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Asia Not Asia

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for the discerning dirtbag.

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Every year I allot precious column inches to crapping all over College Station's Starlight Music Series, a set of five or six concerts held over the summer at Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater. My general complaint is that, aside from booking Rosie Flores and Cowboy Mouth, most of the headlining acts have been crummy tribute bands or some other bullshit. My point of view has been that I believe the City of College Station has a completely different take on what the Starlight Series should be than me. Okay, so be it. The attraction is getting families to camp out and enjoy music in the park, not about bringing awesome music to College Station. I'm cool with that. What I wish they'd do is instead of paying thousands to bring cover bands to town that they should instead pay those thousands of dollars to local cover bands and keep the money here and promote local artists. Make the locals the feature artists instead of letting them open for the touring version of the locals. But that is what it is, and I let it be.

Until I noticed a couple of months back that Starlight had booked Asia for June 16th. *WHAT? YOU MEAN "HEAT OF THE MOMENT", "DON'T CRY" JOHN MOTHERFUCKING WETTON, STEVE MOTHERFUCKING HOWE, CARL MOTHERFUCKING PALMER AND GEOFF MOTHERFUCKING DOWNES ARE PLAYING MY HOMETOWN FOR FREE?!!?!?!?!?* I got real excited and prepared to eat every bad word I'd ever written about Starlight. Until I did a little bit of research, hoping that maybe I could sneak backstage and meet these giants of progressive rock. I mean, these dudes have all collectively been in King Crimson, Yes, and Emerson Lake and Palmer! They are heroes to me. And I know the original lineup has been back together for several years now. Imagine my consternation to discover that College Station did not book that Asia. They instead booked *Asia featuring John Payne*. So who the fuck is John Payne? Turns out he played with Asia 20 years ago after everyone except Downes had abandoned the band and was the band's bassist/vocalist until 2006 when Downes put the original lineup back together. Downes owns the name "Asia". The agreement was that Payne could use the name of "ASIA featuring John Payne" so it's not exactly like the fake *King Goes To Hollywood* that toured America throughout the '90s that didn't feature a single original bandmember, or wait, isn't it exactly like that? There are no original members of Asia in Asia featuring John Payne. It's like a tribute band that has the real band's blessing, kinda like Sublime with Rome, but at least those cats have the original Sublime rhythm section. This Asia has none. Yet this dude Payne is in Asia longer than anyone else besides Geoff Downes.

I don't know why this should bother me. I went on record in *The Eagle* a year or so ago complaining about Chicago playing at Texas A&M and 40 years later the band has two original members out of the 12 or so that started the band. I feel it's a cheat to a certain extent. But last year I had the chance to see Chameleons Vox (an American band fronted by Chameleons UK singer Mark Burgess playing the old songs) and ditched my Mudhoney tickets to go. It wound up not exactly "Vox" because I could tell the original Chameleons drummer was with them (he sets his kit up in a very distinct way) and then at night's end we learned that Reg was playing guitar too, so we were seeing 3/4 of the Chameleons anyways. But it wouldn't have mattered because I was hearing the voice of the band singing those songs. I think that is my problem with Asia featuring John Payne. He is not the voice of the classic 1980s Asia material. That is John Wetton, and a little later, Greg Lake. The current band is filled with rock veterans who've all at one point played with people like Badfinger, Roger Daltrey, Chris Squire, Racer X and The Scream so these aren't exactly hacks. I'm sure the show will be cool, and at least it's not another fucking Eagles tribute band. Along with last month's Marshall Tucker Band appearance (featuring at least one guy from the original lineup) it seems that Starlight is starting to at least pay attention to doing something a little more authentic. Let's at least say this is the first Starlight show that I will haul the kids, the blankets and the cooler down for. And that's saying something.—**KELLY MINNIS**



Todd On Film

I have climbed atop my movie soapbox on a few occasions to proclaim the greatness of elite comedic actors. Oftentimes great comedy performances are ignored by the Academy Awards in favor of tearful dramatic ones because of their seriousness which makes you contemplate deep things. The Golden Globes have separate categories for comedy and drama, and perhaps non-coincidentally, are usually more of a party. Comedic actors show everyone their true skill set when they step into the dramatic world and outshine the normal mainstays in the field. Sometimes they do so with a blend of whimsy and gravity, but it is their grasp of portraying human emotion which makes them so great in these roles. Guys that come to mind for me are Robin Williams or Bill Murray, and I think we're pretty close to adding Jack Black to that echelon of actors.

Black is the title character in the new Richard Linklater film *Bernie*. The two previously worked together in *The School of Rock*, which in all seriousness is my third favorite film ever (a debate for another article), but here they take on a true story of a murder in East Texas that seemingly could not have been committed by a more improbable person. After an opening scene of Bernie painstakingly cosmetizing a body in front of a class, a title card on-screen asks us "Who is Bernie?". During the rest of the film we learn just about every detail of this man, how he excelled upon arrival at a Carthage, TX funeral home, became extremely involved in his church and community, and helped every old lady he possibly could. Bernie is played by Black to near perfection as an earnest person with a couple of quirks, and Black's knack for facial expressions, physicality, and singing come in handy more than a few times. The characters are played with care as real people, along with the interviews of people who knew them, but there is humor that comes out of the situations and dialogue. It's this mix that makes the movie a very engaging story.

A lot of the humor comes from the setting of the story itself. The aforementioned town of Carthage nurtures a lot of Texan and Southern witticisms that continually made me crack up. Some of the humor is perhaps enhanced by my own personal experiences in Texas; it's funny to everyone, but especially funny to people who know the territory. For the same reasons I sometimes become hysterical when watching episodes of *King of the Hill*. Unlike that series we don't hear a bunch of one-liners but instead get to know the place mostly by what is said about the main character. The feel of the setting is also captured expertly through colors in scenes and the cinematography that grabs them. At times it's as familiar as your grandmother's living room or walking into a drug-store diner; you've been to this small town either physically or in spirit. If the thought of perhaps being over-Texas-ed by *Bernie* makes you nauseous, the light and dark humor of the movie should give you nothing to fear.

Bernie also does a great job of toeing the line between a piece of fiction and documentary. Obviously there are actors in the film, so it's not a documentary by any means, but the frequent bits of interviews that are injected between scripted scenes are authentic and given by real townspeople in Carthage, who can be quite the characters themselves. This muddling blend is taken a step further when some of the interviewees are used in scenes alongside Black and others instead of using actors. I really only snapped out of my trance when Matthew McConaughey showed up on screen (he'll always be centerfielder Ben Williams in my mind), but even he plays a hot-shot district attorney pretty well. It demonstrates how it's not about the star power but the quality of the people you use, and Linklater understands that in this case it's better to go with some of the real thing. Above all *Bernie* takes you out of your element by telling the story through a group of lens focusing on the protagonist and letting us be a part of the jury that judges him. Many of the best films do this, whether it's a comedy, a drama, or a little bit of both.—**TODD HANSEN**

Plaza Implosion Draws 1000's

Random observations from the Plaza Hotel tower implosion May 24th that drew a crowd of thousands.

I was standing on a hill south of the Plaza tower. You could see all the floors through a gap in the trees. My daughter and I were about a hundred feet from the podium next to this seven-and-a-half foot heavy-duty tripod with this itsy-bitsy video camera perched on top. Also, I was standing next to a guy with a digital camera wired to jut out from his forearm - he'd been there since 4 a.m. The crowd was a festive mix of old and young with bag chairs and on foot, groaning at the announcement of the 10 minute delay.

I jumped at the noise of the explosions in the middle of the building. The floors folded into themselves just like the implosions on TV in Las Vegas), followed at the end by toppling of the largely-intact tower section. I am so glad I was not on the east side watching - that dust cloud looked pretty scary, like 9/11 freaky.

Photo courtesy of KRTX



"That. Was. Awesome." From the kid running around the VIP area minutes after the building came down.

Why did the destruction of a building warrant a VIP section, naturally the best view?

I wonder how many people missed videoing the implosion because the warning sirens never came. The only reason my daughter and I knew it was coming was the MC (the very adept Jay Socol) gave a one-minute warning.

Anyone else notice from watching the TV video that the local celebrities didn't actually push the button to start the explosion? They were as surprised as the rest of us when it went off, plus looking the wrong way.

Lots of people brought their dogs. They just love implosions, right?

There were the usual Frisbees. I also saw a number of people grilling and even a card table with a foursome playing dominos. Someone was selling t-shirts for the "Implosion Crew" - got one for my daughter. No date on it though.

My daughter got a big kick out of the number of old ladies with iPhones, as well as the many father/daughter pairs.

A reporter from the Fox affiliate from Waco was walking back to her vehicle at the end. News must be really slow there.

We went over to Taco Cabana afterwards to grab something to eat - where we saw plastic yellow hard hats - while the crowd thinned out, so it was 7:40 before we got back to Lot 50 on campus. We were out by 7:48, home a little after 8.

So about a three-hour investment of time. I got up at 5 a.m. and stood in a field with a few thousand other people to watch the nine-second collapse.

Now what do we have to look forward to? - **MIKE L. DOWNEY**

Craft Beer Week @ Harvey Washbangers

Each May, beer geeks and independent craft brewers across the nation celebrate American Craft Beer Week. While several states and small communities host a variety of beer weeks and beer celebrations throughout the year (Oktoberfest, St. Patty's Day, local holidays and festivities), American Craft Beer week was started by the American Craft Brewers Association as the largest and most widely recognized celebration of beer culture and community on the calendar.

Fortunately, I spent the majority of this year's Craft Beer Week at Harvey Washbangers (yes, that little laundromat/burger bar on Texas Ave.) where general manager Michael Laird whittled down the scope of craft offerings from national to regional. From May 14-20, Washbangers featured a different Texas brewery each day, introducing uniquely new concoctions and seasonals, many not yet available in the B/CS on regular rotation.

Laird's dedication to Texas breweries is not limited only to Craft Beer Week. Laird's hope is that Harvey Washbangers will become the Texas craft beer bar of College Station. When asked why such a narrow scope, he said that the constraints of a smaller market challenge him to find new and better beers, to dig deeper into what Texas uniquely offers through old-world craft styles and recipes. Laird also said he's enjoyed building relationships with several of the brewers in the state and to see fantastic beer created from a system run by only a handful of dedicated brewers. Laird said the dedication of independent brewers to their craft (meaning both *craft beer* and *artistry*) fuels his own dedication to their craft, as well. During our conversations, Laird also mentioned a hope to not run the same keg of Texas beer twice this summer. That's a steep challenge, but it's interesting enough to keep me coming in the door to see what's new.

In the way of reviews, I've made a simple bullet-point list of the beers I tried – and will now be looking for at Washbangers – during this year's American Craft Beer Week. I hope next May to preview a calendar of Craft Beer Week events and menus for each of our participating local bars and pubs. Oh, and grab a pen or a pair of scissors. You'll want to carry this list in your pocket.

- Austin's Live Oak Brewing Company focuses primarily on old school German and Czech recipes and styles. For Craft Beer Week, Live Oak introduced a Dry-Hopped Hefeweizen, the first of its kind I've encountered. While the body was overpowered by a yeasty even soapy flavor, the hops did bring a slight crispness on the end. An interesting offering, to say the least, but I was far more impressed with Live Oak's Schwarzbier, which Washbangers just happened to have on tap as well. A bit more bite than Shiner Black, if a Schwarzbier can be refreshing, Live Oak's nailed it. I'll be glad to see more of this on tap at Washbangers in the future.

- Katy's No Label Brewing delivered their Don Jalapeno beer. Brewed with 60 pounds of jalapenos (30 pounds raw and 30 pounds roasted), the Don Jalapeno was, admittedly, the one beer Laird and I were most excited to try, and this chili beer

definitely won the gold medal from me for best beer of the week. Based on their blonde ale, Don Jalapeno features a subtle jalapeno flavor up front, nothing overpowering, with a whispered heat in the aftertaste. Subtlety is what makes Don Jalapeno work.

- My wife, who is no lover of beer, had Southern Star's Crème Brulee Stout written on at least two calendars. We even arrived at Washbangers a half-hour early just to make sure we didn't miss the keg. I'd heard that Washbangers had previously blown a keg of Crème Brulee Stout in just over 90 minutes. I overheard Laird say they beat that time during Craft Beer Week by nearly 30 minutes. The people were lined-up for this one, and with good reason. To build their Crème Brulee Stout, Southern Star poured loads of cold crème brulee coffee into their Buried Hatchet Stout, which is already a hella beautiful beer. Fantastically huge sweet coffee notes rounded the edges of the Crème Brulee Stout begging for a scoop of vanilla ice cream to plopp in the bottom of the glass. I have Southern Star's webpage on speed-dial so I'll know where this one is again.

- Austin Beer Works, who bear the slogan "Brewers Hell-Bent on Excellence", showcased three beers at Washbangers for Craft Beer Week. (In fact, Washbangers may have a few cans left over. So get there quick while supplies last if you hope to try any of these.) First, ABW's Peacemaker Extra Pale Ale is a sessions-sized, light but highly drinkable pale ale that the brewery refers to as their "gateway beer" to craft beer. Perfect for a summer porch beer, the Peacemaker starts with subtle coppery hop notes that slip into a crisp, nonlingering finish. Easy on the palate and, at 5% ABV, easy on the melon. Secondly, ABW's Fire Eagle American IPA is the Peacemaker's grandpappy. Weighing in at 8.4% ABV and 70 IBUs, this IPA is bodaciously loud, with four hop-varieties battling out citrus and coppery notes from one end of the palate to the next. While Texas is sadly not yet known for big hoppy beers, ABW's Fire Eagle American IPA (along with Saint Arnold's Endeavour Double IPA) will surely change that perception. And, finally, ABW's Black Thunder German-Style Schwarz was up there with Don Jalapeno as my favorites of Craft Beer Week. This Schwarz is huge, and it damn near begs the question if ABW mistakenly made a stout instead of a black lager. Giant dark cocoa and tobacco notes make this the best Schwarz I've encountered yet. I'll be bringing cases of this back from Austin soon enough.

Sadly, I missed Jester King's Mad Meg Farmhouse Provision Ale and New Republic's Dry Hopped Bellows. These were totally unintentional blips on my calendar. Luckily, as I've already mentioned, Washbangers will feature several new Texas beers over the course of the summer. As a perk to beer geeks, Washbangers also launched their Draft during Craft Beer Week. For enlisting on the Draft, each Draft-ee receives a Draft card. After consuming eight tap beers and eight bottles, participants can submit their Draft card for \$20 Washbangers credit, which can be spent on laundry, food, or more beer. Although true beer geeks require little provocation to clink glasses and drink deeply, the perks drinking rewards are a fine incentive to branch out and try something new.—KEVIN STILL



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12 books for summer

1. Mindy Kaling's *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me?* – I read half this book on a Saturday morning when I only intended to read the first essay. She's just so damn delightful! Kaling's most endearing literary quality is her ability to mock herself without tipping over the edge into self-deprecation. She also writes with conviction that there's still hope and humor left for America and television, and even American television. I wish I'd read this book when I was a young woman, even though I was never a young woman.

2. Portia de Rossi's *Unbearable Lightness* – Confession: I finished de Rossi's book while administering my last final exam, and I had to fight back tears in front of a dozen college-aged test-takers reading those last twenty pages. And I totally own the total uncoolness of such a confession. *Unbearable Lightness* is not a fun, summery beach read, but it's beautiful and timely and profound. The majority of the book deals with de Rossi's battles with eating disorders, followed by that 20 page epilogue exploring de Rossi's healing, her family restoration, and her marriage to Ellen.

3. Edward O. Wilson's *The Creation* – I like bugs (just look at my left arm), which is how I stumbled on E.O. Wilson, the famed biologist and ant-writer. *The Creation* is Wilson's invitation to the Christian faith community (particularly Wilson's denounced Southern Baptist faith) to drop the debate of origin and join forces with the science community to preserve Nature. He makes the excellent point that the Christian church has become far more concerned with moral issues (homosexuality, abortion, even war) than environmental issues and education. Wilson sees this as strange since Christians believe their God created Nature and bestows children as a blessing. (As a Christian, I couldn't agree with Wilson more.) *The Creation* is a short, fast, challenging read that asks hard questions, offers accessible suggestions, and somehow addresses the unnecessary chasm between faith and science without accusation or ridicule. I may have even felt a few warm fuzzies along the way.

4. Michael Chabon's *Maps and Legends* – Chabon's collection of literary essays serves as my long-overdue introduction to Chabon. As a booknerd and would-be fiction writer, I like seeing great literary minds interact with literature. And I also like knowing what good writers read. Chabon's essays cover a huge span of literature from modern genre fiction to classic fan fiction, from comics and graphic novels to mythology and even (get this) cartography. Michael Chabon is so smart and literate that I want to believe he's a total asshole, although I have no evidence for this accusation except my own inferiority while reading his essays. He's, like, Pulitzer good. (You can also Google a free copy of his story "The God of Dark Laughter" from *The New Yorker*. It's a story about a brutally murdered circus clown. That's all you need to know.)

5. Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* – Ketchum is one of my new favorite writers. He's fantastic. The man somehow brings a literary feel to pulp fiction, keeping the pages turning while still dropping in nuggets of pure gold. I've mentioned Ketchum several times in 979, and I'll do so again in the future. His stories are gruesome and raw, usually involving the total obliteration of a single human or an entire family, but his themes always rest heavily on heroism, sacrificial love, family commitments, authority,

innate goodness over original sin, the burden of secrecy, justice, and communal responsibility. *The Girl Next Door* is an emotionally devastating story, but it addresses damn near every one of the themes listed above. I recommend TGND openly in 979 because I can't fathom to whom I'd recommend it personally.

6. Kelly Riad's *Always Me* – I'm pimping my good and lovely friend here. *Always Me* explores the 400 year repetitive history between Nicky and Xander, a relationship that always ends with one murdering the other so their cycle can begin again. I had the pleasure of editing early editions of *Always Me*, but Kelly made better changes that I could suggest and now her books blowing-up on Amazon. Get it for 99 cents. Support my friend so she can write more books and afford to feed all her damn dogs.

7. *Sympathy for the Devil* – Great short story anthology from Night Shade Books featuring stories about Satan. I'm no Satanist, but I did grow up Southern Baptist, so I probably know more about the devil than most Satanists. And this book is hella fun. I particularly recommend the stories by Gaiman, Chabon, and Meville.

8. Chuck Palahniuk's *Invisible Monsters* – Anything you read by Palahniuk is gonna be hella fun. *Invisible Monsters* is Palahniuk's meditation on beauty and prescription medication. (Aren't all of his books somehow a meditation on prescription medication?) The story follows a girl without a face and a guy who wants to not have a penis and another girl who deserves a shotgun blast to the wherever. I loved it!

9. Flannery O'Connor's *The Complete Short Stories* – I'm from South Arkansas, and Flannery O'Connor's stories feel overly familiar, especially in the summer. Church summer camp was our place to battle sin and Satan while still relishing Shannon Carpenter in a bikini and Marlboro Reds behind our cabin. You don't find such delicious religious tension except in the pages of Flannery O'Connor. Praise God, pass the lighter, and crank the DC Talk.

10. Chris Hardwicke's *The Nerdist* – Okay, so this isn't exactly a book. It's a podcast. But it's fucking awesome. Last week's interview with Ana Gasteyer was a little slice of lemon meringue heaven for SNL buffs like me. Each podcast is an hour (plus or minus) conversation between comedian-host Chris Hardwicke and somebody who's interesting and funny enough to make even Michael Chabon feel inferior. Like Ana Gasteyer.

11. John Irving's *In One Person* – Putting this one on the list for Kelly Minnis. After reading Irving's essay on Amazon.com about his newest title, I immediately put it on my summer read list. I normally steer clear of books over 400 pages, but I might have to make an exception for this one. A bisexual boy falls in love with a transgendered librarian? Yes, please!

12. Stephen King and Joe Hill's *Throttle* – King and Hill are nearly as beautiful a duo as Mike Ness and Bruce Springsteen sharing an LA stage in '09, or Robyn and Katy Perry tearing down the Frank Erwin Center last August. (Sweet Jesus, what a show!) Great story. Very gory. Fast paced and brutal. Interesting exploration – by a father-son authorial team – of a father-son relationship gone sour. Worth every bit of the 99 cents it'll run you on Amazon. —KEVIN STILL

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Another year has come and gone, and all that's left of LOUD!FEST 5 is the very loud lingering buzz of premature tinnitus left in our ears. But we have the memories, and the beer stains, and perhaps the photos to cherish. Here's a pictorial of the weekend's highlights.

LOUD!

Houston's Venomous Maximus rocks Stagecenter—photo by Devin Place



Austin's Rubella Muti sho



Only Beast singer Danielle Renee gets blurry.—photo by Jack A Cheshire



Crowd participation at Revolution during Modern Convenience's set—photo by Devin Place



FEST

puts it out.—photo by Jason Smith



2012

College Station's ASS gettin' sweaty
with it.—photo by Heather De Leon



Modok guitarist
David DiDonato
flaunts a cape like
none other.—photo
by Jason Smith



Side Effects

Doctor says the drugs'll pack a punch, and he's right. So far I've experienced the whole encyclopedia of side effects. Dry mouth. Runny nose. Irritability. Excessive gas. Heartburn. Depression. Itchy skin. Loss of appetite. Runny bowels. Constipation. Wet farts. Republican ideologies. Excessive sweating. Dyslexia. Noontime fatigue. Shortness of breath. Hip arrhythmia. Sensitive teeth. Hair loss. Memory loss. Identity loss. Apathy for tedious tasks. Confusion with electronics. Selective amnesia. Loss of hearing one's spouse. Neo-Impressionist vision. Dead skin. Back acne. Near death sensations. Enlightenment. But the one side effect I have not experienced, and that my doctor never mentioned, is healing. Hell, I can't even spring a boner in this state. Pair of legs as long as a buttered baguette walked by yesterday and all I could fantasize was taking a nap.

Side effect #25a: youthful erectile dysfunction.

Side effect #25b: too tired to give a shit about #25a.

Carrie walks in without saying hello. I don't tell her about the buttered baguette legs, or my disinterest. I don't know which is more scandalous. She gives me a gyro, plastic utensils, but no drink. I ask her if I'm supposed to drink my own spit. She purses her lips like she's about to give me a free refill, and I recant my statement.

"My sister's getting a new dog," she says.

"She's getting a divorce," I say.

"No, shithead. She's getting a legit, four legged dog. A new one."

"Lemme guess: a pit bull to match her husband's \$20 tattoo."

"You don't know anything about anything."

We eat our food. Carrie's however many weeks along. Girls keep count of weeks. Guys keep count of emotional breakdowns. She might be 23 weeks along, but she's 64 goddamn conception fits into baby time. By the time that kid gets here, she could have been a full season of Dr. Phil all by herself. Thank Christ we don't live in California or Illinois or Pennsylvania, whichever state Dr. Phil's surgeon general of these days.

"You pay the electric bill," she asks.

"Couldn't," I say. "Video store charged a late fee for my games. Doc says I need at least another five days off work. I had to get more games. Picked up *Yellow Bullet Busstop*. Shit's for real."

"Puto, if you don't pay the electric bill you can't play your games. TV's off. Game's off. You'll be back to pretending you can read."

"I can read," I protest loudly. "How you think I know all my side effects are legit? Pull up some Google and enter in everything I feel. It's all there in the vault."

The cat curls by our feet. You can hear her purring under the table. Her tail wraps around Carrie's ankle, causing Carrie to giggle. I always liked Carrie's feet. Like the heat of them when she pulls them out of her shoes. Like the shape and size of her toes. I especially like when she wears certain socks. I've been known, if the socks were right, to pull her feet out of her shoes and press them to my nose and mouth, and then I chew her arches with my lips. She don't seem to mind.

"Why'd you wear them striped socks today?" I ask. "I like the dotted ones with those pants, the purple and green ones."

"Cheese and crackers!" She tosses her chicken and rice on the table, and then runs her fingers through her hair. "Why do you care so much about my socks? You own one pair of shoes and they smell like the litter box. The cat probably crapped in them. I worry about you, babe. Really worry about you."

She's having a conniption. It's best I stay calm, for the baby. "There's nothing to worry about, sweets. I just like your feet. That's all." I say this, remembering she went apeshit after I confessed to carrying her dirty socks in my pocket so I could smell them during the day.

She bounces her heels beneath the table, staring at the floor. "Listen," she says, "there's something I should tell you."

Her tone is serious. Not break-up serious, or I'm-doing-someone-else-serious, but it's only one step away from either of those types of serious.

"My brother was talking about you the other day at mama's."

She pauses. Her feet are now on the edge of the chair between us. Her fingers locked on the back of her neck. I wonder if her brother knows something. Like maybe he hacked my browser History.

"What did he say about me? What does he know?"

I shouldn't have said that last part. It sounds like I have something to hide. But I don't. I delete everything, even the cookies.

She pauses, choosing her words carefully. "He said something about you that I said wasn't true, but he said it had to be true because you had all the signs."

"You mean my side effects? The pills?"

"No. Not your side effects. He doesn't even know you're on pills."

I straighten up in my chair. The chair leg scratches the floor and scares the cat into the other room. She leaps with a tiny squeal.

"What did he say?" I ask. "Is he mad I haven't returned his Godsmack CD?"

"Babe, my brother thinks you're gay and that I should leave you." She says it like she's exhaling smoke. Her eyes locked on my eyes. Her head erect. Her hands still wrapped around her neck.

I look out the window and think of that runner girl's buttered baguette legs and wonder if he's right. I want to pick up the notes from the doctor's office. Check the side effects again - Side effect #28: Penile tingles in new directions - but I haven't seen her brother since I've been on pills. There must be other signs that look like dormancy.

My gyro's oozing tzatziki onto my plate, a cole slaw colored puddle of yogurt and cucumber. I look at Carrie. Her freckles as numerous as the kisses I've planted on her body, more divine than perfect health. I'm uncertain what to do next. My throat burns. My hands involuntarily stroke my thighs. Tzatziki and sweat smear across my jeans like drugs and desires over clear thoughts.

"Carrie," I say, reaching for her hand. "I'm sorry. I thought I just really loved your feet." - KEVIN STILL

the ceremonial dagger

Summoned by Mincey Poe

I worked some strange magick and successfully summoned Houston based producer, The Ceremonial Dagger, for his first ever press interview. Have a peak into the spell.

How long have you been producing? Have you released under other names?

C†: Well, I have always been involved in music and electronics. Before the "electronic" music I played in live bands since around 1987, '88. Mainly punk, metal. I began getting into electronic music around '98... there have been lots of name changes... D.I/O. (digital in/out), sunsataniks, kemikore, and the latest (The Ceremonial Dagger) since 2010.

Is there a concept or philosophy that shapes C†, or your work in general?

C†: My mentor and best friend, Ebbflo is generally a hardware based midi wizard and has had a very distinct philosophy concerning music, which we have had some lengthy discussions concerning mysticism and music. One thing I very seriously believe is that artistically you have to get dirty and personal for it to be worth anything. There has to be a very personal connection. Through-out human history, music has been very spiritual. Only over the past 100 years or so has it become so unattached from its creators. Sure, there still are ones with that connection, but I believe many people, especially some of the youth, are missing some of that understanding.

Dark electronic and synth based music has been around for a long time. It's manifested in a variety of ways, but people never stop creating it. However, recently there seems to have been a renaissance and an explosion of interest, but still comfortably obscure. Why do you think people are geeking so hard?

C†: I'm not entirely sure much has really changed. Honestly I am somewhat detached in many respects. I think that having the internet heavily involved, the whether or not witch-house exists drama and hype, I think to some degree has built it. Generally though I think more producers are drawing from a wider variety of influences, creating a gumbo of goth, noise, techno, and so on. I think the world has become somewhat more depressing. I think dark music actually has a reverse effect and people feel better after listening to it.

You say witch-house drama and hype. What do you make of the micro genre, hashtag genre thing? Does it say anything important about the way people produce and consume art?

C†: Yeah, well we live in a fast food twitter generation for sure. How it will affect things in the long term, I don't know. But so far, for me personally, I have more of a following every day. I have yet to see a plateau, just increasing

numbers. I've gone from having 20 followers on Soundcloud for over a year to getting 10-20 every day. Honestly, I have no real idea where things are headed.

Your videos are sick. Anyone who comes over to my place is forced to watch them until they've been converted into C† fans. You did the video for Aimon - Mirrors Fade. I really love that video. How did that collaboration happen and can you give me some idea as to the creation process?

C†: I've played two shows and both were with Aimon. We first met in San Francisco. They were amazing live. I actually left early, I was on an intense, tight schedule, and they came outside and chatted with me while I waited for the cab. Brant and I have had a lot of correspondence. When I heard they were self financing their vinyl release I asked if I could make a video. As with every artist I

have worked with, they gave me complete artistic control. The process, the workflow, is something I have been developing for awhile. I start by editing some video as a base, and then I edit every frame in photoshop. It is tedious, but I love the control. At the same time it is chaos, because editing on such a small scale yields unusual results.

There's so much happening that it's wonderfully mesmerizing. What labels are you associated with or done work for? Black Bus Records released your full length correct?

C†: Yes, I was one of the first people invited onto BLACK BVS, but the album took me a year. I've done work for and with, Tundra Dubs, Amdiscs, Aural Sects, BAKU SHAD-DO, Pale Noir, and Phantasma Disques either in remixes, videos or artwork.

You actively post to Soundcloud and I'm sure your fans are appreciative. Is there another full length in the works? Can we expect more videos in the near future?

C†: Definitely, I have always got more plans. I'm just getting started. Hopefully a vinyl release by early 2013, new t-shirt line, more vids and remixes.

Sweet! People are weird. They can often times be crazy, drug addicts, snakes, shitheads or all of the above. Other than me, have you been stalked by any fans or had someone freak out over your work? Do women constantly offer themselves as slaves to The C†?

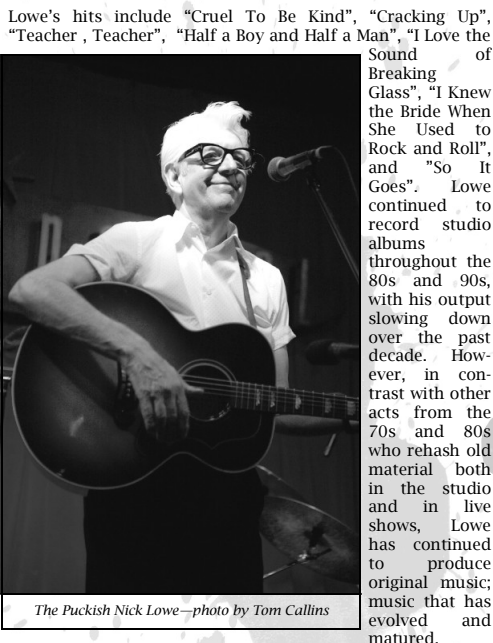
C†: Yes, it is bizarre. But yeah, I get some interesting fan mail for sure, but hey, I like weird.

Check out C† at:
kemikore.com (all releases and links to videos)
soundcloud/ceremonial-dagger



Nick Lowe "Puckish"

Often called a critics' darling and a pivotal player in pub rock, punk, and new wave, British singer/songwriter Nick Lowe has been making and influencing music since the late 1970s. He produced albums for many artists including Graham Parker, the Damned, and Dr. Feelgood. He produced Elvis Costello's first five albums. In fact, "(What's So Funny about) Peace, Love, and Understanding", which Lowe wrote and recorded first in 1974 but later produced for Costello (Armed Forces, 1979), was a bigger hit for Costello than Lowe—and is often believed to be a Costello penned song. In the late 70s, Lowe joined forces with Dave Edmunds to form the rockabilly traced band Rockpile.



The Puckish Nick Lowe—photo by Tom Collins

On May 7, Nick Lowe played the Continental Club in Houston to a standing-room-only crowd. Opening up were Yep Rock label mates The Autumn Defense, consisting of Wilco members John Stirratt and Pat Sansone. (Tangentially speaking, Lowe opened solo and acoustically for Wilco's 2011 North American, and Wilco recently recorded Lowe's "Cruel to Be Kind.") The audience listened and clapped politely while waiting for Mr. Lowe, who took the stage to great, even reverential, applause.

At 63, Lowe is trim, fit, with a full head of white hair. He wore thick-rimmed, black eyeglasses much like those for which Costello is known. At the beginning of the evening, he teased the audience about how they came there to hear the "old stuff"—and how that is not what the band was there to play. I do believe that Houston surprised Lowe. Although older hits were sprinkled throughout, the show primarily consisted of torchy ballads off the recent *The Old Magic* (2011), and the audience listened attentively and responded to both the old and new songs with abundant applause. Lowe was witty, sharp, and his voice was smooth; Lowe is still at the top of his game. Lowe is no longer performing in larger concert halls, but I felt, as did many in the audience, honored to hear him perform in this intimate venue. Lowe ended the show, much to the audience's delight, with Costello's "Alison." - MARY MANNING

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record reviews



Garbage

Not Your Kind of People

This may be the most accessible Garbage album of the past decade... which isn't saying much since they've only had one other (*Bleed Like Me* in 2005). In any case, vocalist Shirley Manson, Butch Vig, and the rest have brought some top-notch tunes and sounds -- reminiscent of "Vow" and "Only Happy When it Rains" -- to the digital music age.

"Big Bright World" is some of the happiest music Garbage has ever made, well, as happy as you can be with a chorus calling "rage against the dying light". But much of the album contains the brittle ineffable rock that characterizes Garbage. The dance-floor radio-ready "Automatic Systematic Habit" kicks things off with its infectious electronic beat and Manson in fine voice. Her confident vocals also cut through the morass of musical noise on "Battle in Me" and the insistent drums of "Man on a Wire". Echoes of early Blondie are apparent on the keyboard-driven "I Hate Love" and the flailing guitar ranging through "Felt" (my favorite so far). Not everything works -- "Sugar" just sounds strained, and "Blood for Poppies" is near-par. The title cut is as creepy as one would expect while "Control" merely chugs along. The album closes with a surprise. The unexpectedly sweet mid-tempo ballad, "Beloved Freak", is a gorgeous paean to those who are different -- "you're not alone" -- that also quotes from the gospel children's song "This Little Light of Mine".

Bottom line? Garbage is back, for your kind of people. —MIKE L. DOWNEY

breaking up and suing each other. I had pretty much dismissed it then, with the exception of the wonderfully-gooey hit "Uncle Alpert/Admiral Halsey".

Listening to the album (it's been re-released with the usual multiple versions) again after all these years, I'm struck at just how much fun McCartney is having and how experimental this sounds for someone who helped define the traditional pop rock sound. He gleefully plays with his voice, weird instrumentations, song structures, lyrics, just about everything. Take the simple rocker: "Eat at Home". Sir Paul -- before he was weighted down with so much rock history -- is just interested in playing guitar and having a good time in the studio. Wife Linda -- and co-writer -- is heard chiming in well on background vocals. She was much maligned for her voice, but the evidence here is otherwise. Some songs feature great harmonies from the couple in the choruses. "Long-Haired Lady" also has a playful song structure in addition to nice horns. "Dear Boy" has fine harmonies too as well as McCartney's voice stuck in one speaker.

Not everything works. On "Monkberry Moon Delight", McCartney strains to rough up his voice on a song that goes on way too long while; "Heart of the Country" is just there. There are more jewels, luckily. "Three Legs" is an oddball acoustic-driven tune. "Smile Away" is great, an effortless straightforward rock song.

And "Uncle Alpert/Admiral Halsey" is still marvelously off-the-wall. —MIKE L. DOWNEY



Norah Jones

Little Broken Hearts

A friend thinks Jones will be ranked as one of the greatest performers of all time, and he loves this album, so I had to give it a listen. However...

I don't get it. Sure, she has tremendous pipes, and the playing throughout is tastefully impeccable, and I'm sure the lyrics are just downright poetry. But, I just don't care for this kind of music. This sort of slow-burning lounge-act minimalism would sound perfect on NPR, which is the website I first heard it on (and I'm a fan of NPR). Why is it that almost every tune starts off the same? Are my ears just that uneducated? Probably. To

me, it's only "Out on the Road" with a surprisingly-sprightly shuffle that the album moves into some sort of other gear. But it doesn't last.

Without a doubt, there is a wide audience for Jones' music, as evidenced by her ongoing popularity, but I'll have to pass. Finally, some have noted the center of *Little Broken Hearts* is the examination of a failed relationship. Didn't Adele already do that? Just saying... —MIKE L. DOWNEY



OFF!

I think we all give Keith Morris a serious bit of leeway that perhaps we wouldn't afford so many other aging performers from the 1970's punk explosion. We don't have so many of the lifers from the California scene still out there making vital music, not to mention one whose legend was made entirely before 1981 and largely hasn't been improved upon since. To me, Keith Morris is the voice of West Coast punk rock, more so than others who may have a better claim to that title. Dude sang on Black Flag's most seminal work (even though I'm not a Hank Rollins hater) and Circle Jerks *Group Sex* is easily Top 3 of my favorite punk rock records of all time, regardless of NYC/London/Cleveland affiliation. The sound of Keith Morris's voice, that pissed-off sneer is the sound of punk rock to me. Imagine my glee upon finding out that Keith had an awesome new band out called *OFF!* that harkened back to that awesome blast of skateboard punk from the 1979-1981 period. They released four 7", compiled them together on one CD and toured the country tirelessly for several years, and now introduce Their first full-length album. Full length is relative, as we're talking 16 songs that blast by in 20 minutes, with most songs never making the one minute mark.

That said, maybe it's just the initial excitement of *Four EP's* that has me thinking that *OFF!* is a little less essential. Cutthroat Records legend Bill Fool said that *Off!* is *The Wild In The Streets* to the *Four EP's Group Sex*. And I'd say that's a very apt description. Still killer, still lots of awesome riffs and heartfelt rants played at blistering speed, but there's something missing this time around. Still kicks pretty much 99% of other recent punk rock

releases' asses all over the place. —KELLY MINNIS



Modern Convenience

The Shakes

The Shakes frantically works the creepy side of the psychobilly musical street first occupied by the Cramps, the Reverend Horton Heat, Southern Culture on the Skids, and others:

Largely a DIY project by guitarist/vocalist Mike Bibb with drummer Maggie Exner, the album finds Bibb anxiously ripping through 11 edgy songs -- only one over three minutes -- powered by wall-of-sound drumming and impassioned guitar. The Memphis residents brought their power trio to LoudFest in May for a second year.

Live and on record, Bibb's vocals often are just another layer of jittery intensity, most apparent on "Ghost Stories" and "The End is Near." "Ghost Stories," a percussion-driven tune, is made more disturbing by the chanted, distorted, and repeated title as the music speeds up. The title cut is the most realized song on the disc -- featuring frenzied guitar work -- followed by the punkish "Destroyer" and the doom-laden "Time is Sick of Me" with its chorus about how "this rock and roll world is done." "No Brains" and "Kusak Syndrome" aren't as speed-laden as other songs like say, the thundering "Seeing Ghosts," but they are still the unhinged work the group is known for. "Metallic Hearts" is led by Exner's steady drumming with some of Bibb's trademark vocals and guitar work.

The Shakes reeks of calamity and unease, as well as something else rock and roll is very good at: taking people out of their comfort zones. —MIKE L. DOWNEY



Paul & Linda McCartney

RAM Deluxe Edition

I first heard this album when it came out in May of 1971 during all the turmoil of the Beatles'

70% of the album is new recordings
10% of the album is new recordings
10% of the album is new recordings
10% of the album is new recordings
10% of the album is new recordings

concert calendar

6/8—ASS, Girl Band, The Tron Sack, DJ Skullbone @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

6/9—Aces Over Eights @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

6/9—MC Magic @ Velocity, College Station. 9pm

6/13—Walking Bear @ The Beer Joint, College Station. 9pm

6/16—Asia @ Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater, College Station. 6pm

6/16—Vagabond Swing @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

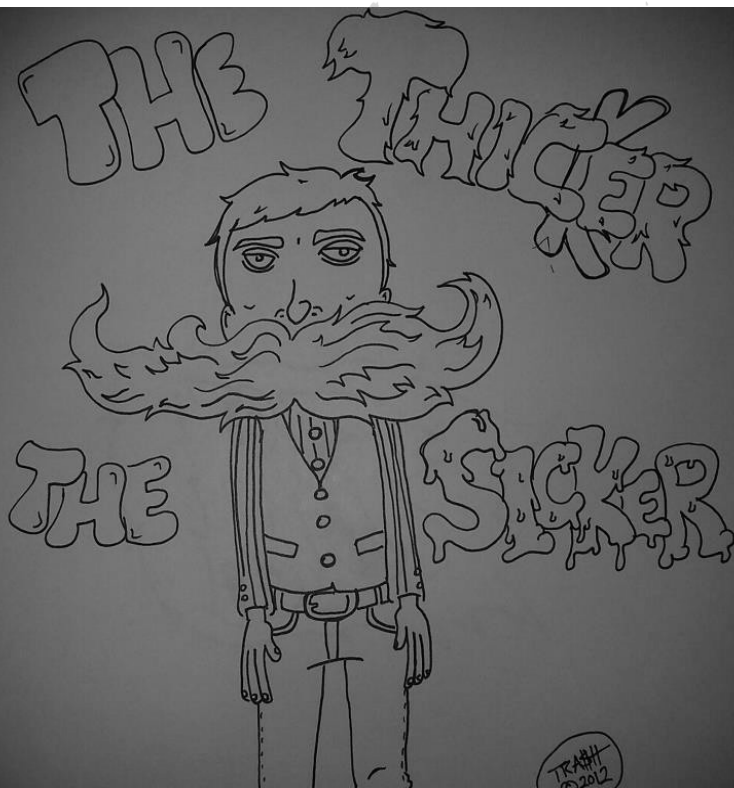
6/16—SUC Reunion featuring Z-Ro, Lil Keke, Lil O, ESG @ Grams, Bryan. 9pm

6/20—Aich Jones, D-DUBB, Educated Minds, Mike Maze, Edj the I.C.E. Man, Wes Shard @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

6/29—the Mighty Orq @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

6/30—The Ex-Optimists, Mike The Engineer @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

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