

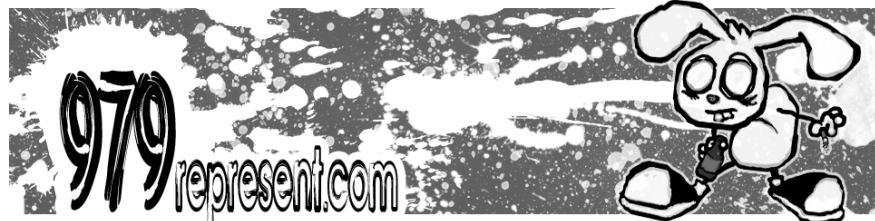
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THE FREEWHEELIN' GUIDE FOR THE OTHER SIDE OF COLLEGE STATION/BRYAN



Also inside: Still Drinkin' tackles the Shiner 6—An American Teacher In Abu Dhabi—Dahli Rama—Rock The Republic Redux—Concert Calendar—CD reviews—Moustache Rides



979Represent is a local magazine
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Corrections:

979Represent makes its first correction in nearly a year of publishing. The photos of Behold The Great Throne run in last month's edition (vol. 2 issue 10) should be credited to Ryan Coombs.

ARSENAL TATTOO



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AIDS IS STILL 4 REALZ

It's been 30 years since the first whispers of an unknown disease began to go around urban areas, a disease that attacks your immune system and doesn't really let go. By the mid '80s it was no longer a whisper. The word was out about Human Immunodeficiency Virus, better known as HIV and referred to more commonly by the name of what the virus causes, Auto Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or simply AIDS.

We've been beaten over the head ever since about the dangers of AIDS/HIV and that practicing "safe sex" or abstinence or whatever will prevent you from contracting it. That message seems to have sunk in, because HIV isn't quite the bogeyman for the Millennials as it was for Gen X'ers. For the most part AIDS numbers have dropped significantly. We all know to use condoms, not share needles, etc. Lifetime expectancy has increased dramatically, thanks to the new drug cocktails that help make HIV somewhat manageable for those who are HIV+. I think we all know that HIV is still a huge problem elsewhere in the world (especially in Africa) but the fever pitch of AIDS sneaking into your bedroom and killing you in your sleep has largely died down. It's rare you hear of anyone dying from AIDS-related illness anymore. It just doesn't happen much.

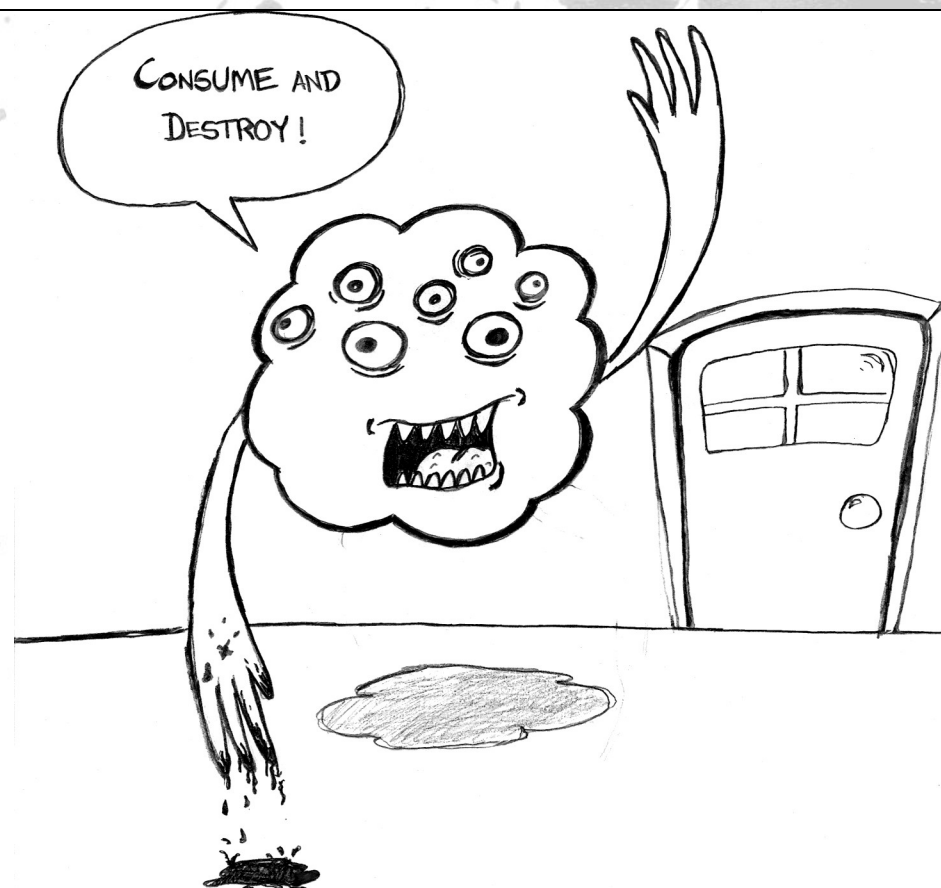
Well, tell that to my brother Sean, who passed away from AIDS-related pneumonia earlier this year. He would've been 39 years old this month. Sean hid his HIV status from almost everyone and his sudden illness and death shocked everyone. We've known for decades that Sean was gay. No secret there. But Sean had been coupled up with a nice HIV- partner for 12 years or so. How could he have survived with AIDS for longer than that without taking the drugs and without showing the signs? Well, Sean was a very large man and managed to hide it well. And his infection occurred 15 years or so before his death. A random sexual encounter from a time when Sean wasn't coupled up so nice. Just because we know what to do doesn't mean we always do it. Being young and invincible is often times our greatest danger. And all it takes is one night of recklessness.

Had Sean acknowledged his disease it's possible he could have managed it. But he did not. While we may be 20 years past the heyday of AIDS paranoia you need not step very far outside of polite conversation to find those that still discriminate, still stoke the old fears, still make it prudent to hide it away rather than to confront it and deal with it. And while America is largely more tolerant today than 40 years ago during the Stone-wall Riots and the birth of Out Gay Culture, it doesn't take much scratching of the surface to pull up the intolerance. Had Sean lived in a major urban hub with a large culture of those living with HIV he might've had the support and the courage he needed to confront and conquer it. In rural Kentucky...yeah, that's just not going to happen.

I cannot pretend that my relationship with Sean was anything less than complicated. His death has filled me with more regrets than I can ever really phrase pertly. The larger lesson for me in Sean's death is that HIV is still a domestic issue and that it is ALWAYS important to be careful. Fucking vulcanize your privates before you expose them to any new sexual partner. It also taught me that just being tolerant and down with homosexuality is not enough. It is not enough to just accept and keep your mouth shut. Confront stereotypes, confront intolerance, confront hatred when you see it before you. Just because I had a gay brother and was cool with it does not give me a hood pass. Contribute to www.itgetsbetterproject.com and let others know what's up. This fall has been rife with suicides by gay teens and adults bullied to the point of no return. Speaking out against the intolerance is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity.—KELLY MINNIS

MOUSTACHE RIDES

BY JAMES GRAY



FRASH 2010



Still Drinkin': Shiner Sixer

It goes without saying that Shiner Brewing Company crafts highly drinkable beers. Their national popularity alone suggests that the Spoetzl Brewery is doing something right. In an effort to understand the Shiner craze, I recently purchased the Shiner Family Six pack - a ready-made sampler of six different Shiner beers - and then drowned myself in some qualitative beer-geek research. On close analysis of available data (and my own overjoyed gullet), I concluded something pivotal to understanding Shiner's fame: the Spoetzl Brewing Company designs easy drinking, non-offensive, all palettes-included beers.

By looking at the numbers, we can see that the Shiner beer with the highest Alcohol By Volume (ABV) is Shiner Oktoberfest with a 5.7% ABV. This is a not a high alcohol percentage until one considers that the average ABV count for most Shiner beers is somewhere right at 5%. This means that even novice drinkers can throw back a few Shiner beers and not feel the alcohol effects as readily. As for flavor, Shiner's highest reported International Bitterness Unit (IBU) count is for Shiner 101, which weighs in at 25 IBUs, making it significantly less bitter than, say, a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale that boasts 37 IBUs. These numbers are significantly lower than typical American craft brewery offerings, which obey current trends demanding bigger beers with higher alcohol and more hops. You have to give Shiner credit for remaining true to their roots by consistently crafting solid beers tasty enough to create wide fanfare but inviting enough to keep people coming back for more.

Below I've included my notes on five of the six Shiner Family Pack beers, skipping Shiner Bock due to space and its already overwhelming popularity. In fact, my main objective in exploring these beers is to shift some focus from Shiner Bock to some of Shiner's other offerings. The notes I've included below are crude, unmanicured, and scribbled directly in the moment of Shiner on tongue consumption. Hopefully, you will find a new Shiner favorite among my rabble. Prosit!



KOSMOS RESERVE - An American Pale Lager. Kin to Coors or Budweiser American Lagers, except that the American Pale Lager is brewed without cereal adjuncts, allowing it to lose the thinned rice and corn flavors. Kosmos pours with a golden grain color, constant upward dribble of small bubbles. Hay-like aroma, touch of lemon and sourdough. Flavor begins with an evidently bright citrus hoppiness, then mellows into grassy clean finish. Everything about this beer is crisp. Highly drinkable, even if not effectively memorable.

SHINER LIGHT (4.0% ABV / 13 IBUs) - Bright white cap from an explosion of carbonation bubbles. Glass looks like a geyser in the making. Light lagers typically use more cereal adjunct to cut calories and alcohol, which potentially sacrifices flavor, but that's not the case here. Flavor remains intact. Thick grainy coat makes mouthfeel a bit less palatable than most domestic light lagers, such as Bud Light, Coors Light, and Natty Light; however, Shiner Light boasts far more character, both from malt and hop presence. Highly recommended alternative to domestic market light lagers: same light price with a heavy satisfaction of small business support.

HEFEWEIZEN (5.4% ABV / 17 IBUs) - You don't find many beers that look prettier in a glass than Shiner Hefeweizen. Hefes usually sport a jaundiced hue that only appears yellow in contrast to a blazing white foam caphead. Not Shiner Hefeweizen: it's almost neon orange. It's a beautiful beer, and one that I've enjoyed greatly in the past. However, this time around, the spiciness I once loved in Shiner Hefe feels muted, and all I taste now is orange. Shiner Hefe was always stood out, for me, because of its spiciness, but now I feel that I may have been mistaken.

BLACK (4.9% ABV / 18 IBUs) - Very dark body, deep plum breakthrough of light at base of glass. Aroma is charred malts, cola, and (oddly enough) something reminiscent of black cherries. Thin halo head assures that, despite dark appearance, this is no porter, no stout. Bright Czech Saaz hop buzz peeps through toasted, smoky, coffee-like malts. The style is repeated (and possibly trumped) in another Texas brew: Ugly Pug Black Lager, from Rahr and Sons Brewing in Fort Worth. Although not available in BCS, Rahar and Sons are a fantastic Texas brewery to look for in the Houston, Austin, Dallas, and Waco areas.

BLONDE (4.4%) - Great beer. Wonderful liquid homage to Texas' Bohemian roots and history. Shiner Blonde pours with a beautiful bright golden lager appearance. Party-favor shoestrings of ascending carbonation bubbles fuse into a bold white foam cap. Shiner Blonde looks alive and ready to dance. Flavor bursts with clean grass and hay notes, stretched out on a firm bed of bright biscuity malts. A very earthy beer, even in its lightness. Unfortunately, a dull aftertaste and mouthfeel cuts down on refreshment, but - by God - it's still such a lovely beer! Although nine time out of ten I'll take a Real Ale's Fireman's #4 Blonde over this, Shiner Blonde is still one of my favorite Texas beers.—KEVIN STILL

Asian Persuasions with The Dahli Rama: Do the '80s Really Need To Come Back?



I'm a product of the 1980's. Being that my old ass was ejected from the womb in 1978, I was in high stride by the time the good chunk of the 1980's rolled around. Don't get me wrong, the 80's were fucking great to grow up in. Me and George Lucas were boys and even at a young age, I could appreciate the greatness that was *Empire* when it first came out in the theatres. Marty McFly was "radical" and Huey Lewis & The News were awesome. Even if you view these flicks from the present, you can feel the genuine nature of the films and that was what made them great. Toys were still constructed with a sense of quality, like the Transformers by Hasbro actually utilizing die cast metal. Big Macs from McD's also looked like the pictures that were displayed in the joint which actually could be deemed a restaurant.

But enough galvanizing about the awesome-ness that was the 80's. The real issue I have with the 80's, beyond the twisted sense of style that for some inexplicable reason is making a come-back, was that it was the time period when modern day capitalism was born. With its birth came the death of standards, quality, and pride in workmanship. These idealistic attributes were then replaced by the unethical observance and acceptance of profit at any cost. It was during this decade that Wall Street took control of our everyday lives and created a formulaic approach to the goal that we all strive for, which is success. It took the everyday little things that created memories and made them insignificant. What mattered now were profit margins, dividends, and marginal costs.

Talk to anyone in my family, even my little brother, and the praises of the Reagan administration are pretty prominent. Can't deny he was a well liked president. But his reign brought about a period where materialism was what spurred on the economy. It all became less about who you were and more about what you had. You didn't go to college to learn about what you wanted to be. You went to college to get a degree in something that would make you a yuppie. Damn I miss that word. But more importantly, growing up became less about shaping and attacking what it was that made up your dreams, and more about what you could make money-wise and the cool shit you could get with it. With all the attaining of said cool shit came the perceived fulfillment of credit cards. Yay for fucking debt. Gone was the mentality of "don't buy shit if you don't have the money," and along came the prominent mindset (even today) of "I can get this cool shit now and eventually pay for it later".

The 90's had some great shit too, but things became more about how society was pissed off and less about trying to roll in the crew with the Member's Only jackets. Life reclaimed some sense of sustenance. But being that today is 2010, I see a lot of the values of the 80's making a come back. How many remakes of 80's movies have we seen this year? Did we really need Liam Neeson sporting a cigar and being Hannibal in the modern day version of the A-Team? Anybody else's nostalgic memory of Optimus and Bumblebee get raped by the repeated and unnecessary spoken dialogue of Megan Fox? And what was the deal with the ghetto-fied ebonics-talking hatchbacks?

To bring back the focus from a pop culture stand point to a value and moralistic review, I see a lot of people investing and re-investing their efforts and life energy into the things that supposedly make life more efficient. I've heard the media and people who write more succinctly and intelligently than I do that this is the information age. At any given moment we are blessed with the infinite knowledge that is available to us at a moment's whim to where we can access a collective knowledge base of information. But let's be honest, what is it that we do with this powerful tool? Porn for one (I'm uber guilty being the lonely Asian that I am), and an arranged library of videos that depict the "quirks" that people used to want to hide. I'm not saying that this sense of new found honesty is something that should be covered and hidden again, but there is a sick sense of shit just being wrong when folks like to YouTube about every inane thought and than for the more hardcore upload videos of random objects and the personal space of their rectum that said objects occupy. The sick sense comes not from the objects and the array of methods of insertion (yes it does), but from the origin of the author(s) intent. I'm not here to judge. I completely understand an individual's need to self-explore and self-express. But the intent is not for these altruistic and sometimes twisted means. They are driven by profit. The information age is spurred on not by creativity, though it is a byproduct. No, the bravado is induced and enacted with the hopes that advertisers will see an untapped market through the audience of said twisted fuck who likes to insert Hot Wheels into his/her urethra. "Hot Wheels - Leading the Way!!"

To live in the present day and age in America, money is a necessary evil for lack of a better term. Having an iPhone 4 or the new Motorola Droid X is fucking bad ass ballz. Have the original trilogy on VHS and DVD? Fuck that. Lucas decided that the definitive collection is to be released on Blu Ray. Was Indiana Jones your favorite movie series? Let me enlighten you on how aliens can fit into everything and release this piece of doo doo movie called "Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skulls". Fucking Skulls made out of Crystal!?!? This is what money in the present brings forth. But are these things, creative ideas (I use that term very, very lightly), and marketing campaigns fuel for what is valuable in life? These things to life value does not bring (my shallow attempt at Yoda-speak). The fundamental formula for a life fulfilled is the same as it has been for eons. It's wrapping your head around the knowledge that humans are pack animals and that we need people to participate in our lives to make it better. This excludes the need to show off your Nissan 370Z or 15 inch Macbook Pro with the Intel i5 core. We are all guilty of that sense of recognition that comes from the cool shit we get. It just shouldn't fall by the wayside however, that we as these personalities that make up who we are have worth that is much more than the things we buy. So by all means make use of the efficient and utilitarian tools made available by the radness that is technology, but keep in mind that showing them off only creates suffering through jealousy and envy. Unless, of course, they're tattoos that you've invested in. By all means show those off with pride.

The Rama Dahli.

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979 Represent 3

An American Teacher in Abu Dhabi

Special Report & Photos by Kristi Galligan

This summer found my children and me residing in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. For those that are geographically challenged, the United Arab Emirates is a small Middle Eastern country on the coast of the Persian Gulf. Most of us know in America know it from *Garfield* or from *Sex in the City II*. When I applied for the position that brought us there, I had a vague idea where it was. I knew it was in the Middle East. I knew it was wealthy. I knew it was near Dubai. I had no idea it was thirty miles from Iran or that it was quite close to Iraq too. I just knew I was starting an exciting adventure of teaching overseas with my two boys, ages 13 and 8.

I had no idea it was going to be one of the worse experiences of my life.

I had always wanted to teach overseas. Before I even graduated with a teaching degree, I had looked at international teaching positions. Most of them required three years of teaching experience, ESL certification and a master's degree.



Abu Dhabi waterline

I had a vague plan to teach while acquiring an ESL certification and a master's degree. Then, when Zak graduated from high-school, I would apply to teach internationally.

Then, I had an existential crisis in early 2010. I was not happy. I felt trapped by my job and my relationships. I began applying to graduate schools in different states, looking at teaching positions in different states and applying for international teaching positions. I was just throwing darts at a dartboard to see what stuck.

One position stuck. It called for a certified secondary English teacher and had a great salary, free housing and free health insurance. I would be working for the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC). Perfect. I applied. I got a call back. Then, an interview. And, an offer. All within three weeks. It was a whirlwind and I spent all summer deconstructing my life. I got rid of a dog, clothes, stuff. I didn't sign the kids up for school and arranged for my mother to pay my bills. We were

set.

So, there we were in Abu Dhabi in August. It was miserably hot. I can't even compare it to anything. Every day was over 100 degrees and heat radiated everywhere. The pool water had to be chilled because, otherwise, it was ninety degrees even in the pool. At night, the windows would fog in the hotel because of the humidity outside.

We were also there during Ramadan which is a month-long Muslim religious celebration. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunset to sundown. Since the UAE is a Muslim country, the rule applies to everyone. Businesses and restaurants are closed during the day so everyone can fast without temptation. One cannot drink water or chew gum in public.

We quickly learned two things: Subway will serve food during the day and they deliver. We ate Subway every single day in Abu Dhabi. The windows were covered with paper so people could not see inside while customers order. It gave me a fugitive type feeling. I felt sneaky bringing the food out or guilty when I had it on the elevator with a Muslim. I didn't want to be disrespectful but I was hungry.

The other thing we learned was the mall was the place to go. I don't know if an American can ever comprehend an UAE mall. They have Carrefours (which is like our Walmart) or Lulu's (like our Target) in them. They have ice rinks and fun places (like Chucky E Cheese). They have every shop one has wanted to visit such as Gap, Mac, Louis Vuitton, and Versace. They also had air conditioning. We went to the mall so much in Abu Dhabi that it was ridiculous. We would make Carrefour runs for crackers and drinks because we were living in a hotel. Room service was expensive.

There was some evidence that I may have made the wrong decision as early as Abu Dhabi. For one, the first meeting we had, they took my passport. It is common for employers to take passports in the UAE because they have to sponsor their employees. I was told it would be ten to fifteen days and they would give them back. I was uncomfortable but I did it anyway.

The first real red flag to me was the week of training. We learned about Arabic culture. We were taught some Arabic. My southern accent found Arabic difficult and it was endless amusement for the other teachers to listen to me speak. Thursday, we had team building activities then they handed out debit cards with 5000 dirhams salary advance (3.67 dirhams equals 1 American dollar). Hey, that's exciting. It ruined the team building activities because I am fairly sure some people would have killed newborns to get those cards. We had been there almost a month and we had already got paid!

Um, wrong. We actually had not been paid. The cards had no money on them! The ADEC representatives had not mentioned that. None of us realized it until Thursday evening and the weekend in the UAE is Friday and Saturday. So, Sunday, we tried again. Nothing. Monday, nothing. But, ADEC had told us that we were getting paid. Surely, they wouldn't lie to us. It must just be a mistake. Tuesday, nothing. Someone from ADEC told us we would get paid by Thursday. Great. Thursday, nothing.

People explained it was a cultural issue. Arabic people want to please you so they say what you want to hear. I can understand that, but the people talking to us are Westerners. So what is going on? We get an email that states we will get paid within thirty-six hours. I think, well, no company would send an email that gives a deadline about pay without meeting it. I was wrong. Thirty-six hours pass and we still don't have pay.

To put it in perspective, my travel group had been in the country for a month, sans money. People were doing laundry in bathtubs and eating crackers for meals. There were some families with three children there, and we had been told to bring maybe \$2000 or so. For me, I thought ADEC was going to follow through on their promises and I rented a car. So, I was starting to worry. A lot.

While this pay issue was going on, part of my travel group had been moved to Al Ain. Al Ain is a city an hour and a half outside of Abu Dhabi. It is smaller and less expensive which is nice. It even has a Chilis which is great! That is about all Al Ain has basically. It has three malls which is a small number in the UAE. It is considered expat wilderness to another expat I spoke to.

It could also be a contender for the roundabout capital of the world. They don't have many street lights and the city planners put roundabouts in instead. Also, there are no real traffic laws. Police don't stop speeders in the UAE. When a person registers their car for the year, they

pay their speeding tickets at that point. People drive wild. So, to get into a roundabout, I just prayed, closed my eyes and shot through into an opening. Death trap. Scarily, I had several people tell me I was a great roundabout driver.

We were still in a hotel in Al Ain. This hotel has seen better days but it is a four star hotel. In Abu Dhabi, we stayed in a five star hotel. ADEC has certainly provided nice hotel stays and they provide us breakfast. The problem, for me, is that we only have one room. We are now on week five and my youngest child does not even have a bed. He is sleeping on the floor or on the balcony. We are tired of each other. We try to get away from each other but it is hard. Going to the lobby requires socialization with other ADEC people and we are tired of each other too. Just when I am getting ready to break, I get paid! ADEC pulled through. Jubilation.

Then, the next red flag happens. We have been in the country for a month. In the UAE, without a resident visa, one can only stay in the country for thirty days or face fines. The only way to avoid fines is to leave the country and come back. Great. Al Ain is on the border with Oman and the kids can cross and come back in the UAE. There is one big problem, though. I don't have my passport. None of us have been given our passports. So, who is going to take my kids across the border? Well, ADEC suggests we find a trusted adult to take our dependents if we are single parents or married teachers.

Here is the problem: I have known these people all of five weeks. They are lovely. As far as I know, none of them are ax murderers or child molesters but I have not known them that long. Worse, I don't even have to write a letter of permission. The kids can just go across with the border with anyone. To say I am unsettled is an understatement. I have received an advance but the fines are really expensive. And, I had to wait forever for that advance. How long will it take for me to receive my actual salary?

So, my kids went across the border into Oman with a stranger.

I am starting to consider going home. I am on a two year contract but I am just not sure if this environment is safe for anyone in my family. I have no passport. I have been in one hotel room for five weeks with my children. I got paid but only after being told several false deadlines and my children have crossed the border with a stranger. Things are not going as planned.

What about teaching? Wasn't I there to teach? Well, no one had told me I might be assigned to a provider in my teaching assignment. A provider runs the school and has its own rules and procedures. It is like a charter school in the States. I am, of course, assigned to one of the worst providers possible. A quick Google search informs me that this provider has a horrible reputation. I try to think positively but, at training, I am informed I am not allowed to talk to parents, I will not set up my own classroom and I am not to make my own tests. For elementary teachers, centers are not allowed-even for pre-K! I am just shocked. I try to be positive-hey, less work for me!

Teaching was actually not that bad. My students were well-behaved. The sexes are separated and they also divide the classes into literary sections and science sections. The literary section means the students are not college-bound but science students are. I have one section of literary and one section of science for twelfth grade. I have one section of science for eleventh grade.

The school day is composed of nine periods and I teach six. There is an assembly in the morning and then two twenty minute breaks. There is no school lunch. In my school, there are no copiers, printers or computers for the teachers. We do have textbooks which is more than some of my fellow teachers have. I am in shock after my first day. I am teaching in the richest country of the world and the schools are very primitive. I am not sure what I expected.

There is an underlying problem in all the schools. When they hired English speaking teachers for this educational reform, they never reassigned the Arabic teachers. The Arabic teachers resent the Western teachers and they are scared they are going to lose their jobs. While Arabic teachers only teach four periods a day then leave, Western teachers are assigned six periods and then have to stay for the day. There is resentment at all levels which can make the schools uncomfortable.

At this point, though, I was exhausted. I have been told we would get housing three or four times now. I couldn't sleep. I was greatly concerned about my passport. I couldn't eat and I became a ball of anxiety. All of us did. I weighed myself, at one point, and I lost twenty pounds in six weeks. Things were just not working. We needed to make modifications.

One of the modifications I made was to search for a school for my eldest child. At this point, I was going to home school them but we didn't have a strong internet connection. They needed out of the hotel, and they had not been in school since May. It was by then late September. They were turning into wild heathens and a half to leave the country but we are home now. The kids are in school and happy.

We left.

I still have not been paid. Getting my passport involved going to the embassy and so much stress that I literally could not keep down food. It took a week and a half to leave the country but we are home now. The kids are in school and happy.

We are glad we went. We got to visit Dubai which is one of the coolest places I have even been. It is in a different emirate and the atmosphere is completely different. It is much more relaxed and much more Western. We learned some Arabic and we are continuing lessons in Tennessee. We learned about a new culture and we learned about a new religion.

We are glad to be home, though.



Zak & Alex in front of Burja Khalifa, the world's only 7-star hotel.



Only in the Middle East.

Signal Rising

profile by Kelly Minnis

Signal Rising is a very new metal band from College Station that combines the pop smarts of post-grunge commercial alternative rock and the darker, heavier sound of nu-metal into an anthemic hard rock sound that is both listenable to diehard metalheads and casual fans. That is no accident, considering who's in the band and how the band came about.

Signal Rising is essentially the lead singer for Linus fronting The Texas Drag Queens. Roger Moore plays guitar, Michael Szabuniewicz plays bass, Ryan Wood plays drums and Cris Pate sings lead and plays guitar. I sat down with Signal Rising last month to talk about the band's origins, their sound and the band's future plans.

KM: So Signal Rising isn't even a year old at this point, and you dudes are already cranking out an album, right?

Roger: Yeah, not even a year. February, pretty much.

Did that happen so quick since you guys are essentially TX Drag Queens without (former singer) Jesse?

The whole band: NOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!

Cris: Please let the record state that we are not the Texas Drag Queens without Jesse.

But you were in the last version of the Drag Queens, right?

Cris: Yes, but I made sure that everyone knew I just wanted to play guitar, I did not want to sing and I did not want to takeover the band.

Michael: Jesse was kinda absent during the last year of the band anyways, and we all had started writing new music that Jesse didn't really know what to do with, it was outside of the Drag Queens sound.

Roger: And since Jesse wasn't really around much, eventually The Drag Queens decided to break up, so we then went off with Cris to do something new.

The three of you from the Drag Queens have played together for some time, right?

Ryan: Roger and me, we've been playing music together since high school. Our first band was By Any Other Name. Michael was in This Last Antic. When those bands broke up we all got together and formed the Drag Queens, and we did that for what, four years? (everyone nods).

And Cris, Linus was your previous band, right?

Cris: Yeah.

So, I'm somewhat new to town, only have been here since the summer of 2006 so I don't know about Linus, and I bet some of our readers don't either. Give me a crash course in Linus.

Cris: OK. Here's the short version. As far as I know, Linus has been the one band from College Station that ever got a major label record deal. That was with a subsidiary of Atlantic Records. We were around early in the 2000's and played around here and Texas a lot. We weren't very good at first, but we got good. We played to lots of people, thousand-plus people at places around here back when people around here still went to see bands like that. It was a good ten to 12 years of my life. But it fell apart as those things usually do, and I moved to Tulsa and that was pretty much it for Linus.

I moved back to College Station 18 months ago and was looking for something to do. I knew all the Drag Queens dudes from way back when their bands played with Linus and I needed to just play in a band again, get my head back into it just as a player. And the Drag Queens thing came up and I joined just as a guitar player. Didn't want to muscle in on what Jesse was doing at all. But Signal Rising just kinda happened as the Drag Queens fell apart.

But I saw the Drag Queens' last couple of shows back in January and it was obvious that the sound of the band was

changing, becoming heavier and darker. I had assumed that was where that band was going naturally. The Drag Queens were weirder, kinda like Jane's Addiction to me whereas Signal Rising is a bit more straightforward, almost poppy. How'd that come about?

Cris: I wouldn't say it was by choice really. I'm a songwriter, and I write songs. I like a lot of different kinds of music besides just heavy music, and I'm not so much into death metal or hardcore so much. I can appreciate it from a guitar player's point of view since I love those heavy, heavy tones but I'm not much of a screamer. I mean, we have some of that intensity too, but I mostly sing. That's just what I do. I'm gonna do the big rock yell and scream, but not full on death metal. Maybe death metal with harmony! (laughs)



Something I've noticed having played shows with you before is that you guys have an entire wall of amps, and they are not the normal sort of guitar stacks. Tell me a little about the Signal Rising guitar gear.

Cris: I designed and built our cabinets. I work in car audio, and I've built speaker boxes before, and I have this partnership with Rich Caldwell. He was in Linus too, but is now the sound engineer for Flyleaf and he also recorded our album. Anyhow, Rich and I have bounced ideas off of each other for some time about building an isolation cabinet that allowed a guitarist to crank the amp but contain the sound somewhat without blowing anyone's ears or messing up front-of-house sound.

Basically like a Power Soaker box in cabinet form.

Cris: Yeah, pretty much. It's the speaker box version of an attenuator. The problem with most iso cabs is that they sound like crap. So Rich and I worked pretty hard on getting the design right. Signal Rising uses the fourth generation of this design. The third generation cabs are out on the road with Flyleaf. Unlike most iso cabs, these can sound pretty good when you're in front of them too. You can still hear them at stage volume but not completely overwhelm the PA. Sound guys love us. The cabinets are all mic'd internally so all they have to do is plug into us. We can have as much or little stage volume as is necessary. And we sound like us wherever we go.

I think it looks pretty impressive out front, with all the glowing lights from your amp heads and these gigantic cabinets up front, makes you guys like intimidating, especially from a dude

with a little Fender amp!

Cris: Yeah! The third generation cabs can cop more of that Fender attitude. Our fourth gen cabs are darker, bassier.

With the Drag Queens Roger was pretty much the only guitarist. Now you guys have to share sonic territory here. Have the two of you worked together at all to scoop out space for each other?

Roger: Not really. It happened naturally.

Cris: I didn't want Roger to have to mess with his tone at all, because I like what Roger does. I can work around it. So I dial in more of the low end, and let Roger keep more of the mid-range higher end sort of sound. It works out really well.

Tell me a little bit about your new album.

Michael: We recorded it in Houston over the summer, and we'd work our day jobs up here and then book it down to Houston and record til late, sleep a few hours and then back to work again. It was brutal! We did that for an entire week. Hopefully next time we do it we can take our time and not have to push it out.

Cris: We already have the next one cooking.

Really? Already?

Cris: We hope to start pre-production on it soon, and get another one out next year.

Speaking of next year, I hear you've got some big shows coming up and maybe some touring.

Cris: Yeah. Michael Montes from Sidewinder Productions helped us and got us some shows playing the Texas dates with 12 Stones, and another date in Houston with Taproot next month.

And then next year, yeah, we've got some tour plans, definitely. In February we'll head out to the West Coast for a couple of weeks. Play the Whisky in Los Angeles, do Vegas, some other dates. In the spring I hope to get to the Midwest. We've made some friends in Chicago so we'll play there and then use that as a base to hit some other cities in the area. And next summer we'll hit Boston and use that to get the East Coast, New York, Philadelphia and so on.

That's a pretty big schedule and big plans for a band that's not even a year old yet.

Cris: Well, I'm 33 now and we've fast tracked this band. All of us know how to play, we like each other, there's no awkwardness, nothing that should hold the band back at all. I've been through all of this before with Linus, and now I know how to do it all the right way. Linus just stumbled through it, and I've learned from our mistakes. I feel like this is my last run and I really want it to work out for me and for these guys as well.

With all this Signal Rising activity does this pretty much put (Roger's death metal band) Primal on hiatus?

Roger: Yeah, but Primal was already slowing down. We lost our bass player and then we had to find a new one. We recorded a new album earlier this year and right now it's in the mixing process. And the other guys in the band are all busy right now too, so with Signal Rising taking off right now it works out great that Primal is preoccupied.

So what happens from here for Signal Rising?

Cris: The plan is really to push the CD as hard as we can, tour it hard and see how it goes. Do it the right way this time and see what happens. I'm hoping these dates with 12 Stones and Taproot will help us make some contacts we can capitalize on. I can always tap the relationship I have with Flyleaf and Skillet for some help. I've played shows with a lot of other bands out there, and we use Diamond Amplifiers and they have a lot of other bands that use their gear, hopefully I can use that relationship to help us stay on the road, maybe secure us a record deal. That's the ultimate goal.

rock the republic: postmortem

My philosophy of music festivals is to hear as many people as possible – two to three tunes tops -- while allowing myself to linger longer if whimsy strikes. So I credit myself with 39 performances at Rock the Republic for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday October 21-23.

The following are the highlights, lowlights, and general observations. Thanks to Tina and Kristi for letting me tag along at times as well as leading me to some new sounds.

Best Mainstream Rock – Boasting a powerful voice with some solid tunes, the Melissa Ludwig Band rocked a small crowd Thursday at the Palace. “These Days” in particular featured strong vocals and

plea for an end-of-the-world flooding of the planet with “Learn to Swim.”

Best Retro Group #1 – The Bus Stop Stallions may have been six white guys and an Asian-American with a Mohawk, but they got down with the James Brown funk like nobody’s business Thursday at The Stafford. They had the brass; they had the sass; and they had all the moves, particularly Chris “Vato” on some soulful lead vocals. Get on the good foot indeed.

Weirdest moment – Hearing this interesting Indian music and coming around the corner to see a stage full of belly dancers at the Palace Theater Saturday. It was Tekatique.

Best Local Find – Chad Petty has this incredible throwback Arlo Guthrie/young Bob Dylan voice and plays a nice acoustic guitar, banjo, and harmonica. It took me a day to find out who he was when he played in the La Salle hotel lobby Thursday. Plus, anyone who can hold their own in a duet with Magic Girl as he did that night is more than ok in my book.

Band most like the No Vacancy group from the “School of Rock” film – That would be the 71s Friday on the main stage, decent enough sound, just not much substance.

Top Dancer – I don’t know the guy’s name, but he was stage front (at one point on stage) at the Jessie Torrisi and the Please Please Me Band Friday at Murphy’s Law and then at the Hangouts Saturday at Revolution. Uninhibited, in control, in constant motion, out of control – this guy was a trip.

Best Cover Song – The Wicked River Band dirtied up “Mary Jane’s Last Dance” – easily one of Tom Petty’s worst tunes – transforming it into

Murphy’s Law Friday. However, Jessie Torrisi and the Please Please Me Band brought a sack-full of good songs and plenty of kazooos for the crowd. Torrisi confidently worked the audience, even bringing several onstage with her to play those kazooos at the end. Only CD I bought.

Best Appearance by Two Old Television Sets – Atarimatt used those sets Friday at Stafford to augment his infectiously-abrasive music he pulls out of vintage video games with epileptic bursts of color, slashes, and bars. It was great hearing “Commuter” live.

Biggest Band (tie) – El Tule on Friday and The Tiny Tin Hearts on Saturday – both at the Palace – had eight members each. El Tule played a traditional Latin vibe with congas, brass, and all while the



Butcher Bear on the 1's & 2's. Photo by Cassie Smith/The Eagle



Photo by Cassie Smith/The Eagle



Mama wolf sings purty. Photo by Cassie Smith/The Eagle



Tekatique shake it. Photo by Cassie Smith/The Eagle



The Hangouts. Photo by Lynn Lane Photography

stinging guitar that wouldn’t be out of place on any creditable rock station.

Most Unhinged Moment – Fair to Midland lead singer Darroh Suderth Saturday night on the main stage did this kinetic motion thing where he flailed his arms and legs and head in every direction. Appeared completely deranged – sort of what you expect from someone who switched from keening Journeyesque vocals to subterranean growls with ease.

Most Irritating Thing Every Night at RTR – The main stage was never on time as were many of the other performances. Too often, you didn’t even know who was playing when, so it was impossible to skip around and catch different acts with any accuracy. Case in point: Friday, the 71s finished their sound check on the main stage just before their scheduled 7 p.m. start ... and promptly left to not return until after 8. Honorable irritant: security screening for the main stage.

Best Song about Storing Your Dead Relatives in the Basement – Danny Malone at Murphy’s Law had this wonderfully-macabre tune during his solo turn Saturday: “When I can’t take it/I like to hold your freezing hand.” He closed with an equally-demented

a searing full-tilt rocker at Murphy’s Law Thursday. Honorable mention: the Orbans’ cover of the Traveling Wilburys’ “Handle with Care” on Friday’s main stage.

Favorite RTR Moment – The hands-down best time was the Ishi performance at Stafford Friday. I can’t remember having so much fun at a show. It featured sinuous electronic dance music, an irrepressible lead singer -- with a droopy mustache, waist-length braids, and a top hat -- countered by a sexy earth mother vocalist, and a crowd eager to enjoy the beat. Kooky lyrics – “I will be waiting in the patterns of time” “Shake your dandelion” – included, Ishi easily had the most fun on stage of the nearly-40 acts I saw.

Best Retro Group #2 – The Roomsounds at Revolution Thursday were dead ringers for the Long Ryders, plying a catchy rock vibe with a hint of country that the Ryders did so well in the Eighties, an antecedent themselves of the Byrds’ Sixties’ country rock. These guys had the Sixties look – as one of them noted during a break, three long-haired guys with a Charles Manson-lookalike on drums. The band encored Friday at the Palace.

Best music before dark – The five members of the Constant Seas played this raucous post-rock progressive music at the Stafford at 7 p.m. Friday. Just wish everyone else had played this well this early on time. Now waiting for these guys to record.

Most Reliable Performance – I’m not sure how many times I’ve seen Kristy Kruger perform, but she always puts on a solid show with her original tunes and the occasional obscure cover, some even from the Twenties. Thursday at Murphy’s Law was no different with her guitar and that unique voice blending folk, big band, jazz and everything in-between. Her cover of Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues” was better than usual. She was the only reason I turned up Thursday. Honorable mention: Magic Girl Saturday at Revolution – great to hear my favorite of hers – “Used Goods” – live.

Best punk – The Hangouts Saturday at Revolution had the Ramonesque-length songs and the Sex Pistols-we-don’t-care-attitude, but everyone on stage is actually pretty professional about putting on a good show. Honorable mention: the Phuss on the main stage Saturday.

Top Use of Kazooos – It looked like a disaster in the making: a cello player, a barefoot lead singer, a bass player, a drummer, and a short guy on keyboard, trumpet and xylophone all crammed in a corner of

Hearts ranged from flugelhorn to banjo to violin for orchestral pop that’s hampered only by the lead singer’s vocals that sometimes didn’t reach the grandeur of the sound.

Best Cerebral Colonic Moment – Thunderous drums, booming power chords, and caterwauling female-male vocals – yep, must be Raspberry Dazzle at Stafford Thursday. The trio traffics in sound fragments, almost anti-music. You don’t really enjoy a performance; it’s something you undergo in a cathartic manner, sort of a psychic cleansing experience.

Two “I Stayed Up For This? Moments – Ok, they weren’t that bad, just not as transcendent as hoped for: L.A.X. after 1 a.m. Friday at Revolution was just MOR house music while We Were Wolves after 1 a.m. Saturday on the same stage plowed a punkish metal road that never really came together to me.

Favorite Folk Cliché – Two young cute blondes playing acoustic guitar and mandolin and singing a Beatles tune – that was the Reliques Saturday at the La Salle lobby. The duo’s original tunes sound like folk throwbacks. Honorable mention – Mama Wolf Thursday at Murphy’s Law, two girls, a ukulele, red and black stripes under their eyes. —MIKE L. DOWNEY

concert calendar

11/1—Capture The Flag @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm
11/1—Jacob Asbill, Will Reynolds @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

11/3—DJ Get Low @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

11/4—Kelly Minnis, Ian Nelson, Paul Joyner @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm
11/4—SMUT @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

11/5—Del Castillo @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm
11/5—Brit Lloyd Band, Slow Rollin' Lows @ Zapatos, College Station. 10pm
11/5—K Custom Quartet @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

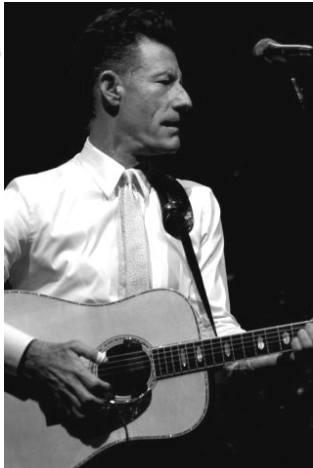
11/6—The Crooks, Sour Soul, Floorbound @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm
11/6—Sour Soul, Sideshow Tragedy @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

11/8—Chad Petty @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm
11/8—Sarah Peacock @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

11/11—Lyle Lovett & His Large Band @ Rudder Auditorium, College Station. 8pm

11/12—The Hangouts, Busy Kids, Vivian Pikkels & The Sweethearts Uber Alles @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm
11/12—Sideshow Tramps, Magic Girl & Her Ex-Husbands @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

Totally Insane Must-See Show of the Month



of Former Students and in enhancement of Clayton W. Williams Jr. Alumni Center.

Why should you care? Because no one mixes up a stew of Texas swing, heartbreaking country balladeering, singer/songwriter intimacy, and hellfire-preaching gospel like Lyle does, and His Large Band can maneuver any obstacle Lovett sends their way.—*KELLY MINNIS*

Most Aggies know that Grammy-winning singer/songwriter Lyle Lovett spent some time attending Texas A&M University in the 1970's. He has deep ties to this area of the state. So it is no real surprise that he should desire to help raise money for the college he once attended. And it's not like Lyle's gonna get in a dunking booth outside of Kyle Field during tailgate! No, he's gonna strap on a guitar and show us his stuff. November 11th **Lyle Lovett & His Large Band** will play Rudder Auditorium on A&M's campus as a fundraiser for the Association

11/12—Lotus Effect @ Zapatos, College Station. 10pm

11/13 - Shea, Big Hush, Downsiid, Killing In the Workplace @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm
11/13—Free Radicals @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm
11/13—Coverfest featuring **Strawberry Jam, Caleb Mak, Josef Pierre, Charlie Gore, Wicked River Band, Matt Fracht, Bottle Cap Alley, Bobby Pearson, Sweet Lu & The Low Fives, The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, Aaron Stephems, Taz & Gian and Lindsey Harris @ Schotzis, College Station. 7PM**
11/15—Jacob Asbill, Will Reynolds @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

11/18—Tobymac, Skillet @ Reed Arena, College Station. 7pm

11/19—Rocketboys, Dignan, The Canvas Waiting, Sunrise & Ammunition, Lotus Effect @ The Stafford, Bryan. 9pm
11/19—Plump @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

11/20—SINKHOLE TEXAS PRESENTS great unwashed luminaries, Patrick Schoenemann, Vegenaut, iFucker @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm
11/20—Gorefest 2010 featuring **Architect of the Unworthy, Behold the Great Throne, Nox Cimmerii, Cerebral Rot, Immortal Guardian, Predominant Mortification, Culture In Ruin, Convicted Of Treason, IPV, Primal, Venomous Suprimacy, Sculpting Atrocity, The Circadian Effect, and Alcoholocaust @ The Stafford, Bryan. 4pm**

11/22—Chad Petty @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

11/29—Jacob Asbill, Will Reynolds @ Revolution Café & Bar, Bryan. 10pm

Record Reviews



CATCHING UP WITH THE
BLACK SWEDES

Black Swedes
Catching Up With ...

The Black Swedes is a collaborative effort between two Seattle-ites: Ian Bell and Matt Benham. Together, these two write and record lush, maudlin, orchestral pop music that leans on one side towards the grandpapa of maudlin folk-pop Nick Drake and on the other side the orchestral pseudo-prog Britrock of Elbow.

Catching Up With The Black Swedes is a 3CD boxed set that chronicles that beautiful game of Pong between those two impulses. The set compiles the band's out-of-print debut album, the current album *Tempest* and a brand new two-song single. Combined, *Catching Up...* shows these artists' humble beginnings and follows their progress.

The material on disc 1 is hushed but yet expansive and mostly, well, beautiful. Most of the music is provided by acoustic guitar and string quartet, with Bell's Peter Gabriel-esque voice up top. The music reminds me of the quality of light on an overcast Seattle mid-morning, the kind that just makes you want to roll back over and loaf in your bed. That's The Swedes' territory, but not in a moping sort of way.

"Sue Me" has a power pop sort of jaunt to it with gang vocals and it pops out of the comforting acoustic guitars, ghostly piano, echoing electric guitar and mesmerizing harmony vocals. Otherwise it's all flannel blanket. Warm, soothing, comforting.

Disc two is their current album and has a larger but hazier sound. The string quartet is less atmospheric and is presented right up front. What I enjoy so much about this boxed set is the unorthodox manner of using strings that the Black Swedes employs. Most folks don't really know how to write for strings and tend to have a string section pretend to be a synthesizer, basically providing pads and mood. The arrangements and performances on the Swedes albums come courtesy of members of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra and there are plenty of contrapuntal runs, interesting harmonies and lots of 20th century compositional flair. Not quite as over the top as maybe Suffjan Stevens' or Rufus Wainwright's use of strings, but certainly in a far more integral role than most bands.

By the third disc you can hear right away that The Black Swedes' maturation has hit its zenith. "God Can't Claim" features a lot of the atmosphere and warmth inherent in their earlier catalogue but with a more focused and concise punch. It has the strings, the use of darkness and light, and pretty much everything else married to a killer chorus and it bobs, weaves and soars like nothing else. Like perhaps a more populist version of Jeremy Enigk's pocket symphonies but with a deeper, huskier voice, less preoccupied with Jesus and fairies.

The boxed set serves up all three albums in a screenprinted box with a special fold-out poster. This is one of those albums that just blows you away, and when you hold it you can feel that kinetic potential just vibrating away.—*KELLY MINNIS*



Superchunk
Majesty Shredding

Seems like the last 5 years or so all the great 90s bands have been reuniting. Starting with the Pixies, and including recent reunions of Guided by Voices and Pavement, the groups are seeing the value of getting back together and touring. Lots of people love these bands, and by and large most still deliver live.

I had a chance see Superchunk for the first time in almost 10 years at this past year's SXSW, and it was a great show. It reminded me why they were one of my favorite indie bands in the 90s - they have great songs with huge hooks and massive amounts of energy. Superchunk is one of those bands you really connect with the indie aesthetic. Two of the member, Mac and Laura, founded Merge Records and signed countless great bands, Spoon among them. Without Merge, the indie landscape would not be what it is today.

I think sometimes Superchunk's music at some point took a back seat to the label they were running. I don't think

they ever really got all the attention they deserved. It seems fitting then that unlike most the 90s reunion acts running the circuit these days, they have made a new record, and one of their best I think.

The first thing I noticed is the production - it is very crisp and sharp, capturing their sound perfectly. It's not like they haven't made great-sounding records, or worked with great producers - they have worked with most of indie's top production people - but here they sound vibrant, fresh, and very comfortable, sounding like they do live. Opening with instant classic "Digging for Something" full of Superchunk trademarks, continuing with another classic burner "My Gap Feels Weird", it is clear they are having a blast playing together again. "Rosemarie" has really stuck with me, one of those songs I find myself singing, and it points out what is so great about Superchunk's songs. They are full of little nooks and crannies, little sidestreets where a chord will take an unusual turn, and their hooks are never played out or recycled.

Another thing I always loved about Superchunk was the lead guitar - I defy anyone to tell me these guys aren't every bit as great as J Mascis as guitar players. "Crossed Wires" feels like home. It immediately captures everything the band ever did but as soon as the verse kicks in with acoustic guitar, it takes you somewhere else. I don't think they have ever blended their live sound with studio stuff so well. "Learned to Surf" makes me want to roll down my windows and drive to the coast. The intertwining lead guitars (another SC trademark) rear their

heads here to wonderful effect. "Winter Games" shows off Superchunk's secret weapon, drummer Jon Wurster. He's been in great demand as an indie sideman since Superchunk went on hiatus, and here you see why. "Hot Tubes" is another great example of why Superchunk were one of the THE indie guitar bands of the 90s, with its tight harmony guitars. Closing with "Everything at Once", a blissed out sugar rush that is probably the most out of character thing here, tilting back and forth between dark and light, joy and melancholy with each chord change. Is bittersweet the word? When something takes you back to such a happy place, and you know you can't go back but want to just for a moment, and you can enjoy it just for that moment. That's what it feels like.

Nostalgia is not all bad. It's just that most of the time when we see things from the past, it doesn't match our perfect emotional memories of it. It's a really great thing when a band you once loved makes you love them all over again because they are still good. Superchunk certainly are.—*JASON CLARK*



Eaux Neaux
All That I Regret

Last year I reviewed the debut release for Eaux Neaux, the one-man recording nom de plum for Consolidated graduate Taylor Everett. He played in a lot of local bands around College Station, most notably Hand Me That Piano. I've had a soft spot in my heart for the music Taylor makes because I felt the dude was terribly precocious and largely avoided the kind of mistakes most high school musicians make in their early bands.

All That I Regret continues in the same minimalist pop-electronic vein as the debut *Misery Swimmingpool*. We're talking all drum machines and synthesizers, but not in a "techno" idiom. It still sounds to me like a much less hectic, more minimal Postal Service or Owl City, and a much more personal lyrical approach. Confessional, like Lou Barlow or Rebecca Gates but in more of a screamo sort of way.

One major difference is that Taylor's voice is much more confident than in the past, and as a result the vocals are much stronger. The opener "Trust" definitely shows off that new confidence. Another aspect that has grown is the production. *Misery Swimmingpool* was about as dry and direct as could be. I enjoyed that aspect of Eaux Neaux's sound, but I'm glad to see Taylor has begun to make the songs a little more wet, using reverb and delay judiciously.

The second major difference is that Taylor is collaborating now, and dropping rhymes in the middle of his work from guest MC's. "So Fake" drops in guest work from Austin MC Minjin X and it oddly enough it works. Search for Eaux Neaux on Facebook & download this one gratis.—*KELLY MINNIS*

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