up my alley. Purchase this limited run single from the band and gain access to three additional digital tracks. Of the second batch, "HOV-1 Violator" speaks to me the loudest. Damn those lawbreakers! —Sean Koeppenick (Fun World, trinarysystem.com)

TYLER DANIEL BEAN / AU REVOIR:

***Live at Dead Air*: Split 7"**

The Tyler Daniel Bean side of this split features soft, atmospheric indie rock from Vermont. The Au Revoir side is more dynamic and less lyrically driven; it moves from plaintive, moody sections to louder, discordant parts with

screamed but nearly inaudible mixed-down vocals. I like the Au Revoir side better (it reminds me a little of the quiet iteration of Pygmy Lush) but the other is nothing to sneeze at if you're into that sort of singer-songwriterly thing. —Lyle (Tor Johnson with Orb Weaver Press, torjohnsonrecords.com)

UNFUN: *Waterboarding*: LP

The review I've been waiting for. I've wanted to try to tell any audience that would listen, just how important Unfun is to me. Unfun is the sound that bounces between my ears and rattles around in my brain constantly. As in, I don't understand how some people whistle pretty notes into tunes or noise artists decide on the aural assaults they feel the need to produce, 'cause inside my head, those two things belong together. Unfun is the "you put your peanut butter in my chocolate" Reese's noise fuzz outer layer and sugar sweet pop center crushed into the Vitamix engine drone of my mind. "Death Majesty" indeed... sad that it's over, but what a way to go out. —Matt Seward (Debt Offensive, debtoffensiverecs.com)

USELESS I.D.:

***We Don't Want the Airwaves*: 7"**

I think this is the first time I have heard Useless I.D. unless it's cropped up unknowingly on a compilation that I've listened to. "We Don't Want the Airwaves" is hugely catchy with a melody that hangs around my head for an hour or so before moving on without causing me to mourn its departure,



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perhaps an indictment of its short term appeal. The other three songs don't even maintain my interest whilst they are playing, so not a band I'm going to spend any more time on once I finish writing this review. Weirdly, despite not being a great experience, the title track did sound a bit like Chixdiggit, a band I do like. —Rich Cocksedge (Fat Wreck, mailbag@fatwreck.com, fatwreck.com)

UZ JSME DOMA:

Jaskinie Caves Jeskyn: LP
Prog-punk from the Czech Republic, with bits of ska, jazz, and traditional Eastern European folk styles mixed in. These folks have been around for decades, but this album is my first introduction to them. Listening here, my first thought is these guys sound like if Los Fabulosos Cadillacs met the Stranglers for pints in Prague and then started up a band with the locals they found in the pub. —Jeff Proctor (Cuneiform)

VAASKA: Future Primitivo: EP

Originally a limited release for the band's Japanese tour earlier this year, *Future Primitivo* is now available in a wider release through Beach Impediment Records. This was my first exposure to Vaaska, whose discography includes a previous LP, and some split recordings with Impalers and Japan's Skizophrenia. *Future Primitivo* features fast, furious d-beat, with shredding lead guitar parts and Spanish language vocals. I was a big fan of the blistering

leads. I was less of a fan of the echoey style of the overall recording. I dig when records have a gritty and raw live recording-esque style, but this had more of an "I can hear the band playing from outside the warehouse venue vibe." Not terrible by any means, but a little less echo to the recording would surely have upped the intensity. Still thoroughly enjoyable, and it's worth looking into Vaaska's other recordings. —Paul J. Comeau (Beach Impediment)

VÄISTÄ!: Mukaudu: LP

Slick modern HC from Finland that would be right at home with the Bridge9/Lockin' Out crowd. Lyrics are in Finnish so I don't really know what they're saying besides the descriptions on the one-sheet ("Humalistonkatu" — that is of course a street name in Turku!) but there is a really nice zine included with the record with lyrics and pictures of the band. The band isn't treading any new ground but the riffs are good, the vocals are convincing, and the song structures are interesting. Fans of Righteous Jams, Folsom, guitar solos, and breakdowns should track this one down. —Ian Wise (Blast Of Silence, info@blastofsilence.org)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Columbusblood: LP
According to a note taped to the cover, this is the third (?) annual installment of a comp series documenting some of the sounds coming outta Columbus, Ohio. Brat Cure, The Hail Bop Group, Raw Pony, (((reverbaines))), Mount

Carmel, The American Jobs, EYE, Sex Tide, Kizzy Hall, Bloody Show, Good Shade, and Sin Nombre kick up dust across a number of different styles—punk, art damage, rock, indie rock, proggy synth, no-fi garage, and Cookie Monster metal. Like the best comps, the focus here appears to be more about documenting what's happening in Columbus' music scene Anno 2016 than about hyping some label's sub-par acts. While not everything here may be grand slam material, at worst you get a few smacked deep into center for a quick on-base. Solid work put in here both behind the instruments and behind the scenes. Kudos to 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (Break Up)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Danger! La France a Peur!: 7"

Since I got this comp I've been trying to think of the quintessential French punk song. The Dogs' "Nineteen" seems to be the most ubiquitous French offering. Even Belgium has a stronger punk history on paper. *Névralgies Particulières*, *Fuzzed Up Lost 60s French Punk!* and the recent *Danger! La France a Peur!* shine light on what French teenagers were up to in the '60s and '70s. If you can find someone to translate the liner notes and the neat little folded interview included, you'd know a lot more. *Danger!* covers bands from '76-'80 and it's a solid load of punk. Single Track's "Here We Go Again" is catchy and, like a lot of the bands on this comp, walk the line between

snotty punk and tough power pop. Telephone was a French band whose self-titled album rode that line and was distributed a bit more than others. If you like that record or want to bone up on your French, this is an excellent comp. —Billups Allen (Danger)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Destroy All Art: LP

A friend of mine describes certain punk albums as having a "'90s feel," indicating to me I won't like it. What are those reasons specifically? I can't really say. Enough bad things happened to punk in the '90s for that statement to be relevant. But were there good bands? Good scenes? Good people? Yes. Is there still good unheard stuff out there? *Destroy All Art* is an emphatic yes. Your brother's band didn't blow if it ended up on this comp. If you enjoyed the recent *We're Loud* comp pulling from '90s demos, *Destroy All Art* is a definite winner for you. The album starts off with a killer: "Self-Hate" by Epileptix. Snot vocals with guitar wretch, overdriven chords. There are a variety of retro sounds on this one as well. Several Species' "Fight" frames tales of brawling with a melodic guitar intro and an infectious, Dictators-style chorus you should hear. Firewood fires a great cave beat with an awesomely inappropriate keyboard sound. Skuds delivers three-chord chaos with "Got Meth?" That's the first four songs. And the album continues uphill. Pretty essential. You really can't miss with this. There isn't a KBD or Bloodstains moniker associated with good, obscure



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'90s punk yet, but I hope people keep working on it. '90s isn't necessarily a bad word, but it doesn't look great on an album cover yet. —Billups Allen (Rock N' Roll Parasite)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Purity Control 7": 7"

This comp is a collection of work themed around *The X-Files*, including a surf version of the TV show's iconic theme song and a conceptual poem by Adrienne Dodt, about Mulder and Scully's beliefs. Generically, the comp covers ground from miraculously not-cloying folk punk (James Dean Death Cult) to scuzzy lo-fi noise (Lieutenant Dance) to plaintive folk and pop punk. It's a fine subcultural meditation on the conspiracy dramedy, just in time for its return to the small screen early this year. The cover art is the cover of Goo/ Mulder and Scully you never knew you needed. Great for TV freaks and anyone who wants to believe. —Lyle (What's For Breakfast?, wfbrecords@gmail.com / We Used To Drink Together)

VIOLENT ARREST:

Authors of Our Own Demise: 7"

It might be a wise move to take cover when listening to this release, which comes free with the latest edition of the *Artcore* zine, as it contains some really ferocious hardcore. I swear, that as he settles into the role as the band's new frontman, Welly's vocals are becoming even more aggressive; the band is ramping up its intensity when compared to its recent album.

The end result is some excellent throat-shredding, fist-shaking punk rock. One final point is that with *Artcore* being Welly's baby—currently celebrating its thirtieth year—he doesn't do things by halves and has enlisted both Brian Walsby and Vince Rancid to provide artwork for the record to make for an awesome package. —Rich Cocksedge (Artcore, artcorezine.co.uk)

VISITORS: Poets End: LP

Holy shit! In the world of shit landfill reissue records, there occasionally comes a release that actually makes sense and deserves a spot on my record shelf. This band hailed from Scotland in the late '70s, released a couple of singles that vaporized, but somehow they piqued the interest of Mr. John Peel. Peel had them do three sessions, all of which were magical but, alas, they disappeared back to obscurity and the nine to five. Mercifully, someone pulled the sessions out of the ether and stuck them on the a 12". One part Wire, one part Joy Division, and the rest a mix of the darker side of Crass Records like Lack Of Knowledge. What makes this disc shine is the faultless BBC recording. I can't believe this has been wallowing in obscurity for so long. Absolutely mandatory for all the folk who like a little sour taste to their post-punk. —Tim Brooks (Telephone Explosion, telephoneexplosion.com)

VIVISICK: Naked Identity: CD

Pure insanity! Think Toy Dolls on speed and LSD at the same time.

And Japanese. This record is totally bonkers. Wild, over-the-top, speedy punk rock from the psych ward. All sung in Japanese—but with translated titles such as "Why Must I Grab My Penis?" and "Asia Is Burning," it seems like the lyrics are just as scattered as the music. Fans of Hi-Standard and Love Songs will love this. —Chad Williams (Vivisick, vivisick.shouten.jp / Tankcrimes, tankcrimes.com)

WEREFOX:

Das Lied Der Maschinen: CD

Wow. Is there a top ten of worst records ever reviewed? This is what all the normal folk think gothic/alt rock is. Are you guys familiar with that act Skin? From Slovakia I can see this lot trudging around Europe's rock clubs trying to get big. Next level terrible. —Tim Brooks (Moonlee, moonleerecords.com)

WHITNEY HOUSTON'S CRYPT:

Self-titled: 7" EP

Whitney Houston's Crypt is some freaky shit. The warbly guitar on "Twosome Threesome" will have you second and third guessing if you are playing it on the right speed, but when the guttural screamo vocals kick in, the reality of just how weird this noise punk is sets in. "Hatoful Boyfriend" is just as bizarre—super angular guitar and ambient noise with a slow-churning beat. Flip to "Michael Hotchips" on side B for some string-bending, tape-warping noise that is like an acid trip where everything and

nothing makes sense all at the same time. Bona fide freaks, and I like it. —Camillye Reynolds (Vacant Valley, vacantvalley.bandcamp.com)

WILD ANIMALS: Basements:

Music to Fight Hypocrisy: LP/CD/CS

It's not that long since I first heard Wild Animals' excellent debut record, so to have the follow up come along so quickly is a slice of good fortune. Ideally, I'd avoid hyperbole but it's just not possible here as *Basements* is a fantastic piece of work with warm, scrappy songs built around a fuzzy melodicism that is infectious from the outset. The odd hints of early Samiam work magnificently with the male/female vocals and the blown-out-sounding bass, making me feel uplifted and elated. Hats off to this Madrid-based trio for referencing the television show *Six Feet Under* in the outstanding "Television Blows," which has great significance to me, as without the programme I would never have met my wife. The album is out on a multitude of labels, so it's worth doing some legwork on the internet to find what suits you best but I got mine from s-n-c-l in the U.K. A definite contender for best album of the year. —Rich Cocksedge (s-n-c-l, sncl@collective-zine.co.uk, sncl.collective-zine.co.uk)

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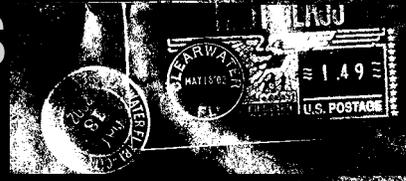
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There is so much awesome
in this zine, I don't know
how to handle it. It's
honestly overwhelming in
the best possible way.

—Sean Arenas, NO FRIENDS #3

AS YOU WERE #4, \$10, 5½" x 8½", 118 pgs.

As new issues of *As You Were* continue to roll out, I'm amazed at the number of excellent cartoonists that I've either never heard of or have known in name only. Part of it has to be that this is the longest issue thus far, and there are a high number of excellent pieces this time around. The theme for this issue was "Roommates from Hell," an excellent theme to which we all relate. Though absent from the issue, Mitch Clem's printed baby has legs, and I hope *As You Were* is able to continue into the foreseeable future. It carries the tradition of showcasing the broad and varied talent of underground cartoonists from all walks of life, loosely connected by the sponge of punk. My personal favorite story this time around was about Load Bearing Rats, which is so fantastic of an idea I'm going to think about it for a few days. —Bryan Static (Silver Sprocket, 1057 Valencia St., SF, CA 94110, silversprocket.net)

CABILDO QUARTERLY #9, \$1, 11" x 14", copied, 2 pgs.

It's another issue of my favorite non-fiction/fiction/poetry two-page literary writing! For this issue, the piece that spoke to me the most was Karen Lillis's well-written introduction to self-publishing. She dropped the names of a number of people with whom I am familiar, such as Soft Skull and The Minus Times, making it relevant to my past experiences with writing. It was a very encouraging piece about the possibilities of writing and getting your own works out there for people to read. There was an interesting piece of fiction about a man and his "pretty awesome" mustache. It's kind of humorous, even though if you knew anyone like this in real life (and chances are you probably do) you'd want to smack them into next week. The poetry this time around was so-so. Still, the piece by Lillis totally made this worth reading; for those of you who are authors, I'd say this is required reading, especially if you're feeling discouraged about ever getting your work published. —Kurt Morris (CQHQ, PO Box 784, Belchertown, MA 01007)

DEEP FRIED ZINE MPLS #9, \$1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs.

Don't pretend that you don't love fast food. You do. Even if it's just a small part of you that's weirdly nostalgic for the days of skipping class and scarfing down personal pans at Pizza Hut, you love it. *Deep Fried* continues to celebrate diarrhea-inducing delicacies in the most punk rock manner possible. In this issue, the DF team covers fast food Garfield promotional items, the pizza-centricness of *Home Alone*, and the band Mean Jeans' tour boycott of Taco Bell, among other important things. This is perfect post-Arby's toilet reading. —MP Johnson (Deep Fried Zine MPLS, 2901 Yosemite Ave S., St. Louis Park, MN 55416, facebook.com/deepfriedzinempls)

DRAFT DODGER #2, \$7, 8½" x 11", copied, 38 pgs.

The second issue of *Draft Dodger* is about two years in the making. There's no real explanation for the gap, but life happens (don't I know it). Thus, some of the interviews aren't quite as relevant as they might've been a while ago—for what it's worth, they are with *The Wild*, *The Sidekicks*, and *Caves*. There are also some photos, comics, and columns. I enjoyed the columns the most, as they spoke about things I could relate to: mental health, growing up listening to Christian punk music, and living in Bloomington, Ind. For me, that made reading this issue engrossing. I found myself very engaged with the columns, but then my interest dropped off. I wasn't familiar with the bands and the comics didn't do anything for me. I suppose if you're into the bands, though, this would be worth checking out. —Kurt Morris (Draft Dodger Zine, 1611 S. Meadow St., Richmond, VA 23220)

DRAFT DODGER #2, free, 8" x 10½", newsprint, 39 pgs.

Similar in style and layout to *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* and *Razorcake*, *Draft Dodger* is a punk fanzine located in Richmond, Va. Only on its second issue, the standouts were definitely the short essays. Ranging from stories about growing up

and growing out of the punk scene, to memories of punk houses lived and loved in, the personal writing always seems to draw me in more than band interviews and album reviews. Don't get me wrong, the interviews in this issue with bands like *Caves*, *The Sidekicks*, and *The Wild* were interesting too, and I enjoyed the short cartoons splashed throughout the issue, but give me more of those personal columns! —Tricia Ramos (Draft Dodger, draftdodgerzine@gmail.com)

EGGY'S DEAD #1, \$7, 5½" x 8½", copied, 36 pgs.

Intentionally or not, the first issue of this submission-driven literary zine reveals an inclination toward the surreal and disconcerting. There's the opening story, an unsettling jolt of sort-of-sci-fi weirdness involving sentient fungi, and the brief blip of prose describing a face transformed into quivering goo. There are the scribbly line drawings of deformed beings that punctuate the text. Of course, there are also some short personal essays and meditations on regular old topics like self-worth and creativity, so I can't just go imposing the weird mood that first story put me in on everything. Yeesh. Not too bad, all in all, though some entries are far stronger than others (as tends to happen with these kinds of zines). —Indiana Laub (Eggy's Dead, riotradiopodcast@gmail.com)

GAD! #10, Free or trade, 8½" x 11", copied, 25 pgs.

This is Gadsden Alabama's own punk zine. Open to any submissions—be it art, music, photos, whatever. The contents are mostly reviews of punk, metal, hardcore records, and demos, but it also includes interviews. This issue in particular features an interview with members of +44 (remember that band that the guys from Blink 182 did after Blink 182?), director Chuck Hartsell, and Chuck Mosley from Faith No More. The most useful part of the zine, in my opinion, was the last two pages—an "Alabama Underground Music Directory," which was a thorough list of Alabama bands (their name, the city they reside in, the genre of music, and contact info) and music venues. When I think of Alabama, I don't tend to think "punk rock," so this was a cool zine to read! —Tricia Ramos (GAD!, PO Box 394, Gadsden, AL, 35902)

INSIDE ARTZINE #18, 8½" x 11", glossy, bound, 60 pgs.

First page features a sculpture of a severed tongue with teeth growing out of it. It's an unsettling piece that is hard to stop staring at, but is wrong to the extent that it makes something twist in your stomach. This is what *Inside Artzine* does best. It compiles some of the most gorgeous and disturbing art from all over the world. In these pages you will find sculptures of various types of religious buildings made out of guns and bullets. You will find art made out of human skulls. Of course, there is a brief H.R. Giger retrospective that seems almost obligatory in these pages. Ultimately, this zine is everything I want out of art. —MP Johnson (inside-artzine.de)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #395, \$4.99, 5½" x 8½", newsprint, 108 pgs.

San Francisco's premiere punk magazine, *Maximum Rock'n'Roll's* newest issue features interviews with bands Negative Scanner, The Pessimists, and The Coltranes. Covering more than a usual amount of fests, this issue has articles about Manic Relapse in Oakland Calif., Damaged City Fest in Washington DC., and Everything Is Not Ok in Oklahoma City, Okla. The highlight of this issue, for me, was the interview with director Ricardo Meléndez regarding his three-part documentary about the history of punk in Colombia. The first part of his series will be available to download soon. Check it out at bogotapunkdocumental.wix.com. —Tricia Ramos (Maximum Rock'n'Roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA, 94146, maximumrocknroll.com)

NO FRIENDS #3, \$6.50, 8" x 10½", newsprint, 120 pgs.

There is so much awesome in this zine, I don't know how to handle it. It's honestly overwhelming in the best possible way. *No Friends'* latest issue offers interviews with bands like Jamie & The Debt, Börn, Shopping, and record label

Halo Of Flies. But *No Friends* is willing to boldly go outside of the typical territories of DIY punk fanzines by including interviews with the composer of the *It Follows* soundtrack, Disasterpeace; the creator of *Cinema Sewer*, Robin Bougie; and comedians Kyle Kinane and Caitlin Gill. Plus, there's an article about skating in North Korea, a plethora of op-eds, and countless record reviews. I don't mind the newsprint stains on my fingers because every page is chock-full of insights and entertainment. Oh, I forgot to mention that this issue also includes a flexi disc featuring Violence Creeps, TV Slime, Shockwaves, and Bleeding Gums. If you're reader of *Razorcake* or *Maximum Rock 'n' roll*, which I assume you are, then a *No Friends* subscription makes perfect sense. —Sean Arenas (No Friends, nofriendszine.com, PO Box 12343 Chicago, IL 60612)

NO FRIENDS #3, \$6.50, 8½" x 11", copied, 120 pgs.

I've been keeping an eye on this quarterly zine since the first issue last year, so I'm glad to report that *No Friends* is coming in strong for the third time. What I think makes or breaks these "big deal" punk zines—you know the kind I mean, the *Razorcakes* and *Maximum Rock 'n' rolls* of the scene—is variety. Without some diversity in the pages, you'll end up with a stack of newsprint that doesn't amount to much more than a list of punk-as-fuck all-caps band names and a handful of "What are your influences?"-type interviews. Who reads those? Fortunately, the *No Friends* crew has got variety covered, with the interviews once again hitting a good balance between the straight-up punk rock content (represented by bands and labels including Violence Creeps, Shopping, Stickshift Recordings, and Halo Of Flies) and the more tangentially related stuff, like Disasterpiece, the artist behind the synth soundtrack to *It Follows*, and DIY-minded comedians Kyle Kinane and Caitlin Gill. And that's only a portion of this issue—also featured are a queer non-profit ride service from the Bay, a roving documentary filmmaker, and a guide on how to skateboard in North Korea, not to mention the columns and reviews... they really pack this thing, don't they? As always, an exclusive flexi is also enclosed. This is a zine that feels like it's made

NOT LIKE YOU #6, \$7 ppd., 8½" x 11", offset, 40 pgs.

Hardcore-centric zine with a full-color cover, comprised almost entirely of interviews. Bands included: the dude from Leeway, Sammy from Fang, Night Birds, the guy behind the New Breed tape comp, and pro skaters Julz Lynn and Greg Harbour. Also five pages of record reviews. Layout's readable, if a little dry—same goes for the questions themselves—but let's be honest here: six consistent print issues of a zine still being released in the year 2016? That in and of itself is commendable. —Keith Rosson (Not Like You, 102 Richmond Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106)

ORGAN GRINDER #5, \$5, 8½" x 11", offset, 26 pgs.

Punk rock puzzles to keep your brain zesty! My favorites include "Cosa La Morte," in which you match the dead celebrity to the means of their demise, and "These Are the Daves We Know," in which you stare at a collage of people named Dave and try to figure out who the fuck they all are. I spotted Dave Murray and David Carradine right off the bat. The crossword puzzle references both Star Wars and Ani DiFranco. There's an answer key in the back, but don't cheat, okay? —MP Johnson (organgrindermagazine.com)

QUITTER #10, \$6, 3½" x 5", ink-jet printed, 36 pgs.

Tightly kept inside a thin parchment paper sleeve, Trace Ramsey's *Quitter* is a beautiful looking zine with personal stories of a small, American life. Beginning with the words, "I AM NOT A TALKER" in bold red font, the chapters that follow are all named after different ages in the author's life. Reading through, I felt a slow, quiet American life. Every chapter recounts a memory or a personal family story. Trace's descriptions of the nature around them and attention to detail are superb, putting the reader right into their writing, as though you're experiencing the dry grass beneath their feet, the hot summer nights in the South, and the personal family tragedy that lives in your blood and veins and travels on to your children. This contemplative,

The DF team covers fast food Garfield promotional items, the pizza-centricness of *Home Alone*, and the band Mean Jeans' tour boycott of Taco Bell. This is perfect post-Arby's toilet reading.

—MP Johnson | DEEP FRIED ZINE MPLS #9

by a group of people who know what they're doing and know what they want. If these early issues are any indication, *No Friends* is well on its way to a solid place in national DIY punk culture, right beside all the fixtures that no doubt inspired it. —Indiana Laub (No Friends, PO Box 12343, Chicago, IL 60612)

NON MONOGAMY 101: A PRIMER FOR QUESTIONING COMPULSORY MONOGAMY #1, \$5, 3¾" x 6", copied, 38 pgs.

This zine is smart, well researched, and engaging. The author presents many examples throughout history where different cultures flourished with non-monogamous relationships. Alongside the historical data, there are several interviews from people from all sorts of backgrounds: cis, trans, gay, lesbian, many races, and from all over the world. Each quote from these people is presented in a word bubble with a caricature of the (assumed) person it's attributed to. Adelaide Barton runs the gamut on counterarguments to those opposed to non-monogamy, and also stresses the importance of communication and comfort. In no way is she advocating a lifestyle for those who are not prepared or interested in it, but she is offering guidance for those who may be considering it, or those who had not even thought about it at all. Each part of her research is backed up with a "works cited" page at the end and footnote references, making this zine more of an illustrated essay. I really enjoyed that there's a glossary at the back of the zine just in case something didn't make sense. There's absolutely no judgment passed or any sense of disdain for choices that one makes in their romantic life. It merely acts as an explanation, a walkthrough of alternative relationship arrangements. Also included are lists of celebrities (including sex/advice columnist Dan Savage) who engage in various forms of non-monogamy, complete with quotes about their set up. This is a great zine to remove some wool from the eyes of the monogamous couples (not that there's anything wrong with them). —Kayla Greet (Adelaide Barton, 290 2nd St., Troy, NY 12180, ladygardens00@gmail.com)

small, and deep zine is something you'll read through quickly, and then want to immediately re-read again. —Tricia Ramos (Quitter, 100 E Kansas Ave, #248 Lansing, KS, 66043, pioneerspress.com)

ROJONEKKU WORD FIGHTING ARTS #1, \$2, 7" x 8½", copied, 40 pgs.

There's a lot to digest in this half-legal zine. Raven rants against borders and cornhole, anthropomorphizes states of the union, and philosophizes. The prose herein is well-written, though occasionally feels bogged down by self-importance. Still, though, a lot to chew on—engaging and interesting throughout. —Michael T. Fournier (Rojonekku, PO Box 270, Scottsville, VA 24590)

ROJONEKKU WORD FIGHTING ARTS #2,

\$2-\$4 sliding scale, 8½" x 7", copied, 40 pgs.

Strange collection of anecdotes and thoughts released by a thoughtful, affably wacky writer who likes to arrange rocks in haiku 5-7-5 formation and compose sonnets and run them through Google translate and back. Dense, weird, very well-written stuff by someone who holds Rumi and Rammellzee in equal regard. Not for those readers solely looking for a "punk" zine, but definitely charming, eccentric, and interesting. —Keith Rosson (Rojonekku, PO Box 270, Scottsville, VA 24590)

ROJONEKKU WORD FIGHTING ARTS #4, \$2, 7" x 8½", copied, 38 pgs.

Raven Mack is a self-proclaimed "mystic-poet-philosopher-artist of the Greater Appalachian unorthodox tradition," and if that didn't prepare you for this zine, I don't know what will. Raven's series, *Rojonekku* is a "words fighting arts zine." I'm not exactly sure what that means, but in this issue the author tells us a story about a non-operational jukebox that he once bought, and then upon failing to fix said jukebox, he drops it off in a field under a tree. One late night

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on a whim, he decides to plug the jukebox into the base of the tree. After doing so, the jukebox plays its records—though slowed down and only if the season wasn't winter? The author then describes more than a dozen of the slowed-down mystical songs, their original song meanings or origins, and relates his own personal life stories to said songs. Mind you, the descriptions start at number one hundred, and this is only issue four, so I'm assuming there will be a lot more issues covering this strange phenomenon. A bizarre read, for sure. —Tricia Ramos (Rojonekku WFA, PO Box 270, Scottsville, VA, 24590)

SPARE CHANGE: NOTES FROM ANARCHTICA #34,

\$3 or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 40 pgs.

I brought this on a two-hour flight to L.A. and didn't peek inside until I settled into my seat. To be honest, I'm glad I'd brought a backup book, too. I was very excited to tear into this zine. The intro set up the story of a punk house named Anarchtica which survived for over fourteen years and held shows for nearly the same amount of time. Years in a punk house are similar to a dog's years, so to make it almost a decade and a half without being evicted or killing your housemates is as shocking as it is impressive. An example cited in the first page was a January where Anarchtica hosted ten shows and eighty-four people over the course of the month. They started numbering each guest to help keep score. Anyways, this zine has excerpts of their kitchen where grateful punks posted thank you notes. It's like *Found* magazine in that way, though we know precisely where these letters came from (including house punk #73 and one that has the Hickey symbol on it). Where the zine fell short is not expounding on those stories that I assume the curator was present for. Instead of thirty-eight pages of mostly indecipherable text and silly doodles ripe with inside jokes, I wish the Anarchtica house would've let us past the kitchen and further into the history of the home. As someone who has a small collection of very similar notes, a little context goes a long way. Overall entertaining, but it could've been a lot more so. —Kayla Greet (Thomas Foote, PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401)

SPIDDER #18, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 26 pgs.

Train hopping, campfires, truck stops, and cowboys. This is the meat of *Spidder*. While the zine itself does veer off into cutesy comics and a random interview with Your Pest Band from Japan, the standouts of this issue are the illustrations of the lonesome prairie, cowboys, and a short story about train hopping and truck stops. Written like it came straight from the mouth of a

Southerner, I got a real feel of life on the road—the ups and downs of what the author calls "Wild America." —Tricia Ramos (Spidder, 1925 Highway 69 South, Savannah, TN, 38372)

SUBURBAN BLIGHT #12, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 54 pgs.

The latest installment of this long-running—yet somewhat infrequent, judging from the issue number—political zine continues to cover current events in radical politics and social justice, including the Black Lives Matter movement, teacher strikes across the country, anti-Columbus Day protests, and more. Following the news is an "Arts & Culture" section that features several poems and... drawings? Paintings? It's hard to tell in black-and-white photocopy; some of the art looks good, but it really doesn't translate well to this format. Wrapping up the issue are some in-depth book reviews, some of which border on short essays. The content is dense throughout this zine, but the writing is thoughtful and accessible. —Indiana Laub (Stephanie B., 370 Seventh Ave., Suite 1401, NY, NY 10001)

TURNING THE TIDE Vol. 28, #6, \$2, 17" x 11", 8 pgs.

Turning the Tide is a periodical calling for immediate and ongoing political action. This is not a publication that is going to offer pros and cons on the fifteen dollar an hour minimum wage, or offer ways that the prison system can be reformed. The title page demands radical change now: "Abolish the police, Abolish the prisons, Abolish wage slavery." Police officers are commonly referred to as "pigs" and the Black Panthers are far from a history lesson—they are here, now, and active. This issue offers stories on movements to free political prisoners, like Black Panther Herman Bell, an "anti-colonial response" to the Oregon militia standoff, the murder of indigenous Mexicans by paramilitary groups, and a two-page story on ending forced labor in Texas prisons, which the paper rightly refers to as "slavery." Another feature, *Know Your Enemy*, offers stories on the police and U.S. intelligence agencies. It's nice to see a product like this in hardcopy form and not just one of the millions of pieces of trash that float upon the internet's endless ocean of conspiracy theories and shouting in all caps. This is not the kind of stepping stone you would want to offer to your friend who is really excited about another Clinton presidency, but this is good information for those who know that something is wrong and that moderate reforms will not fix it. —Jon Mule (Anti-Racist Action Publishers, PO Box 1055, Culver City, CA, 90232-1055)



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BOOK REVIEWS



Going Underground: American Punk 1979-1989

By George Hurchalla, 416 pgs.

Despite the glut of punk history books in recent years, a precious few still attempt an overview of the “hardcore” years referenced in the book’s title. The best known, Steven Blush’s *American Hardcore*, is a highly flawed and wildly inflammatory cesspool of factual inaccuracies, lurid sniping, backbiting, and axe-grinding posturing as “documenting” one of the most important subcultures of twentieth century music history. Though covering the same ground, Hurchalla’s tome is easily superior on a number of levels. He understands the subculture of which he was a part and he makes a concerted effort to explain it—its motivations, codes of conduct, strengths, weaknesses, and very *raison d’être*.

Hurchalla weaves his tale of the American hardcore scene’s patchwork of sub-scenes, almost like a tourist’s guide, adroitly focusing each chapter on a given city, state, or region of the country, its musicians of note, and how they fit into the larger picture. He culls the bulk of his tale from both contemporary interviews and the assorted fanzines long before the worldwide web became

The Humorless Ladies of Border Patrol is a travel book of sorts, but one written by a musician whose banjo and accordion tumble from one dive to another in a land of improvisational train schedules and apocalyptic Soviet architecture. The book gets its name from author Franz Nicolay’s idea for a pinup calendar. It would feature border police grimacing into the camera in the same way they scowl at Nicolay as he crosses from Hungary to Ukraine, Ukraine to Russia, or any of the jittery borders in post-Soviet Europe. One of the cheerier guards asks for a CD: “It’s the kind of music you can listen to in the gym?” he asks, doubtfully. Well sure, if you’re gym is a cabaret bar with beer-slicked treadmills.

So the question—why tour deeply in here, of all places? Surely, Japan and Mexico and Spain and Australia are easier to book, more trodden and routed with popular venues. But as it is, Nicolay’s great-grandmother hailed from near Transylvania, he knows a handful of the languages, and he’s a bit of a Slavophile when it comes to literature. In fact, I’ve never read a travel book with more complementary literature about the region. We’re treated to snippets from historian granddaddy Herodotus, all the big Russian lit names, and a bucket of scholars to follow. It doesn’t seem showy, either. It’s as if Nicolay expected me to ask, *Why Bulgaria? Why Mongolia?* In reply, he asks us, *Why not?*

Nicolay prefers “Slavs and their neighbors [for] their pessimistic humor [and] preference for the possible over the admitted,” for their belief “that it is only natural and rational to cross the street if it’s empty, to park on the sidewalk or median, to have a drink if having one will not adversely affect your neighbor, to pull the car into a river for a bath [...], to free domestic animals to graze and fornicate and excrete in the commons.” After all, “us being children of nature, and nature famously harder to tame than to indulge,” wouldn’t these people be the most receptive to folksy, foot-stomping punk?

Nicolay has played in loads of successful groups, notably with indie superstars The Hold Steady. But I thank the pagan god of Nicolay’s choosing that he didn’t publish some boring-ass Pitchfork memoir about his latter group and instead gave us this researched, charming, and sharp account of touring eastern Europe during the days of Ukraine’s revolution, Pussy Riot’s arrest, and a hundred other memorable moments from a wandering musician’s perspective. —Jim Joyce (The New Press, 120 Wall St., 31st Floor, NY, NY 10005, thenewpress.com)

Let’s Go to Hell: Scattered Memories of the Butthole Surfers

By James Burns, 504 pgs.

The Butthole Surfers are perhaps the band that holds the record for staying longest on my “I gotta check this band out” list. The fact that their album *Electric Larryland* seems required by law to be in every used CD

Yes, the story of how Gibby Haynes put his penis on a suitcase Jimmy Carter touched is interesting and funny.

No, it probably was not a moment that influenced and shaped international policy.

—Adrian Salas, *Let’s Go to Hell: Scattered Memories of the Butthole Surfers*

the all-encompassing resource/boondoggle it is now. Respectful of his subject matter, Hurchalla is not afraid to address the scene’s shortcomings—the sexism, racism, and other –isms punk still struggles with. He also addresses its cliquishness, often narrow-mindedness, and the violence and mayhem that both charged and plagued its formative years. On the flip, he also celebrates the things that continue to make it an inspirational, crucial outlet for so many generations of pissed-off kids of all classes and ethnicities.

In this third edition, Hurchalla tightens up the time period and trims his personal recollections while expanding his scope to include input from women and punks of color. The result is a more focused and fluid narrative that provides a more holistic view of a very diverse subculture. It remains the go-to book and an essential read for punks and historians alike. —Jimmy Alvarado (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA 94623)

The Humorless Ladies of Border Control:

Touring the Punk Underground from Belgrade to Ulaanbaatar

By Franz Nicolay, 359 pgs.

At best, travel writing is a commercial that advertises a trip you could never have because they leave out the diarrhea, the hangovers, and the loneliness. At worst, the genre stinks of charity as so many writers praise opportunities to get their hands dirty, either by participating in some highly choreographed public service—which they would never participate in stateside—or by literally holding the hands of an impoverished local for a photo-op.

bargain bin (along with Sisqó’s *Unleash the Dragon*) probably played a part in my hesitancy to dive in. Reading *Let’s Go to Hell* was a full-immersion course in correcting my fifteen or so years neglecting the Butthole legacy beyond the songs “Pepper” and “The Shah Sleeps in Lee Harvey’s Grave.” This book is a passionate love letter to the band, if not at times borderline cult-like in proselytizing for the Butthole’s importance.

The Butthole Surfers’ story is cobbled together from interviews author James Burns has compiled over the years, archival materials such as zine columns, and a healthy dose of conjecture. The biographical narrative of the book could have benefited from some judicious editing; quite often, enthusiasm gets the better of the author. The stories told of the band’s many incarnations, though, are a fascinating portrait of the Butthole Surfers’ intentions to push the musical and artistic boundaries of punk—and often of good taste in general. The—admittedly shaky—recollections of the band’s ultra hardscrabble rise from destitute Texas cult band in the ‘80s to legitimate hitmakers in the ‘90s alternative boom is a fascinating trajectory. (I’m not sure how to feel about them suing Touch And Go Records, though.)

Perhaps the book’s biggest weakness is that in its eagerness to spread the gospel of the Butthole Surfers’ importance as punk’s kings of weirdness and one of Texas’s hardest working bands, the writing often tips over into purple prose and grandiose moments of navel gazing. Every member change, tour, album release, and label signing becomes an odyssey necessitating grand-scale heavy introspection on what the chosen particular moment meant—not only for the Butthole Surfers, but punk rock and society as a whole. Stepping

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back for a couple meditative reflections on a band's place in the world is acceptable. The dozens of pensive asides got to be a slog. Yes, the story of how Gibby Haynes put his penis on a suitcase Jimmy Carter touched is interesting and funny. No, it probably was not a moment that influenced and shaped international policy.

That said, the 160 or so pages of annotated info on the Butthole Surfers' discography and live performances at the end of the book is a marvel to behold in its obsessive detail. —Adrian Salas (Cheap Drugs, notsaved1401@gmail.com)

The Metaphysical Ukulele

By Sean Carswell, 184 pgs.

The first novel of Sean Carswell's I read was his 2008 *Train Wreck Girl*, and I was an immediate fan. Like Carswell, I grew up in the backwaters of Florida, so I connected with the familiar settings and characters almost as much as I did his seemingly effortless writing style; a style that conveys a working class DIY punk ethos in its very delivery, without bringing attention to itself. While other "punk writers" can seem as obvious and ham-fisted in their prose as an obligatory NOFX singalong (and I've got nothing against NOFX), Carswell's authorial voice seems more comfortable and worn, like your favorite Arrivals or Worriers song.

So, it was not without a bit of trepidation that I approached Carswell's newest collection of short stories, *The Metaphysical Ukulele*, in which he purposefully compromises his own authorial voice. The dozen stories are all about well-known writers written in that writer's style. And, yes, each story also revolves around a ukulele. But the literary conceit of writing *about* an author *in* that author's style is a device that could go horribly wrong so easily. I'm sure the very premise behind the collection would make many creative writing teachers' blood run ice cold. Artful homage can become painful parody with the overuse of a trope. Emulation can collapse into shallow stereotype under the weight of forced inside jokes.

But goddamn does Carswell nail it in each and every story. Throughout, he is borrowing stylistic tricks—informed references and passages from each author—yet his own authorial voice remains intact. Yes, I was already a Carswell fan, but for fuck's sake, this collection should simply not succeed at the level it does. The Herman Melville opener, with its references to questionable sexual escapades and ukulele accompaniments, barely prepares the reader for the heights that Carswell hits. By the time you get to the Chester Himes story (in which a ukulele effectively transforms Chester Himes, struggling artist, into Chester Himes, world-renowned detective writer), you will be a believer. By the utterly brilliant Richard Brautigan story, Carswell is hitting his stride. Each story I read became my new favorite story. How could he top the inspired story about Raymond Chandler as told from the perspective of a private dick hired to find the blocked writer's ukulele? How about with a story of a young woman initiated into a secret band of ukulele players that may or may not include the one and only Thomas Pynchon, written in the style of Pynchon? To dare to pull that story off—hell, any of these stories—takes some serious gall. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to testify that Sean Carswell has the skills to meet the challenge and then some. Highly recommended. —Kevin Dunn (Ig Publishing, PO Box 2547, NY, NY 10163)

NOFX: The Hepatitis Bathub and Other Stories

By NOFX, Jeff Alulis, 357 pgs.

This is tied with Joe Keithley's *I, Shithead* and Michael Azzerad's *Our Band Could Be Your Life* as the best punk rock book I have read. The story of NOFX is told by each member of the band in near equal measure (Eric Melvin, Erik "Smelly" Sandin, "El Hefe," "Fat Mike," and, where applicable, their early guitarists Dave Casillas and Steve Kidwiler). Each band member brings a very distinct aspect and viewpoint to the history of NOFX as their stories intertwine. Juxtaposing each band member's story with each other is an extremely effective exercise in crafting and examining a historical narrative. Just as often as recollections back each other up, there are times that the story from one person does not agree with another's, or sheds light on aspects that weren't known to other members of the band. What emerges isn't just a point-by-point recounting of NOFX's history, but stories of four lives shaped by punk rock.

The tales are occasionally inspiring, just as often hilarious, and even more often, disturbing. Impressively, the hepatitis bathub mentioned in the title isn't even the most disgusting anecdote in the book. NOFX, in a way, personify the complications of punk rock. Discovering punk at the right juncture can save a person's life, but just as often, punk can be stupid, violent, and more than a little contradictory. For every positive change punk has had on those in NOFX or their immediate circle, there are just as many people who were swallowed up into darker paths—like addiction or random violence—especially in the hardcore scene of L.A. in the '80s.

Perhaps the most compelling thread in here is Smelly's path from obnoxious and out-of-control junkie to longstanding sobriety, while still retaining his place as the drummer in a band where insane amounts of drugs and alcohol are standard. This is juxtaposed with band members reflecting on Fat Mike's increasingly heavy and worrisome intake of drugs and alcohol, up to and including present times. There is a refreshing candor to how little it is held back from any of the band members. Yes, Fat Mike can often seem kind of self-aggrandizing, but there's also enough raw back story that it starts to make sense (if not necessarily being agreeable).

Jeff Alulis has managed to help massage NOFX's recollections into something eminently readable. The stories are not always pleasant—in fact they're often not—but they are intensely fascinating looks at the way lives are shaped by punk, for good and ill. —Adrian Salas (De Capo Press, 44 Farnsworth St., 3rd Fl., Boston, MA 02210. decapopress.com)

Punk Rock Entrepreneur: Running a Business without Losing Your Values

By Caroline Moore, 127 pgs.

As someone who is entrenched in DIY culture and has it baked into my life, I feel like this book is a big no-brainer. That's not to say there aren't any golden nuggets of truth here. Some important takeaways for me were these following couple of quotes: "When you're working on something you feel strongly about... there are benefits other than money," and, "But you do need to develop a healthier attitude about getting paid." Finding one's value and worth in their own work is a struggle, though I feel like that topic is much more thoroughly covered in another Microcosm book, *Make It Mighty Ugly*.

I found myself muttering "no duh" several times. While this isn't meant to be the punk rock version of *Who Moved My Cheese?*, it still manages to be both and neither. One of the sections covers the importance of building a community of support which becomes your audience. Another lays out the benefits of split records (i.e. half the cost, twice the exposure). Many of the other tidbits are about how you should value your time and not let the prospects of lengthening your resume consume your vision of success. Moreover, you should be proud of each thing you put energy into; otherwise it's not worth doing.

My two biggest bones to pick are the assumptive and condescending attitude Moore often took. For instance, she explains what *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* is, but then talks down to the reader if they don't know Louis CK. On the flipside of that, several artists are mentioned with no context of who they are, like Winston Smith (who, up till now, I thought was solely a fictional character in *1984*. In case you're wondering, he's a collagist who designed the Dead Kennedys logo. He also makes/made fake gig posters).

My second complaint is intensely more passionate. Here is the spark that ignited the irritation: "Sometimes, opportunity cost comes in social standing, which can be a major roadblock to peoples true passions. It could be that if I quit the family business, our Thanksgiving dinners are going to be awkward." One of the key components to this DIY entrepreneur guide is to know your audience. You're a music photographer, writing about punk ethics in a book released on an alternative press. Do you *really* think that your audience is concerned with *perceptions of social standing*?

The author goes into detail at the start about how the book came to be. Moore had been volunteering as a photographer and coordinator for Weapons of Mass Creation festival for three years. She lead a seminar called "How Punk Rock Made Me a Better Entrepreneur." After reading this book, I feel like the seminar or a web series might have been a better way to go in dispersing this information. —Kayla Greet (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 Williams Ave., Portland, OR, 97227)

The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise

By Brix Smith Start, 455 pgs.

I have to admit that I know very little about the band The Fall. So, I approached Brix Smith Start's memoir, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise* with some concern. I questioned if I would be able to relate to her time in this long-running British act. But if a memoir is well written, the subject matter can be easily understood and related to. (Think Patti Smith's *Just Kids*.) What I found with Start's book was an overabundance of information and anecdotes. *The Rise...* is a tome, coming in at 455 pages.

Start literally writes of her entire life, starting with her birth in 1962. She shares her upbringing, including her parents' divorce, her father's many marriages, and the shuffling between family members in Chicago and Los Angeles. She goes to Bennington College in Vermont, but eventually drops out and returns to Chicago to live with her mother and step-father. At the time she was very much into The Fall. After running into Mark E. Smith (who pretty much *is* The Fall) at their Chicago show, Start finds herself in love and moves to Manchester, England, to be with him. Soon the two are married and Start joins the band full time.

After a tumultuous time in The Fall (and her divorce from Smith), Start looks for ways to reinvent herself: solo musician, actress, fashion designer, and television personality. She's constantly finding ways to succeed, often relying on her connections to give her a boost. She tells of meeting world-famous musicians and British royalty. The more she tells of her experiences, the harder it is to entirely sympathize. The lifestyle Start lived was—with the exception of her years in The Fall—decidedly un-punk.

While there were enjoyable, interesting stories in the book, there is no reason it has to be this lengthy. I couldn't help but wonder, "Where was the editor with this?" Why didn't anyone tell Start that there wasn't a reason to include a page's worth of description of the food available at the Friars' Club in Beverly Hills? Why were there pages upon pages of material written about her pugs? While I understand that they are important to her, they don't drive the memoir or serve as a primary theme in the book.

If I'm to gather it correctly, the book is primarily about Start's ability to reinvent herself when faced with large challenges. That's perfectly well and good. However, that theme needs to be the focus of the memoir. That should guide the work. Given its bloated page count and excess information, that's unfortunately how I felt about this book: fairly pointless. —Kurt Morris (Faber & Faber, 74-77 Great Russell St., London, England, WC1B 3DA)

The Spitboy Rule: Tales of a Xicana in a Female Punk Band
By Michelle Cruz Gonzales, 144 pgs.

Spitboy was a Bay Area hardcore band active in the '90s. They sported an all-female lineup, a rarity in a scene long known just as much for being a hotbed of testosterone as for being the hotbed of creativity that produced, among other things, what became known as "alternative" rock. Though they intentionally didn't affiliate themselves with the then-nascent riot grrrl collective of bands, they did cover much of the same lyrical territory and beyond—misogyny, racism, sexism, rape culture. They simultaneously tried to navigate their existence in a scene that—despite its best intentions—continues to struggle with the fact it's often little more than a microcosm of the greater society to which it strives to provide an alternative.

Gonzales, then known as "Todd Spitboy," was the band's drummer and one of its lyricists. The book is more memoir than a linear autobiography. Gonzales writes of her formative years in a small Northern California town,

her discovery of punk, her move to the San Francisco area, her early musical endeavors, and the life of Spitboy, from formation to dissolution. Each episode is delivered in chapters that sometimes mirror the assorted photographs peppered throughout the book. They are short impressions that both document a given moment in time and contribute to a greater thematic thread.

While her story is of note in and of itself, *Spitboy Rule* is particularly affecting when she speaks of being a person of color within the punk scene, and the only person of color in her band. Recounting numerous awkward moments within the context of both, she talks of first trying to bury and supplant her ethnicity with that of a punk. She then rediscovers and embraces

Why were there pages upon pages about her pugs?

—Kurt Morris, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*

that ethnicity and its accompanying social class when it pops up and causes some uncomfortable situations between her, her peers, and her bandmates. Gonzales addresses the subject with candor and understanding. She raises some interesting questions in the process with a voice that is clear, singular, and introspective while never losing sight of the bigger picture and her place within it.

Included are pieces by Professor Mimi Thi Nguyen and Los Crudos vocalist Martin Sorrondeguy, who deftly provide context about Gonzales, Spitboy, and the time and world they inhabited. All told, *The Spitboy Rule* is a highly recommended read for anyone interested in gender/ethnic studies, Spitboy, the punk scene in which it existed, the often contradictory and landmine-ridden political climate of that scene, or simply a memoir about living an extraordinary life during an extraordinary moment in America's musical timeline. —Jimmy Alvarado (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA 94623)

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