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# 97.9 REPRESENT



## LOUD!FEST

**MAY 16-18**

2013  
BRYAN, TX

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*INSIDE: LOUDFEST 2013 GUIDE—STILL THINKING—13 BOOKS FOR SUMMER  
2013—STILL DRINKING...HIJACKED—EX-OPTIMISTS' NEW LP DISSECTED—  
MUSTACHE RIDES—RECORD REVIEWS—CONCERT CALENDAR*



**979Represent** is a local magazine  
for the discerning dirtbag.

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**Six Years of LOUDFEST!**

Last year the principal brain trust of LOUDFEST were interviewed on a local public access show about how the festival got its start. And being that we were on television and trying to be nice and stuff we hedged our answer and could not be 100% truthful. After the taping we rued that we couldn't just say "We started LOUDFEST because we hate the fucking Toadies". Which is completely true.

Let's dial up the Wayback Machine, Sherman, and go back to April 2008 to the most recent (and probably last) Northgate Music Festival in College Station: NMF was not very locals-friendly and tended to book local artists at the last minute and in really bad time slots. The Hangouts and great unwashed luminaries were last-minuted into the NMF line-up at Schotzis upstairs...during the same time as The Toadies headlining the festival on the main stage outside in the Northgate parking lot. As you might guess, the locals got 20 or 30 people while The Toadies scored a thousand.

Not The Toadies fault, right? Right, but that night the folks in both GUL and The Hangouts decided that we needed our OWN music festival that didn't shaft local artists, that wasn't out for making a big splash but was geared more towards the DIY movement of our youth, putting together a great time for audience and for bands alike. Thus LOUDFEST was born. Our first year we had bands all day at Zapatos on Northgate and helped draw attention to a petition to show support for a municipal skateboard park in College Station. Six years later, CS has got the skatepark and LOUDFEST has managed to outlast both Northgate Music Festival and the also gone kaput Rock The Republic. This year LOUDFEST has expanded to three nights between Revolution Café & Bar and The Grand Stafford, bringing in 40+ regional and national punk, metal, indie and otherwise bands for the princely sum of \$5. And unlike Northgate Music Festival or others that have come since, LOUDFEST places a premium on local talent, with 1/3 of the artists hailing from Bryan/College Station.

As for The Toadies, well, I don't really have anything against them. I never really cared for them, but I'm also not from Texas and that seems to be an important part of the Toadies fandom equation. But I suppose I should be thankful for The Fucking Toadies, as without them there would probably be no LOUDFEST. So help me Jesus.—KELLY MINNIS



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# still thinking

After work yesterday I continued my pre-dinner ritual of drinking decaf coffee and reading Tim O'Brien's *If I Die In A Combat Zone* when I came across an interesting sentence:

"The essential thing about the prairie, I learned, was that one part of it is like any other part." - Tim O'Brien

I found this interesting because it reminded me of a line in one of my favorite classic novels, a book that I've highly recommended but for which few people have shared my affections, Willa Cather's *My Antonia*. The sentence comes from Jim Burden as he and his family travel west across the plains. Jim says: "The only thing very noticeable about Nebraska was that it was still, all day long, Nebraska."

What's remarkable about these two sentences, besides how greatly O'Brien's narrator echoes Jim Burden, is that neither character is actually speaking about the prairie or Nebraska. Jim Burden was actually referring to his own ennui of travels and his dreaded notions of a life lived isolated among the expanses of land and land and unchanging land. O'Brien metaphorically uses the prairie as a concrete symbol of something far more complex and abstract. Look at O'Brien's sentence, embedded in a chapter about his hometown, in its fuller context:

"I tried going to the Democratic party meetings. I'd read it was the liberal party. But it was futile. I could not make out the difference between the people there and the people down the street boosting Nixon and Cabot Lodge. The essential thing about the prairie, I learned, was that one part of it was like any other part."

The double-entendre there jolts the reader's attention. O'Brien expresses his boredom with politics through a concrete reference to the boring landscape. This is good writing. This is - although O'Brien published *If I Die In A Combat Zone* in 1975 - indicative of classic literature.

This also reminds me of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, when a distraught Tess roams down a country road in search of Angel, Alec has just been stabbed, and the narrator describes the road, its dying floral boundaries, as illustrative of Tess's despair. The narrator never directly relays Tess's emotions. Instead, the reader gets descriptions of dirty paths and wilting foliage, but we know we're not really reading about paths and foliage. We're reading about Tess.

I allude to Tess because I clearly remember reading that passage, and suddenly many things my English instructors tried to teach me about literature finally clicked into place. I read that passage many times. So many times that years

later Tess still swirls up in my coffee while reading Tim O'Brien's book about the Vietnam War, which, of course, is not actually about the Vietnam War.

Here's the statement I want to make that my disclaimer pre-referenced: One reason our modern literature, even our modern mindset, is no longer infused with the classical condition is because we have become more obsessed with what is inside ourselves than what is outside.

Let me say it like this. When Thomas Hardy or Willa Cather or Tim O'Brien want to express abstract internal emotions they used concrete external imagery. When Robert Burns says, "My love is like a red, red rose", we snicker because it's cheesy, but it's also concrete. At least I can see a red rose. I can't see bloody hell of Burns' love. (Especially because Burns is so bloody hell dead.) Unfortunately, this type of writing and figurative language requires the writer - even the reader - to possess a vocabulary rich with the language of the world, not just the language of the self. And we've long abandoned such a bilingual education.

The sad reality of our singular self-speak became evident in class yesterday.

We've spent several days - if not the majority of the semester - discussing rhetorical analysis. How to pull apart a text. Examine it at various levels. Discuss the elements of the text rather than personal reactions to the text. Then we watched a documentary. I paused it often and modeled for them, early in the film, how to analyze the film. I asked questions. I told them things to look for. I stopped the film and asked them to take notes. When it was all over, I asked them to write a review of the filmmakers' rhetorical devices. What they brought me back were combinations of climatic summaries and sentimental spittle about "I feel" and "I think" and "It was so sad." And when they finished sharing their reviews I had to point out to them that only one person in nine actually wrote about the film. Everyone else wrote about themselves. Two days we spent watching a film about other people, about land, about big corporations, about injustice, about governmental sins, about death, about life, about making better choices - two days we gazed deeply into something larger than our immediate now - and all my students saw in any of it was themselves.

But I cannot blame them. This is their modern America. This is their country's condition. If O'Brien looked out at the political landscape and saw only a vast expanse of repetitive prairie, I look out at our current creative capacities and see only a bumper crop of compact, handheld mirrors. - KEVIN STILL



# Mustache Rides

By James Gray



TRASH  
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# LOUD! FEST

## MAY 16-18

This year Loudfest turns six years old, and to celebrate such an important birthday the good folks at Sinkhole Texas Inc., Idiotbox Pedals, and 979Represent have expanded the festival to three nights featuring 42 bands at two different venues. This issue of the magazine is an ersatz program for the festival.



Houston trio **Alkari** is the closest thing Texas has to an honest-to-goodness modern Anglophile prog-rock band. Vocalist/guitarist Mike Beatty leads the band through weird time signatures, alternate tunings, and vocals that switch between howl and caress. Bassist/keyboardist Jason Smith thunders behind it all in true John Entwistle fashion and drummer Marc Badillo propels it forward with an intense punk-Latino fusion. The band's 2011 album *Blackout Falls* was nominated for Best Album of the Year by the Houston Press. If you like Muse or Radiohead you will completely dig Alkari.

*Alkari plays Revolution Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 9:15pm*  
[www.facebook.com/alkari3](http://www.facebook.com/alkari3)



B/C/S metal band **Anxious Fate** has been kicking around the area for a few years but has recently hit its stride with its current incarnation, writing and performing epic, prog-rock influenced power metal with keening vocals ambience combined with punishing heavy riffs and galloping drums. Definitely an alternative to the normal breakdown bro metal.

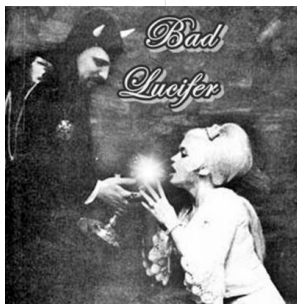
*Anxious Fate plays Stafford Stage Thurs. 5/16 @ 9pm*  
[www.reverbnation.com/artist/fb\\_share/2512857](http://www.reverbnation.com/artist/fb_share/2512857)



Remember when metalheads and punks started to check either out, in the mid '80s? Metallica wore Misfits t-shirts, Motorhead had been striding the divide between both worlds for years at the point. Crucial albums from Suicidal Tendencies and D.R.I. cemented the term "crossover" for metal bands who took the attitude and velocity of punk and melded it with metal palm-muted riffs and double kick drum onslaughts. Bryan/College Station has its very own crossover band, **ASS**. Punk rock vocals over doomy metal riffs that just beg for you to grab your Psycho Stick and drop in on a backyard halfpipe.

*ASS plays Revolution Stage Thurs. 5/16 at 12:15am*  
[www.facebook.com/assthrashpunx](http://www.facebook.com/assthrashpunx)

Many stoner metal bands get the tempo and the distortion right but few capture that *vibe*, that sense of paranoia on the edge of your perception like the onset of a bad trip. Austin's **Bad Lucifer** gets it, taking the slow and heavy Sabbath sound but with beautiful angelic female vocals that alternate between soothing and manic.



*Bad Lucifer plays Revolution Stage Thurs. 5/16 @ 11:30pm*  
[www.facebook.com/pages/Bad-Lucifer/235756359832798](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bad-Lucifer/235756359832798)



Imagine if a bunch of Klingon wives got together in an attempt to explore the extent of human emotion, and to do so to its most logically illogical conclusion, those Klingons decided the best course was to start a colossal mid '90s math rock inspired heavy rock band. That band would almost sound like **Black Cock**. This Austin trio combines scratchy guitars, loud drums, dub-deep synth bass, skittering drum machine sequences and manic-panic guy-girl vocals in a way that is purely unique. You've never heard a band like Black Cock before, and probably never will anywhere else.

*Black Cock plays Stafford Stage Friday 5/18 @ 10:30pm*  
[www.facebook.com/BlackCockRock](http://www.facebook.com/BlackCockRock)



**The Blood Royale** is something of an Austin thrash metal supergroup, featuring members of Dixie Witch, Gutbucket and The Drunks. Remember how refreshingly awesome that first Metallica album was? These guys do, and meld that New Wave of British Heavy Metal sound with vocals that somehow suggest Lemmy and Jaz Coleman at the same time. Dark, apocalyptic, punk-informed but purely old school metal at the same time.

*The Blood Royale plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 11:30pm*  
[www.reverbnation.com/thebloodroyale](http://www.reverbnation.com/thebloodroyale)



**Critical Misfire** grew up in the 1990s and their post-grunge hard rock reflects those roots. Smart songwriting chops combine with loud power chord rock and a certain somewhat nerdy aesthetic combine to make this band one

of the more original sorts around Bryan/College Station.

*Critical Misfire plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 9:45pm*  
[www.facebook.com/CriticalMisfire](http://www.facebook.com/CriticalMisfire)



Austin duo **Bounce House** is appropriately named. The modern punk-inflected indie rock these two peoples make is meant for making people jump at house parties, energetic, beery and bodymoving. Also, they have the best pyrotechnics this side of Elgin...

*Bounce House plays Revolution Stage Thurs. 5/16 @ 9:15pm*  
[www.facebook.com/bouncehouseATX](http://www.facebook.com/bouncehouseATX)



**The Chumps** are like Austin punk rock royalty, an essential part of the mid '90s Austin garage punk rock scene. Tapping the "fuck you" at the deep core of classic American hardcore punk, The Chumps play songs for fuckups young and

old, when punk rock was the last refuge for dropouts, street urchins, deadbeats, and dirtbags.

*The Chumps plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 11:30pm*  
[www.myspace.com/68494511](http://www.myspace.com/68494511)

Austin punk rock trio **Come And Take It** is a little different than the usual punk rock bands that come into B/CS. They have a little more jangle, a little more upper Midwest in them than the usual nightmare Cleveland/NYC/Orange County fare.



*Come And Take It plays Revolution Stage Thurs. 5/16 @ 10:45pm*  
<http://comeandtakeitband.bandcamp.com>



Houston's **Knights of the Fire Kingdom** infuse classic rock tropes with a punk and early metal energy, presenting their jean jacket vest beer drinking blue collar tuneage that is at once familiar but yet renewed with a

fresh energy and a show, something that is usually missing from indie music these days.

*Knights of the Fire Kingdom plays Stafford Stage Thur. 5/16 @ 12am*  
<http://facebook.com/KnightsOfTheFireKingdom>



**The Escatones** is probably Houston's only surf rock band. But when I say "surf rock", don't let the preconceptions take over. Sure, the guitars are reverbed out and twangy, the chord changes are familiar, but imagine acid-damaged dudes surfing on Quaaludes and you've pretty much captured the Meat Puppets-y ramble of The Escatones. Butthole Surfers legend Paul Leary likes them so much he lends his guitar work to the band's most recent 7" single.

*The Escatones plays Revolution Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 10:45pm*  
[theescatones.bandcamp.com](http://theescatones.bandcamp.com)

**The Ex-Girlfriends** has that classic Houston jump punk sound. Super fast, super catchy, and super fun. Featuring members of The Vipers, The Sweethearts Uber Alles and The Busy Kids, The Ex-Girlfriends take The Clash's "Know Your Rights" and fashion their odes to sexhaustion, dumb girls and other everyday ephemera.



*The Ex-Girlfriends plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 8pm*  
<http://ex-girlfriends1.bandcamp.com>



**The Ex-Optimists** has been inundating the folks of Bryan/College Station for nearly five years now with their high volume brand of guitar pop encased within a noise-rock shell. Earplugs recommended.

*The Ex-Optimists plays Revolution Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 1:00am*  
[www.facebook.com/theexoptimists](http://www.facebook.com/theexoptimists)



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B/CS local music fans are pretty familiar with Mike The Engineer and Golden Sombrero, two great indie rock bands. But before those dudes were in those bands they were in **Fistful of Dollars**, a band that you can quite honestly ask, "Hey, is that Freedom Rock?" And the answer would be a resounding yes. "So turn it up, maayaaaaaann"

*Fistful of Dollars plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 8:30pm*  
<http://www.myspace.com/fistfulofdollarsBCS>



Houston indie rock outfit **A Sundae Drive** have that Yo La Tengo noise pop sound down tight, with intricate dual guitar work and winsome girl vocals with occasional bursts of volume and adrenaline.

*A Sundae Drive plays Stafford Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 9:45pm*  
<http://www.asundaedrive.com>

B/CS cryptic metal band **Galactic Morgue** has been around for awhile but has only recently begun to share their morbid brand of NWOBHM for local music fans. Now the band features former members of Drapetomania, Red Meadow and Machine Meets Land, solidifying the band's lineup.



*Galactic Morgue plays Stafford Stage Thur. 5/16 @ 9:45pm*  
<http://www.myspace.com/596561572>



Last year, B/CS' s only all female punk rock band **Girlband** made their live debut. One year later they are still pumping up crowds with their old school early Donnas-esque punk rock

anthems.

*Girl Band plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 7:45pm*  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Girlband213204058800384>





B/CS punk rock stalwarts **The Hangouts** describes themselves as "guitars with no knobs, skittle cracks, flipping drumsticks with no intention of catching them, pointy basses, tattoos and having lots of fun."

Except you should

add that there songs take less time than a real good piss.

*The Hangouts plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 1am*  
[www.reverbnation.com/thehangouts](http://www.reverbnation.com/thehangouts)

New Orleans band **Harvard** doesn't sound very Ivy League.

They sound like they are from Stockton, CA, as they channel the sounds of that town's proudest sons Pavement and Grandaddy. This is loose collegiate indie rock, the kind I wish B/CS college students made (instead of bad country).



*Harvard plays Revolution Stage Thur. 5/16 @ 10pm*  
<http://www.facebook.com/HarvardMusic>

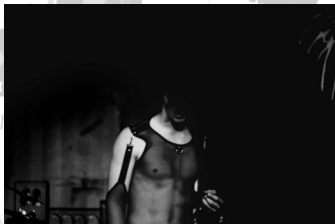


Houston is full of interesting art-damaged dropouts, mostly centered around Super Happy Fun Land. **Hate Pony** are that sort, punk rockers that are more curious about messing around with form to be true to the usual Houston punk style. The band is bass-heavy with a singer reminiscent of Perry Farrell, lots of echoes, whoops and

glossolalia.

*Hate Pony plays Revolution Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 10pm*  
<http://www.facebook.com/lovehorselovehorse>

Many locals will be familiar with Cody Hancock from his days fronting his one-man metal band Predominant Mortification. These days Hancock has turned his programming skills towards darkwave and



EBM, and has returned to the stage with **Immaculate Creation**, combining danceable electronic beats with the intensity of death metal and the creepy gothic darkness of early EBM bands like Skinny Puppy and Einstürzende Neubauten.

*Immaculate Creation plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 8pm*  
<http://www.facebook.com/ImmaculateCreation>



Austin trio **Inflatable Baptists** consists of a bunch of Central Texas old school punk rock hoodlums, featuring members of Street Pizza, Jesus Christ Superfly & The Pocket Fishermen. These guys have a more straight-ahead, Stooges-y sound with a Dead Kennedys vocal style.

*Inflatable Baptists plays Stafford Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 12am*  
<http://facebook.com/The-Inflatable-Baptists>



Memphis crew **Modern Convenience** blows it all out live, sweating, stick shavings flying, all garage punk nimble like. It's been awhile since B/CS peeps have been treated to ModCon. See what the fuss is all about.

*Modern Convenience plays Revolution Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 12:15am*  
<http://modernconvenience.bandcamp.com>



For five years now Houston's **Muhammadali** has been one of my favoritests bands out there doing its thing. The songs are simple post-hardcore punk at the cusp of college radio rock anthems played loudly, drunkenly and with much audience comradery. Singer/guitarist John Zambrano's lyrics are simple and cut straight and true.

*Muhammadali plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 10:45pm*

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B/Cs metal crew **Myra Maybelle** blends the melodic vocal style of the early days of strident heavy metal with death metal larynx shredding evil, while musically the band's guitarists harmonize classic metal lines but also pull it back for neck-snapping hardcore breakdowns and mathematical polyrhythms. Myra Maybelle looks forward and backwards at the same time. Must be hard on the eyes like that...

*Myra Maybelle plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 9:30pm*  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Myra-Maybelle>



College Station's **Signal Rising** are a very heavy modern hard rock band that balance catchy songwriting with deep groove-heavy metal-leaning post-grunge hard rock.

*Signal Rising headlines Stafford Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 12:45am*  
<http://signalrising.com>



**Skyacre** is definitely Austin's best math rock band. Loud quiet, soft hard, always dark, always intricate, always rocking. The guitars interact with each other like three threads of a Celtic knot. The band can get way small and then slam you to the back of the room with blunt force, while treading deftly through

stop-start arrangements and more odd time signatures than a prog band on crack.

*Skyacre plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 10:15pm*  
<http://skyacremusic.com>



**Solomon** is easily the heaviest band to grace a stage at LOUD-FEST this year. So loud you feel their music in your chest. So much space and sustain in their music that you might have a heart attack in anticipation waiting for the next down-beat to come down, like a skyscraper imploding on top of you. Sure, you can steal music on the interwebz to your heart's content, but Solomon is a band that **MUST** be experienced live. You can't download the feeling of a band so forceful that their amplifiers and double kick drums make the tiny hairs on your arms move...

*Solomon plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 11pm*  
<http://www.facebook.com/Solomonmetal>

### Something Called Nothing

hails from Austin, and kicks out classic rockabilly with a punk rock heart and a vocal in Virginia Lopez that is a full, wailing and smoky alto that sounds like k.d. lang if she were raised on big band swing.



*Something Called Nothing plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 9:15pm*  
<http://somethingcallednothing.com>



Victoria's **Stout City Luchadores** wears Mexican wrestler masks. Yet they are no gimmick band. These folks write the catchiest punk anthems around, blending cartoonish horrorpunk with classic loser-centric California

skatepunk. Easily one of the best Texas punk bands around these days.

*Stout City Luchadores plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 10pm*  
<http://facebook.com/Stout-City-Luchadores>



Houston's **Strange Weapons** plays early '90s alternative rock, with a Soundgarden heaviness and a '90s power pop tunefulness, with a hint of '00s post-rock ambience.

*Strange Weapons plays Stafford Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 9pm*  
<http://strangeweaponsband.com>



**Street Pizza** is the closest thing to punk rock royalty Bryan/College Station has known. The Allen Brothers and company have been banging fists, swinging bass guitars, shredding fretboards and

banging the tubs since Reagan was the President. Have bassist Bill tell you his stories about taking Dee Dee Ramone first book shopping in College Station 30 years ago...

*Street Pizza plays Stafford Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 11:15pm*  
[www.bandmine.com/artist/music/streetpizza/822487](http://www.bandmine.com/artist/music/streetpizza/822487)



**The Swamps** hail from Houston and make a very loud, straight-forward, hard and heavy brand of modern punk rock.

*The Swamps plays Stafford Stage Thur. 5/16 @ 11:15pm*  
<http://reverbNation.com/theswamps13>

Houston's **Kose** bridges the Houston jump punk style with ragged garage rock and old school radio pop. Their energetic set will turn any club into a rad house party.

*Kose plays Revolution Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 10:20pm*  
<http://facebook.com/kosetheband>



A funny thing happened since we started booking shows up here a few years back from Houston stoner metal band **Venomous Maximus**. They blew up nationally, toured with The Sword and Down and got signed by a prestigious all metal label in Europe. We've been saying for years you'd best come see VM while you still can on a small stage. And I'm saying it now. Next time you see Venomous Maximus will be in an arena opening for a metal legend.



*Venomous Maximus plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 12:30am*  
<http://facebook.com/VenomousMaximus>



**We Were Wolves** has been playing shows around B/CS for years, touring up from their native Beaumont. But we haven't seen them for a couple of years, and in the interim they've moved to Houston, released a new album and continues to pump out Queens of the Stone Age-inspired modern alternative rock.

*We Were Wolves plays Revolution Stage Fri. 5/17 @ 11:30pm*  
<http://www.werewolves.tx.com>



**What Lies Inside** is a new B/CS post-hardcore metal band. So new in fact that they have yet to play a show. What a way to blow out yer live performance cherry than at LOUDFEST!

*What Lies Inside plays Stafford Stage Sat. 5/18 @ 7:15pm*  
<http://facebook.com/W.L.I.band>

**The Wrong Ones** started out as a Cleveland '77 inspired punk rock band, complete with a super charismatic frontman in Jaret Barger. But lately, The Wrong Ones have toned down the stage antics, added British Invasion organ and concentrated on combining the super-fast Randy Rhoads style shredding of Brandon Barger with the tunefulness and attitude of Nuggets-era garage rock.

*The Wrong Ones plays Stafford Stage Thur. 5/16 @ 10:30pm*  
<http://facebook.com/www.thewrongones.hell>



# still drinking...hijacker

I'm going to spend some time this month talking about a handful of Southern breweries: one that gets a couple of different beers completely right, and a couple of breweries that do one style of beer utterly wrong (or do they?) So let's do the latter first, shall we? Oh let's!

OK, what the fuck is wrong with you Wicked Beaver and Cedar Creek Brewing? You guys have managed to make two of the world's worst examples of cream ale in existence. And that is a hard one for me, because one of my favorite three beers in the entire universe is a cream ale. So perhaps Hale's Cream Ale (brewed in Seattle...only available in kegs up there) sets the scale a bit too high. But I'm no cork sniffer. I'll gladly drink Boddington's and Caffrey's when I can get it too. So imagine my excitement when I see the bomber bottle of Wicked Beaver's Cream Weaver in Wonko the Sane's refrigerator last month. I located my very own and was all prepared. Boy, it seemed to pour out weird though. Sure, it had the super foamy head usually associated

with a cream ale and it sure had that hazy lemony color...but that is where the association ends. For starters, the head is REAL

lacey, and cream ale traditionally pours smooth like Guinness (usually because the cans contain nitrogen cartridges to ensure it pours right). So I'm still not entirely nervous, thinking maybe this is how cream ale pours without the nitrogen. But then the color stays hazy and never clears up. Hmm. Getting nervous. Once it settled

down a bit, I bring it up to my lips and...OH MOTHER OF GOD NO!!! It's not that Cream Weaver is an awful beer, but it is an awful cream ale. It comes across like a very biscuity version of Hoegaarden, an excellent sweet/sour weizen style beer brewed in Germany. Boy was I mad. I made it through my pint glass of it, but then poured the rest of the bomber out.

Then one night Wonko dropped over some tall boys of Lawn Ranger, Cedar Creek Brewing's attempt at cream ale. This one poured out a similar lacey head and hazy lemony yellow color but the head died down very quickly. The first one I had was, once again, not a bad beer but a terrible cream ale. It is aptly named, because it has a bit of clipped lawn fragrance in the aftertaste and the same biscuity dryness and a slighter sweet/sour Hoegaarden aspect. The first one was slightly cooler than room temperature and my expectations for what I was about to taste really clobbered its first impression. I had a second one a few days later after a couple of hours of lawn work and it certainly hit the spot better freed from my expectation of a classic cream ale.

These beers let me down hard, and I was curious as to whether or not these beers might actually be more accurate to what a cream ale is supposed to be versus Boddington's, Caffrey's and Hale's. Michael Jackson (the deceased beer critic, not the deceased pop star) says that cream ale is a singularly American invention and is a lot like a German Kolsch. Hmm. Boddington's is considered a draught bitter. Caffrey's is considered a draught Irish ale. Although Hale's calls theirs a Cream Ale its literature refers to it as a "Dublin style draught ale". So perhaps it is I who is completely tripping here. Perhaps I have not had the correct nomenclature for what I've actually been drinking and loving for all these years. Perhaps these two fine Texas microbreweries deserve me to cut them some serious slack...well, okay. Viewed in light of a good Kolsch (I refer to NW versions like Pyramid or Red Hook) Cream Weaver blows, but Lawn Ranger succeeds. So, mea culpa. Lesson learned.

Now I've got all that negativity out the way, I can now completely love up a handful of other fine beers that have stunned me recently. So let's now head east to Mississippi to the Lazy Magnolia Brewery and chat a bit about two of their line that are excellent brews, starting with Jefferson Stout, the brewery's lone black beer. It is a sweet potato stout. Lazy Magnolia calls it the perfect Southern-style stout. I did know there was such a thing, but I have high expectations here. Locals New Republic have dabbled with a sweet potato porter and I missed my chance at tasting that one. Pouring Jefferson Stout it comes out tar black with a brownish head. On first taste it's hard to get any of the sweet potato taste, but it is definitely very creamy (thanks to the addition of lactose) and somewhat salty with a hint of caramel. In fact, it comes off a lot like Abita's extremely limited Oyster Stout from a year or so ago, another beer that impressed the socks right off me. As the beer warmed up a bit I began to detect the starchy mouthfeel of the sweet potatoes even if the taste never really came across. All told though, Jeff Stout is a very, very fine smooth stout that I could certainly see sipping on the back porch in a summer evening.

I also had a bottle of Lazy Magnolia's Southern Pecan, a nut brown ale with a healthy dose of roasted pecans added directly to the mash like grain rather than using the pecans as an additive in later portions of the brewing process. It definitely has that sweetness and odd banana-y quality that the yeast provides to a good nut brown ale but it is not as overwhelming nor as murky as Newcastle. This beer pours an almost amber color and tastes much smoother and clearer than Newcastle. It is not my favorite pecan-based beer. It is hard for any beer to compete with 512's Pecan Porter, let alone a pecan beer. Overall though, I have to say that I'm seriously impressed with Lazy Magnolia. The brewery claims the region's water, home to some of the best bootleg whiskey of the Prohibition era, lends a certain soft quality to their entire beer line. I'd

believe it. Mark me down as a fan for sure.

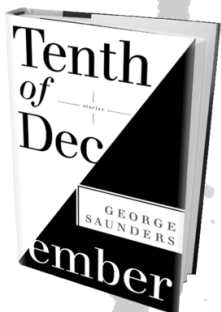
Lastly, I'd also like to give some love Pedernales Brewing Company over in Fredericksburg. You'd think that town would produce a first-rate brewery, what with the rich German tradition in that area of Texas. I took a chance on a bottle of their Lobo

Negro back at Christmas time and was quite impressed. I am a big fan of the black ale as a style and have loved up on some New Belgium's 1554 back when it was just a limited edition beer, same with Shiner Black. Pedernales refers to their beer as a dunkel dark brown lager. In the bottle it is that perfect combination of the malty-wheaty sweetness and the almost burnt char flavor indicative of a good black ale. Last month I was able to take on a pint of Lobo Negro on tap and was even more impressed with that combination of malt and char. Complex but super easy to drink. Pedernales has a brewpub in Fredericksburg. Perhaps a road trip is in order this summer.—KELLY MINNIS



# 13 books for sum

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Max Brooks' *World War Z*—The dedgum cinematic calendar requires these titles be top priority this summer! *The Great Gatsby* premieres May 10, and *World War Z* releases June 21. The first good news being that Fitzgerald's novel is super short and arguably one of the best penned by a dead White American male. So even if you read *Gatsby* in high school, you'd do yourself a quick favor chomping it down before hitting the theater. Second good news is you've got a month and plus to peel through Max Brooks' *World War Z*. Admittedly, I have way low expectations for Brad Pitt and Marc Forster's film version of WWZ, who apparently have turned a horrific zombie novel into another Oscar-possible political thriller. You know those two with their UNICEF pins and bleeding hearts are going to screw up the damn apocalypse. You might as well ask Angelina Jolie and Kathryn Bigelow to remake *Sixteen Candles*. They'll ruin all the fun! Speaking of dead White American males, we could really use a raising up of Dan O'Bannon about right now.



2. George Saunders' *Tenth of December*—I got turned onto George Saunders when a friend recommended his story "Tenth of December". I thought it was the best short story I'd read this side of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown." No matter what you read this year, Saunders' newest collection of stories will trump it. This guy does things with structure that rewrite the rules of short fiction. And the story "Puppy" will haunt your gosh darn nerves for a chunk of several days straight. So get ready.

3. Karen Russell's "Vampires In The Lemon Grove"—I discovered Karen Russell's story "Vampires In The Lemon Grove" in the Best American Short Stories of 2009. The title caught my attention, so I read that story first. And then I read it three more times. And then I immediately read Russell's first collection of stories, *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*, which didn't live up to its title or my expectations but it was still maddeningly impressive. At the moment I'm reading *Swamplandia!*, Russell's novel about a family of alligator wrestlers in Northern Florida. For the record, *Swamplandia!* is quite good and it makes me hate Russell with a festering neon pus green passionate envy. Did I mention she'll turn 33 this summer? Yeah, don't even get me started.

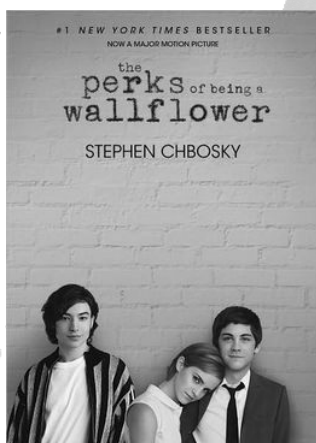
4. Helen Oyeyemi's *The Opposite House*—Speaking of young writers, I only know three things about Helen Oyeyemi: (1.) She's published four novels and two plays before her thirtieth birthday; (2.) *Granta* literary journal recently named Oyeyemi one of the Top Twenty Young British Writers, an honor *Granta* also bestowed on Salman Rushdie and Ian McEwan and Julian Barnes back in 1983, for crying out loud; and (3.) her novel, *The Opposite House*, supposedly about Cuban mythology, is waiting on my coffee table for the end of my Karen Russell studies. So, yeah again, neon and pus and envy and green.

5. Lena Dunham's *GIRLS* (Season One and Two) - Not a book, but totally worth your time. I chimed into *GIRLS* for two reasons: 1.) Dunham's so damn young (a theme in my summer reading), and (2.) Judd Apatow, one of my heroes, is the executive producer. Meaning, Dunham works with Apatow. Not only that, but Apatow asked to work with Dunham after he saw her debut film, *Tiny Furniture*. So I jumped into *GIRLS* propelled by curiosity and jealousy but then got hooked by Dunham and Apatow's magic. Yes, *GIRLS* is silly, shallow, and overly sexualized, but the writing is stupidly good, the characters are deplorable, and all the sex is deliciously awkward an honest, unglamorous, not-television way. You can

tell Lena Dunham took many cues from Nora Ephron, and, dear Lord, that lady was gem.

6. Michael Chabon's *Manhood for Amateurs*—I've been listening to Michael Chabon read this sucker on CD for nearly a month now, and its crazy fun. First of all, Chabon's got a strange voice. He sounds like an effeminately upscale tomcat wearing a monocle and drinking a vodka martini with a wisp of yermouth breezed over the lip by a Spanish bartender named Felipe whom he personally hired on a fishing trip in the Mediterranean Sea on which he never actually fished or prepared his own sandwiches. At least, that's how I see Chabon while he's reading. But his stories of childhood and his panics about being a father remind me of my own childhood and my own father, who I only had access to in the summertime, if ever. For this reason, the tone of *Manhood for Amateurs* feels like summer to me, and I imagine lots of grass and sunshine and kites and sherbet surrounding Chabon as he wrote these pages. Oh, and Legos. Buckets of Legos.

7. Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*—My friend Angela told me to read this book and I did and I nearly lost it at the end. I was not hip enough to have read this back in 1999, back when I was too snooty to read modern fiction, not to mention YA, and too self-important to be moved by high school dribble. I was not Charlie, Perks' narrator, in high school. I was way different than Charlie. But, like the best of John Hughes, it doesn't matter. This book reached back and slapped the tenth grade me and told me to buck up and hold tight and steer clear of anyone who seemed too overly sure of themselves. Which I was. For far too long. Books like this, read at the right age, can make you dangerously curious and unwaveringly certain that life has potentials beyond your own pitiful skin. The movie version of Perks, also written and directed by Chbosky, is spot on. But read the book first.



8. Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*—O'Brien's account of the Vietnam War feels hot and sweaty and mosquito fevered, so much that pages not reporting actual summer simmer with a constant, sizzling moisture. O'Brien, still salty and sweaty in speech, spoke at my school recently, which is why I finally got around to reading this book. He impressed me, and he spoke about writing and memory almost as much as war and political hypocrisy: themes each receiving equal treatment in *The Things They Carried*.

9. Flannery O'Connor's *Mystery and Manners*—Flannery O'Connor's writing is also hot and sweaty and mosquito fevered, even if she was a cool drink of lemonade who didn't venture far from the front porch. O'Connor will always, and forever, be on my summer reading list because her words dry on paper like clots of blood on working denim. She's funny and she's scary, and in *Mystery and Manners* she pulls no punches on who could be and who shouldn't be a writer. The more I read O'Connor the more I'm convinced she was a delightful woman from a drastic distance, but I'm striving to slide up to her as close as possible. These essays offer the best chance.



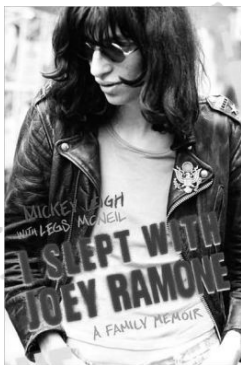
## Tweets I Would Tweet if I had a Tweeter

10. Patton Oswalt's *Zombie Spaceship Wasteland*—Don't ask me to name my favorite Patton Oswalt record because I can't. *The Finest Hour* (2011), *My Weakness Is Strong* (2009) and *Werewolves and Lollipops* (2007) have all serenaded – repeatedly and repetitiously – the majority of my lunch breaks and kitchen-cleaning sessions since last September. When guys gush over Louis C.K., whom I adore with a red wrap-around passion, I always want to ask, “But have you heard this Oswalt guy? I hear he's Louis C.K.'s Comedy 101 prof.” Even though I haven't read *Zombie Spaceship Wasteland*, my response to anything bearing Oswalt's name usually is “Yes, please and more!”

11. Alec Baldwin's *Here's The Thing*—Not a book, but I love this podcast. Here's the thing with *Here's The Thing*: Alec Baldwin sits with some interesting person for a 45-50 minute casual conversation – and done. That's it. No extra bells and whistles and cute on-the-street segments or countdowns or time-wasters. Baldwin is earnestly engaging and extremely funny. He's next best thing to Terry Gross. And Baldwin obviously thinks highly of himself, which feels charming juxtaposed alongside his even higher regard for his guests. Favorite episodes include conversations with SNL writer Paula Pell, NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams, New York Times columnist David Brooks, *GIRLS* writer and director Lena Dunham, *GIRLS* executive producer (and one of my personal heroes) Judd Apatow, and longtime SNL cast member Fred Armisen. Okay, it looks like I just listed half the *Here's The Thing* catalogue, but I didn't! But only because I haven't heard the one with Thom Yorke yet.

12. Mary Roach's *Gulp*—Whenever one of those hypothetical questions comes up about who'd you want, alive or dead, sitting around a dinner table, Mary Roach always comes to mind. No matter who else was at the table, Mary Roach would shine. She's smart. She's funny. She's obsessed with gross things. And she's super pretty for a nerd. I fell for Roach when I read her book *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, the book that convinced me to donate my body to science, specifically one of those forensic cadaver farms where they study decay. (I'd rather not shit myself in a leotard testing airbags. I shat myself enough in life that I don't need the indiscretion in death, as well.) Her newest book, *Gulp*, follows Roach's curiosities into the human mouth, down the esophagus, and through the human digestive system inch by inch. She follows our cravings from food to feces, reporting each manifestation in between. As a person possessing a unique relationship with my bowels, I'm drastically looking forward to this one. Her recent interview on Fresh Air is worth searching in the iTunes archives.

13. Mickey Leigh's *I Slept With Joey Ramone*—Every summer reading list needs at least one trashy rock-n-roll biography, and *I Slept With Joey Ramone* is mine. The title here is gorgeously misleading. Penned by Joey Ramones' kid brother, ISWJR offers a lovingly sympathetic look at punk rock's gentle giant while also relaying a unique first-hand account of American punk rock history. Leigh was not only Joey's kid brother, he worked as the Ramones' sound-man in the early days and kept regular practice sessions with Johnny Ramone – Leigh's personal friend and, at times, mortal enemy. Leigh also works chronologically through the Ramones' discography, telling stories from the recording and production all the way through each tour. Comprehensive to the point of near exhaustion, Mickey Leigh is the Norman Mailer of punk rock. Good read by Leigh. Better music by his brother.—KEVIN STILL



1. Black coffee and albacore tuna do not constitute an opposites attract scenario.

2. Sometimes my pug-dog looks like an Imperial Walker. Other times he looks like Zuul. Once I caught him looking like Walter Matthau, but he was just really tired.

3. Why is the Sun-Maid maiden on the Natural California Raisins boxes so pale? She's sitting on the frickin' sun. She should be a strip of jerky or a name-engraved belt by now.

4. It is truly amazing how many things are wrong with this student's statement: “Women who are bold and manly enough to reach their points are a plus.”

5. I just told an Asian girl I was proud she walked campus in bare feet. She said she was proud of my beard. Together, we could stop wars between nations and end the world's hunger for love.

6. My grandmother's candy dish contains Skittles. My grandmother's grandson contains turkey-bacon wrapped testosterone and a framed 8X10 of Michael J. Fox.

7. I just heard a girl in the hallway proclaim, “I just want Carrie Underwood's legs!” You say cannibalism, I say lesbianism, let's call the whole thing off!

8. One time I smoked pot, ate some corn chips, and – euphoric with the salty yellowness – asked everyone in my immediate proximity if they have ever eaten a corn chip. I mean, really eaten a corn chip.

9. One time I smoked pot and used my forearms to give birth to myself, convinced if I could get to the other side I'd be reborn a “good boy.”

10. One time I smoked pot and felt assured The Cranberries' song “Linger” amplified through my fingers, but only because I realized “linger” and “finger” rhymed.

11. One time I smoked pot on a train in South China. Okay, now, I'm just bragging.

12. If I ever decide to do psychedelic drugs, I'm skipping Pink Floyd and going straight to Ke\$ha. She's my kinda high.

13. There should be a biological law for the number of times a person can say the phrase “It wasn't my fault” before the age of 25.

14. Britney's “If You Seek Amy” is the best use of a chorused acronym in a pop song since Carman and de Talk's “A2J”.

17. Today I ate two Fun Size Snickers in the can. Gotta say, it feels a bit awkward to gain and lose weight simultaneously like that.

18. There's no such thing as too much gravy.

19. KELLY CLARKSON!!! is better than beer. Maroon 5 is worse than piss.

20. Richard Roeper gave the new Evil Dead one star, but he's exactly the guy I don't want liking the new Evil Dead. Thumbs down Roeper, finger up Kiki.

21. After a long look in the mirror, I've decided I can totally pull off short shorts. After taking off my long pants. In the dark. Pitch black dark. Alone.

22. The man in the stall next to me should never eat at Cracker Barrel again. His situation sounded like something in a Lloyd Kaufman film.

23. I spend loads of emotional energy worrying about my dog's emotional energy.—KEVIN STILL

# record reviews



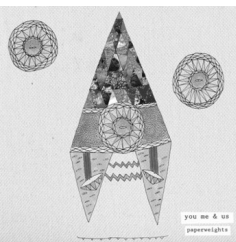
**Pink Smoke**  
*No Party*

*No Party* by Pink Smoke is the best punk cassette I've heard in decades. Ok, that sounds underwhelming. How about this? Pink Smoke has done one of the best punk albums I've heard in years. Yeah, that's the ticket. Throwback technology aside (the *No Party* cassette comes with an online digital version), Pink Smoke out of Denton has assembled a great assortment of songs that they deliver with frantic energy and urgent passion (many of these songs were featured when the band played at Revolution earlier this year).

There's nothing in these 12 short songs that remotely resembles a ballad – the pace never relents. "Kicks" is one of the best, a punk classic sweetened with organ, but "Breakdown" leaps to an even more delicious level with some potent guitar. "Insects" is a fun outing about "insects taking over... he's got 96 tears now, he's got 96 legs" that also includes a nice Johnny Rotten sneering vocal in places. "We're Ready Now" is a great straightforward romp with superb dynamics. There's not really a bad song in the lot, something I've never written in a review since my first for a small Texas daily newspaper a long long time ago. "E.T. Boy," "No What I Said," "Sir Crazy," the great narrative in "King of the Night" – it's just one great song after the other. Only "TVNM" is ordinary. Pick up the cassette for the download – the band says it makes a good coaster. —MIKE L. DOWNEY

college radio 1986-1994 distilled to essential form. A little gothic English guitar pop, a little Ohio lo-fi indie, a little Sarah Records jangle, a little shoegazer howl, etc. What keeps the band from being a straight revivalist act is that Bradford Cox is a seeming supernova of ideas just exploding to get them all out. And rather than just follow one muse he is able to explore so many different sides of classic indie rock, tying it all together with his Julian Casablancas style voice (except Bradford is far from monotone).

Deerhunter's *Halcyon Digest* was my favorite album of 2011. *Monomania* is looking like a contender for that title for 2013. For starters, it is a less refined album than *Halcyon Digest*. The pop hooks are there, but are generally now frosted with a sheen of tape distortion. With *Halcyon Digest* there was a bit of overlap between Deerhunter and singer Bradford Cox's more ethereal side project Atlas Sound. This time around, we have an album that harkens backwards in the band's catalog towards their first album *Cryptograms*. But with songs with the songwriting smarts of "Dream Captain" and "Pensacola" you know you're winning. "T.H.M." has a 3rd album Velvet Underground hushed quality. "Sleepwalking" and "Back To the Middle" scratch that *Halcyon Digest* itch with dreamy lead guitar. My one criticism of this album is that there is a distinct absence of guitarist Lockett Pandt's voice. His "Desire Lines" stole the show for me for the last album, with a cool Ian McCulloch insouciance. This time around we get one song "The Missing" and it's a killer too but I'd like to see him as a more equal partner next time. —KELLY MINNIS



**You Me & Us**  
*Paperweights*

You Me & Us makes simple and upbeat garage rock that is at once familiar and new. The trio of two women and a guy – vocalist/guitarist Carlee Hendrix, bassist Alyssa Midcalf, and drummer Ignacio Caniza – is like early REM in the sense the vocals are largely incomprehensible, but the music is so catchy you don't really care.

The band caught my attention at one of its SXSW gigs on Sixth Street; the tunes were fun and instantly appealing. Hendrix labeled the sound as modern nostalgic pop – the group

reminded me of the early recordings of a Canadian modern pop band called The Weekend. "Off Pudding" is most typical – a straight-ahead rocker that is over almost as soon as it begins. In fact, all of these tunes on this EP are that way; just about as soon as you notice the quality, they are done.

The stately lumbering of "Bright Red Marker" is driven by the fuzzy longing in Hendrix's voice and her guitar. "California Street" and "Steve Holt" bounce along very nicely. "Planetary Differences" finishes up its romp of off-kilter background vocals with a drum-cymbal flourish. The title cut is led by drums, guitar, and Hendrix's urgent vocals about change and the loss of summer (I think). A weird extra tune after "Paperweights" is several seconds of Hendrix warbling about a grumpy bear.

The group recently played two sets at Coachella and are said to be finishing a second EP—MIKE L. DOWNEY



**The Flaming Lips**  
*The Terror*

*The Terror* is a classic album. What you have is a record that songs cannot be pulled away from singularly. It must be listened to as a whole, as the entire album flows together, dark, druggy, hushed and, at times, unsettling. The album is full of the repeated oscillations of tape echo devices, Wayne Coyne's vocals mixed backwards and always behind 10 feet of reverb. Steven Drozd (easily one of the greatest drummers of the indie rock generation) barely drums, instead programming out minimal drum machine beats and lots of library album synthesizer soundscapes. Much of the album comes across like late '60s impressionist European nouveau abstract composition. It is very much influenced by Harmonia and the early '70s pastoral version of Pink Floyd. Or perhaps the more experimental and less beat-centric portions of Radiohead's *Kid A* and definitely the ambient chordal washes of the first Weather Report album. This is music for educated drugheads, or people who like to go on trips, traveling without leaving from between headphone speakers.

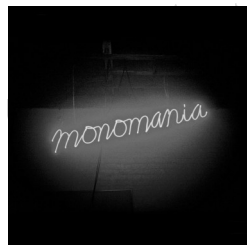
At times certain sounds leap forth to take your attention, like the sort of electronic Ennio Morricone sounds of "You Lust", with Wayne Coyne warbling "you've got a lot of nerve to fuck with me", though

I'm pretty sure that the person who is fucking with Wayne knows that there will be no resistance. It is not hard to imagine *The Terror* soundtrack a '70s horror movie or an early '80s nuclear apocalypse tale. But then "Sun Blues Up Today" bringing you back to the more sunny pop craziness the band has been largely known for in the 2000's. It is a welcome relief in its position towards the end of the album, which then closes with an eerily calm cover of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love". As a suite of songs it all just fits together perfectly. I'm certainly in the honeymoon phase with this album, but I'm gonna go ahead and call *The Terror* my favorite The Flaming Lips album yet. Put this album on, turn off the lights, and fire up your imagination. —KELLY MINNIS



**Tim P. Scott**  
*Uncollected Works (2007-2013)*

Californian Tim P. Scott has been releasing carefully-crafted electronic music since the mid-1990s in the usual places: iTunes, CDBaby, Amazon, Bandcamp, SoundCloud. The long-time musician went through his rock band phase in the 70s and 80s before discovering his penchant for instrumental music influenced by everyone from Frank Zappa to Mike Oldfield to K. Leimer to Brian Eno. *Uncollected Works (2007-2013)* is really uncollected material since Scott pulled the tunes together for a solitary CD. The 16 tunes range from the stately keyboards of "Pangur Ban" to the touchingly-etheral notes of the oddly-named "Magnanimous Vole Brain" to the Eastern-inspired "Haborthelmen" to the "Total Recall" sound-track-ready churn of "Mnagpure." "Kronecker's Epsilon" is the most ambitious composition at over seven and a half minutes, a calculated exploration of synthesizer and guitar soundscapes. "Broken Robots" quickly establishes a rhythmic base that Scott experiments on with guitar, keyboards, and other sounds. One finds the clear piano among the thoughtful noodling of "A Serious Thing." Then there's the rocking trio of "Robot Monster" tunes, complete with sci-fi dialogue, that are driven by guitar and drums in 1 and 2. However, synths and keyboards dominate in 3. The nameless bonus track at the end closes out the non-collection with a quiet majestic mix of chimes and sustained tones. Check out the sounds at Crow Caw Music Works online. —MIKE L. DOWNEY



**Deerhunter**  
*Monomania*

*Monomania* was perhaps my most anticipated album release so far this year. It is no secret that I am a serious Deerhunter fanboy. What I like the most about Deerhunter in general is that I feel like I am listening to the best of



# concert calendar

**5/2—Quiet Company** (CD release), **Scientist**, **The Feeble Contenders** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/4—ASS, Galactic Morgue, Fistful of Dollars, Garbage Dump** @ Schotzis, College Station. 9pm

**5/5—Fest For West** @ Palace Theater & Grand Stafford, Bryan. 12pm

**5/8—Madison Rising, Hazy Ray, The Conglomerate, Larynx** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/9—Blue Bear** (CD release), **The Will Callers, Votary** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/11—Saint Carmen, Snake Skin Prison, Echo Temple, Rockett Queen** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/16-5/18—LOUDFEST** @ Grand Stafford & Revolution, Bryan 7pm.

**5/23—Leopold & His Fiction, Luke Wade, No Civilians** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/24—Least of These** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/25—Ancient Wisdom, Myra Maybell, Fallacy, Firestarter '82** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**5/30—Second Lovers, Jeff Whitehead** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**6/4—Kopecky Family Band** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 10pm

**6/7—Cavegirl, The Most, Strange Weapons, The Ex-Optimists** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

**6/8—The Background, Red Box Harbor** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**6/21—Seryn, Chambers** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**6/22—The Freakouts, Girlband, The Hangouts** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

**6/27—Straight Line Stitch, In the Trench, Myra Maybell, Hindsight** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**8/3—The Escatones, The Hangouts, Spudnik** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

## Locals The Ex-Optimists Release New Album: Two Writers' Take

The Ex-Optimists likes its guitars, and *Bee Corpse Collector* is filled with guitars: loud and raw and memorable. This is the Brazos Valley band's latest recording since a colorful vinyl 45 in 2011 and its second full-length album - an honest-to-goodness vinyl record - since 2010's *Soaking up the Cathode Rays* CD.

While the songs are split by the vinyl, the music is really divided into two groups: two long shoegazer tunes and six more traditional Sonic Youth/Idlewild-influenced rockers. Overall, the album continues vocalist/songwriter/guitarist Kelly Minnis' striking melodic song craft of "Disciples of the Sun" and "Fireboy" through "Nitemare City" and "February." Guitarist Michael Scarborough is in evidence throughout the album. His distinctive playing colors every tune, whether the short demented love song "Let's Go to Sleep & Dream" (dedicated to Minnis' wife at the record release concert) or the bright guitar on the modern rock gem "Postcards." Bassist Steve Kennedy is solid, the strongest on the aforementioned and the opening "No High Fives," a tale of regret. "Never Lose That Feeling" is the best of the lot (nipping "Postcards"). It's a swirling dark rocker, filled with disturbing images: "burn it to the ground/Smoke and ash all around," "Here come the bee corpse collector," "mistaken gangrene for fitness."

While there are no punk raves like "She's Gone Cold" or "Applekiss", the intense "Portrait of an Artist in Flames" comes close as Minnis screams "All I ever wanted/Was just to see you happy." "Postcards" powers along with Scarborough's guitar as Minnis sings about lost promise: "we can never feel the same/Like that postcard scene reflected in my dreams". The methodical pulse of "Summer at Sea" echoes Interpol/Bloc Party even as the lyrics lament being "lost at sea for summer/Set adrift upon the waves". "Dead Eyes" is a slow crawl of murkiness - "jet black/coiled serpentine/you're not quite sure what it all could mean" - featuring some edgy and moody playing. And then there's the extraordinary sound excursion "Do No Harm," a tune plucked from the first album. It's expanded on *Bee Corpse Collector* to 12 minutes of atmospheric experimentation hinged to

one simple slow melody and a handful of lyrics. Get your future tunes on retro vinyl now.—MIKE L. DOWNEY

I felt compelled to write something about the new record by my very good friends the Ex-Optimists, *Bee Corpse Collector*. I will say at the outset I love this record. If I didn't know and love the people who made it I would be scrambling

to find out who they were...it's that good. It is the kind of record that Kelly Minnis (the Ex-Ops frontman and songwriter) and I used to talk about making back in college, one that had great songs, and hinted at all of our influences, but was spoken in its own language. Kelly & co. have done just that. But *Bee Corpse Collector* really just sounds like the Ex-Optimists, with Kelly's songs framed by his and Michael Scarborough's beautiful twin-guitar interplay, and underpinned by Steven Kennedy's solid, thoughtful basslines. You just don't hear this kind of playing much anymore. People playing music together, in a room. People playing with sounds

and effects but never losing sight of the songs. I have listened to this record over and over again this past weekend, and it reminds me of listening to my favorite records back in college, playing a new GbV record, and hearing the songs over and over in my head. I've heard most of these songs before live, been blissed out beyond belief when they close with "Do No Harm" along with "Dead Eyes", and even still, these songs in this order on this record work together in a way that makes it seem like I'm hearing them for the first time. I'm still trying to decide if there's anything on here that will replace "Burn Bright" as my favorite song of theirs, but the truth is this is a record where EVERY song could be your favorite depending on when you listen to it, and to me that is what makes a great, great album. With everyone talking about the death of the album, it is so refreshing to hear a well-made one. Even sweeter if you know and love those who made it.—JASON CLARK



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