

# 97.9 REPRESENT



*Inside: The Ex-Optimists' New LP—Still Thinking—Ask Creepy Horse—A Collection of Horrors In Less Than One Minute—Sneak Peak: Evil Dead—Castle Dungeon—Mustache Rides—Record Reviews—Concert Calendar*



## Iraq: 10 Years Later...

It is hard to believe that it has been ten years since America extended its non-war pre-emptive war in the Middle East from the (perceived) successful campaign in Afghanistan towards a non-war pre-emptive war against Iraq. With Afghanistan we were flushing out al-Qaeda, the dangerous terrorist organization responsible for the non-war pre-emptive war upon America founded on September 11th, 2001. Ten years now since we daily heard the terms Hans Blix, Weapons of Mass Destruction (lovingly acronymed as WMD's), the Palace Guard, Enduring Freedom, etc. It all seems like a lifetime ago, when America was reeling from 9/11 and the world's most wanted man was Osama bin-Laden.

Yet in a way it seems like this non-war "conflict" has lasted for a lifetime now. America has been armed and amok in the Middle East since early 2002 now, making our actions in theater officially longer than our stunts in both World Wars, Korea and, our last big non-war "conflict", Vietnam. While the casualties from the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts did not sustain the levels of those more cataclysmic events, it seems that America has forgotten it is still at "non-war" in the Middle East.

So many mistakes were made, and history will not be kind. America had cause to snuff out al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, but to spread itself thin by "nation building" in Iraq based on the flimsiest of evidence (which proved to be entirely false and perhaps a complete fabrication from the get-go) turned out to be, well, a serious crime against humanity that will ultimately go unpunished. Meanwhile, Afghanistan heated back up and, once we were able to wash our hands of Iraq with some shred of dignity (the tiniest shred), we have been stuck ever since trying to find a way out of Afghanistan without looking like we got beat. All while spending trillions of our country's money at, in retrospect, the worst possible time for the entire world. Monumental mistake, folks. I cannot wait to read my grandchildren's history textbooks about this period of time.

Of course, this mistake continues perpetually. President Obama has promised to bring most of our personnel home next year, but the price our country has paid will continue to be paid for a generation. 6676 Americans have lost their lives in these conflicts, and still counting. More than 38,000 were wounded. VA hospitals estimate half a million visits from post-9/11 veterans. It is untold how many servicemen and women bear a moral scar on their psyche for what they have seen and done. While that is a very small number of our populace, all toll between both conflicts estimates are that 1% of our populace served during that period. Which makes all of us that are not veterans post-9/11 or currently active duty or in the guard "the 99%".

That makes 1 out of every 100 people seriously effected by these conflicts. Add their family members and friends to that count. And then add you to that count, because these folks will return to society, if they haven't already. Many have post-traumatic stress disorder. It's estimated that one servicemember commits suicide every day. It is a mess that our society will clean up for a good portion of this century. Yet this 10th anniversary last month passed quietly without much fanfare.

It is no wonder this dubious anniversary went mostly unremarked upon. The media did not ask the hard questions at the time. It is hard to think of this era outside of context, as many of us were still reeling from 9/11 and the subtle ripples it made across the national fabric. I know it factored in my coverage of the lead-up to the "war". I aided the Republican Party in selling the war to middle America. As a producer of a pro-war hawkish conservative talk radio program my job was to help carry water for the GOP War Machine. And I carried it. It weighs on my conscious still, especially as it has become my wife's passion and calling to help returning veterans with their schooling and post-service career planning. So many Americans duped, and the deception continues. Pour one out, remember. Ten years gone.—KELLY MINNIS

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On the interwebz thingy at  
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Materials for review & bribery can be sent to:

**979Represent**  
1707 Austin Ave.  
College Station, TX 77840  
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## A Collection of Horrors In Less Than One Minute

(#1) I realize I do not have my phone  
(#2) or a pen (#3) or a journal:  
I am (#4) without contact, (#5) without voice  
To an outside world - so far! - that may  
Any moment (#6) expire - capsized  
Beneath (#7) floods or (#8) darkness  
Or (#9) undercooked meat - while  
I remain here (#10) trapped (#11) alone  
And (#12) unmissed. I have only just  
Arrived, just taken seat to find  
That even (#13) music does not exist  
In the (#14) silence of this men's room  
Where surely I will find, left behind,  
One roll of ..... (#15) ....  
- KEVIN STILL

**Monday** - Dungeons & Dragons, Video games  
**Tuesday** - Magic the Gathering Constructed, Draft, Trading  
**Wednesday** - Pokemon League & Trade, Dungeons & Dragons Encounters  
**Thursday** - YuGiOh Constructed, Trading  
**Friday** - Magic the Gathering Constructed, Draft, Trading  
**Saturday** - Video Game Tournaments & Special Events  
**Sunday** - Special Events, Video Games & Misc. Gaming

Check Website for Special Events & Tournaments



## Ask Creepy Horse

*Dear Creepy Horse, I've been trying to get my girl to explore anal, but she always says it makes her feel like she needs to poop. What can I do to change her mind?*

Geoff in Austin Colony

Dear Geoff,

If you had a larger penis, perhaps you could pack that shit in there like a real man. Alternatively, you and your girlfriend could come up with a code word intended to let you know she just took a massive dump and the runway is clear. Or maybe, you could realize that your girlfriend obviously isn't interested in anal intercourse.

Pervert.

*Dear Creepy Horse,*

*My wife and I have been married for many years and dated for several years before that. Our sex life has become routine, and it always follows the same routine (me initiating foreplay, missionary position, etc.) How can I get us out of this rut and get us back to being more excited about sex?*

Hank in Navasota

Dear Hank,

You have a stupid name. I'm going to overlook that because the editor wants me to answer your stupid question. I'm sorry that your sex life has become mundane. This is probably due to the fact your wife is cheating on you. Some bla... African-American individual likes to bend her over your kitchen counter while you're at work and the kids are at school. He's a little uncouth and unnecessarily rough. Your wife digs this. The way I see it, you have two options. 1) Invite Jamal over for fried chicken and a cuckold session. 2) Show your wife you can be the stallion we all know you can be. Put her legs behind her head and give her a pounding that even Jamal would be proud of. Then flip her over, grab her mane, and go horse-styud on that hoe. Make her whinny like the slutty little mare she is. When the soreness subsides, she'll be initiating the foreplay for a change.

Or you'll go to prison for rape.

*Dear Creepy Horse,*

*The Supreme Court of the United States is hearing two important cases involving the constitutionality of marriage equality. Which way do you think the Supremes should rule, and why?*

Stoney in Wolf Creek Lofts

Dear Stoney,

Horses aren't known for their transcendental political views, but we definitely believe in equality. We come in all different colors, shapes, sizes, and sexual orientations. From a scientific standpoint, homosexuality has been observed in all domesticated species and nobody has a religious bias toward any of them. Why should Humans be any different? Furthermore, while some religions have rules against alternative sexualities, they almost always preach tolerance, forgiveness, and love. But truthfully, this isn't a religious debate, it's a constitutional one. This country was founded with the intent of providing equal rights to all people...and horses, regardless of what they believe unless you're brown. Why can't we focus on that? Why can't we all just get along? We're all in this together.

Ultimately, though, you'll have to make up your own mind because, as my mentor Mr. Ed said, "How should I know? As your wife and neighbors say, I'm just a dumb animal."

Follow Creepy Horse on Twitter @creepyhorse and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Creepy-Horse/394198840679234>

## Sneak Peak: Evil Dead

Fans of the original *Evil Dead* films will remember how the craziness cracked after the creepy grandpa voice on the tape recorder read a spell from the *Book of the Dead*. That spell not only unleashed a bizarre legion of woodland demons (one taking the form of a sexually deviant tree), but those magic words also launched director Sam Raimi's rocket roaring camera, shooting a prolonged and classically signature shot ripping between trees and brambles and eventually blasting the front door of a cabin that would hold all the comedic horror of Bruce Campbell's heroic Ash. After the camera flew, after Ash screamed in our faces, the real fun began. Girls levitated. Corpses danced. Amputated hands ran havoc and decapitated trophy heads mocked our protagonist. Looking back, the first *Evil Dead* films exceed the legal limits of horror genre campiness and plunge, often, into sheer silliness.

Perhaps this is why we love the old *Evil Dead* films: they give us permission to laugh in the face of evil, strapping humor to our questions of the unknown like a chainsaw to a bloody stump. But this may be the place where the new *Evil Dead*, directed by Uruguay native filmmaker Fede Alvarez, veers most severely from its predecessors.

In many ways this new *Evil Dead* is a fresh, new beast. Viewers should not expect an

evident Ash character in this film. Alvarez's cabin walls do not laugh or bleed. Unlike the vacationing, romantic youth from earlier films, Alvarez's youngsters congregate in a devotion of tough-love, specifically to cold-turkey junkie Mia, played with nomination worthy intensity by Jane Levy. Alvarez also offers less humor and more gore, trading peals of squealing laughter for a slashing spree of creative blade-work. Viewers of the new *Evil Dead* should also expect actual demonic demons in place of floating bloated witches and pus-faced precesses. The truly sinister world Alvarez has created makes Raimi's original feel even more Pixar's dark take at live-action black magic.

Even so, Alvarez most fully writes his signature on the *Evil Dead* story after the reading of the spell and his respectful nod to Rami's forest rocket camera shot. Once the camera lands on Mia's unsuspecting face, once the tree has its aberrant way with Mia, the film never relents. If there is anything to be said of this new film, it's that it simply does not relent. The circles into hell widen, the vacuum pulls, until finally the skies themselves bleed. Thankfully, Alvarez does not pull the reoccurring new horror trope of attributing Mia's horror to the wiles of addiction or insanity. Such possibilities rise initially as Mia's supernatural visions are discounted as withdrawals, but eventually everyone sees what Mia sees. Eventually everyone possesses her fear.

Inasmuch, the audience is reminded, in direct opposition to much of modern supernatural horror, that evil, despite popular belief, may indeed exist. In other words, what may appear as insanity or chemical imbalance on the surface might be the true manifestation of something far more sinister lurking underneath. Likewise, Alvarez also suggests the consequences of our addiction, as well our small invitations to unseen forces, have the potential to destroy those who love us the most. Leave it to a Latin American to reveal America's overtly materialistic lack of faith in the unseen and the effect our spirits have upon one another. This *Evil Dead*, releasing nationwide April 5, is a good film for several reasons, mostly for being so unrelenting.—KEVIN STILL

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# Castle



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By James Gray



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The Ex-Optimists have been a staple in the Bryan-College Station for quite a few years now. Their brand of noise rock draws from a variety of influences and features both great riffs and well-crafted songs. On April 26<sup>th</sup> they will play a release show at Revolution Café and Bar in Bryan with Skyacre, Jay Satellite, and Loafers to celebrate the release of their second album, *Bee Corpse Collector*. Guitarists Kelly Minnis, Michael Scarborough, and bassist Steven Kennedy are also heavily involved in many other bands and projects in town as well as the area's music scene at large. I sat down with the band at local taphouse O'Bannon's to ask them a few questions and have a couple pints.

**Y'all are about to release your second full-length album, *Bee Corpse Collector*. Congratulations. The artwork and test pressing I've seen.**

Kelly: I haven't seen the artwork yet either.

**Well, the label looks pretty awesome. I wanted to ask y'all first of why did you all choose to go with the vinyl release rather than CD?**

Kelly: We just like to waste money.

**What do you mean by that?**

Kelly: Well, nobody listens to CDs anymore. My CDs sit on the shelf after I've ripped them and put them into the hard drive. I do still listen to records. Steve buys records. Michael buys records. Ed, the drummer, buys records.

Michael: We bought a whole lot of Ex-Ops records.

Kelly: And we just bought about 300 Ex-Ops records. So when one wears out, I've got plenty more.

**It sounds like you self-financed the thing by yourself?**

Kelly: Indeed.

**Was that a trying experience?**

Kelly: Not really. It's an expensive thing...fortunately we didn't have to pay for everything all at once. The recording was spread out over time and we paid each day as we went. Pponying up what amounted to \$1200 for the album itself, that wasn't all that bad. I guess that was bad for you [Michael] to pony that all up at once. And the last \$1200 that I spent I got to do on two or three increments; I don't remember which.

**I saw your post of Facebook the other day; you said you just listened to a test pressing you made on your own record and that your seven-year old self would be proud.**

Kelly: Well yeah, I mean it's kind of a goofy thing to admit to. Ever since I was a little kid - some little kids think they're going to be a baseball player or they're going to grow up to be a fireman or a cop or something else like that - I, from that early age, was going to grow up and be a rockstar. That's what I knew I wanted to do, and, you know, a funny thing happened on the way to Albuquerque, unfortunately. But you know...

Michael: I don't think my seven-year old self knew what records were.

Kelly: Oh I did. I used to carry 45s around with me and I would put them on my fingers and such and spin them around.

Michael: Do they sound better that way?

Kelly: They do.

Michael: Natural skin-tone.

Steve: I used to hold them between my thumb and middle finger and pretend they were like blades.

Michael: What do you mean "used to"?

Kelly: So you had appending blades of vinyl?

Steve: Yes!

**The album's title I know comes "Never Lose That Feeling". It's a song lyric in there. I wanted to ask you [about] the song lyric "bee corpse collector". Does it mean anything? What's the significance behind it?**

Kelly: I moved here from Seattle seven years ago, and I still read the alternative weekly paper up there. It's called The Stranger. And I'm always writing down cool title for potential band names, potential album names, potential song names, and a person had an art show with a painting that they had entitled "Bee Corpse Collector", and I wrote it down...

Michael: No, it wasn't a painting. She actually collected dead bees and made them into things. So the headline was "Artist/

# the ex-ops

interview by

Bee corpse collector." Kelly: Okay, so it was a multi-media art extravaganza as opposed to a painting.

Michael: With *actual* dead bees.

Kelly: But I thought the title was really cool, and so that title wound up as a part of the song lyric and then we spun it out into the album name.



Steve: Well, 'cause I remember you were saying, like the song was basically you threw words together and it was just kind of a non-sense song. But then you said, "Well Michael really wants the record to be named 'Bee Corpse Collector'." And I was like, "That actually makes sense." I was thinking about it, and you have bees, you know they're beautiful and they perform a service, they make honey and it's a wonderful thing, and then they die. That's basically what we are musically. We take all these things that people have discarded and have died but were once beautiful, and we kind of pull them together.

Michael: Then we make beaded necklaces.

Kelly: Yeah, that song was kind of like a bunch of different random images, but it almost seems to me like an *Amityville Horror* kind of song. There's kind of a narrative line of setting houses on fire and clearing houses of spirit and of darkness.

Michael: I just thought it sounded like a good Guided By Voices title.

Kelly: It does kind of, doesn't it?

Steve: Well it does have three words in it.

**What were all of you guys able to do on this album going into the studio that you weren't able to do on your previous releases before?**

Kelly: Well... sort of. Our drummer at the time - all four of us tracked the record together. When it came time to mix the album the drums were found wanting, and so the producer and engineer, Chico Jones, asked me if we could have someone

Steve: Play together in one room.

Kelly: Which is an improvement from previous recordings.

**So y'all did play all together in one room?**

Kelly: Well... sort of. Our drummer at the time - all four of us tracked the record together. When it came time to mix the album the drums were found wanting, and so the producer and engineer, Chico Jones, asked me if we could have someone

# Optimists

Tom Hansen

replace the drums. Jessica had quit by that time, so that wasn't an option. I looked into getting Ben Kent from Black Cock to play drums on the record, and then I thought about having Ed, our new drummer, play on the record, too. But Ed jacked up his knee, and he didn't know all of the songs. And I thought, "Well we've only got one day to do it and I'm going



to have to do two of the songs anyways because Ed doesn't know all eight of the songs on the album, so I'll just do the whole thing." And so the album was recorded with four people individually, but one person's parts were replaced completely.

**And I know you guys are really, I call you gear-heads. Like whenever I have a question about gear I go to Michael. It seems like every hour on Facebook there's a new thing from eBay that's been posted or found. How much do you guys find stuff for fun and how much makes its way into Ex-Ops stuff?**

Michael: I think we ran out of actually needing a long time ago.

Kelly: Yeah, I used almost every guitar I own on the record.

Michael: So did I, and I can't tell you which one I used on which track.

Kelly: I know what I used and I know mostly what you used. But I think we're both gear-hounds. Steve's a gear-hound, too. I used to kind of fight with myself about being a collector and flip Michael a bunch of shit about being a collector and Steve about being a collector and I've kind of become one, too. So hypocrite equals me.

**Well if you're using the stuff at least, like Michael said, you can justify it a little bit.**

Kelly: Loosely.

Michael: It's justifying an expensive habit.

Steve: I have far less bass gear than I have guitar gear, so that doesn't justify me owning any type of guitar gear.

Michael: Yeah, how's that bass amp working out, Steve?

[Steve just looks at Michael]

Kelly: I don't know. We could spend our money on drugs or something.

**That would be a more expensive habit.**

Kelly: We could invest it in the stock market.

Michael: I've done that, too. I've made that flipping gear.

Kelly: Good, I hope you counted that on your taxes as capital gains.

Michael: [leans into microphone] YES.

**As far as how you guys write songs and create the music for them, what's the process that you go about things?**

Michael: Wait for Kelly to write the songs and the music, and then play them.

Steve: And then they change and becomes something that looks and sounds kind of like what he wrote but..

Michael: But I can actually play them.

Steve: When we all play them together, things happen and they become - they're the same songs but they're different. Usually the parts are the same but the tempo will change or certain rhythms will change because they take on their own life.

Michael: Mostly Kelly writes the songs because he's really good at it, and then we play them incorrectly and it becomes our song.

Kelly: Because we're too lazy to fix the mistakes. "Oh it goes like that now. Okay. Everybody remember that."

Steve: "But it sounds better that way." "What were you playing there?" "I don't know." "It doesn't go together." "What should I play?" "No, no, no, leave that, I was just noticing it doesn't go together." "That's discordant! It fits, I don't know why."

**Well I know you guys are in a bunch of musical projects in the area besides The Ex-Optimists. I don't even know how many each. I tried counting and I couldn't. I think there's ones that don't exist yet that are in the works. How do balance all that time and decide what to do when?**

Kelly: Well it sounds like it's a bunch of time, but in reality none of our bands ever practice consistently. Half of the bands don't practice at all and by their very concept are meant to be a non-rehearsing, throw-it-together, get-up-on-stage-and-play-quickly sort of thing. I'm really only in three bands at this point that require any significant amount of thought beyond just showing up and "Um, let's play D for forty minutes. Ready? Count it off." And there are at least two of the bands that we've had that that's very much the way - "Hey, what are we going to do? Should we practice it?" "No let's show up and just wing it." But the other two bands everybody else is in everybody else's band, too, so there's plenty of time to go around because everybody's busy doing other things.

Michael: And a lot of that spawns from being such a small music scene. If want to get certain kind of bands to come down and play, they need a band to go with them, and a lot of times those bands don't exist so we're like "Well, let's throw this together." Like that's how The Tron Sack came about. "We want to get these stoner metal bands to come in but they won't play with our silly punk rock band so we'll start a stoner metal band."

**And what a stoner metal band it is.**

Kelly: Incorrect stoner metal band.

Michael: Right. It's close enough that we pull them in to coming and playing shows, which is the point. 'cause the reason why we started doing any of this is we wanted things to go see and things to do. That's how our label Sinkhole Texas came about. That's how Loudfest came about because we want this town to be interesting.

Kelly: If there's no culture then create it yourself. That's basically what we've done. It seems like it's a bigger deal on the outside looking in. There's maybe 8 or 9 indie, alt, punk-type bands and between the five of us at this table we're in every one of them

**It's a little bit incestuous in that respect.**

Steve: It's just a fact of that kind of music isn't really around that much, and so when you [think about how] it's not around in a larger sense it's certainly not going to be when you shrink it down to the little microcosm that is Bryan-College Station. If it's hardly represented in American pop-music culture, then yeah, no wonder you don't see it

Here.

Michael: On a more personal note, it's just an excuse to play more. I mean, if we just had one band playing locally there's really only one venue we could play at. We can't do that all that often and maintain it, so if we're in seven bands... or a handful of types of bands then we can play the same place a few times a month and it doesn't get as tired.

Kelly: We've kind of created a currency with our friends and people that we know and they trust us enough to go "What the hell is the Lightning Briefs? Oh, it's Kelly and Michael and Katie and Todd.. oh okay, well it will be alright then. We know those people."

Michael: "It at least won't be any worse than the last thing."

Kelly: "We'll just bring our earplugs this time" or "Oh shit, we'll go outside and drink. They sound better outside than they do inside."

Michael: It's a way of staying busy without over-saturating. 'cause I want to play every night somewhere, but yeah, that's not really feasible.

**So listening to the album there's a lot of very emotional lyrics to them. I wanted to ask you if you write more from personal experiences or do you write more fictitious characters or characterizations.**

Kelly: Our first record was autobiographical and by the time we got around to making this record I wasn't unhappy and a lot of the things I was unhappy about in 2008 and 2009 when we were making the first record..

Michael: You wouldn't know it by listening to the record.

Kelly: Yeah this album is a very unhappy record, but it's mostly from looking around me at our friends and some of the things that they're going through right now. There's a couple of songs - there's at least one song on there that's the first love song that I've ever written. At least the first good one.

Michael: And it's just a minute and a half long.

Steve: And it sounds very angry and the end is really loud and ominous. If you didn't know it was a love song you would say "That doesn't sound like a love song."

Kelly: There's another one - "No High Fives" is autobiographical to a certain extent. At least the first verse is.

Michael: And also about Tuesday nights at Revolution.

Steve: Like musically and lyrically Kelly was saying it wasn't necessarily autobiographical or he wasn't upset necessarily when he wrote the songs. The songs themselves are not down, but it is kind of a downer of a record. There are some really bleak points, and I think that's because we, in the last year and a half, have all kind of been living up to our name. Like "wow, this has all kind of gone to shit..." By the time we ended up recording it we'd all either been sick, or work was shit, or just all kinds of stuff, or there were inter-band turmoils that no one wanted to talk about but were obviously there. So we all kind of weren't optimistic anymore..

Michael: To be fair I was born a pre-optimist.

Kelly: I have a hard time writing happy songs. It's hard to write about being profoundly joyful without sounding like a...

Michael: It's also hard to do that over a broken, dissonant chord.

Steve: That's why I love "Do No Harm" as much as I do, because that, regardless of whatever else happens at a show or on the record, that comes and there's a sense of - it's not necessarily happy...

Michael: It's resignation.

Steve: Yeah, there's like a sense of, just, let it go and it's okay.

**"Do No Harm" is always an incredible end to the set. Have you played it last at every single show?**

Michael: We used to play it first. It used to be a completely different song. It was much quieter, much more mellow, and I guess the first half is still that..

Steve: I think I was the one that said "That should go at the end. That's the 'we're done and we're going home' music."

Kelly: That song, that was part of the very first demo session for the band. That was band in 2008. We played it a few times and didn't do anything with it for a year after that. The song was more aggressive in the very start. It didn't have the sort of ebb and flow that it came to have, which is why it wound up being on the album since it's one of our oldest songs. It's actually already appeared on our first album.

Michael: And if you listen to it it's a completely different song.

Kelly: Michael made me put it on this record, for starters.

Steve: I was behind that as well. I've always contented that that's one of the few constants we've had. Because it has changed over time as we've changed over time, it's a very representative song, it's like a Litmus test of who we are.

Michael: I don't even remember how I played it on the first record. I don't play it like that anymore, and I like that. I like that a song can change over time and become something different. And especially that one. It's become so much more meaningful, at least to me.

Steve: "Do No Harm", it changed and became this kind of melancholy, beautiful release.

Kelly: It's a lullaby. That song has six words. Twelve and a half minutes, and six words. A lyrically that song is meant to sooth, and for the most part that song is meant to sooth people, and even when it's loud and it's stunningly loud, it's still meant as a pacific song.

Michael: And that's what it does. Looking at the audience, they're all over the place, but by the end of that song they're all standing there going... \*displays face of awe\* ..I don't know how to put that on the recording. To me it's the one that comes across most honestly, not that the other ones don't come across honestly, but it's always the end of the night, everybody's tired, and then it's just this big explosion of noise that just goes on and Steve and I have a lot of freedom to just do whatever with that resonant and becomes... I don't know.

Kelly: A remember reading a Greil Marcus review of a Sonic Youth live bootleg record from the mid-80s, and his thing about what he liked about Sonic Youth that wasn't accurately capture either in the studio or even on this bootleg, was that they would have moments in their set where the room would shatter, and that was his direct quote. "The room would shatter." And there are parts of that song that are meant to break the room.

Michael: I love a song that can be - I mean, I know its structure but the end always becomes its own thing - and I love a song that can change from set to set and feel different and reflect the mood of the room and the people playing it..

Steve: And there are quiet parts, really quiet.

Michael: But that song always reflects the feeling in the room, but it's always different. And I love that it can be different but still recognizable. 'cause it's not a jam; there's a song, but every time you see it it's slightly different, and sometimes drastically different and terrible.

Steve: I notice I'll be playing a certain song - you know how Blake Swartzboch of Jawbreaker always puts in things that are musical references to something and you're not sure... You're like "Okay I recognize that...oh, he's doing "American Woman"... and I don't know if he's trying to be ironic to do something with a big butt rock musical quote that most people wouldn't get. But I notice that we do lots of those. Have fun looking for them.

Michael: "Never Lose That Feeling" is chalked full of them. I stole a lot of lyrics in that song or references from other songs..

Michael: "No High Fives" is very much Sonic Youth. My part, anyway.

Kelly: Well, I'm just thinking lyrically there are a lot of clues, easter eggs that I have appropriated from other songs. I look at them as things that I, as a fiction writer would consider allusion, versus "I stole the shit out of something."

Steve: So lyrically you do it, consciously kind of like as an homage or whatever.

Kelly: Yeah.

Steve: Well I'm talking about I'll play a part and I won't realize until later "Oh shit, I stole that. That's a straight lift from something." And I'm not going to change it.

Michael: I do that all the time, and I don't notice until y'all tell me.

*The Ex-Optimists celebrate the release of their new LP at Revolution Café & Bar in downtown Bryan Friday April 26th. Also performing are Jay Satellite (Austin), Skvacre (Austin) and Loafers (Waco). \$5 cover; \$10 cover + LP. The album will be available for purchase at <http://www.sinkholetexas.com>*





# Still Thinking: The Concept of "Manliness"

Dear 2-3 Readers,

We're changing a few things up around here. For starters, I'm taking a break from my regular Still Drinking monthly Texas beer column. I'm doing this as an experiment of sorts, seeing what a beer-free diet and writing life might look like. So far, it looks like black coffee. Early mornings with my nose in books and my dog on a leash. Ink pens leaking down my jeans. Little paper scraps cramped and crumbled into any pouch or bag or pocket on my person. Unintentional hummings of Britney Spears and Red Fang buzzing around me like wood bees on the eaves of my neighbor's house. The inside of my head as scattered as the bed-head atop my head. Quotes. Lyrics. Uncontextualized vocabulary. Panic. I'm especially jacked today what with that bottomless cup they give you at that one place in town that does not pay me enough to advertise for them. I'm thinking more than I'm drinking, so we've changed the focus of things for a spell.

I'm thinking about how my favorite Rashida Jones is the Rashida Jones from *Our Idiot Brother* who dresses in "dude clothes" and wears those giant glasses. I'm thinking about what color t-shirt looks best on my pug. I'm thinking about being evil and being dead and how impossible it is to say everything you want to say about a single film, especially one you've been wearing like thick stink for several days. I've been thinking about what my toe looked like the other day when I took my shoe off and how much it reminded me of one of the Scary Stories to Tell In the Dark, and I've been thinking about how I've never outgrown such nonsense. I've been thinking about ginger root and aloe vera and bleu cheese. I've been thinking about what makes turtles, encased in nearly indestructible shells, so damn skiddish. I've been thinking about Lena Dunham and the potential therapeutic benefits of self-extended partial nudity. I've been thinking about my favorite parts of a grapefruit and, of course, this deadline.

But I've also been thinking greatly about what it means to be "manly" because my own manliness - not expressed through any extensions of full or partial nudity - was recently called into question.

Here's the scenario: I was told recently by a much younger dude that my choice to eat Wings-n-More chicken bites (those little swabs of fried chicken deliciously soaked in hotly-tangy sauce) was "unmanly". I do not want to say who told me this or where I heard it, but I can tell you it happened in my office and directly in front of my back. Honestly, I was grateful the questioner of my gender identity did not wait until I had lilted beyond ear shot before deeming my eating habits "unmanly". Taken off guard, I asked, "What's unmanly about eating the food I want to eat?" The obviously uber-manly male said he did not know how to answer my question. So I asked him, "What food would I need to have on my plate in public to convince the people around me that I am extremely manly?" He said, again, that he did not know. So I asked him, if he did not know what foods constituted manliness, what were his credentials for

being so manly? Also, with such shady dude credentials, how did he possess the authority to declare unmanliness on me? Our conversation ended here.

But this got me thinking about all the things I've been told, since moving to Texas, are unmanly. Admittedly, every item on the following list pertains directly to me. As you will soon see, I am, by current social standards the unmanliest of men in this brawny, testosterone drenched Brazos Valley. My unmanliness manifests most glamorously in my following behaviors:

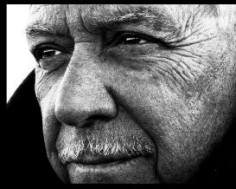
- eating chicken bites
- carrying a tote bag adorned with pink flowers
- appreciating the film *Pretty In Pink*
- enjoying animated / kids films
- reading female writers
- reading / writing poetry
- reading (in general)
- not hunting
- listening to big band or folk music (especially if the folk music is by a female artist: ie. Ani DiFranco or Gillian Welch or Neko Case)
- enjoying the music of Katy Perry and Kelly Clarkson and Britney Spears for non-ironic, non-sexual reasons
- crying at the movies
- owning a small dog; ie. a pug
- picking up my small dog's poop with a green plastic dog poop pick-up bag
- washing the dishes for my wife
- allowing my wife to pick the movie or dinner restaurant
- cooking food in a kitchen apart from a grill
- wearing glasses
- writing letters on paper that will later be stuffed in an envelope and sent through the mail with a stamp
- keeping a journal
- playing a musical instrument

By all current standards, it would appear I am in a gender pickle, but I can guarantee you I am not. So many glaring contradictions exist on this list - ie. it is unmanly to play an instrument but it is only manly to listen to dude musicians? Whaaat? - that I've chosen to abandon the whole thing. Screw the whole phallic point! I've also decided, since the distinctions are so bizarre and crude - ie. men do not consider their wives or show emotion or eat/watch/read/listen to anything that they've not been given masculine permission from some uber-masculine meathead to enjoy (which by all means makes the man seeking such permission a total pussy) - that being considered "manly" by such arbitrary social standards is neither a compliment or an insult; rather, it is a black hole of narcissistic chest beating and engine revving that, in the end, looks so pathetically theatrical it just makes me tired. Tired enough to throw up my jazz hands in surrender. Tired enough to extend genuine gratitude whenever a "man" labels me "unmanly". Hell, tired enough to pour a cup of green tea, pop *Sixteen Candles* in the VCR (again!) and relish - maybe even a little misty eyed - Samantha telling Jake Ryan her wish had already come true. Dude, I'm telling you, it gets me everytime!



# Record Reviews

## 'TIL YOUR RIVER RUNS DRY Eric Burdon



**Eric Burdon**

*Til Your River Runs Dry*

Seeing another Sixties rock icon (been in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for nearly a decade) record again originally made me very depressed. However, after listening, I came away with a different perspective. I don't care for the direction of Burdon's current sound—too many slow blues for me—but his voice is undiminished.

My favorites are the tunes where he cuts loose with that bellow of his: the rocking cover of "Before You Accuse Me", the gleeful "Old Habits Die Hard", and the opening "Water". Even the shuffle of "Bo Diddley Special" works better than all the blues numbers to me, but hey, that's what you do when you've done everything he has.—**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



**Chelsea Light Moving**  
*Chelsea Light Moving*

It appears that with the divorce of Sonic Youth members Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore that the venerable parents of modern indie rock will no longer be able to make music together. Last year, the band's "hiatus" helped introduce guitarist Lee Ranaldo as a solo artist, with the debut of his excellent *Between the Tides and Times LP*. This year we have *Chelsea Light Moving*, the debut LP from the band of the same name. Chelsea Light Moving is the latest project for Thurston Moore.

It is hard to take either Ranaldo or Moore's music on its own merits without comparing it back to Sonic Youth. Ranaldo largely escaped from the SY mode and made a slightly psychedelic guitar pop album with traces of acoustic singer-songwriter tied in with the keening angular sound he's best known for. Thurston...he's kinda doubling down with Chelsea Light Moving, if not moving somewhat backwards. It's a shock the first time you listen to "Alighted" at

chugging, palm-muted super fuzzed out 8th notes that would be somewhat better suited to a metal band. Sure, it's in a post-SY context so it sounds more to me like the metal poses on the first Dinosaur Jr. album than Meshuggah. But it's still a very agro approach for a man whose main band and solo work recently tended towards the calmer side of things.

The album kicks off with "Lip" that definitely has more of a mid-'90s Thurston solo side to it than Sonic Youth's last album *The Eternal*. He's swearing again, (the refrain goes "Too fucking bad"), "Empires of Time" shakes off some killer high-neck metalhead riffing; "Groovy and Linda" gets it back to *Experimental, Jet Set...* era pop before jumping into a straight up hardcore punk send off, with Thurston screaming "Don't shoot!" "Mohawk" brings it back down to the early '00s spoken word and hyper strummed guitar vibe.

I should also say that this is not just a Thurston Moore solo album by another name. His band does an admirable job of keeping up with Thurston's angrier approach. Second guitarist Keith Wood largely doubles Thurston on guitar without a lot of the harmonized interplay that we are used to with Ranaldo on board; bassist Samara Lubelski doubles up on violin during quite effectively during "Mohawk", lending a certain John Cale vibe to the neuro-Lou Redisms of Thurston's poetry; and drummer John Moloney plays with wild Animal abandon (especially live).

All toll, *Chelsea Light Moving* is a solid first effort from this band. Is this really a band that will record more albums? Hard to say. Is this just a stop-gap measure while we all wait for the inevitable Sonic Youth reunion? You know, I don't really think we're going to see that one happen again. That ship has sailed. Is this Thurston's mid-life crisis post-divorce album? You bet it is, though not in a confessional sort of way. It's imbued with a younger energy that long-time SY fans will find refreshing to hear again. We all thought Thurston left that behind decades ago.—**KELLY MINNIS**



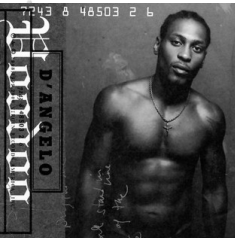
**Swingin' Utters**  
*Poorly Formed*

Besides having one of the greatest names in punk, the Swingin' Utters continue to crank out great punk

product after nearly a quarter of a century. Their latest clocks in at just under 30 minutes, but it's some super stuff all over the map; they just cram it all in a delirious mish-mash.

Most of the tunes are infectious punk like "Fake Rat of Dave Navarro" and "Librarians are Hiding Something", but then there are great head-scratchers like the viola-driven (!!!) Mumford-and-Son-ish "Greener Grass" and the cow-punk hilarity of "I'm a Little Bit Country" thrust into the mix. "Sevita Sing" is about the only experiment that doesn't work really well. However, the Utters are best with full-tilt rockers, and they hit their stride with "In a Video" and "Walk with a Postman" although "Temporary Contemporary" has an urgency that is pretty gripping.

Keep it swinging.—**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



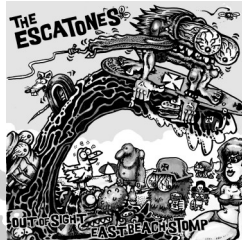
**D'Angelo**  
*Voodoo*

Recently Seattle record label Light In the Attic, responsible for some incredible archival releases (my fav is the work of former Miles Davis Mrs. Betty Davis's gutter porno-funk from the early '70s) resurrected D'Angelo's second album *Voodoo*, heralded upon release in 2000 as a 10 star masterpiece by most everyone. It's hard to believe *Voodoo* never made it to vinyl originally and Light In the Attic lovingly renders this one with deluxe packaging and 180g vinyl. This release gave me the opportunity recently to reassess *Voodoo* because, between you and me, in 2000 when I first purchased *Voodoo* I was a bit disappointed.

See, I didn't hear what everyone else was hearing at the time. Take it, I was definitely involved in the new jack deep soul movement. There were excellent albums released in the years prior to *Voodoo* by D'Angelo himself (*Brown Sugar* is certainly praise-worthy), Angie Stone, Erykah Badu, Rafael Saadiq (c'mon y'all, Lucy Pearl deserves as much hype as D'Angelo), Me'Shell NdegeO cello, Maxwell (*Urban Hang Suite* and *Now* are superb), Jamiroqui and, loosely, Lauren Hill. In that context I found D'Angelo's music to be somewhat safe. Especially if you take it in context against the true neo-soul movement that came in the mid-00's with the stiff out of Daptone Records, with Sharon Jones, Charles Bradley, and

The Sugarman 3, not to mention the stuff out of England like Amy Winehouse and Duffy.

On recent listen I get the same thing from *Voodoo* that I did at its time of release. It's an interesting album, few hooks, kind of a searching music, like D'Angelo wasn't sure whether he wanted to be hip-hop or soul and the heavy mixture of the two didn't really satisfy the hip hop fan or the soul fan in me. I am apparently the only person who thinks this. Vibe gave it a 10 originally, Pitchfork just gave the reissue a 10. There was a serious in-depth Spin article about his fall and redemption. Friend and bandmate ?uestlove tweets regularly about where D'Angelo is now and what he's up to but...man, I just don't get it. *Voodoo* is a good album, I particularly dig "Devil's Pie" with its horrible vocal melodies and everyone loves the very Prince-like "Untitled (How Does it Feel)" but at the time and now...this is not a 10 rating record y'all.—**KELLY MINNIS**



**The Escatones**  
*Out of Sight*

This Houston band self-identifies as a surf band. I'm not entirely it's accurate. Or inaccurate, as the case may be. These guys use surf-styled tones and chord changes but rearrange them with a more languid, almost early '60s teen pop laziness than the hypertension of Dick Dale or other more classic surf recordings.

The A-side "Out of Step" begins with minor key guitar arpeggios, in a downer, '80s indie or metal way before the familiar surf change comes in but at a slower pace, and then there's *vocals*. Kinda sounds like Tommy Keene or Tommy Womack singing (think '80s power pop reedy higher voice). It's a cool track, but then gets uncomfortable fast with tremoloed guest guitar craziness from Butthole Surfers legion Paul Leary.

B-side "East Beach Stomp" definitely has the classic beach vibe. The song has that shooting the pipeline sound but without really sounding stoned or formulaic. I think the modern recording methods help keep it from sounding like an Estrus Records retro by numbers exercise in surf music. When you buy the 7" you'll get a bonus track to download, an oddly soothing 8 minutes of babies crying.—**KELLY MINNIS**

# concert calendar

4/4—**Johnny's Body** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

4/5-6—**Chilifest** @ Crystal Ballroom, Snook. 4pm

4/6—**Firestarter '82, The Hangouts, Girl Band, Galactic Morgue** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

4/6—**Gorefest** feat. **Shawn Whittaker, In the Trench, Oceans of Slumber, Giant of the Mountain, Predominant Mortification, Flesh Hoarder, Hell's Conspiracy, Sever the Silence, Anxious Fate, Critical Misfire, Irreconcilable Suffering, Myra Maybell, Special Guest Satan, Await the Desolation, Mymik, Aphotic Contrivance, Birth At the Massacres House** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 12pm

4/7—**Brazos Valley Derby Girls vs. Corpus Christi Maidens** @ VFE Hall, Bryan. 5pm

4/11—**Sour Soul, Leopold and His Fiction** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

4/19-20—**Texas Independent Film Festival** @ Rudder Theater, College Station.

4/20—**Kirko Bangz** @ Schotzis, College Station. 9pm

4/23—**Bush, Oleander, Kyng** @ Hurricane Harrys, College Station. 7pm

4/25—**Jonathan Tyler & Northern Lights, Black Pistol Fire, The Docs** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

4/25—**Velcro Pygmies** @ Daisy Dukes, College Station. 9pm

4/26—**The Ex-Optimists (LP release party), Skyacre, Jay Satellite, Loafers** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

4/26—**This Will Destroy You, Equals** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

4/27—**Powerman 5000, Signal Rising, Wellborn Road, Artificial** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

## tails out-jason clark

*Jay Satellite singer/guitarist Jason Clark is about as big a music nerd as they come. His band harkens back to the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s when pop melody, big guitars, punk rock energy and psychedelic experimentation could all be found mashed together on college radio and 120 Minutes. When bands like The Cure, Sugar, Nirvana, My Bloody Valentine and Stone Roses all vied equally for attention. We asked Jason to talk to us a bit about an album that was crucial to him.*

In the summer of 1983, I was 10 years old, and I was already a pretty big music fan by then. I grew up with two older brothers which afforded me lots of exposure to the music of the late 60s, 70s, and early 80s. I was in love with Kiss, Cheap Trick and Electric Light Orchestra, and had discovered Van Halen a few years earlier. I had received my first guitar, an awful Les Paul copy made of plywood the summer before, and the mysteries of music were all around me - equally frustrated with learning to play the guitar in a household that by and large did not support such an endeavour, and fascinated with the music of the early 80s - new wave, early alternative, etc. I will never forget the moment I first hear The Police's masterpiece, *Synchronicity*. Little did I know it would be their swan song.

Those first few moments of that record - "Synchronicity I"'s awesome, programmed marimba intro - and I was hooked. Stewart Copeland's drums thundered a beat so strident it made me want to run full pace, and Andy Summers' guitar chords slashed and rang like nothing I had heard before - and Sting's voice, and lyrics...it was all so much to take in. Those words...what was he talking about? I looked at the

Carl Jung. I asked Dad who that was, and he was pleased by this question. I wasn't aware my Dad believed in much of Jung's ideas. I soon held a copy of the same book in my hands. I'll never forget my Dad's reaction when I told him where I saw the book. He said, "Well any rock band that makes a kid ask about something like that can't be all bad..."

But it didn't stop there. Every song was amazing, even the weird one Andy Summers wrote, "Mother." This was art. For the first time, I heard a band making a record that could truly be described as "Beatlesque", not in the sense that they sounded like The Beatles, but whose scope of genre and style was as boundless as The Beatles. So many great songs, the ones we all know, but so much more - the intense darkness of "Synchronicity II" with its brilliant contrast of the working man's dread and true fear of what's in the dark. Or Copeland's "Miss Gradenko" and the way it led perfectly to "Synchronicity II". It all made such a huge impression on me. It made me want to make art with music.

I go back and listen to this record again and again and every time I do, it affirms what I try to do with my music and the records I make - to create something greater than the sum of its parts, and to write words that truly cut to the heart of the matter. For a ten year old kid in Houston, Texas trying to figure out how to make music on a barely playable guitar, this record made me want to push forward with no idea how or why. I just wanted to make music that made someone else feel like this music made me feel. And I'm still trying.

*Jay Satellite plays Revolution Café & Bar in Bryan April 26th with The Ex-Optimists, Skyacre and Loafers.*

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# LOUDFEST

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