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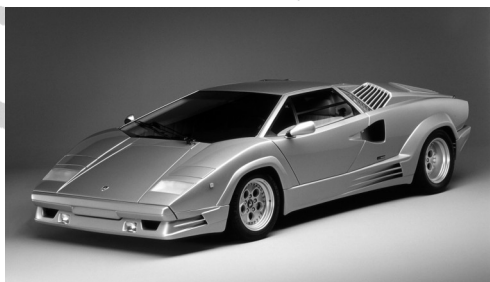


**INSIDE: A DESPOTIC TEXAS SUMMER ASK CREEPY HORSE STILL THINK-
ING IN DEFENSE OF THE BATTALION MUSTACHE RIDES TODD ON FILM—
THE BLING RING PEDAL PUSHING REMEMBER THE NAME WENDY
DAVIS RECORD REVIEWS CONCERT CALENDAR**



Lamborghini In a Small Town

This morning while walking my pug-dog to the corner creek, where he puts it on God's carpet rather than my hardwood, I saw Dog The Bounty Hunter walking across the parking lot of my dentist's office. It wasn't really Dog, but it might as well have been Dog thirty years ago and with a yellow bandana wrapped around his forehead. He also wore a neon yellow muscle shirt and acid washed jeans. His hair, pulled back in that headband, formed a solid mullet: spiked on the top and sides with a long wavy blond curtain cascading over his right shoulder. He was a California god in the Texas humidity, sculpted in Aqua Net and Coppertone, Reeboks and Guess jeans. I thought of the POW in *First Blood: Part II* who asks John Rambo what year it is. "1985," Rambo says. The POW, in silent response, looks forlorn and lost. Admittedly, I stared. I remember 1985, and here it stood before me like Doc Brown come to dodge the Libyans. Dog saw me staring and said, "Hey, bro". In silent response, I nodded, forlorn. Then he climbed—I shit you not—into a Lamborghini Countach. Shit you not! He tossed his mullet over his neon yellow muscle strapped shoulder and lifted the door to a red LAMBORGHINI COUNTACH. I recognized the Countach because I once owned one as a MicroMachine.



Before Alyssa Milano forever sealed the question of my sexuality, the Lamborghini Countach—tacked to my wall in a Car Digest pull-out poster next to Milano in a hockey jersey—sent my blood boiling. This morning I tried to play it off. Tried to pretend I wasn't staring, as if I was 12 years old at the swimming pool when Kerry Lucas—sweating and oiling!—was on lifeguard duty. Then Dog closed the door and drove away, and I stood watching to see if a real Lamborghini Countach on the street looked like my MicroMachine Countach on the coffee table. And then I saw a group of men in the parking lot, slack-jawed and gawking at that red sleek strip of metal sex drive away. And that's when I realized: we, in our gawking, had given this dude exactly what he wanted. After all, this is a small town. A Prius Sport is a flashy car in a town this size. And you know a mothertrucker with a Lamborghini can also afford a Honda Accord or a used Geo Prism to drive to the dentist. A Lamborghini to the dentist office?! I've never seen anything like it. I never will. And my pug-dog dropped it right in front of his empty parking space on our way back, completely unmoved and unfazed by such a sign of extravagance and cool. You know, Linda Hamilton could be riding in a car like that. Linda Hamilton, with that Terminator bouffant and those shoulder pads, letting her bangs bounce in the Lamborghini breeze. I should have looked closer when I had the chance.—KEVIN STILL

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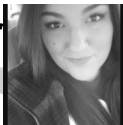
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Ask Creepy Horse A Despotix Texas Summer



Dear Creepy Horse,

My friend and I have an opportunity to share a rental house near downtown Bryan this fall, but she's really worried about moving to Bryan. Says it's all high crime and her parents would be worried about her. Can you help me convince her that moving from an apartment in College Station to a house in Bryan is the better deal?

Jen in College Station

Dear Jen,

Downtown Bryan is a wonderful place, but let's be honest: It sounds like you and your friend are very, very, white. Your friend's parents should worry. There are people in Bryan called 'minorities'. They aren't like us. They enjoy clandestine dice games, drink 40s, and shoot people in their spare time. Find where all the rich people live and start moving outward until you can afford it. If you ever find yourself in Downtown Bryan without a ride though, hit me up at 979-4AHORSE; I love pretty white girls.

Dear Creepy Horse,

I saw recently that a gay couple getting married in Washington state are suing a florist who refused to sell them flowers for the wedding based on her religious (ie. anti-gay) beliefs. I'm confused. Can't these guys just "vote with their wallets" and buy from someone else who doesn't share this florist's bigotry? Or is this a Rosa Parks kind of moment that requires legal action?

Joe in Redstone

Dear Joe,

The Federal Civil Rights Act guarantees all people the right to "full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation, without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin."

It's interesting to note that while it is unlawful to refuse service to certain classes of people, it is not unlawful to provide discounts on the basis of characteristics such as age. Business establishments can lawfully provide discounts to groups such as senior citizens, children, local residents, or members of the clergy in order to attract their business.

In my opinion, there was no legitimate business reason for the refusal of service, and so the discrimination in this case was unlawful.

Also, how much gayer could you be? Suing a florist. Ha!

Dear Creepy Horse,

I'm wondering what you think about how the horse meat that has somehow wound up in the world's food chain. Um, I didn't think people really ate horse.

Stephanie on Holleman

Dear Stephanie,

Have you ever seen *Sweeney Todd*? It's kinda like that. Unless, of course, you're in Central Asia. There, nothing is taboo.

Creepy Horse

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It's that time of year again. The time when summer chokes us to death with heat, sweat, and exposed skin that should never see the light of day.

Sadly the sun will become our enemy, and the humidity will drown us in midair. Living in Texas, East Texas at that, we should be used to the horrible inevitable of summer; but we're not. Ever year it goes in the same pattern. We complain about spring being too short and cold, summer being too hot and long, fall not being cold enough and being too short when it finally gets here, and lastly winter; my dear sweet winter. The majority of Texans complain about winter being too damn cold, and too damn wet. Oh how I will miss my winter while the summer sun beats down on my head only to drain what hydration I have left in my body. Sunburns, Aloe Vera, flip-flops, sand in the shorts, and the smell of charcoal will become the new normal. Sweet, horrible summer is here to stay for the next 5-6 months whether we like it or not—or whether or not the calendar says. Texas has a mind of its own and we just deal with it.

During the summer months West Texas will become a mecca for locust, and tarantulas. The plains will be a desert and tumble weeds will travel along with the cars. Those poor pitiful bastards. North Texas will be breezy and I will envy them. South Texas will be a sauna from hell and will accumulate mosquitoes the size of fucking rats. East Texas is somewhere in the middle of that sauna from hell with a delicate breeze to mock, and the valley of a hot, angry forest. We even have the joy of junebugs and mosquitoes.

Though I describe the summers of doom, Texas weather is about as unpredictable as you can get. Texans can never know what will come or when it will come. The days of drought have gone on for months; and then come the rains. Whether it's for an hour or a week, it's always so unexpected and so annoying, and sometimes so needed.

As the heat seats and the sun comes closer to the earth, clothes come off. Sometimes too much comes off. Girls wear shorts that come an inch below their junk, shirts that... well.... I can't call them shirts because they don't have enough material to be in the genre of shirts. Guys come out with muscle shirts and swim shorts or cargos, and did I say muscle shirts? Good Lord. And then there are the ladies and gentlemen who shouldn't have stepped out of their house due to the lack of material to cover their bodies. I can deal with skanky or even risqué, but there is a certain point where, honestly, they might as well have left the house naked. And I may point out; some people should NEVER wear the shorts that don't cover all of their ass cheeks! Yup, I'm talking to you fellow chubby folks. Just because you can button it, doesn't mean it fucking fits! You make the rest of us look bad, just saying.

Once the pools begin to fill with chlorine-infused water and the smell of tanning lotion and sunscreen become the new perfume of choice, what the lakes and beaches of Texas have to offer will start calling me. Late night BBQs filled with liquor, beer and bad decisions will become my new normal for the summer months. Long hours tanning in the golden eye of God will crisp my skin to perfection and the stifling heat will become obsolete once July comes around. Evolving with the climate is something mandatory for Texas living, that and the tolerance of pitchers and pitchers of ice cold sweet tea.

Texas weather offers me all the annoyance I can stand, but I can't imagine living anywhere else. This weather and I have a love/hate relationship not meant to be understood, or captured in a flippin' Facebook status. We dread the oppressive heat, but welcome the summer culture. Adapt or get out! - JESSICA LITTLE

Remember the Name Wendy Davis

Late last month perhaps one of the most riveting events in Texas politics since the Ann Richards governor's race of 1990 occurred. An unlikely left-wing Democrat uprising, spearheaded by a Harvard-educated "teenage mom" thwarted the will of our presidentially-minded governor in a very public and spectacular way, and it may have just been the catalyst to begin the "purplizing" of Texas's voter rolls that pundits have been quietly discussing behind closed doors.

Texas is undoubtedly a Red state, meaning that our fine republic leans center-right and reliably votes Republican and has so for 20 years straight. After the 2012 election many election scholars poured over the data from polling places and discovered that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney had a serious problem with Latinos, women, and African-Americans plus young voters of all creed and gender. Texas political wonks took these numbers and began to analyze patterns in our state's voter pool and, based on voting patterns and simple demographics, it began to be quietly whispered amongst operatives of both parties that Republicans have a major problem on their hands. Texas is already a majority Latino state, just barely. Demographic trends mean that this voter block, that largely votes Democrat (duh! they don't try to send all brown people back across the border!) will play a much larger role in state politics as their population continues to outpace those of all other creeds.

Now, tie this also to a side effect of Texas's "robust" economy during the Great Recession. Texas stayed in better straits than a large portion of the country, and that attracted many job seekers from across the country (my wife and me included) that fled the West Coast and the Northeast, both bastions of left-minded voting. Not to mention that younger job seekers, facing the most difficult job market since the 1930s, found Texas a haven, and young people also tend to vote left-wing. Add all this together, and you've got a recipe for a Blue overthrow of this solidly Red state within a generation. A recent Slate magazine article had pundits of both parties quoted as predicting 2024 as the year that Texas becomes Purple (ie, a mixture of Red and Blue mentality, or perhaps better labeled simply as a swing state).

Come forward to 2013 when our very tired governor and former Ag Rick Perry has long overstayed his welcome in Austin. Any politician who has held the same office for as long as Perry will eventually become ineffective, usually because all the double dealing and lowdown cheating that is required of the modern politician winds up catching up with the officeholder. Perry has plenty of scandalious moments, but the past year has been particularly rough on him. Combine a disastrous presidential run that made him the laughing stock of the country (and that's saying something when your opponents are Michelle Bachman and Herman Cain), the explosion in West that shined a very bright light on the laxity of the governor's policies towards public and environmental safety and, especially prominent in Aggieland, his hand has guided policies that threaten to undermine Texas A&M University's status as a prominent yet affordable Tier 1 research university. And just last month, the icing was smeared onto the cake, when his abortion agenda via State Bill 5 was filibustered to death in a last minute Hollywood ending by state senator Wendy Davis, with collusion from her fellow Democrat senators (and hundreds of protesters who showed up to lend support). In a serious nailbiting 11-hour filibuster in which Davis could not sit, eat, drink, piss or do anything

except talk specifically about the bill, Davis was able to squash a bill that would have restricted abortion laws severely in this state. SB5 would ban all abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy as well as require abortions be performed at a medical facility, which pretty much would've put Planned Parenthood out of business in this state and require citizens in rural areas (and there's literally days of it in this state) to drive as much as 12 hours to reach the closest abortion provider. Statewide polls all show that Texans are firmly pro-choice and do not support a ban on abortion, yet Gov. Perry has let slip that State Bill 5 was meant to be the first sword stroke in making abortion so difficult to obtain that it may as well be banned. Roe vs.

Wade prevents an outright ban.

Word got out on the last day of the Legislature's meeting of Davis's plan to filibuster and, thanks to progressive websites and social media, the live feed from the filibuster began bouncing around the Internet, then covered by traditional media and eventually even mentioned on President Barack Obama's Twitter feed. All of a sudden, a Democrat star was born, and at a time that left wingers in Texas so desperately needed a leader to

help steer them towards the eventual demographic shift of the coming years. Gov. Perry absolutely DID NOT need for this to happen, yet he and fellow GOP state politicians have only themselves to blame. Because of their grand-standing and kowtowing to the far right of their party (and I suspect that Perry was hoping to make national headlines that would give him a firm base with the far right to help boost him through the 2016 Republican Presidential Primary) the Republicans not only gave Wendy Davis the opportunity to step up but gave her all the grist for the mill she will need to possibly (dare I say it outloud? why not, everyone else is) run a successful campaign against Perry to oust him from the governor's office.

So how did Perry take his defeat? Bitterly. He sniped at Davis on Twitter, demeaning her and her mother as simple "teenage moms" and unintentionally slut shaming both of them (under the guise of "they should understand more than anyone the sanctity of life"). It makes Perry look bad. Davis's star shone bright to grassroots progressives nationally, which means that Davis, should she run for governor next year (and signs point favorably towards that decision), she should be able to raise some serious cash for that race, not to mention that she has gained much needed name recognition in this state.

Sadly though, this was not a forever victory. The governor convened a special session to begin July 1st that would cover not only State Bill 5 but also transportation issues. It is widely believed that, just based on the layout of the state Senate (nearly 2/3 Republican) that State Bill 5 would pass in special session. During the normal legislative session 2/3 majority is required on all votes rather than the simple majority required in special session (kinda sneaky that SB5 is reserved for special session, wot?). Mass protests are being organized via social media. It is unclear whether those protests will be enough to persuade votes. What is clear though is that Wendy Davis has become a powerful female politician that netroots progressives and the average Texas voter have begun to be very excited about. Progressive website Politico suggests that Davis vs. SB5 may have set forward the purplizing of Texas by one to two election cycles. What its lasting effect will have on this state is still unclear, but what is clear is that Wendy Davis has vaulted into the public conscious in a way that will have interesting consequences for the state. Remember that name.—KELLY MINNIS



Wendy Davis in her Mizuno Wave Riders as she filibusters SB5.

[illegible]

Mustache Rides

By James Gray



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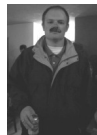
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Todd On Film: Man of Steel

I have never been much of a Superman guy. Before I continue, I must warn the reader that I am not schooled in any comic book series, DC, Marvel, or otherwise, and that any knowledge that I have of superheroes comes from major films, cartoons I watched while growing up, occasional browsing of Wikipedia, and the Marvel OverPower card game my friends used to play back in fourth grade. I do usually tend to favor the dark and mysterious heroes over the other ones. Batman has always been awesome (I make an effort to block out *Batman & Robin* from my memory). Wolverine probably should've been a bad guy but chose not to be. Raphael was my favorite ninja turtle (they were superheroes, right?). Obviously Superman, despite (or perhaps because of) having the ability to do nearly everything, was never much of a draw for me; although, with Jerry Seinfeld being such a Superman fanatic, maybe I should have given him more of a chance.

Previously I had gone to the theaters to see the initial series reboot, *Superman Returns*, and was not terribly impressed. Despite being directed by Bryan Singer, who did a good job with the X-Men movies that he was a part of, the movie felt like it wasn't sure of what it was trying to do. Was it a sequel or not? We jump into the Superman story without having a recent reference to go off of. Sure, we all know about the x-ray vision, ability of flight, super strength, and weakness to kryptonite. There wasn't anything intriguing about the film, except for Kevin Spacey's job well done as Lex Luthor. Apparently many other people felt the same, because Singer was not asked back to direct *Man of Steel*. I was initially a little concerned about Christopher Nolan being brought in as a producer, since I'm not a big fan of the same people having their hand in multiple franchises (see J.J. Abrams and *Star Wars*), but he ended up bringing the focus that the movie needed.

Man of Steel begins not with Superman jumping in deus-ex-machina style to save the day, and not with Clark Kent meekly working at The Daily Planet. Instead it opens up at an alien world on the brink of violence and sides being chosen. We see the birth of our protagonist and learn both about his father Jor-El and military leader General Zod, who each have competing visions about how their home Krypton and its people should be saved. Choosing to start here, whether it was Nolan or director Zach Snyder's doing, was very important in getting the non-initiated involved with the story from the beginning, rather than having an explain-what's-going-on catch-up-session later. Additionally, the movie benefitted greatly from its supporting cast which included Russell Crowe, Kevin Costner, Diane Lane, Amy Adams, and the intensely-awesome Michael Shannon, who just needs to be in more things in general (his new film *The Iceman* is getting great reviews if you are interested).

This film succeeds where the previous Superman attempt did not in that it provides the hero with a human conflict rather than just trying to save the world. The intriguing part about Superman is not that he has abilities that mere humans do not, but that he grew up as a human struggling to comprehend his powers (this issue of detachment was a similar problem for Doctor Manhattan in Snyder's previous film, *Watchmen*). *Man of Steel* wisely takes the time to set up the character before getting into a lot of the action. This version of Superman isn't brooding, but he is made human enough to be relatable. This movie gave me a reason to care and have an interest in his fate. Turns out Jerry was right all along.—TODD HANSEN

Still Drinking: Craft Sodas

After deciding to lay down the bottle back in February, I needed something to replace all the beer once holding purchase in my crisper. Remembering the great discovery the wife and I made last summer while sucking down two-to-three Moscow Mules a day, I turned my attention first to ginger beer. *(Notice the Moscow Mule recipe at the end of this article.) That love of ginger beer piqued my interest in root beers. Over my past few sober months I've tried just about every craft made ginger beer and root beer sold in the BCS area. Places like The Brazos Natural Food Store, Village Foods, and World Market have provided a cornucopia of non-corn syrupy, pure cane sugar soda beverages. The result is a new passion for natural sodas, one I believe will surpass the end of my beer fast. Below is a brief selection of the best craft sodas I've discovered. Enjoy.

It might be helpful, first of all, to distinguish some sort of fundamental difference between ginger ALE and ginger BEER. From what I can tell through my palette's research, ginger BEER features more ginger spice, less sugary soda sweetness. After discovering ginger BEER, I noticed my long loved Canada Dry Ginger Ale tasted like a 7-Up knock-off. Not true of the ginger BEER! And of all the ginger BEER we've tasted, **Reed's Extra Ginger Brew** (available nearly everywhere in BCS) takes the crown. Smooth and buttery with a spiked ginger finish, Reed's is not an overly sweet soda. And the ginger spice is a crisp thirst quencher. But for the spicier palette I highly recommend **Maine's Spicy Ginger Beer** (available at Village Foods), **Regatta Ginger Beer** (at Spec's), and **Cock-n-Bull Ginger Beer** (at World Market). I'm looking forward to trying these spicy brews in a Moscow Mule one day. And the added bonus of Ginger Beer consumption is the medicinal benefit of ginger. Good for the belly.

I've never been much of a root beer drinker until I discovered craft natural root beers. Like your corporate ginger ales, most big name root beers are high fructose corn syrup sticky sugar bombs. Not refreshing. Void of complex flavors. This was my impression of root beer until I tried my first bottle of **Virgil's Root Beer** (available at Brazos Natural Foods, Village Foods, and the College Station HEB). Virgil's, made by the same company that makes Reed's Ginger Brews, hands down wins the root beer category. Virgil's is stout stuff with a strong black licorice flavor profile, which is probably why it won me over. **Blue Sky Creamy Root Beer** (at Brazos Natural Foods and Village Foods) is a bit less licorice-y and easy to palette. It also makes the best floats we've tried. **Sprecher Root Beer** (sold in bombers at World Market) is a thick beast that reminds me more of a Russian Imperial Stout than a soda pop. Be prepared to split the Sprecher with a friend. And you can't go wrong with **BJ's** craft root beer on tap. And with free refills, they make a strong case for a fine happy hour.

*Moscow Mule recipe: Traditionally served in either a Collins glass or a copper mug, squeeze ½ a lime over ice (drop in lime peel), add two ounces of preferred vodka, and four to six ounces of ginger BEER. Be careful with the Mule! The ginger is deceptively refreshing and inviting of more Mule. You'll be three Mules into the afternoon before the vodka shouts a howdy.—KEVIN STILL

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from zombies to creed to paula deen: how our need for communal preferences hinders communication

I once was privy to a blind date in an Austin Chinese restaurant that made me all the more grateful I am no longer in the dating world. The gentleman looked like an aged metal guitarist with waist length grey hair and a pleasant tubular middle. The woman was a smoking failed actress type wearing a rose-patterned shawl. From looks alone, the man was drastically out of his league, but within a few bars of the conversation I began conspiring a solid out for my brother. He was kind, artistically minded, and the woman poo-pooed every question concerning art he posed. Books, it would appear, were no longer smart enough for her. Music was not soulful enough. Theater not classic enough. Radio—even NPR—not publicly radioed enough. Painting was too impersonal, sculpture too un-phallic, and fashion too drab. At one point I actually heard the lady scoff and say, "I only watch foreign films, particularly the Indian *Hollywood* cinema. It's the only cinema saying anything anymore." I empathetically looked to the man's face, recognizing the great struggle of his eyes not to check his watch.

This encounter came to mind while reading Maureen Dowd's June 22 column in the *New York Times*, title "A Zombie Scare With A Zombie Chaser". Dowd, thankfully, is not a culture poo-poser. This may be one of the reasons I like reading her columns more than most other *Times* columnists. In this column, Dowd makes it fairly clear that she prefers vampires over zombies then she explores her viewing of Brad Pitt's new zombie epic *World War Z*. And Dowd makes interesting points about WWZ's most pressing metaphor being one of a "broken Hollywood system" rather than a "broken global system". Her article is light-hearted and authentic to her previous writings concerning our strange attempts to map and understand our shifting cultural landscape.

So how did Dowd's article, written with humility and humor, bring to mind the hoity-toity rose-in-shawled cinephile from Austin? Easily, as it was not Dowd's article that conjured her to mind. Rather, it was the slew of pompous comments following Dowd's article, deflating the fun from Dowd's piece and rivaling the pride of our previous prima donna. My favorite comment, posted by Miss Thang, boasted, "*I fell asleep during this movie. Nuff said.*" What follows are loads of similar comments, all trying to sound smarter than the last by degrading and denying and debunking zombies, Brad Pitt, and American cinema in general. I laughed reading the comments thinking, *Dowd's the think-tank here, and she's the only one of these stiff's willing to have fun with her brain.*

Few cultural trends irk me like the need to poo-poo what everyone else poo-poos, especially in order to sound smart or hyper-cultured. Perhaps such sensitivity stems from my pop music fandom. I've stopped counting the number of people who have told me they secretly rock Britney in the car or they really wanted to watch the Katy Perry film but feared what people would think. I've heard the same in pseudo-academic circles when certain writers—Stephen King, John Grisham, Steig Larsson, for example—are referred to as "guilty pleasures". And I shirk from conversations making distinctions between low-brow and high-brow humor, especially confessions of minimally enjoying the former while strong preferring the latter. I'm always tempted to fart right then and there and then watch their face, just to test how low-brow their humor truly could be.

What I mostly want to scream is to just come off it. No one cares. You are not that important. We're not a culture of Santa Claus trainees keeping records of who's cool and who's not. But, then again, maybe we are. If social media has taught us anything, it's to second guess our preferences and ideas, to publicize some, to hide others, and to wage massive cultural, religious or political debates in soundbites with as little evidence or strategy as possible. We're reduced to (and fear) the immediacy of face value, because what if face value is not comprehensive enough to comprise a complimentary portrait of me? God forbid the cool kids

see me wearing my Kelly Clarkson t-shirt today and miss the Misfits skull I might sport tomorrow.

Chuck Klosterman—who I can never decide is friend or foe in these discussions—proposed a fine theory about our need to align preferences, particularly our cultural hatred, with the populace. To research his article "A Night With The World's Most Hated Bands," Klosterman attended a double-billing of Creed and Nickelback in a single night. He watched part of each performance. He talked to fans. He studied their studio work. He found that the music is simple, poppy, and formulaic. It's easy to listen to and possibly to like, which makes it an easy target for music critics. In the end, Klosterman theorized that most people hate Nickelback and Creed because people need something to hate, and it's always easiest to hate what other people hate. He suggested there may be other musicians we equally dislike, but there are few other bands we are so willing to hate as vehemently and publicly as Creed or Nickelback. In sharing our hatred for these bands communally, we gain a shared sense of superiority—a finely tuned cold shoulder decreeing a concretely formed "us" and "t h e m " i d e n t i t y .

While this social and critical superiority—the same superiority that pays homage to the notion of "guilty pleasures" - is possibly my greatest cultural pet peeve, I realize it doesn't matter a hill of beans how people position themselves in the face of zombies or Stephen King or Creed. Sure, you'll drop several notches in my estimation, but my estimation is of little evolutionary concern on our forward trudging American path. Where this discussion matters most, I feel, is in conversations concerning our nation's heart. For instance, in how we discuss Paula Deen.

As most of us now know, Paula Deen is simmering in a frying pan of her own doing. She made statements that could be considered grossly racist, and she has lost her *Food Network* television program and several corporate sponsorships as a result. Asking for a team of black men to dress in tuxedos and serve at a Southern plantation style wedding represents an antiquated mindset most Americans, even in the South, no longer share, except in private parlor humor. And using the "n" word to describe her servers reveals a disconnect between Deen's domestic and public vocabulary. By being an unthoughtful loudmouth, Paula Deen has given us a wonderful gift: she has given us a face that we can all hate together. She has given us a behavior that, like Creed's music, is easy to dismiss and, thereby, to swell against with great superiority. We will do this for a week, until something more tantalizing comes along, and then we will hate that thing together and feel superior again until, once again, the flavor wears thin and someone else is the next buffoon. However, in demonizing Paula Deen so quickly, only to move on just as quickly, we miss the opportunity to engage a vital and larger conversation: the very conversation juxtaposed a few headlines over from Deen concerning the Supreme Court's rulings on Affirmative Action and Gay Marriage. The conversation hidden in all these headlines suggests that we have not yet solved our issues of race and gender and sexuality and what to do with people different than us. We're still learning how to see one another, how to count and parcel and invite one another into our communities. And we're still learning how to discuss such matters beyond their moment in print.

Paula Deen is not the face of blatant, mean-spirited racism; rather, she is the mouthpiece of an unchecked cultural language shared within her community. She just let that stuff slip to someone who didn't share the joke. It would be wrong to consider this moment in Paula Deen's life a "fall from grace". Apparently, she's been "falling from grace" most times she's opened her mouth for the past several few years. If only more of us could be so blessed—whether we're discussing other races or the gays or the immigrants or the zombies next door—to have someone privately humble our poo-pooing, dismissive superiority.—KEVIN STILL

Pedal Pushing: SUF Civil Unrest

I love fuzz tone. I don't care if it's The Kinks' seminal "You Really Got Me", the frenzied psychedelic workouts of the best work on *Nuggets*, the fizzy toppy impossibly dense workouts of Robert Fripp on forward to the over-the-top craziness of J. Mascis, the grinding broken-amp tones of Mudhoney's Steve Turner, the creamy hollowed-out violin tones of Billy Corgan up to the bellbottom boogie of Dan Auerbach. More often than not, that fuzz tone is provided by the derivatives of classic fuzz pedal circuits: the Dunlop Fuzzface, the Univox Superfuzz, the Burns Buzzaround, and the Electro-Harmonix Big Muff. The Big Muff is probably the most famous of fuzz circuits, having good penetration into music stores world-wide.

The thing about the Big Muff though is that the circuit changed at least a dozen times and, for a while, was produced in Russia. To say "I use a Big Muff" requires the caveat of which version. Triangle? Ram's Head? Violet? Green Russian? Civil War? Red Army? Op amp or IC? Black Russian? Deluxe? Little Big Muff? All share the same sort of vibe. They offer a boost in volume, either germanium or silicon-based diode clipping and a simple tone control. However, some Muffs are smoother than others, some more gnarly, some louder, some creamier, some better for bass, some with less of a mid scoop for better use in a band, etc. Some musicians are notorious for which Muff they use; J. Mascis and Roger Gilmore are associated with Ram's Head Big Muffs; Billy Corgan with 5th gen IC-based Big Muffs; Dan Auerbach with Green Russians, etc. Not to mention that Electro-Harmonix would use whatever parts were around in a pinch so that, until normalizing of the production line after the company's brief hiatus from production in the late '80s, it is nearly impossible to find two pedals that were built the same. And different eras of Big Muff production are known for being unreliable and designed around some shitty switches and jacks (most of the Russian built pedals). So how do you find what sound you are after AND have it in a pedalboard friendly size and built to last?

I had that question myself, as I love fuzz tone but have been unable to use it in a band context. The Big Muff by nature hollows out the midrange of guitar tone, which is the opposite of what helps most electric guitars stick out. It's great for creating that near-infinite violin-like sustain and compression for single note guitar lines such as solos and great for bass guitar, but it's a real boobpunch for rhythm guitar players, with their rigs often competing in the same EQ spectrum as bass players. I have tried normal Big Muffs,

modded Big Muffs, and boutique Muff derivatives and none have really worked with my pedal chain nor the sound that I have in my head for what I want a fuzz pedal to sound like. That is, none until I took possession of my Stomp Under Foot Civil Unrest.

Stomp Under Foot's Matt Pasquerella made it his business to preserve classic Big Muff circuits but build them to be more robust, smaller and more affordable. He has built many Muff derivatives, some in limited editions with original period stock caps, filters and circuits. On guitar forums

Matt is praised as pretty much The King of Muff derived fuzz. Although Matt preserves very rare designs, he is also known for taking those designs and augmenting them to improve upon the design. The Civil Unrest adds midrange control to the Civil War fuzz, which is itself based on a silver-and-blue boxed Russian-made Big Muff known for its bigger bottom end, less scooped midrange and less gain (less fizz and a smoother sound). The Civil Unrest adds variable control for the midrange. Mined out and you get the stock sound of the Civil War fuzz! Maxed out and you get more of an amp, cranked sort of midrange-heavy natural tube breakup. The mid and the tone controls are linked together and the pedal loses high end response with cranked mids. Pulling back the mids a bit adds more clarity to the high end. What does all this mean really? It means that the Civil Unrest, with the volume cranked, the tone and mids

cranked and just a splash of distortion, recreates the sound of your average Marshall master volume JCM cranked. The distortion is compressed and tight and with a lot of low end. Turn up the distortion and the tone gets crunchier and with a more pronounced white noise effect. This pedal is great for playing rhythm guitar in a two-guitar band. With other Big Muffs I feel like my guitar tone is like carpeting, with the Civil Unrest I can still hear it in a band context. If anything, I'd like a tad more volume from the pedal, as I feel it maxes out a little quieter than what I'd like.

The pedal itself is built tough and is guaranteed by Stomp Under Foot for life. It is relatively affordable for a boutique pedal (\$175), though the current production US-made Big Muff is nearly \$100 less. You can find the Civil Unrest and other Stomp Under Foot pedals (Matt makes other distortions based on the Rat, Buzzaround, Tubescreamer and other classic circuits) at www.stompunderfoot.com. Be prepared for a wait, as Matt often takes 6-8 weeks to deliver his pedals.—KELLY MINNIS





still thinking

The wife and I ate dinner at a Mexican restaurant where a student of mine worked as a server. And although teachers should not have favorite students, [----] was a favorite that semester. She was smart, super funny, and words flew from her mouth that betrayed her presentation. In other words, she appeared cutely prudish but came off bitingly shrewd, and I adored her for it.

So the wife and I ate at [----]'s restaurant because [----] gingerly reminded me that I had not accepted any of her "two-damn-thousand invitations" she had extended me. So we went. And LT and I were the only people in the restaurant that afternoon. And at one point [----] came to the table laughing and said, "Mr. Still, you won't believe what the guys at the wait-station are saying about you." And I said, "God can only imagine. What?" And she said, "They're all like, 'man, look at that guy with the beard and the tattoos, you know he's such a bad-ass.' And I was like, guys, that's my prof, and he totally is not a bad-ass. He's the most opposite from a bad-ass you can get. He's never kicked any ass in his life!" And then we all three laughed and, once again, I adored [----] for her bite.

The truth is there's a good chance I'm the most hypocritical person I know. The "bad-ass" tattoos and the beard are just one example. Many of my students have echoed [----] at the end of the semester: "When I first met you, Mr. Still, and I saw your beard and tats, I was like 'Whoa! This dude is hardcore!' but then you ain't." And I remind them, "And let that be a lesson to you." One Black student told me I was "the Blackest White person" he had ever met. I told him that didn't make any sense and I felt sorry for him for feeling so desperate to appear relevant to a White man.

But, yes, back to my original point, I am a hypocritical person. This, I believe, is not a fault of mine because I so readily admit it. Here are five examples of recent paradoxes within my nature:

- I've been writing a series of emails with my lovely friend, Chadverb, concerning the state of modern American fiction, and yesterday I wrote a scathing diatribe against the literary market's perverse control on what gets published or read. I also went so far as to proclaim how they belittle us—and our youth—by offering and promoting dumbed down, quickly published knock-offs of real literature, especially that sanctioned by the Oprah Book Club. I said all this yesterday morning, and then last night I went to Barnes-Nobles to purchase—with my Barnes-Nobles Membership Coupon—Philipp Meyer's new novel, *The Son*, because I heard a neat interview with him on NPR, and we all know NPR is really just a higher-brow Oprah Book Club. Call me Literary Whore.

- I quit drinking alcohol so that I could solemnly break a potential addiction to alcohol, but also to explore greater sleep and dietary patterns. However, I replaced my six pack a day habit with a solid pot-of-straight-black-coffee-a-day habit, which has curbed my morning appetite from a solid breakfast and has now fucked my sleep routine. Call me Glutton of Personal Punishments.

- Another set of emails with my buddies Pepe and Ian has discussed the disgusting trends of mass market production companies defining the shape and delivery modes of modern film and music. We glorified the idyllic notion that to hear really great music—that not deemed great by iTunes or Pitchfork or Paste—you had to go to the local pub and rub elbows with neighbors and drink overpriced beer and hope that what hit the stage was better than what the Billboard claimed, and even if it wasn't, you had the experience outside your house with music as a social entity, not a personalized product consumed behind wailing bugs inside your auditory canals. (I say this even though I go to bed most nights by 8:30 and miss all the good music in town.) I pushed this conversation, but then yesterday I found myself overly annoyed with a girl playing her acoustic guitar and singing in a coffeeshop when it was obvious she had not been sanctioned to play her acoustic guitar and sing in that coffeeshop. She was just there, having a little practice: as were many of the other patrons with sketchbooks and Moleskins and Beth Moore Bible studies, fine tuning themselves in much quieter ways. Granted, the girl sounded amazing, but I thought she was either mentally retarded or hell a narcissistic (she was wearing crazy short-shorts) to just whip out the old Yamaha and begin a set about the Great I Am. All this while David Crowder warred her holy affections on the overhead cafe speakers. Call me Bastard.

- I am a fast-talker about supporting local businesses, but last week when given the option to order my Pad Thai from our locally owned Jin's Asian Cuisine, I instead went with Pei Wei. Also, this week when I decided I wanted pizza, I did not order from our famous locally owned Antonio's Pizza, nor did I go to one of the three or four locally owned cafes that made pizza with locally produced and farmed ingredients; instead, I went to Boston's for the All You Can Eat cheap deal. Call me Wal-Mart.

- During the months of April and May, I woke with fair regularity at 4:30 AM to read and write. This was also a fact I made sure everybody who knew me learned and relearned each time we chatted. This summer, however, I've slipped into waking anywhere from 6:45 to 8:50 AM, depending on the previous day's caffeine intake. Regardless, when people ask me, "Are you still waking early to work?" I say, "Oh yes." Although it's not technically a lie—my wake-ups are still early on somebody's scale—I knowingly allow my compatriots to have the false notion that I am Thomas Merton, awake before the sun and genuflecting on a fresh toadstools' glimmering dew. Call me Bullshitter.

I am not alone in my hypocrisies, but I do relish these quirks as solely mine. In fact, after I die it will be these sorts of inconsistencies that my grievors will enjoy retelling as they tip PBRs and Reed's Ginger Beers into the grass, pouring one out for their hamster-gator-bullfighter friend whose greatest heroic acts involved "keeping it real" and "shitting his pants". As a would-be writer, these are the things to celebrate, to illuminate, to give vocabulary. These are things that make us, that make good literary characters, memorable.—KEVIN STILL



concert calendar

7/6—Brazos Valley Metal & Hardcore Festival with In the Trench, Myra Maybell, A Theory on Conquest, Closed Hand Promise @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm

7/10—Red Line Chemistry, Signal Rising, Brothers N Arms, Saint Carmine @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm

7/11—Jay Satellite, Lightning Briefs, A Sundae Drive @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

7/12—Shiny Ribs @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

7/13—GOBI, Zeale, Syne Wav @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

7/18—A Candlelit City, Against the Archaic @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

7/19—Trey Brown, Mission Eldorado @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

7/20—Featherface, Whitman, The Cush @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

8/2—Milkdrive, Larynx, Daniel Gonzales @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

8/3—The Escatones, JT Haberstraat (Altercation Punk Comedy), The Hangouts, Lee Bucker @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

8/23—the Feeble Contenders, The Hawks, The Found @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

9/12—Green River Ordinance @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

record reviews



ASS
Speed Krusher

I was a skateboard rat as a kid in the 1980s. Punk rock was a big part of skateboard culture at that time, with bands like Agent Orange, Circle Jerks and Black Flag soundtracking many a curbside session nationwide. The metal dudes used to chase the skaters around (usually yelling out "faggot" or "circle jerk" as they drove past), but it always perplexed me why the metal guys were so afraid of skaters and punk rock in general. To my untrained 7th grade ears metal and punk rock were pretty much the same thing. Only the clothing was different. Not just on the metal dudes, but on the music itself.

Punk and metal are both loud, fast, pounding, discordant, nihilistic, dude-centric and focused on brass, distorted electric guitar and gruff, shouting lead singers. Of course, there are many traits the two do not share, but they have more in common than they don't. Along about 7th grade, a handful of thrash metal and punk rock bands began to "cross over," so much so that they unwittingly created a new genre of music named for the very act of crossing over. Punk bands like D.R.I. and metal bands like Suicidal Tendencies blurred the lines of punk and metal. Thrash titans Anthrax operated with the spirit of punk, if not following the very

letter. And then those bands, for whatever reason, let go of the "in-between" hybrid nature of the two different worlds and mostly went full-on metal (which is pretty much where all the money/record deals/hot chicks were). ASS, a quintet of College Station punk and metal lifers, decided to form a band that would bring back skate metal/punk crossover, and *Speed Krusher* is the first recorded fruits of that labor.

For starters, it's cassette only, on a new B/CS tape label Cerveza Records. It's an awesome package (Xerox black/white cover art looking like it was drawn on the back of your Trapper Keeper in 1987 inside a neon green tape case) that feels like it was dredged up in a forgotten box from high school. The music takes me right back. The band itself leans heavily towards the metal side of things, with the psychotic over-the-top divebombing fax-modem lead guitar of James Shreddy and the galloping double bass drum thwomp of Bobby Hell. It's the hardcore shouter vocals from Jonny Cerveza and the rapid fire Lemmy bass playing of Atarimatt that helps to lend the punk attitude, making ASS in essence the most righteous San Francisco 1982 metal band with the raddest Orange County 1982 vocalist.

"Speed Krusher" gets the party started in a *Kill 'Em All* fashion but Jonny and gang tie a cool punk rock shoutalong chorus to turgid whipsmart thrash metal. "Down and Out" aligns a death metal harmony guitar intro with badass New Wave of British Heavy Metal heavy palm muted riffing. "Meth Mouth" has an awesome Suicidal Tendencies breakdown in the middle. "Upside Down Cross" rounds out the cassette and is easily my favorite of all of ASS songs, as it goes after the sludgy side of metal while Jonny makes like Paul Diano while claiming "there is no god/believe in yourself". When the breakdown comes

in it is impossible not to bang your head. Sure, you've heard crossover before, but ASS breathes fresh life into the genre and you won't realize how much you missed this kind of metal until you push play on *Speed Krusher*. —KELLY MINNIS



The Boxers
The Boxers

It's been seven years since Blake Powers and Fallon Franklin (with drummer Joey Campbell) have released an album, and their new self-titled one as "The Boxers" shows they haven't lost anything of their richly-layered male-female pop.

Known then as Blake and Fallon, the cousins (with Fallon's husband Campbell on drums) out of Austin played around Texas for most of the past decade including several times at Northgate back when it had decent music. Noted for their stellar songwriting and amiable live performances over the years, Powers and Franklin didn't fit into an easy niche of Americana, Texas country, or folk. And they still don't.

This self-titled album features strong individual vocal performances as well as the duo's lush vocal mixes. Franklin goes from the expressiveness of "How Low" to a blow-out-the-speakers take on the soul-blues barnburner "Ain't No Woman". While Powers has his best solo turn on the potentially understated "January", his

emotive voice is the ideal lead on songs like the piano-dominated "Heart-Shaped Smile".

Musicians first, these singer-songwriters pepper their tunes with supple instrumentation. There's the fiddle-driven bluegrass tune "Angry Bones" that is roadhouse-ready a la Mumford and Sons. Then, you have the brass on the "Milo's Song," and there's the subtle organ on the plaintive "Home." One of the best tunes is the alt-country shuffle "Passing Highway Lines" with its tasteful slide guitar - and "Carnival" has the perfect weeping steel guitar wrapped through the pair's intertwined voices.

Hopefully, it won't be 2020 before the next album comes out from the pair. —MIKE L. DOWNEY



Power Trip
Manifest Decimation

Not since Slayer's *Reign In Blood* has an album made me want to cause serious physical damage to another human. Manifest Decimation makes me want to punch all of the kids that "hardcore dance" so hard in their boygins that their balls finally drop. This album is full of serious power and aggression with the perfect amount of thrash and mosh. If you want to dance, go watch Footloose with your little sister. If you want to go to prison, put on Power Trip's *Manifest Decimation* and go full metal potato. —ATARIMATT

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