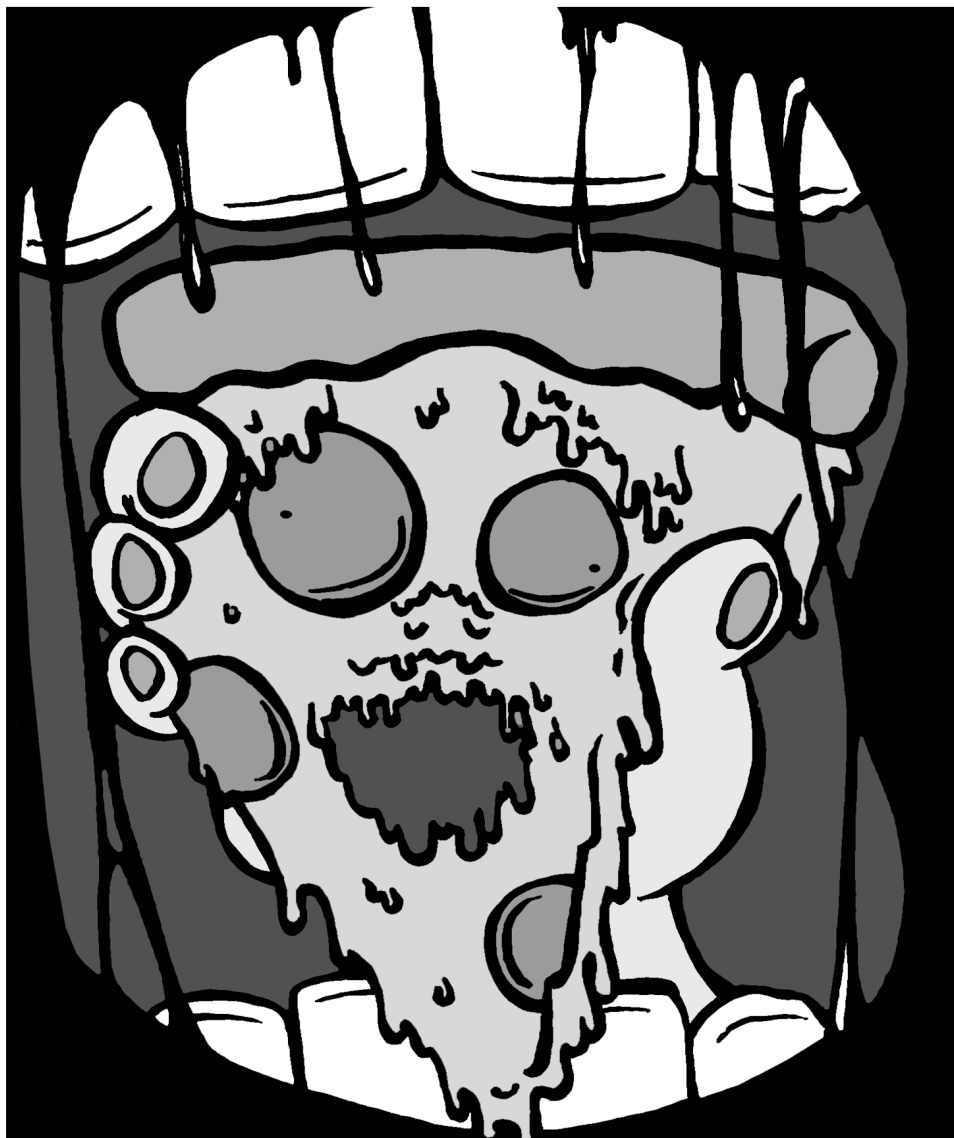


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Vol. 5—Issue 8



**INSIDE: THE UGLY TRUTH ABOUT KICKSTARTER KEVIN GOES TO THE  
THEATER FELL IN LOVE AT 37 VICIOUSLY VILE LIVING GRATEFUL  
SPRINGSTEEN FANATICS WHERE THE EFF IS DOC BROWN A BAD  
MONTH FOR VAGINAS RECORD REVIEWS CONCERT CALENDAR**



## Bad Month For Vaginas

I am not surprised that upon a second time through the special session mill that Texas Republicans were able to squeeze through House Bill 2, a ban on all abortions after the 20-week mark as well as a requirement that all abortion providers have surgical privileges at local hospitals. The first portion of the bill bugs me somewhat but the average aborted pregnancy is usually performed well below that 20 week point (though what happens in the case of potentially deadly birth defects? Tough titty said the Kitty). It is the second half of that legislation that bugs me the most, as it is more harmful to a woman's access to abortion than the first half. It is so harmful that it will close all but a handful of providers in this state. Including Bryan/College Station's Planned Parenthood.

On August 1st, Planned Parenthood will close its location on E. 29th St. in Bryan. Similar centers in Huntsville and Lufkin will also close down. According to Planned Parenthood:

"In recent years, Texas politicians have created an increasingly hostile environment for providers of reproductive health care in underserved communities. In addition to losing reliable access to prevention services, women will also lose access to safe abortion services in Brazos County, due to the recent passage of politicized healthcare restrictions in Texas House Bill 2. Women who have made the complex, deeply personal decision to end a pregnancy have relied on Planned Parenthood Center for Choice in Bryan, a separate, nonprofit healthcare provider. While we believe the excessive and medically unnecessary requirements imposed on clinics providing early abortion are unconstitutional, we have made the difficult and practical decision to close Planned Parenthood Center for Choice in Bryan at this time rather than face the prospect of having to do so in the foreseeable future."

Separate yourself from the abortion argument for a moment. Planned Parenthood provides women's health care for poor and lower income women in Brazos County. Many of my friends, colleagues, and even bandmates have benefited from using Planned Parenthood's services. IT IS NOT JUST AN ABORTION PROVIDER. Ask anyone who has had to use the local government-run clinic for women and they will tell you that Planned Parenthood is more efficient, doesn't require months of waiting to be seen and is generally a much more comfortable environment. This is what most less-government Republicans usually want, non-profits and private citizens to step in to meet a charitable need rather than depend on government to do it, since government will always do it poorly and waste more money and resources than the private sector. It shouldn't matter that our Planned Parenthood provides abortions or not, as the last time I checked access to abortion procedures was made legal by the United States Supreme Court before I was born. Planned Parenthood provided birth control, true, but it also offered pap smears, OB-GYN services, mammograms and other women's reproductive health services to those uninsured. Sure, locals seeking an abortion will now have to drive to Houston for the closest clinic, but it's the loss of the other services to this area that will be more keenly felt.

—KELLY MINNIS



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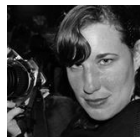
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## VICIOUSLY VILE: The Conjuring

With heavy anticipation, I have spent the last couple of months waiting for the newest supernatural thriller to hit the theaters. Based on a true story, *The Conjuring* features the Perron family gleefully moving into a Rhode Island farmhouse to start life anew only to find the house is full of lingering past horrors. After the family endures enough tormenting from malevolent spirits, the

wife (beautifully played by Lili Taylor) contacts Ed and Lorraine Warren for help. If you have been living under a rock, Ed and Lorraine Warren were the top demonologists/paranormalists who began their research in the 1950s. After first watching the trailer right before an *Evil Dead* screening, I was hesitant to even give this a chance considering that trailers have

had a bad habit as of late to include all the creepy, eerie scenes just to get the butts in the seats (*Exorcism of Emily Rose* anyone?). I am happy to say this did not hold true.

Let me start by saying that if you go into this thinking it is going to be another *Amityville Horror* or *The Exorcist*, you will be highly disappointed. Within the realm of the horror genre, *The Conjuring* has a place of its own. Thankfully, the movie has left out the typical schlocky effects just for the sake of a cheap thrill. Director James Wan has done a terrific job at keeping it real. The mood is dismal, the scares are pure, and there is a sense of genuine sympathy for the characters. What begins as banging doors, pictures flying off the wall, and clocks simultaneously stopping at a certain time ends in gruesome manifestations of attacks against the children and full-on possession.

This could not have been more wonderfully cast. Vera Farmiga (A&E's *Bates Motel*) and Patrick Wilson (*Insidious*) charismatically implement the charm and selfless personas of Ed and Lorraine Warren, who honestly help those with paranormal dilemmas. Playing a harried mother of 5 young girls, Lili Taylor (*The Haunting*) is the one who shines, and she has amazingly proven herself to be a universal actress. Ron Livingston (*Office Space*) was fantastic as the worried father, who unfortunately sits by the sidelines and watches the horror within his family unfold.

If you are hoping for death and camp, look elsewhere. I consider this one of the most intelligent horror movies ever made, one that will examine your beliefs and question all logic. Not enough blood and gore to be exploitative, but enough honesty and in-your-face realism to put the horror genre in a tailspin. *The Conjuring* is compelling, will keep you locked in throughout the film, and haunt you well after the credits roll.—VAMP VIXEN

## The Southern Gothic of Crimes of the Heart

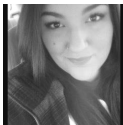
On the surface, *Crimes of the Heart* sets three sisters to the task of waiting out various levels of bad news in their grandfather's kitchen. The year is 1974. The setting is smalltown Mississippi. And the time and place both pour thick through the sisters' tongues, punctuated their language with drawls as long as their waiting and as deep as the secrets each one brings to the table. On the surface, granddaddy is sick and one sister shot her husband in the gut the previous night. But, as anyone from the South knows, Southern stories and Southern families rarely exist "on the surface", and audiences learn the twisting depths and complexities of each sister even as they learn one another.

Such complexities in theatric storytelling do not find root in the script alone, which here spins with a dizzying effect of tragedy and hilarity, as much as in careful direction and honest performance. Veteran StageCenter director Raquel Masco unearthed subtleties of humor and pain behind each character, creating a story that digs deep and then, at just the right moment, offers levity and laughter. *Crimes of the Heart* does not rely on cheap punch-lines or slapstick tricks for comedy. Rather, the comedy comes through the characters, who are richly individualistic and layered. The eldest sister, Lenny McGrath, played with disquieted precision by Nathalie Musquin, carries a heap of shames compounded atop the full-brunted responsibility for her sisters and the McGrath estate. Middle sister, Meg, portrayed by a superbly funny Jen Battaarbee, having not yet fulfilled the great legacy she left out for years ago, comes to the table with blazing guns and bawdy boots, ready to own the moment if not the entire night. And baby sister, Babe, a mentally hinge-swaying performance by Hope Bailey, brings the sisters together in the wake of her own violence and scandal. Together in grandfather's kitchen, waiting for news on grandfather's health and Babe's innocence, the McGrath sisters travel the past and call to order each other's faults and forgotten potentials.

*Crimes of the Heart's* cast is rounded out by a trio of strong supporting performers: hen-pecking neighbor, Chick Boyle, played with bouncing brutishness by Jane Long; old-flame, Doc Porter, skillfully portrayed by Jovan Martinez; and Babe's lawyer, Barnette Lloyd, masterfully played by a scene-stealing Ethan Montgomery. The supporting cast offers more walls and surfaces and gravities by which the McGrath sisters are broken and plunged and exposed.

*Crimes of the Heart* runs at StageCenter Theater in Downtown Bryan through August 10. Performances at 7:30. Tickets are available at the door as well as on [www.stagecenter.net](http://www.stagecenter.net). Information and calendars for future performances and audition opportunities can also be found on the Stage Center website as well as in the *Crimes of the Heart* program.—KEVIN STILL

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## Where the Fuck Is Doc Brown?

It's Thursday, I was sitting in a dog kennel at work—trying to escape actual work—and I was wishing I could go back to a simple, young time where all you had to hope for is that *Blue's Clues* was not playing a re-run.

What is it about the intense desire to live in the past? We feel like times were simpler, when things weren't as hard as they are now, especially now that you're an adult. Responsibility swarms you every move, your every thought and decision. It fucking sucks. Is it the idea of knowing what we had and how we never really appreciating the life we once lived? Maybe... Maybe it's the desire of not wanting to deal with this hypocrisy of a world. We ask ourselves when did shit matter, when did we have to give a damn, and when did the childhood end and adult-hood begin. We all ponder the inevitable death of life. The fear of not knowing our future and trying with all of our might to hold onto familiarity, to hold onto comfort that was certain consumes us all.

I want to go back and re-live the good times. The whole cliché "If I knew then what I know now" has that hindering slap in the face feeling every time I think of what once was. When the world was lenient and stepping into new technology, before tweets and irrelevant documentation of our every move on the internet fascinated us, there was a point in time when simplicity was the core to the American dream, and most importantly, when the American dream wasn't back breaking, or drowning us in debt.

It's strange because every generation wants to go back and re-live their past. Every person has a special time and place they would rather be in than the present. But in reality, is the time we live in now really that terrible? Yes there is a lot of bullshit wrong in the world...and reality TV, but is this life we have now undesirable enough to truly want to leave what we have created and go back into a time when we were just getting started?

For me...I say fuck yea. But that's just me. I'd go back and see my dad. I'd go back and tell everyone who was an asshole to piss off, and I'd go back and create the Facebook. Eh, but I can't, and even though the surrounding population sometimes sucks ass, I've made a pretty good starting life.—  
*JESSICA LITTLE*

## Living Grateful; How A Music Scene Is Redeemed Through Blood, Sweat and Beers

Preamble: I know this piece is about 979's ever optimistic neighbor Austin, but bare with me, BCS gets a mention.

Recently, A post surfaced on an Austin music blog lambasting the current music scene. People were skipping out on local bands, not willing to buy anything and generally sucking the life out of the local music scene. I dwelled on the article, and found my cynical self agreeing.

But then something happened. I decided to become one of the many people crammed into the disgustingly overcrowded Hotel Vegas. We were all here to a catch a glimpse of Living Grateful, an Austin band with no Bandcamp, Facebook page (except for a Spanish fan page, strangely) or videos to speak of. You see, Living Grateful are a reincarnation of The Strange Boys, who made it sort of big a few years prior with their brand of jingle jangle waif rock. This was a much different band; out was the three chord romps, in was a Civil War-era piano player who could play a keyboard and harmonica solo at the same goddamn time. Bar room country, extended jams—all that I had resented as a man of punk suddenly made sense, and it was glorious.

I stood there perplexed as band leader Ryan Sambol, flicked barely noticeable, micro second long hand signals to the rest of the band. Every single variation in tempo, dynamics and rhythm were preformed flawlessly by all the band members—I'd never seen such effortless musicianship and tightness. And this was only their second show ever. Needless to say, I started to feel pretty crappy about my own musical endeavors.

It was strange seeing Hotel Vegas, Austin's go-to for garage-rock and psych, so densely populated with such a varied bunch of people. And densely populated it was; you would be hard-pushed to find a sweeter environment. Un-air-conditioned underground strip clubs in Atlanta were less sweaty. And it seemed as if this shared sweat actually bore something resembling a community—something Austin's music scene apparently lacked.

This is where it all tries back in to College Station. Playing at Loudfest back in May was a great experience. Yes, this was in part because of the 5am roof-top parties and crowd-surfed drum kits. But really it was the sense of belong in a community of musicians, fans and borderline alcoholics that made the fest such a raging success. People in Austin always bemoan the influx of new visitors; how they don't know anyone in the bars any more. How condos and wealthy old guys were serving to commodify and undermine Austin's culture. But what Austin's culture all comes down to is strangers dancing, sweating and drinking as one. And no amount of luxury high rises and F1 tracks can take this away from us.—*JOSH EBSWORTH*

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# Fell in love at 37

My nearly 20-year relationship with Starflyer 59 was strained from the beginning. Put plainly, I hated them. I deeply hated that first album (*Silver*) with the vintage cargo plane on the cover. Someone told me to pick it up. Once the cellophane was off and the punishing, driving distortions pedals were sparking (surely they were frying the boards and blowing speakers all across Southern California in 1994), I threw my high school hands up to my oily pubescent face and shook my head back and forth. No. This was not for me. I was back the same afternoon at the music store demanding an exchange. Shockingly, they took that album back and I snagged something else: The Prayer Chain or The 77's or early Poor Old Lu.

Twenty years ago is rather blurry. I remember metric tons of Taco Bell, soda, In Living Color, and Jim Carrey. I think that was most of my high school years. Oh, and Green Day's *Dookie* and a girl named Meg who kissed me like she was Princess Leia as we swung across the abyss on a wire line—or something like that. Like I said, I'm fuzzy on distant details.

Six weeks later, I bought that same album after giving my friend's copy a second chance. I completely whiffed on that first pass. I admit it. Soon thereafter, I snagged the *Gold* album and then the ones that followed: *Americana*, *She's the Queen*, *Fashion Focus*.

I didn't follow this band in any traditional sense of the term. I didn't wait the release of new albums with baited breath, wear their t-shirts, or even list them among my favorites in those all too deep conversations had over lattes in college coffee shops staring into a girl's grinning eyes. I would have listed others. I was pretty deep into punk music in college and Starflyer 59 doesn't qualify—no matter what iteration of the band lineup or which album one might hone in on. It just doesn't. I would have probably said, "If it isn't punk, it sucks". I would have delivered that bombastic line, sophomoric as it is, to convey all the tenacious disdain possible for a 19 year-old full-time student on scholarship at big State U. Honestly, Starflyer fell off my radar until the early 2000's. Sure, I heard things. I knew they were there on the West Coast doing something. I heard they released an album that got radio play and that they were "taking off"—whatever that might mean.

My kid brother was in Dallas and asked if I wanted to see a show in Deep Ellum. He wanted to see Farstar and casually mentioned that Starflyer would headline: a galactic evening (?) I hated their show. I don't know if their lineup was off or if I was suffering from acute punkitis, but it just fell flat. It felt slow and overly sad. Oh God! I probably muttered as I rolled my eyes. I keep to a pattern, see: I have a hair trigger reject button. It saves me time and pisses off friends who are enthusiastic about things I can't seem to stomach. I don't have many friends.

Bad first album exposure. Bad first live performance. It wasn't looking good for me and Starflyer 59. Slowly, their newer albums trickled into my world. I found an album here or there. Kiki Malone would snag one or two at used bookstores because he knew that I was sort of into it. They

didn't leave my car's CD player for a month or so. I read a couple of articles and interviews about Jason Martin and what he was doing or trying to do with music. I tripped backward into a strong affinity for this band that is actually (mostly) one guy. He is as low-key, stripped down rock 'n roll, and unassuming a musician/writer as I've found. I remember having two longish conversations with Jeremy Post of Black Eyed Seva/Model Engine fame when they played in Austin in the late 90's. Post didn't posture himself as anyone but a music enthusiast who did his own tinkering when not studying philosophy. Martin strikes me as a very similar sort of fellow. Martin drives a delivery truck for the company his dad founded. Just drives that double axle diesel bastard around Riverside. Then, at night, I suppose, he clicks on a few lights and mixing boards. Low speed. He crafts his lyrics, sometimes droning, sometimes whispered—always authentic. The albums of the last twenty years have shown great range and when friends say they don't like Starflyer 59, I always ask them which album they listened to. Too driving? "Tackle Fell in Love at 22" or the album titled *Americana*. Almost nodded off, did you? "I Am the Portuguese Blues" or *Old* should do the trick. Loved that new Tron soundtrack by Daft Punk? Same here. Have you heard "Blue Collar Love (Joy Electric Dub Mix)"? Each album lands a different sort of punch. Their heavy British influence (Smiths and the Cure) and new wave sensibilities hit all the right tones and pings for me. They feel a bit Jesus and Mary Chain with smatterings of Echo and the Bunnymen and this sort of cocktail simply can't do anything but succeed as far as I'm concerned.

All to say, I awoke to a very strange reality last month. I am a huge Starflyer 59 fan. I had no idea. It was quite a jolt! This discovery happened abruptly. I was listening to *The Changing of the Guard* on streaming radio and thinking about what a nice sound Martin had found (Shane—track two—kills me. Dead.), when I began to reflect on my lengthy, complex relationship to the band as outlined here. There aren't many bands that have set the soundtrack to my life consistently, over and over again, for twenty years. As much as I love early U2, we got a divorce some years back. Though I actually cried tears when I first heard the title track on Radiohead's *The Bends* back in college and suddenly swooned, Mr. Yorke and his lot haven't hit me right even once in the last five years. I've pounded the steering wheel on a few Volvo 240's to the Smashing Pumpkins and Social Distortion, but these bands haven't slapped me around, wooed me back, and finally settled in with me, into my middle-aged malaise step for step. None have, but Starflyer 59 keeps kicking me back into rock 'n roll when I'd probably settle into nutritious, but bone chillingly bland Andrew Bird and Bon Iver. The strange dawning felt even more bizarre when I thought that if I had been asked about Starflyer only fifteen minutes before I would have said, "Yeah, Starflyer is pretty good. I like 'em." Just like that. The way I say I like Mark Knopfler, the Clash, or the Pixies. I do like these others, but it turns out I've always been in love with the girl next door. What a strange discovery. It's like suddenly realizing that you can't get enough peanut butter. I love that life does this to me every once in a great while.—

PEPE GUZMAN

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As I was working on the finishing touches for a new piece of music under my new artistic guise SPF One Million ("Cuz Bitches Need P'tection"), Ableton Live, my Digital Audio Workstation (also commonly known as DAW), inexplicably crashed. Subsequent attempts to open it not only failed, but also, perhaps more inexplicably, shaved two GB from my hard drive upon each attempt. After popping a Clonazepam in an effort to stave off what could have been the worst panic at tack I've yet experienced, I immediately placed an appointment to Apple's Genius Bar so that one of their whiz kids could diagnose the problem, a problem well beyond my purview.

I received the prognosis that I'd feared from the day I carried my laptop out of the same Apple Store over five years ago with a grin from here to Peoria: my computer is near death. I bought my laptop with student aid funds, and, knowing that this day would arrive, I'd planned to buy another in five to seven years (I based this estimate on conversations I'd had with other Mac owners whose laptops served them in good stead over a longer than ordinary period of time, including two people who'd used theirs for seven years and counting) after establishing my library career. One laptop near death and no career, a disability check presently serving as my brightest career prospect, later, I faced the irretrievable loss of five years worth of hard work. Needless to say, I was not grinning upon leaving that day, but not "frowning from here to Peoria."

I explained the situation to my mom, and, with aid of a generous loan from her and my dad, bought a back-up drive (my previous back-up drive died approximately 500 days prior, if a message from my computer that I hadn't backed up Time Machine in approximately 500 days has any veracity), which, thankfully, enabled me to salvage the best of my past five years' work. We bought the drive at, let's call it, "The Computer Cable Superstore" (this place has a truly breathtaking variety of cables among its breathtaking inventory of computer arcania). While there, my wife and gathered pricing information for the dying computer's replacement.

During the course of my exasperating visit, I did manage to squeeze out some useful information: a Mac Mini, fully outfitted, comes in at \$802. Everything considered, a brand new Mac, one that will do everything I need it to do, for well under a grand is a steal. Plus, if I were to buy a mini monitor, it's portable. That get-up is not as efficiently or elegantly portable as a MacBook Pro, but I could still take it to the coffee shop.

As reasonably priced as the Mac Mini is, it still beyond our financial reach. I suppose we could liquidate a few things, but experience has taught me that doing so is almost invariably regrettable; besides, what could we reasonably expect for a twenty-year old convection oven that seems to work only on holidays? I'd entertained the notion of creating a Kickstarter campaign before, and with my present career outlook nebulous, save disability, I could sure use a benefactor.

Even after I'd received the prognosis and exhausted all other foreseeable funding options, I had reservations about starting a Kickstarter campaign. My chief concern was the ethics of embarking upon the endeavor. Essentially, it seemed like I'd be asking my friends to give me money so I could continue my musical capering, and my friends have their own capers to attend to. However, my attitude changed dramatically as I fashioned my campaign. In an abrupt volte face, I, as I stated in my pitch, arrived at the answer "Why shouldn't I?"

Without trying to rehash my pitch, I realized that my ideas are as valid as anyone else's, regardless who that person might be. Amanda Palmer, also known as Amanda "Fucking" Palmer, received over \$1,000,000. Qualitative concerns aside, I believe that my ideas are as valid as hers, and as valid as anyone else's who's decided to seek funding through Kickstarter. Furthermore, and, again, quality of ideas aside, we all wish to realize our ideas. For many of us, that realization is something concrete: a film, a book, or a recording, to cite only the immediately salient, most general examples.

# Kickstarter—a right

by Ronald

To put the matter in the broadest terms, I'm a multidisciplinary artist. Within most of the disciplines I practice, I'd characterize myself a dilettante, albeit a happy one who's really not trying to put one over on anyone. I am mostly comfortable calling myself an artist in two disciplines: music and literature, and even the latter might be an overstatement. Music and writing, then. I've proven to have more affinity for those than the others (e.g. film, graphic design). I've practiced them longer, and I enjoy them the most. Regardless of the discipline, I harbor few ambitions for creating a product. For the purposes of this piece, music will serve as the example.

Speaking for myself, I have little desire to release an album as we know it in traditional terms. Several limited-run EP's with unusual artwork in the future maybe, but not a full-length album. Having said that, I think I understand the motivations behind an artist's decision to make an album. I don't share any of their motivations.

Within the ten years I've been making music, I've become self-sufficient enough to produce and master the work I've written and arranged, services that cost all but the most well-heeled in the industry a small fortune. Right now, I'm perfectly happy to put my recorded output on Soundcloud. Any money I'd stand to make from a recorded piece of music would be gravy. Honestly, few people turn down gravy.

My desire to keep going was not enough to sway Kickstarter. I'm not going to say that a "lack of ambition" doomed my campaign; again, I believe in my ideas, and, further, I believe that the means of realization of those ideas has validity as well. Arguably, my realizations are more reasonable. I don't have boxes of albums and CD's cluttering my place.

Perhaps I could have stated my case more convincingly, but my premise was clear: I just want to keep going. The desire to keep going, in Kickstarter's words, "does not meet [their] criteria." Right now, let's just say that I suspect that there's more at play than my not meeting Kickstarter's criteria.

In the interim between presenting my pitch to Kickstarter and their initial response of denial, I watched my "Preview Page," where potential backers (at that stage, most likely friends, family, and acquaintances) could provide feedback to help ensure the project's success. No one left feedback on my Preview page; however, a few friends left feedback on my Facebook page. Their feedback demonstrated that my friends not only read the pitch, but also thought my endeavor worthwhile. A couple of friends even mentioned their anticipation of receiving their "Rewards." If feedback from a few friends on one's Facebook page serves as a representative sample, my campaign had a fighting chance.

In Kickstarter parlance, a "Reward" is something tangible that donors receive for chipping in to a campaign. About rewards, Kickstarter states, "Everyone loves limited editions, one-of-a-kinds, and fun experiences (parties, screenings, balloon rides!). Spend some time brainstorming your rewards and people will respond. No one needs another coffee mug."

I, too love limited editions, and I also love and need another coffee mug because I use the same one every day, but I'll be a top hat before I offer a preposterous reward like a balloon ride because, to start, I'm not going to the trouble of pricing liability insurance in case one of my donors falls out. A party's not a bad idea, if you factor in the costs to fly your donors in, but since "projects cannot offer alcohol as a reward," (<http://www.kickstarter.com/help/guidelines>), checking into airfare's not worth the hassle, either. Then again, maybe my donors can take a balloon to Houston for the party. I'm thinking outside the box here!

I offered nothing as pedestrian as another coffee mug nor as preposterous as a party in a hot air balloon. In order to, at once, offer something unique (and for the \$15 donor, limited) and manage costs, I offered rewards that were consistent with my campaign: music. My rewards were to be:

# It's Rich in the balls

**Imagine:** For donations of \$10: "A CD-R complete with custom artwork by the artist! The artwork will be, let's say, 'out of the ordinary.' For donations of \$15: "A CD-R complete with customer artwork by the artist! Your copy will be one of a kind: that's the SPFOM guarantee! Also, your copy might contain, say, an autographed recipe by the artist!"

Also consistent with my campaign, my rewards were humble. Maybe not as humble as the cup, but certainly more so than an offer to join the SPF One Million Mile High Club. I stated that I wasn't interested in making an album, but I was willing to reward my donors with something handmade, genuine, heartfelt, and, again, unique, something each donor could cherish and call his own. Handmade and humble, yes, but not half-assed. I even thought about including new songs from yet another of my artistic guises, Ectomorph, if I could get my hands on a loaner guitar. As it turns out, I didn't have to worry about learning to play guitar again, rooting around for Charlie's Angels trading cards, or write out a pasta recipe by hand.

Within two days of submitting my pitch, I received a message from Kickstarter stating that they'd elected to pass on my campaign. Upon receiving Kickstarter's denial message, I was ready to pat myself on the back for giving it a try; furthermore, the message did nothing to sway my belief that my ideas could stand up next to anybody's, the next guy's or the next gal's even if she's Amanda "Fucking" Palmer, never mind that my campaign was not consistent with their "focus."

A few days ago, I was talking to one of my neighbors. A subject came up, one with which most of us are familiar: the notion that we're only, I don't know what it is, seven degrees away from any given person. And goddamn you Kickstarter, you brought me one degree closer to that sniveling little shit Zach Braff. If I'd only known...I'll just say that learning about Zach Braff's successful Kickstarter campaign was like learning that there's no such thing as Santa Claus. I recovered quickly enough, in time to realize that Kickstarter doesn't smell quite as nice as they'd you to believe it does. But maybe I should thank them; arguably, Kickstarter's first denial extended my campaign and steered it in a new direction.

Kickstarter's next denial response wasn't nearly as kind as their first. That Kickstarter used my phrase "keep it goin'" indicates that someone read my proposal somewhat thoroughly. I must admit: I am, at once, impressed and amused by this. What immediately follows insults me: the implication that I'm using Kickstarter as a means for funding a, to use their term, "fund my life" project.

Two questions immediately spring to mind: Might Kickstarter suspect that I'm going to put my new computer to non-creative uses, such as balancing our checkbook, or filling out job applications? Does anyone think that Zach Braff isn't going to use part of his \$3.3 Million Kickstarter haul for hair gel? Might anyone suspect that Zach Braff sought donations in order to avoid dipping into his own personal wealth/retirement (after all, he hasn't worked in a while, it seems)? I'll address this question in greater depth later; for now, I'll depart from it by stating that Zach Braff might use part of the proceeds to purchase sandwiches for his film crew. That's a nice thing for him to do, but does such a purchase violate Kickstarter's guidelines?

I seem to recall Kickstarter stating that once the funds are acquired, theirs is a hands-off policy. The beneficiary is free to spend the money as he sees fits, and Kickstarter has no role in determining the direction of the final product. If I find the passage specifically, I'll cite it. Until then, you'll have to take my word for it. At any rate, that policy introduces another question: So what if I use the computer to balance my checkbook and apply for jobs? Isn't that all but implied? Also, is Kickstarter asking Zach Braff how he allocated his monies? Money in hand, are they telling him, "Mr. Braff, we see that you've spent inordinate amounts of money not consistent with our guidelines, if the line item 'Grooming' is an indicator?" According to their policy, no.

At any rate, my dalliance with Kickstarter was finished. They didn't like me

and I like them less. They don't have the time to trifle with SPF One Million's \$50. I, on the other hand, have nothing but time right now, and I want to keep my campaign going.

The problem is, Kickstarter led on struggling artists, having them believe that they're welcomed with open arms. Indeed, the folks at Kickstarter fancy themselves as torch-bearers of the noble tradition of cultural patronage. As an enticement, you, the artist, is invited by Kickstarter to join such august company. You might call the enticement a reward.

A lot of space, perhaps too much, devoted to "indie" and "D. I. Y." culture is in order, as well as a caveat: cultural criticism is murky business by its nature. So many people, whose credentials vary from "self-styled" to "PhD," comment on culture, for one, and for another, an entire language was created expressly for the task of cultural commentary because plain English won't do and in an effort to keep the barbarians at bay. Inevitably, questions along the lines of what is "is" arise, burning questions such as, "When did 'independent' become 'indie'?"

Basically, the terms "indie" and "D. I. Y." exist in hegemony (basically, and God willing, briefly, a power struggle between two factions. The victor "controls the narrative," or defines the terms), between artists who truly used to do it themselves, with little, if any, hope for a benefactor, and corporate interests and media, dutifully falling in line, that have vitiated the terms such as to render them all but meaningless, save for their marketing cache. Currently, corporate interests and media define the terms in question.

Maybe it is time for truly independent artists to jettison those now meaningless terms and replace them with more suitable ones in an effort to distinguish themselves; then again, maybe that doesn't matter. Truly independent artists have never had much say in their own narrative until well after the fact. Their concerns were more fundamental, like choosing between art and starvation. Michael Azzerad's *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, while, perhaps, not definitive, serves as the most well-known chronicle of the 80's underground, and provides not only good definitions for "indie" and "D. I. Y." but also plenty of examples to demonstrate that "indie" was, at least one time, not synonymous with "glamorous."

One thing's certain: few so-called "indie artists," according to the contemporary definition, have to choose between guitar strings or a trip to Taco Bell, and none of them have the stomach to play through a vicious bout of diarrhea like Mike Watt did when The Minutemen toured as support for REM in 1985 (Azzerad, *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, from memory: I no longer have the book). Now, they don't have to. Many venues offer food, if the artist can't already afford to go out, and if an indie artist like Zach Braff gets diarrhea, he can call in sick. Even when he's not playing, he's still getting paid. After all that verbiage, we can all agree on this: English doesn't get any plainer than diarrhea, and none of us like it. That includes Kickstarter.

By all appearances, Kickstarter is where the cool kids hang out, and if your Dionysian impulses are screaming to run riot but you're late on the rent again, you might be thinking that it's not only cooler in their cool blue pool, but also a lifeline. If so, take a dip, or go soak your head.

No one can maintain a state of permanent sensory derangement and get out unscathed, and here, I urge you to consider all this new paradigm business with your cool, Apollonian head. To start, when corporate America or media outlets proclaim that a paradigm shift is underway, and that a business' (e.g) practices best emblemize that shift, you should approach that business with caution. Kickstarter is such a business.

For one, Kickstarter boasts that it is simply the latest (and current best) iteration in the grand tradition of noblesse

**continued ->**

oblige. That bit about "Mozart, Beethoven, Whitman, Twain, and other artists?" That would signal a return to old practices, and those practices were subject to the caprice of the wealthy. Nice if you could get it, sure, but let's just say that the wealthy didn't answer every knock on their doors. Also, never mind that noblesse oblige might not really exist anymore. Here, a broadside: many members of the wealthy class use every trick to avoid paying taxes, which is the least of their societal obligations, and even the wealthiest tax cheat gets to enjoy the benefits of society.

I guess someone's got to deliver the tax cheat's pizzas. Maybe the delivery guy's working a double to finance an album. Maybe the tax cheat will tip the pizza boy handsomely. Maybe the pizza boy should pitch his idea to the tax cheat; that is, if the pizza boy's a square.

Funny enough, consumers' attitudes concerning the acquisition of art are similar. Their attitudes constitute, in part, the new paradigm concerning art's acquisition: consumers expect something for nothing. Artists who profited under the old paradigm can proceed more or less in the manner to which they'd grown accustomed because they've established enough cache, either with consumers, the industry, or both. Most artists operating under the new paradigm should do so with the understanding that they'll receive little more than "hugs and beers" as compensation for all their hard work. Kickstarter addresses this shift thus: balloon rides, aka rewards (see Part 2). Each creator is expected to create rewards in an effort to entice potential donors (and by rewards, we're not talking coffee cups), which, to me, seems like more work piled atop the project proper. For better or worse, Kickstarter sussed out that part of the new paradigm. I'd argue worse, of course: under the new paradigm, consumers expect us to operate under the old independent artist paradigm so that they can enjoy the benefits under the new paradigm. Effectively, consumers tell artists, "If you want me to listen to your stuff, you're going to have to work consecutive double shifts at Papa John's, and don't keep me waiting." Ian Mackaye, a music veteran of unimpeachable credentials and the true exemplar of the old independent artist paradigm, addresses this shift in plain English: "[P]eople should be prepared to have fun with the past because the only music that can possibly be free is the music that's from the past. It costs money to make music. And if people are prepared to only have the past to listen to, then let it be free." In response to Mr. Mackaye well-pointed declamation, Kickstarter might respond, "And that's where Kickstarter comes in."

If, as Kickstarter might have you believe, Kickstarter is the answer, then I'm trading in my broken computer and my other music equipment for the gaudiest pair of golf slacks you can imagine. Ask yourself: In Kickstarter's five years of existence, has the artistic landscape changed? Again, it seems to make sense that if, instead of corporations, ordinary folks such as you and me are digging deep to provide funding, then the consequent art should reflect that. I don't see or hear much art that I'd be willing to fund, at least any that's broached mass consciousness. I'll leave you to answer the question, "Where's the shift?" Rolling Stone says, "Kickstarter funds the future." Maybe, if you read Rolling Stone religiously.

And let's face it: Kickstarter, the fact that it allows a few small fries through the velvet rope and a design scheme that serves as inspiration for the living rooms of our social betters notwithstanding, didn't dispense with all of the practices under the old paradigm wholesale. They threw out some of the nasty beige bath water, but they kept the baby with the good head for business. To wit: What Is Kickstarter? Scroll to the bottom. If you're not inclined, I'll save you the time. Under the heading Our mission is to help bring creative projects to life, you would find, "We're a for-profit company based in New York City's [New York: Where All Worthwhile Art Gets Made] Lower East Side. We spend our time making Kickstarter a little bit better every day, answering questions from backers and creators, and finding new projects to share. If a project is successfully funded, we apply a 5% fee to the funds collected." Consistent with the

practices of an ages-old model, Kickstarter gets down to business a couple of layers deep, and once you've managed to get through them, you still have to go to the bottom. Business on the bottom is business as usual.

"What is Kickstarter?" is fair game. Is it a vehicle for "grassroots funding of the arts?" Yeah, and I'm Mr. Peanut in his top hat partying in a hot air balloon. Is it a business? Indubitably, albeit one that pretends that not to really be one, at least as you know it (I imagine a sign that hangs above the entrance of Kickstarter headquarters: "Leave your tie at the door."). Is it "[p]aradigm-shifting?" Does CNN, decent source for current events that it is, truly know much about culture? It doesn't appear that way, but I will accept its claim in part, if, by "paradigm-shifting," they mean that the shift more greatly favors the Z-List celebrity rather than the A-List celebrity now.

As it turns out, Amanda "Fucking" Palmer-Gaiman (wife of author Neil Gaiman), Whoopi Goldberg, and Zach Braff, none of whom you'd heard much from until they mounted their own campaigns, still have enough cache that ordinary people like you and me, people whose comparative wealth is negligible, will fund their projects, seemingly because they just had the gall to ask. Consistent with their policies of funding only "creative projects" and not asking questions once these no-accounts, whose collective resume consists, in part, of The Dresden Dolls, The Color Purple, Ghost, Hollywood Squares, "Roman Polanski wasn't guilty of 'rape-rape,'" Garden State, and Scrubs, get their greedy grip around their money, Kickstarter first looked the other way, and then mounted several of their own backpedaling campaigns. Their campaigns must have been successful enough: they kept the money, and artists, struggling and otherwise washed up, are still lining up for their share.

Their gerrymandering actually dilutes the pool, forcing the struggling artist to compete against the likes of Zach Braff, Whoopi Goldberg, and Amanda Palmer-Gaiman. Who knows who else in the future? KISS? A Kickstarter campaign doesn't seem beneath them.

For a company that cherishes "transparency" (Kickstarter uses that term quite a bit, too, and always with regard to creators), it seems that Kickstarter has problems of its own. No matter. They have their money, and there's more on the way.

I can distill all of that verbiage, plain and academic, pithily: Attractive public face notwithstanding, Kickstarter is mostly business as usual.

In my proposal, I thanked Kickstarter for providing a forum for me and other struggling artists to tell our stories. I thought my story compelling enough to attract benefactors. I thanked them too soon - Kickstarter's denial ensured that I never got the chance to take my plea to donors. I still think my story is compelling, so I elected to keep my campaign going, almost certainly without Kickstarter's blessing.

Although I lack a benefactor (a job would be nice), I still hold to hope. I'm married to the best woman a guy could hope for. I have plenty of supportive friends, all of whom are the best a guy could hope for. I have health insurance, which is a true luxury for anyone now, artist or not. I should qualify for disability between current unemployment and ultimate career, and, for now, my computer still allows me to listen to "Ventura Highway" on Spotify (deprecated version) and write. Yes my friends, the pen still has some ink in it yet, and as long as it does, I'll keep going. One of my true blessings is that I have a voice; with it, I've told my story, the one that Kickstarter wouldn't allow me to. To borrow a bit of lingo from the new paradigm, I hope my story has been a reward for you. It has been for me.

And who knows? Maybe one day, and I'm guessing that that day is still in the distant future, I'll have the opportunity to create another Kickstarter campaign, one that competes with an aging, ever-more-whacked-out Axl Rose's.





## Still Thinking: Farewell Coffeemaker

Our ten dollar coffee maker, made by the Chefmaster Company and purchased at our local Target Gigantoplex, died this morning at the ripe old age of nine weeks. I expected to get at least ten weeks for ten bucks, but, as it would appear, I'm a whimsical consumer with lofty expectations. If the dying of my Chefmaster is a result of planned obsolescence, I perceive they set their clocks a wee soon.

This thing about imagery and language is something I think about a lot as a teacher, as a writer, and as an overly emotional guy. One of my favorite "family traditions" from Old Testament scripture is Jehovah's insistence that Israel build landmarks to remind themselves and their children and their children's children of Jehovah's fulfilled promises and provisions. This the children of Israel stop and do after nearly every battle, after every parted war scenario, and after finally obtaining the Promised Land. It's funny that Jehovah knew how feeble human devotions truly are, that even after all those clouds by day and fireballs by night and walls of ocean and crumbling Jerichos and tents full of circumcision (that last part seems fairly memorable) Jehovah knew that Israel needed concrete reminders of His covenant. They'd soon forget. They'd soon be off in the woods worshipping fairies and fauns and each other's sexy parts.

There's even this great story in Joshua's memoir about the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh going out to build an altar "of great size" that appeared so questionable to the rest of Israel that a fight nearly broke out—and when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to war against them. (Joshua 22:12) Funny thing, it was all just a misunderstanding. Israel thought that the Reubenites and the Gad and half-Mans were building altars to lower-case gods. And considering that these were people fresh off a lifestyle of mass murder and pillage, killing even the cows and the kids of an entire people, the Reubenites and the Gads and the half-Mans had to quickly assure, "No, no, no! This altar is for the capital-letter God, your God! We're making a landmark to show our kids! We call it Dadaism!" Then all of Israel had a good laugh, apologized, clapped each other on the shoulder, and went home to circumcise something. The point here being that these people took their altars and landmarks and concrete reminders seriously. So much so that if one people group designed their reminder in a questionable Marcel Duchamp type fashion they were in danger of massive attack. The people from Chefmaster really should hear this story.

The need for concrete reminders seems to be hardwired in us as human race. We love to remember and we're afraid we'll forget. So we buy souvenirs on vacation, t-shirts at concerts, picture frames at Wal-Greens, guilty pleasure CDs on the discount rack. We tattoo our skin and decorate our home and put stickers on our vehicles and name our pets or children in tribute. We keep heirlooms and mementos and trinkets in the form of jewelry from ancestors, furniture from family, old letters from past friends and ex-lovers. And sometimes we host elaborate rituals to erect and to exchange concrete symbols of abstract intentions, many of which we soon misplace the value, such as birthday parties with cakes and graduations with diplomas and weddings with rings and funerals with deep holes in the ground. We make art and we make our art available to people, and we lie, unconvincingly, saying we make that art for ourselves and be damned if no one likes it. And in our modern age we record and photograph and sentence size everything to fit our screens because if we can't socially share our moments they might as well have never happened. We inherently do these silly things because we feel deeply and we forget easily and, even if we live a long life, we die sooner than we would prefer, certainly before we ever made ourselves as known as we had hoped.

I can add to my collection of concrete imagery this morning a broken coffee maker. Here's my disappointment and my longing, my addiction made plastic and obsolete.—KEVIN STILL

## Springsteen and I Highlights the Fanatics

After watching the documentary *Springsteen and I* last week, I think I finally understand why his fans are such . . . fans.

First, the documentary is geared for the faithful; I doubt any curious music fan will be won over by some of the grainy footage or the sometimes-overly earnest declarations of fans' love for Bruce. However, it is much funnier than I expected, particularly the tale of the poor husband of one fan who is dragged all over Europe for shows. The documentary was made from videos submitted from Bruce fans worldwide.



The documentary also affirmed why Springsteen's latest tour didn't include any Texas dates. There were just nine of us at the July 22 local showing (at least one Dallas showing did only slightly better). However, watching one music fan after another on screen struggle to try to explain what Springsteen's music meant to them, it occurred to me that the near-obsessive bond between Bruce and his fans was simply this: he can articulate what they can't. There is something in his persona or his lyrics or his sound or his performance that speaks directly for them -- and to them -- in a way nothing else in music had ever done.

For Bruce fans, his music gives meaning to the mundane in their lives, and it also gives them joy, pure and simple. In the documentary, it was a factory worker and a truck driver and a manual laborer, all who found a certain level of pride and majesty in what they did for a living because of Springsteen's music. What a great gift that must be for them. The level of fervor for Springsteen spans countries and economics. It ranges from the long-married couple in the documentary who had never been able to afford a concert to ardent fans like the two guys in the theater who had flown up to New Jersey earlier this year for a couple of shows. There were the self-conscious fans as well as the older fans, almost embarrassed to still be so enamored of a performer after all these years, but the passion is there for them all. And it's that passion that fuels the relationship between performer and crowd as evidenced by the interplay at numerous shows over the years in the documentary. Springsteen needs his audience as much as they need him. For those fans, music—his music I particular—makes their lives worthwhile. For Springsteen, whose only job—ever—has been performing music, playing for his fans IS his life.

So, when you see the crowd at a Springsteen show or you find yourself cornered by Bruce fans, remember that they are not looking for salvation from the music, they have already found it. Brrrruuccccccc . . . (Full disclosure: I have been a Springsteen fan since 1975, seen about seven shows, met him, own most of his music).—MIKE L. DOWNEY

# Mustache Rides

By James Gray



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# concert calendar

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

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

**8/10—J Goodin, Ass, The Hangouts, DJ Skullbone** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**8/16—In The Trench, Myra Maybelle, Shattered Sun, Critical Assembly, Dsgns, Inside Falling Skies** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm

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

**8/29—Buxton, The Eastern Sea** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**8/30—Rocketboys, Driver Friendly, The Lonely Hunter** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**8/31—Black Pistol Fire** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm  
**8/31—Jay Satellite, Paris Falls, Magic Girl** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

**8/31—Come & Skate It** @ Garrett Hysmith Skate Park, College Station. 11am

**9/5—Octopus Project, Scientist, Atarimatt** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

**9/14—Football, Etc., The Ex-Optimists, Sparrows, This Year's Tiger** @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

# Record Reviews



**Steve Martin & Edie Brickell**  
*Love Has Come For You*

I heard a bit of an interview on NPR (naturally) where Edie Brickell first met Steve Martin at a party where she told him how much she liked his music. Now I want to live in a world where the parties I go to have Steve Martin and the wife of Paul Simon in attendance. But back to the album. *Love Has Come For You* sounds pretty much like what you'd expect from this odd pairing of a Grammy and Emmy award-winning comedian/actor/writer and a folk singer; pleasant and mildly amusing. I wondered if they just got together to amuse themselves with the reference to the singing couple from the 1950s and 1960s: Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme.

Every song features Martin's slow banjo playing, bright-sounding enough, but it never changes above that moderate speed - no breakneck runs here. Due to Martin's measured playing throughout, one expects the tunes to be about the Civil War or something. However, Brickell's voice is luckily as agreeable as it was in the 1980s with the New Bohemians. It is her often-quirky lyrics that provide the wry humor throughout the album - Martin just did the music. His only funny contribution is a brief liner note.

While the music doesn't vary much despite the touches of fiddle and other instruments, Brickell's subject matter ranges wildly from barn dances ("Who You Gonna Take?") to babies thrown from trains ("Sarah Jane and the Iron Mountain Baby") to

creepy cousins ("Shawnee"). Probably the sprightliest thing is "Siamese Cat", an interesting break-up song of the modern age for the somewhat older set. It's from the perspective of a woman who doesn't care for the daughter of the man she's dating, so she's saying goodbye.

This is inoffensive music that can be played anywhere, but it sure would have been a great deal more interesting if Martin and Brickell had cut loose on a couple of numbers. —**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



**True Widow**  
*Circumambulation*

Dallas slowcore trio True Widow has been celebrated quietly amongst the indie rock intelligentsia as a band that is breathing new life into the early 90s dreampop sound. Rather than channel Mazzy Star like Tamaryn or later period Dum Dum Girls, True Widow injects a bit more muscle, which has them equally as embraced by the stoner metal set as they are the neu-dreampop people.

*Circumambulation*, the band's third album and first for Pittsburgh indie label Relapse, has the band working the same sound as the previous two albums. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. And True Widow is not fucking with their streak here. If you liked the earlier albums, you'll like this one. The songs stretch out well past five minutes, and the tempos are languid. There aren't really songs here so much as there are tone poems, moods that the band

explores. Steady, flat-EQ'd drums with riveted cymbals helps to fill out the space that the guitar and bass leave up top, as the band likes their strings doomy and muddy, but oddly enough, the band doesn't really come off sounding "metal" heavy. Just steady and deliberate. More like krautrock reimagined as slowcore stoner indie. —**KELLY MINNIS**



**Sneaky Pete**  
*Snokey Mountain Musical Meats*

A bit of local music history - "Sneaky Pete" is the musical alterego of Dr. Pete Rizzo, a retired Texas A&M University professor of biology now living in Tennessee, who taught at A&M for more than three decades. He also used to hold forth for crowds up to 200 at various local music venues and has recorded nearly two dozen novelty albums. Several tunes have been featured on the long-running Dr. Demento music program as well as music sites across the United States and even overseas.

*SMMM* doesn't break any new ground for the Sneak - he continues to favor short self-deprecating humorous Sixties-era tunes (the album clocks in at under half an hour). This outing, there are three songs about food - "Pierogi Polka" is actually a polka a la Weird Al Yankovic (whom Pete extolled for president in song in 2012). The peppy title cut—one of the album's best—is about Rizzo's penchant for playing songs with less than perfect technical expertise. "Cupid's Dart" and "Dandelion Wine" are both playful songs about obvious topics.

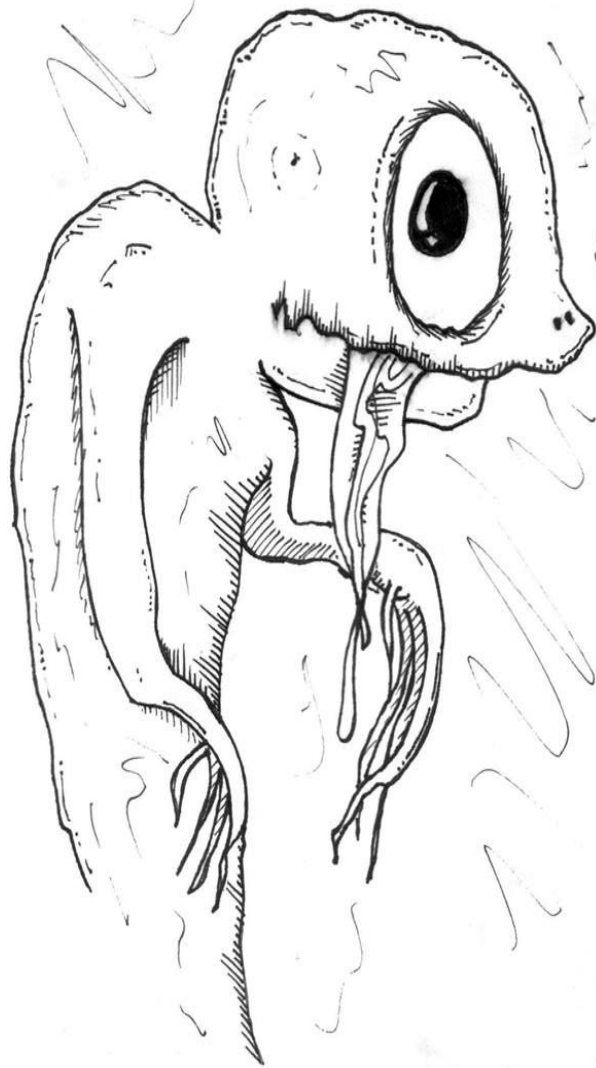
"Villerville, TN" is a folksy look at people who live and die in the same town just like their parents and everyone else did. "My Dog is a Porn Star" is the odd tale of the dog's owner living the high life. "Cosmic Boogers" is the spoken-word story of two less-than-urban types and their discourse on comets. The album closer ("Milking the Dragon Pats 1 and 2") is also spoken word, a litany of one-liners: "Growing up, my parents told me breakfast was the most important meal of the day/I have since learned Happy Hour is the most important meal of the day."

Now in his seventh decade, Rizzo obviously continues to have fun with his music, a lesson for us all. —**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



**The Freakouts**  
*Care Less*

I didn't want to like The Freakouts 7". The band is very much more image-heavy than any other Houston punk rock band running around right now. They look so Sunset Strip that it was hard for me to want to take the music at face value. That is my problem, because *Care Less* shoves too catchy as fuck hard rock/punk hybrid gems right in your face. Singer Ash Kay has the right amount of sass and grit to give these rockers some real character. The band has a slower Fastbacks kind of vibe had the Kurt and Kim hailed from Los Angeles instead of a Seattle basement. Keep an eye on these guys and gals. —**KELLY MINNIS**



SOMETIMES  
YOU FEEL  
LIKE A  
NUT.  
xxx

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