

979 REPRESENT



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*inside: the formally optimistic crew in space - 12/17, our holiday -
tour diary of an unknown rock band - death sucks - ask creepy
horse - chula frontera - rented mule chronicles - dear carrie brown-
stein - no more body parts - record reviews - concert calendar*



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

editorial bored

kelly minnis - kevin still

art splendor

katie killer - wonko the sane

folks that did the other shit for us

timothy danger - ken dannelly - mike e. downey -
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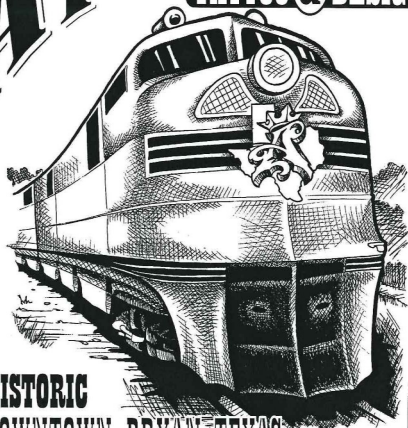
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"NO MORE BODY PARTS"

These are words an eyewitness claims to have heard uttered upon arrest by Robert Lewis Dear, the man who walked into a Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood late last month and shot up the place, killing three and injuring nine. It is the latest salvo in the Culture Wars that have continuously ebbed and flowed in the wake of the Roe Vs. Wade decision in 1975 to make abortion a legal service nationwide. This is not a question of whether one supports a woman's constitutionally supported right to choose abortion or does not, it is about the semantics of the argument, the disinformation willfully batted around by politicians and media figures, and the digital divide at the social media level that continues to pit citizen against citizen in a fruitless and uncivilized discourse. It is time for that divide to be bridged, and a line drawn in the sand that both sides of the issue will recognize, respect, and absolutely refuse to cross.

Let us begin with the disinformation. Videos surfaced earlier this year filmed by The Center for Medical Progress. The videos were recorded in secret featuring actors hired to discover what happens to fetal tissue gathered from abortions. The videos allege that Planned Parenthood sells the tissue to companies for research. The truth is slightly different. In some states it is legal for researchers to obtain discarded tissue. Most states it is not legal. In the states that it is legal, the nonprofit organizations that conduct stem cell research and other medical research take the discarded tissue and donate in-kind for its use. The donation is not required for the tissue. **THIS IS NOT AN EXCHANGE OF MONEY FOR GOODS.** However, the CMP has a political agenda and has edited their videos to disseminate incorrect information to further their political agenda of defunding Planned Parenthood in a back drawer attempt to make abortion procedures impossible to access. Many fact-finding organizations have debunked the factuality of these videos, yet many continue to cite these videos as 100% fact. This misinformation has been used by conservative politicians nationally to fuel a largely successful campaign to defund Planned Parenthood. Texas ran with the misinformation, and our local Planned Parenthood office was shut down as a result. Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina has most famously used her viewing of the videos as a call to arms to end Planned Parenthood and eventually abortion. It is a call that apparently Robert Lewis Dear answered. Fiorina is not directly responsible, but the politicizing of misinformation is.

The New York Times reported on an elderly man seen wandering around outside of the Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood during the blockade. The shooter could not get entirely inside the building so the death toll is a lot smaller than it could have been. This elderly man's 80-year-old wife was inside for a checkup. The couple are on Medicare and Planned Parenthood provides his wife with inexpensive ob/gyn care. She got out okay. This is the type of patient Planned Parenthood sees 97% of the time. Someone there for other services beyond abortion. These are the patients who suffer at the hands of the misinformation campaign more so than the abortion doctors or those seeking abortions. People like your grandmother, not some "harlot who got knocked up". It is time wherever you fall along the culture war divide to stop the politicization of misinformation about Planned Parenthood. It hurts people far outside of that debate.—**KELLY MINNIS**

ASK CREEPY HORSE



I found out a few months ago when my oldest brother had come to visit, that we were both victims of sexual abuse at the hands of our mother who used us to pay off debts or whatever random flights of fancy she may have had. The two of us were in shock. We both had internalized our abuse and felt "we were the only ones". I was sickened for him the whole rest of the day. I'm okay, that was years ago, and trust me, my twenties were all the therapy I needed to understand what had happened and how to deal with it. Well, cope. Everyday it lives with me but I've learned how to cope.

Unlike my brother though that had a very loving and supportive father and family, I have a very different father and family. I was violently abused through my preteen to teenage years. That family is primarily composed of drug dealers, gang members, prisoners and addicts of all kinds. Education is low and most of those folks don't see a world beyond the barrio. Domestic violence runs rampant and the poverty is incredulous. We are like a Mexican version of the White family.

I've witnessed my aunt and grandmother beat a pregnant aunt with a hair brush, my uncle died from his heart literally exploding from too much cocaine. He was in his 50's, already a great grandfather and was known to beat his wife of several decades on a daily basis. I have a cousin that has spent more time in prison than out and he's close to my age. And he's a grandfather.

My childhood was difficult. For years I would joke that we were "white trash" until recently when I realized, "Holy shit, we really WERE white trash." As a child you only come up in something and don't know that it's right or wrong. We were very poor, food was donated by church groups and well wishers of the community, our child support was used by our mom for what we now believe was her ongoing drug addiction and material things like expensive perfume. We may be going to bed with our stomachs growling but dammit mom was going to smell like Oscar de la Renta!

My brothers and I literally had to fight in some bad neighborhoods in a rural town outside of Pensacola. My oldest brother being a ginger and me being mixed race didn't bode well with the demographic. None of my mother's children made it past 15 with her and I recently found out she tried to get my oldest brother to adopt me and my older brother when we were kids. We had the kind of mom as soon as you were of age, you were working and paying the bills. If the electricity or phone got cut off, it was your fault.

I was emancipated and homeless by the age of 15. She had pulled me out of high school against my protest the year before. My dad and I had been estranged since I had run away from him fearing my life. In the few months I had tried to live with him as a teen, I was violently abused nearly every day to the point I slept with my bedroom door locked and even called CPS on him.

Domestic violence for me began when I was 10 years old. I reached out and tried to tell my mom and several educators and family members that my step dad was abusing me. It fell on deaf ears until the night he beat my mother for 8 hours overnight in a closet breaking her back and arm and ripping out her hair. He also tried to kill us when she got away and ran outside to call police. He put a gun to my head and gave her until the count of three to get back in and give him the phone. After that

we lived in motel rooms hiding from him for many months as the courts released him.

Now, I'm not telling you this for attention or to zap away all your good feels, I'm telling you this as someone that comes from the experience no matter how terrible your past has been or what you've done, it should never ever stop you from being you. You really are quite fantastic and amazing.

I recently went over to visit my dad who I made peace with years ago when things abruptly went aggressive with him. I had gotten home a few minutes before him and started cooking dinner. I was almost finished eating when he came in. He sat down and started berating me. I hadn't had the chance to say anything as I was mid-slurp finishing off my plate of spaghetti. There wasn't a trigger or anything I said or did. My father is just an angry psychopath. He wanted me to tell him I was "a pathetic loser". His reason being to make sure I'm not "crazy or stupid". He ridiculed my insecurities and even threatened either bodily harm or my life.

I got out of there. When I found out about my oldest brother, I cut all ties with my mother. After this violent tirade of my father, I've moved forward doing the same with him. I actually had to have friends confirm several times with me that my parents behaviors are not only absolutely not normal, but incredibly bat shit crazy. Again, growing up with this how would anyone know what is and is not normal?

I think cutting ties with my parents may be the greatest thing I've ever done. Getting toxic and abusive people out of your life is not only quite refreshing but completely essential. I'd only want people to feel sorry for me if I continued this abuse, I ask you to be proud of me. And please don't compare. What you are going through, if it hurts you then it matters.

I've had friends that have had far worse lives than me. I had a friend whose siblings and her would have to comb through rural farm land to find their parents who would binge on meth in tents with a commune so that they could get fed. When she went to run away, she was kidnapped at a bus station and at the age of 13 was made a prostitute that many high end business men had their way with. She's now happily married, living well off with a family of her own.

These things are real and they do happen. You have no idea what a person has or has not been through. I know what it is to be afraid, to be scared, to feel lonely and sad. I myself have been in some very dark places at times in my life, I have also survived. We've all been through something and if you are out there and you are hurting, or someone is hurting you, then you need to get help and know that this is not normal. No one should scare you or make you think lesser of yourself. If something doesn't feel right, then it most likely isn't. Get help. Talk to people.

You have something to offer this world, and whatever tragic pains have happened to you, I am sorry. The worst thing is to lose yourself and succumb to the perils of others. You are stronger than you realize and you have something to offer others even if you don't know what that is yet. Get help if you are hurting or being hurt and be the very best you that you can be. And never let anyone dim your shine.—CREEPY HORSE

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RICK SHAW HEART—ALL'S WELL THA

This is the seventh chapter of a serialized novel that began in the June 2015 issue —ed.

Rebecca hadn't been home in weeks and Dan didn't care. He had been so busy trying to get together his new gig being a hotshot music producer that he hadn't had much time to think about her. Life seemed to be going pretty smoothly actually. The sun seemed to be setting and rising at the same time most days. He didn't mind. He was almost always awake and he never slept, but he took brief super charged power naps that seemed to do the job most times.

Despite the isolation, they carried on. Despite the cold moments they persevered. Fleeting fiery passions kept them going without missing a beat most days when they were together. "Hollywood" was destined to bare witness to their escapades, Dan began to muse right along with Rebecca. She for one now found herself longing for him for a change from time to time. The tables were indeed turning. She was unaware as to his goings on as of late, but she knew he seemed different—as though he had more spine if possible. She assumed he had just been making himself useful somehow in one of those "oh how cute" kind of ways. But he had more profit these days through well timed appearances at various diners throughout the city then Rebecca had paying work. He began impressing the right people and then it just steamrolled from there. They felt for him, and loved the idea when he told them his plan to toy with Ms St Claire. They soon all wanted nothing from him, but for the newly dubbed Frank Kilgore to be the new cock of the walk.

Much the same way simply having children can promote unqualified nobodies to good family people, Rebecca was so busy chasing her stars she didn't notice when she was home how clean and well-kept Dan had become. She was oblivious to his stars rise. He still kept up the notion as being a working class man when home, but the second he was away he was becoming Mr. High Society! Luncheons, dinner meetings, day spas, and limo rides were just the tips of the icebergs. He was beginning to live life the way his starlet wife longed to be without spending her own lottery money. Only for him the moving and shaking happened behind the cameras. He still did nothing. He was a natural, something else she always longed to hear without coaxing. In fact, he

still did many of the same things he did before. He'd still smile, wave occasionally, and listen to a lot of hot air. There was much less cleaning though he noticed these days, not that Rebecca noticed. Frank Kilgore had been hired as one of the head A&R people for a newly re-branded high dollar blues/jazz record label focused on New Orleans and based out of California with a small office in the Midwest. It paid generously. With money to burn comes lavish ways to spend it. One of the ideas he had been toying around with for a grand romantic gesture, was the notion of getting a professional acapella jingle made for her that could be played over whatever music was needed while she made her debuts in various commercials, videos, and films. He felt certain she would not only be pleased but that the notion may actually soften up the calloused dry interior she normally lugged around with her.

The position at the label was actually a fluke of its own. Ironically, it had happened one night after a nasty drunken tiff between the two that ended with her telling him that he was nothing and she was the only person of substance in the home. He decided then and there to slick his hair back, put on a some of the finer threads, and hit the strip in stride. A few hours later he was chatting it up with a lovely brunette by the name of Georgia Ann who just happened to have inherited the reputable blues/jazz label Trumpet Boy Records from her Grandfather who she barely knew. Dan was spotted by a slightly intoxicated Georgia Ann who saw him snapping his fingers and singing along at the bar. She saw perfection & zeal.

She didn't play cloy or for quits. She liked him. She was drunk. He was handsome. He seemed to understand jazz and soul. She liked it, but made no such bold claims. He was well dressed. He was a smooth talker. The label needed a new, but older human face. Something attractive, but welcoming. She offered him a drink and a limo ride for a minute of his time when she proposed the offer. No sex, just words. Was he okay being kept at bay? She thought she was in control, without ever realizing it was Dan aka Frank Kilgore pulling strings all along. Subtle cues made the tensions that much more splendid. Georgia Ann didn't care he was married, she didn't know at first, but once she looked at his hand, she saw it as something that existed more for show then for anything else. She was a hot number herself after

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all. Who could resist her?

Time moved on. Rebecca St. Claire was now cast in a made for TV film *Red Notes*, where she happened catch a glimpse of Frank Kilgore in passing while he was on set to work out some kinks with the soundtrack on behalf of the label. Rebecca had no idea Frank was Dan at this point either, but from what she had seen her loins wanted more, more, MORE!!! (Much unlike with Dan as of late.) The movie would be a flop and was a D-lister from the get go, this much was certain, but the money was real and that much mattered, along with a good reputation with cliental, so Mr. Kilgore was there on set lending a helping hand helping to budget song lengths. So far they could afford half of one of the classics and roughly 15 seconds of a few other familiar tunes, along with a few that sounded pretty close to something you'd probably heard before... maybe, which seemed to work just as well if we're to be honest. The movie told the tale of Louie Armstrong growing up on Mars destitute without a single trumpet on the entire planet for eons, and how he had finally had enough and how he eventually decided to hitch a ride on a meteor to come to Earth and rock his Martian heart out. Like I said, it was a real whopper of a film. But the studio seemed to think that it was at least worth completing to secure the rights for a future remake should better editing and graphic technologies come along in the relatively near future. The contract said the film needed to be completed and screened for the rights to carry. So it was guaranteed at least that much. Everyone involved would get their names in lights at least for a night.

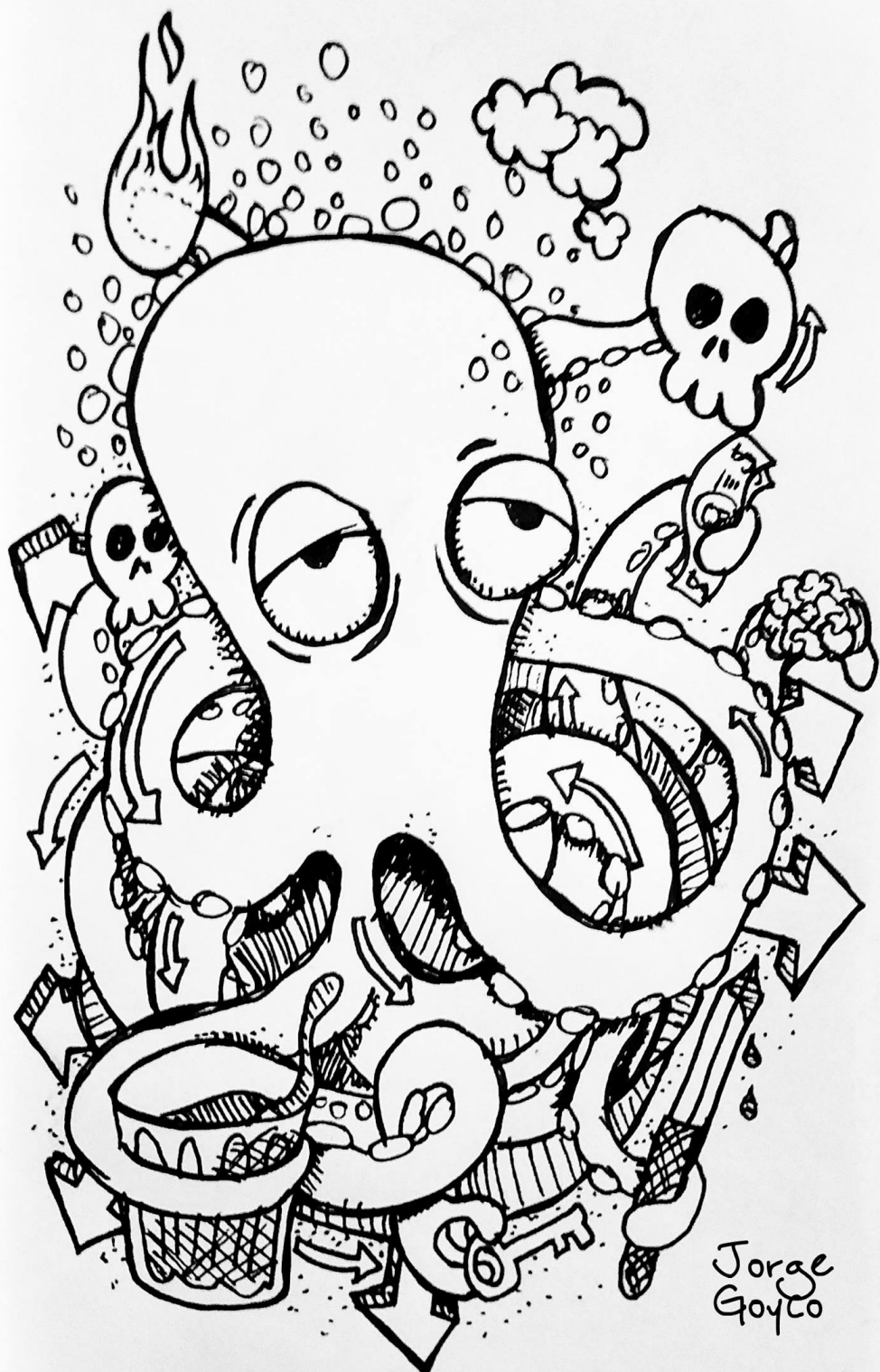
And would you guess who was playing Louie's second wife? Yup, you guessed it—Rebecca St. Claire! And boy could she over act! She was notorious for it, just look at any of her previous work; busy upper class mom in a few paper towel commercials, and a fake reporter who screams when she thinks the camera is turning away—that was for a sun lotion commercial. This was what she had been fighting for this whole time, a lead part and it was utter shit, and she knew it, but it was in front of the lights and people, and her name would be in print, and she would give it her 100% human zing. If not, then it was all for not, she thought. But she was a star and she needed to be seen and appreciated, it was her function, after all. And her star would rise if she had to pay off the entire world.—*WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON*



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THE FORMALLY OPTIMISTIC CREW IN SPACE

Katie made cookies in the shape of birds, even though she had not seen a bird in 27 Saturn-spins nor had she ever eaten a real bird. She made the bird shapes by placing her hands on the dough, tracing the outline of her palm with a small cooker's blade, and drawing a bird face on the piece of dough beneath her thumb. They were crude birds, but she liked the decor. Besides, now that their message recording was complete, the Formerly-Optimistic Crew had new reasons to feel optimistic. In a spirit of celebration, Katie pinched off a muck of raw cookie, rolled it into a ball, and held it down by her knees.

"Zoot, you want some bird balls?" Zoot, asleep at Katie's feet in the kitchen, awoke and reached the flat edge of her face towards Katie's hand. Smoke curled from Zoot's nostrils, a sign of pleasure, as she chomped noisily at the treat.

"What do you think?," Katie asked. "More vanilla," Zoot replied. "Such a butt," Katie said.

Michael emerged from the battery unit. During their last supply run on Rudyard, Michael had dropped the only bottle of Pumpkinator in the entire Spec-drant. The sound of its shattering was followed by shrieks of panic. Several Rudyardians leaped on the Pumpkinator puddle, lapping at its remains among slivers of broken glass. One woman rose from the floor with blood coursing from her lips. "Haha! She looks like a Twilight movie!" Katie said. An elderly man spun Michael around and yelled, "You Agg-Hole!", before ripping Michael's arm off at the shoulder. The man then began swinging Michael's metal arm at the crowd drinking Pumpkinator off the floor. He hit one kid on the back of the head, plopping him into the puddle of nectar and shattered glass. "Call Kelly from the ship, Zoot!" Katie said. "Oh my!" Michael said, still spinning in circles from having been spun by the old man. Zoot flew back to the ship where Kelly, captain of the K.I.S.S. ship, cleaned glassware in anticipation for fresh Pumpkinator. "Hurry, Kelly!" Zoot said. "Katie's making Twilight references!"

Kelly grabbed his bit-gun from its holster, hidden beneath his luscious dreadlocks, and ran into the Rudyard supply store firing two shots into the ceiling on his way. The crowd, still licking the floor despite being pummeled by a metal arm, scurried like bloody-fanged cockroaches in different directions. Zoot flew low and bit the leg of the man wielding Michael's arm. As he doubled over in pain, Kelly grabbed the arm from the old man, gave him an upper-cut with the clubbed limb. Katie took Michael by the only hand he had and led him back to the K.I.S.S.. Kelly kept his bit-gun drawn and pointed towards the crowd, some still licking Pumpkinator off their hands, even off one another, as he backed out of the store. "I can't leave you guys alone for five minutes before Kristen Stewart makes the conversation," Kelly said as he powered the ship and flew away.

The Formerly-Optimistic crew, now nearly a month without Pumpkinator, had subsisted on a high-hop liquid diet. Leaving Rudyard, they set their course towards the only place in the galaxy where they knew they could find more Pumpkinator: the Whoop Stop. The thought of flying the K.I.S.S. past the tracker-whackers of the Whoop Stop had once been unthinkable. Still, after

weighing the dangers and putting the matter to a vote, the Formerly-Optimistic Crew agreed to be optimistic once again. Pumpkinator was as much at stake as their lives.

Zoot had easily reattached Michael's arm, putting it on backwards the first time as a joke. "I smell balls," Michael said clunking into the kitchen. "You can't smell anything, you dummy," Katie said. "Actually, I can detect the rise of pleasure temperatures from you and Zoot. I predict cookies. Am I right?" "They need more vanilla," Zoot said. Michael turned to Katie, "Has Kelly risen from the Sinkhole yet? I feel anxious to hear the recording of our message." "Zoot, go get Kelly," Katie said.

Zoot stretched her hind legs and opened her wings. She farted once and flew through the kitchen door. Outside the window of the ship's kitchen, a small maroon planet glowed like a bright Skittle. The Whoop Stop was within reach. They had orbited the planet for three weeks as they crafted the message they hoped would dial back the wrath of the tracker-whackers.

"The mix-popper in the Sinkhole recorded my voice at a high frequency," Kelly said entering the kitchen. "Still, I think the Husbands will get the message." "Butts, butts, butts, butts," Katie said. "All those Husbands are Agg-Hole butts. They can't horde all the Pumpkinator." "They are truly true evil," Michael said. "I'd like to rattle their bones like wind-chimes."

Kelly approached the window and gazed at the Whoop Stop. "I've been down there before. I fought the Husbands during the prime of my Great Luminary phase. They are a formidable foe. And, you're right, Katie: you will never find a more wretched hive of Agg-Holes and Butts." He turned back to the Formerly-Optimistic Crew. "But don't let go of the rising star of your new found optimism, my friends. If something is in the way of us obtaining more Pumpkinator, it will not be our fear." "A bit heavy there," Michael whispered to Katie.

"Zoot, patch the Phantom Freight message through the Killing It So Softly speaker system," Kelly said, placing the message disc between Zoot's gingerly careful teeth. "You know he's feeling it when he uses the ship's whole name," Katie whispered to Michael. Kelly smiled and clapped his hands. "Let's all share one last high hop liquid diet before we assail upon the Whoop Stop." "Cheers here!" Michael said, scampering towards the cabinets. "I want to put all the Pumpkinator in my mouth!" Katie said.

Zoot rushed back into the kitchen. "Uh, guys. I have un-optimistic news." Panic fluttered in Zoot's eyes like a million falling bee corpses collected in a bad metaphor. Katie pounded her fists on the cabinets. "We're doomed," Michael said, throwing his hands in the air. Kelly turned and looked out the window. "Don't tell me, Zoot. I already know what you're going to say." Zoot swallowed the lump of bad tidings in her throat. "Yeah, boss. You guessed it."

CHOICE: Do you find out what happened to the Phantom Freight message recording? (Turn to Record Reviews)

OR: Do you be an Ag-Hole and not care about the fate of the Formerly-Optimistic Crew? (Eat butts)—KEVIN STILL

HECKLER GETS MAULED BY THE MILLENNIAL FALCON

Let's cut to the chase. **Silver Apples** are pretty high up on the music snob "cool" list. Seeing them live means dealing with quite a few self-appointed scenester "elites". Some of these elites graduate from haughty, joyless music snob to haughty joyless "musician". Flying under the banner of "noise", these (mostly) white privileged vanguards of the musical revolution make quite a racket with laptop computers, atonal untuned guitars, and/or with sundry kitchen appliances. Usually these "musicians" ride herd in packs of two or three and are named after one member of the band; presumably the one who is the richest and/or the most miserable (because misery is never free and being poor is "cool"; unless you actually ARE poor).

I'm usually reasonably tolerant of these "musicians". It isn't really my thing but I think they deserve at least a smidgen of credit for attempting something new; albeit something contrived and self-serving. Others in the audience usually either leave or pretend they like what they are hearing; keeping a careful eye on the other music snobs in the audience to get their cue as to when it is appropriate to applaud (possibly in hopes of getting their turn to dazzle the masses with their apple laptop computer and/or egg beater...). However, not all the audience were quite so willing to pretend they were impressed.

My friend—we will call him Mr. C—was not willing to go along with this script. He arrived in time to see the second "band"—**Sam De La Rosa**. This was a two man "band" consisting of out-of-tune guitar and laptop. Allegedly this gent was once in a band that mattered that released a record on Sacred Bones Records; how the mighty fall. They were pretty lousy, with Mr. De La Rosa moaning like he was having live kittens shoved up his arse while his musical cohort made all sort of noises on his laptop computer much akin to the sound a home video game from the 1990's after being dropped from a 10 story building.

Full disclosure: Mr. C is a musician in a working band who has put out releases on cassette, vinyl, and CD. While this isn't a blank check to heckle a band, this information is presented to emphasize that this wasn't some random bozo in the audience spouting off. Yes, Mr. C had a few too many but as the saying goes *In Vino Veritas* (if I'm writing about noise bands I'm allowed a bit of pretentiousness).

Mr. C. called out Mr. De La Rosa for what he was: Long on pretentiousness and self-importance, short on

musical talent, self-awareness, and most importantly a sense of humor. The noise rock music snob glitterati squirmed uncomfortably as Mr. C yelled "It must be nice to not have to tune your guitar" and so on. After their set, the girlfriend (?) of a band member splashed water on Mr. C and attempted to kick him in the testicles. She missed. Noise rockers can't fight either evidentially; more on that later. She also yelled "YOU RUINED EVERYTHING!" as if Sam De La Rosa's multi-platinum record deal had been destroyed by a single heckler in an audience. Mr. C laughed it off and went outside. We missed the next act and returned inside shortly before Silver Apples came on.

There waiting for us was Sam and his musical cohort. It took them a full band's set to find the wherewithal to

confront Mr. C about his heinous actions. He got in the face of Mr. C and started yelling: "Are you going to heckle us now !!?" His bandmate attempted another testicle kick and also missed. Is the cheap testicle kick some sort noise rock thing (missing balls is perhaps the perfect metaphor for this band)? I moved in between them and moved the second ball kicker away from Mr. C. I asked this band mate "What are you getting out of this?" His response is "Nothing". He then ranted about how he was backing his bandmate as if his loyalty to his musical project after 45 minutes of noise horseshit was ever in doubt. I returned to Mr. C. and band member 1 who were now in full fighting stance. The girlfriend (?) then intervened, tried another kick and missed again. She then hits Mr. C with her purse. At this point Mr. C is ejected from the venue by security. That night, noise rock and physical assaults trumped one heckler. I'm sure Mr. De La Rosa is writing a conceptual masterpiece about the night as we speak. It is possibly the most real thing that has ever happened in his privileged, spoiled, millennial life. It is the billboard for the social media age we live in. If you don't the message, get rid of the messenger.

I'm all for musicians pursuing their musical vision wherever it takes them. However, this pursuit does not give you a license for automatic coddling from opinions about your music you don't like. Unlike elementary school, musicians do not get a trophy simply for trying. People were heckling Greek Tragedy acts in Ancient Greece and will continue to long after Mr. De La Rosa ends in up the cutout bin in Half Price Books. Music, like life is inherently unfair. No amount of "noise" rock will change that.—**RENTED MULE**

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TOUR DIARY OF AL

Last month **The Ex-Optimists** spent five very interesting days on the road in the interior South, playing music in places that were largely new to the band. This is my attempt to chronicle those days' activities and non-activities.

THURSDAY – BATON ROUGE

Baton Rouge is only five hours from College Station, so we have a leisure start. I have plenty of time to figure out the new Tetris situation with loading all of our gear and us into the van. We have had years of experience with this, but recently we had to replace Katie's travel bass amp. The old amp would fit inside the old bass cabinet (it had a flip top). The new one does not. The band sent me home with all the gear the night before so I will have time to mess with packing to figure it all out. Fortunately, everything fits. I cannot recommend any higher the Dodge Grand Caravan for touring bands. Not only is it modular so you can fit your band, your gear, or your mother-in-law and 5 other passengers in it, but it looks like someone's mom drives it and band thieves tend to avoid it. Attention road bands: your 12 passenger church bands towing a trailer couldn't scream "ROB ME!" any louder.

Eventually the band shows up so we can head out. Except not all of the band shows up. Ed the Drummer will need to be picked up in Houston. His fiancé is going to the Baton Rouge show tonight but he doesn't want to ride with her all the way because she's going to drop off to New Orleans in the afternoon to go shopping at some head shop or other and Ed "hates hippie shit". Why didn't he just ride with us all the way since we are picking him up an hour away in Cypress? Good question. No one has the answer other than a shrugging "It's Ed". So we meet up with him and continue into Houston. "I need to stop in Baton Rouge to get a snare head and sticks," Ed announced. Luckily he spoke up before we got out of Houston, since I think it's better to stop now while we have time since there's no telling where we'd have to go to find those things in an unfamiliar city. We stop at the new Guitar Center on Studemund, play through some amps we don't have at our Guitar Center, and generally waste 30 minutes since this GC doesn't have Ed's head in stock. A quick call to Rockin' Robin confirms they do have one, so we head over to Rockin' Robin, where we look at stuff that Rockin' Robin won't sell (they are collectors), get Ed's gear then walk over to Star Pizza for a late lunch. Michael and Katie marvel that they serve St. Arnold's Pumpkinator Imperial Stout in pints (99% of other places serve it in a snifter) and get a little loopy. I can't believe we are on tour, it's 3PM and we still haven't made it out of Houston yet. So we make tracks.

We eventually make Baton Rouge by 8:30pm. We are on the road with our Houston homies A Sundae Drive but we aren't actually driving with them. We travel separate. They've been in Baton Rouge already for several hours, gnoshing on a big Greek dinner and pregaming on good beer and whiskey at their hotel. We hit the venue first. At first we were booked to play at Hound Dogs, a bar in the university area, but loud bands the previous week upset the neighbor tenants and the show has to be moved to another locale. So we land at The Woodshop.

Turns out the venue is appropriately named. It is a 19th century woodshop, still functioning. It's southern Gothic at its finest. It's dim, there's sharp objects and sawdust everywhere. A few minutes later our hosts, Heavy Sleeper, show up. They are an awesome noisy, cranky, shouty metal/punk band, grunge in the oldest and finest of sense. They bring lights, a PA that probably hasn't worked right since 1985 (Heavy Sleeper Jonah crowed that he bought it at the Goodwill), and eventually some of their friends and A Sundae Drive.

ASD plays first. With the work lights aimed downwards in the dark room there's no way not to take an awesome vibe-filled photo. Next, we play. Ed has troubles with the drum rug, I have trouble being awake, and all in all the show was rather average for us. I pack up and eventually head to the van to take what we now refer to as a "van nap". I miss most of Heavy Sleeper, sadly, but I could no longer function.

Later we all pack up and head to the hotel room Ed and his fiancé have engaged for the evening. I hit the floor in the sleeping bag and I'm out. All toll, we rather enjoyed Baton Rouge and hope to come back and sweat it out in summer in that woodshop with Heavy Sleeper again.

FRIDAY – AUBURN

I have never been to Auburn, AL. The extent of my touring in Alabama has been on the I-10 and I-65 corridors. But our good pal 8-Bit Bobby lives there and helped book us a show so that's where we head for the next night. First, we drive across town to meet A Sundae Drive for breakfast at a Waffle House (always a trustworthy choice), then, when leaving town, we realize we drove right back past the Waffle House that was next to our hotel. Should've had ASD come to us! Ah well. At some point leaving Baton Rouge Siri gets confused, losing ASD a good 90 minutes of time going the wrong way. We made tracks for Mississippi.



N UNKNOWN BAND

Ed the Drummer has a very small bladder. We're talking walnut-sized. Fortunately Ed's call to nature occurs at just the right time, as we see signs for the Lazy Magnolia Brewery. We decide Ed can pee there and we can visit the brewery, since Katie, Michael, and myself are all fans

of their Southern Pecan Brown Ale. We are apparently WAY early for any sort of tour but within minutes a hostess is found for us. She offers us a small tasting and the cliff notes version of the tour, which we gladly accept. We try some awesome beers you can only get at their events as well as the mead they brew. Because of the weird liquor laws in Mississippi they cannot sell beer on site, but they can sell mead because it's

considered wine? Bizarre, but the mead is pure brilliance so we buy a handful of bottles to take with us. We also discover later that our hostess has gifted us with a few bottles of the awesome local-only beer that we exclaimed so much about. We decree that Lazy Magnolia is rad as fuck. We try to convince ASD to stop (two of those folks are beer hounds too) but Siri continues to let them down. We settle in and head on into Alabama and turn north.

Somewhere in-between Mobile and Montgomery (on Hank Williams' Lost Highway) Michael tells us that someone has taken hostages at an Eagles of Death Metal concert in Paris. We all have a "huh, that's odd" reaction and drive on. A half hour later the details begin to emerge about the Daesh coordinated attacks on Paris. I feel really disconnected and disconcerted. I want to know more, if only to help assuage the deepening hollow pit in my stomach. Terror attacks happen often, this one though hits home. The band remains in a somber mood, hauling balls to make Auburn in time, as we our brewery escapade lost us a bit of road time.

We eventually make Auburn an hour before showtime. We are unprepared for the culture shock. We drove

1000 miles from home only to play on Northgate on a Friday night. The bar we are booked at, the Balcony Bar, is on the main strip of town. Auburn is a big college town and it's the night before a big football rivalry. The strip is hopping with college bros and basic girls. The bar, like its name suggests, is upstairs so we quickly load up. 8-Bit Bobby helps me find a good place to park the van and we catch up. Bobby has deep roots in our community has the former drummer for Nuklehead and ASS and it is good to meet up with him in his recently adopted town.

Tonight we share the bar with the Balcony Babes Drag Revue. They have already set up their DJ equipment on the drum riser so we have to hit the floor beside the stage with a borrowed PA. Since we are at the bar first, we play first. Amazingly, people kind of come out of the wood work to hang out. We play a much better set than the night before, though it is somewhat abridged since time is tight. Both bands dedicate songs to the tragedies in Paris. It affects Jen from ASD in particular, as she is a French teacher and has been in Paris. Our gesture helps us cope. ASD rock out a short set and then we have to run our stuff out the door as quick as we can so the drag show can get underway. It is an amazing clash of cultures that somehow works. I know from having played similar mixed shows in Seattle that there's historic precedence for rock and drag to coexist and we were all stoked that this show lived up to that history.

I get to the van and realize I can smell the mead. That's not a good sign. Turns out one of the bottles wasn't sealed so well so we decide to dirtbag it in the parking lot outside the club and share it around. I cannot speak highly enough about this stuff. We have all had bad Ren Fair or homebrew mead but when it's done right, boy howdy! Lazy Magnolia makes theirs on blueberry. It's like the perfect blend of beer and wine. ASD went to a hotel outside of town, we went to 8-Bit Bobby's, where we enjoy a nightcap and geek out to Bobby's shrine to prog metal and video games. It is a lot like going to visit Brea and Tim Danger in Victoria, though instead of Star Wars everywhere it's Nintendo everywhere. The second night of the tour finds me on a couch this time, and it's lights out.

SATURDAY - HOT SPRINGS

I generally wake up before everyone else on tour. I drive and I keep the schedule, so I generally have to be the responsible one. Band dad, Katie calls me. I'm not sure if that's complimentary or snide. The hour I get by myself means I can shower and hit the web to figure out what exactly happened in Paris the previous day. The news is not good. I get everyone up and pointed in the right direction. Turns out the Auburn-Georgia game is early so that means there's no way we are gonna be able to get breakfast together. ASD heads out ahead of us, we pause for some coffee with Bobby on the way out. Then we hit the road again, pausing for an hour in Birmingham for a fantastic lunch at some gyro and hummus place that gets good Yelp.

The drive from Birmingham through Oxford is very pretty. Lots of dramatic hills, crags, and pine trees,

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reminds me of western Kentucky, where I grew up. Michael comments that it all looks of our shows Michael always seems to attract like terrific terrain for hiding a body. True that. It occurs to me as I come upon Oxford that I have unintentionally booked the SEC tour. Before the road trip is over we will have been in or through a good half dozen SEC college towns. We come at Memphis from a different direction than I'm used to, and cross the mighty Mississippi on a different bridge. Not one nearly as tall and majestic as the I-40 bridge. I grew up reading Mark Twain and my home town is on the Ohio River. The old rivers loom in my personal mythology, as does the music of Memphis. And the death of Jeff Buckley in that river. Later, Zeke ASD and I compare notes about crossing that river and thinking of him losing his life in its muddy wake. Memphis is a vibey place, even at 70MPH on the interstate.

Again, we are behind schedule. Ed's bladder and my inability to factor it in to my schedule means we get no time to stop. We forge on. We navigate the twisty, windy roads in the dark towards Hot Springs, Arkansas. I am most excited to make this show than any other on this trip. The club we are playing, Maxine's, is nationally renowned on the touring circuit for being a killer place to play. I've tried booking us there for five years unsuccessfully until this tour. This night we get a hotel room just a few doors down from ASD's so we can finally have a little bit of hang time with our homies. In true ASD nature, they made the hotel an hour before us and had settled in for some pregaming. Next time we have to figure out how to caravan better so we spend more time with the band we are traveling with. We were able to check in, throw our stuff inside and then head over to the club.

Maxine's does not disappoint. A killer beer and liquor selection, our first real stage and PA of the trip, and heavenly pizza to boot, and they feed us and let us drink for free! Damn skippy we hit the lottery! The first bite of Katie and Michael's veggie pizza is like biting into a pizza version of Gushers. The pizza explodes with roasted garlic, butter, and grease. This is easily one of the top 5 pizzas I've ever had in my life. Then we see a tap handle for something called a Mole Stout. Heck yeah we want one, precious, and it also does not disappoint. Later I google it and discover it's a New Belgium beer. Whoa, really?! ASD plays first and puts on easily one of the finest shows I've ever seen them perform. Then some weird local band plays second. They are like John Denver fronting Dylan's Rolling Thunder revue. The lead guitarist wears a cap with a feather in it and looks like the Alpine mountaineer on that one game on The Price Is Right. The drummer puts flowers on the tom mount atop his bass drum. They are fantastic players but the band is boooooorrrriiiiiinnnnngggggg. We plug in and proceed to blast the Rocky Mountain High out of the room. Surprisingly, people dig it.

After most of our shows Michael attracts a lot of fan attention. Mostly from guitar players who are fascinated with his collection of Jazzmasters and his gigantic, glowing pedalboard. This night does not disappoint in that regard. We close the bar down, drinking maple-infused whisky and chatting with some new people we have met. We sign lots of autographs, which always weirds me out a bit but I am gracious that someone finds worth in it. We all declare that Maxine's is one of the best places we've ever been, let alone played at, and can't wait to

come back again in the spring. We decamp to the hotel and party down with Mike and Zeke, drinking another bottle of the Lazy Magnolia mead.

SUNDAY – DENTON

We make an early morning date to meet up with ASD for breakfast but they bail so they can make Dallas early to meet up with Jen's brother before the show. We go into town for breakfast and gawk at the main drag in Hot Springs. By noon we hit the road to make Denton some what early for a change. Our host Mik (familiar to locals as the bassist in B/CS metal bands Drapetomania and Red Meadow) attends North Texas University's music graduate program and has a rehearsal at about the same time we are set to arrive so we then aim for the main square in Denton. There are record stores there to comb and we haven't done any of that so far on tour. So we make downtown Denton in the pouring rain and proceed to comb two record stores, one lame and one completely killer. We have a fantastic burger at Lone Star Burger and catch a little of the Seattle Seahawks game. Then we make it to Rubber Gloves, the place we are playing this night. Denton has been another town we've had trouble getting into, so I am very excited about playing there but, thanks to the rain, we get 5 people at the show. We get there first (again) so we set up first. There are two other local bands playing with us and ASD but one of them cancels. So it's a small show pretty much for the bar. But the bar has Joust AND Moon Patrol and the sound dude plays good post-punk vinyl from the board so I am content.

It takes me a little while to get into the set, but eventually I warm up and The Xops play 98% of a good show. Some time toward the very end of "True Evil", the set-ender, Ed the Drummer kicks his drums over. This is not uncommon so I figure Ed is just really into it. He then picks his bass drum up and throws it down the stairs behind the stage and out onto the back patio in the pouring rain. Ed follows the drum outside and punches holy hell out of it, kicks it, rips at it, and destroys the thing. His cymbal stand and bass drum pedal are next, rendered into unplayable pieces. This is not normal. This is strange and weird behavior even for Ed. The mood in the club becomes REAL heavy since no one can figure out what just happened. ASD set up and play a fine show. Another local band set up and play a fine show too. Ed proceeds to glower around the club, not talking to anyone. Throughout the night he wanders out to the patio to punch and kick on his drum parts so me more. As the night closes out, we tip the bar heavily to make up for no one coming out and to reassure them after Ed's continued episode. We load back up and say bye again to ASD, who have their own hotel room. We are bunking down with Mik at his place. Once loaded up, we have a dickens of a time finding Mik's place in his rabbit warren apartment complex. He eventually has to drive out to us so we can follow him in. All this time Ed the Drummer is still non-communicative. He has his outsized headphones on listening to his phone. Eventually we get cozy in Mik's, closing out the night watching King Crimson videos on Youtube.

MONDAY – COLLEGE STATION

I want to be home by the time my kids get home from school so I figure we gotta get out of town by noon. Stephen from The Wheel Workers had messaged me that we should drop some of our singles off at one of two rad record stores in D/FW so I pick one of them and make for it. Slowly Ed starts to come out of his rage coma and talks again. We drop by the record store, which turns out to be a gigantic warehouse full of pretty much any record you'd ever want or had heard of...at

astounding collector prices. We're talking \$100+ copies of old Miles Davis records or original 1977 punk singles. We have a long and very heartening conversation with Dave, the curator of the store. He is one of the old school collector sorts and we talk pragmatically about records and collecting in general. It was a great detour. We have enough band money left to get Whataburger on the band tab and then head the rest of the way home. During the journey home we try to talk out what happened onstage the previous night with Ed but we cannot get him to understand where we are coming from. To him he played poorly and so that justified his actions of smashing his drums into pieces. We did not notice him

playing any different than normal so we could not find any activity to warrant his response. We are mystified, but we are used to Ed the Drummer being an iconoclast. He is like no other person we've ever met. No remorse, no recognition that his actions represented us as individuals and collectively as a band. We can only shake our heads. We eventually make it home.

We made a 2000 mile loop, playing four cities in four nights. Saw some interesting sites, ate and drank like royalty, drove some beautiful highways, made some new friends and met up with some old ones, and lost a drummer along the way.—KELLY MINNIS



DECEMBER 17TH, OUR HOLIDAY

I'm a huge Star Wars fan. If you're anything like me, then you know what I'm about to talk about. It's happened to you before. You're probably one of those people who love Star Wars and all your friends know about it. They might bring you a token or something at work when they see something SW related and think you will like it. They asked you for your opinion the day after the trailer came out. They know for you it's a great time to be a fan.

THEN... the jerks come out. You know the ones I'm talking about. They randomly show up on your Facebook feed or somewhere else talking about how lame it is or trying to be cool bashing something that is popular. It's usually the type of people who don't mind beating the hell out of each other on Black Friday, but can't understand why people wait in theater lines so long. They are the close minded people true nerd fans in the '70s and '80s avoided. Before the internet became a part of our daily life, and science fiction and comic books dictated pop culture, the world was run by shitty people like this.

But that's alright man, because this is our time to shine. There's a new movie we know almost nothing about, it looks great, the director is semi respected and we get to see the Falcon fly again. But I'm rambling...

Let me tell you a little story: A long time ago, in a county far far away, in a rural Texas town, there was a young boy who lived in a dead end town of dirt and agriculture. He didn't like team sports, he didn't want to do what everyone else did. Then he saw a movie called *Star Wars* which was ironically about a young farm boy looking for his place in the galaxy and he knows it's bigger than the small rural area he is in. I was the right age and the right time when *Star Wars* came out.

This was before VCRs were available to a lot of families. We watched that movie and had to remember certain things about it. We watched it when it re-ran on television every few years, it molded our lives. We looked at the stars every night. My brother and I used to dream of far off adventure, anything to get us away from the drab life we were in and to chase opportunities. We went through the motions of school in a public system. My brother taught himself to draw, mostly drawing *Star Wars* scenes. Public school was not meant for artists, with standardized tests and cookie cutter philosophy. We were there for the wait, the wait between *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of The Jedi*. I remember the

years we speculated what would happen when the movie finally came out. Instead of "cowboys and indians," the neighborhood kids would play "Rescue Han from Carbonite". We had no idea what Jabba would look like. We didn't have deleted scenes. Our imaginations were in overdrive for years.

I remember the day I saw the commercial on TV for *ROTJ*. It was an afternoon and my brother and I were watching a rerun of "Laverne and Shirley" on a tiny black and white TV in my parent's bedroom (the only TV in the house) then the commercial came on. There was HAN! He was alive! There was Luke, Leia, Chewie.... what the hell were those little teddy bears? Who cares? It was awesome. We whooped and hollered, jumped on the bed until my mom came in and yelled at us. That was one of the best moments of my childhood because it meant so much to me.

Since 1997 when they started releasing SW toys again, SW has had a consistent presence in the toy aisles of America. The John Williams score makes my heart skip a beat. It changed the way movies and special effects were made. It counts for something.

This movie isn't just a movie. It's not just our "childhood". It raised us. It taught us to be good and stand up for ourselves. It taught us to aspire to be heroic even when the odds were against you. It spoke against a tyrannical government and encouraged multi cultural blending and lifestyles through aliens and other worlds. It taught my brother to be an artist (who is one of the best artists I know and that's saying something) but most of all, it drove me to get out of that pissant town. It drove me to be a musician and tour the country. It drove me to travel around the world, and be a better person.

This is the time of year that everyone wants to be like us. Everyone wants to act like they have been the biggest fan all this time. Right now, you'll probably have a lot of casual conversations with people asking for your opinion of SW because you are a fan and they know it. They are looking for your expert opinion because they will form their opinion off yours. Ironically, it's cool to be a nerd now. I'm glad I got to see the day, but it's not about that. It's about that kid looking up at the stars waiting to be inspired again.

So go out and get inspired. *Star Wars* is air. Breathe it. —TIMOTHY DANGER

DEATH SUCKS

The point of this article is to walk through the idea that I feel we are not wired for death, but we grow from experiencing the death of loved ones. Which at this point, philosophically sounds like I am saying Death is good...which is strange, and I hate it. And the older I get, I mean, the longer I am alive, the more death I'm gonna see. I understand that. It's inevitable. But I am sure it's not going to get easier.

I've recently (within a month of each other) lost two people in my life. One was a good friend, one was a baby we lost that was 17 weeks gestational.

My friend slammed head-on into a semi on HWY 21 near Crockett. That was a huge fucking surprise. So shitty. He's left behind a beautiful young family. I miss him a ton, and right after his death, everything reminded me of him. Things we did together, things I knew he enjoyed, how much he loved his family and friends, things I knew he would laugh at, things people said that sounded like him, even seeing pickup trucks around that looked like his. Even his "wake". He would have loved it. All his favorite people were there. I kept expecting to see him.

I catch myself quoting him every once in a while. Then, slowly, after days and weeks, things started "settling" down. I still think about him every day, but emotions don't well up in me as quickly. Mostly I miss him. He and his family were very loved, and I see tons of that love poured out on his family. His brothers have been stepping up. No, everyone has been stepping up.

It's super interesting to me that good comes out of a thing that is bad...or at least perceived as bad. I mean, I guess it's inevitable, or at least I hope it's inevitable that considering the capacity we as humans have to love, that love presents itself in pretty massive ways when tragedies happen. It's really the coolest thing ever, that humans can and do care for others. It all starts with our ability to be aware that we are alive, and are also aware of the fact that others around us are aware of being alive as well. That's intense. Then it moves on to the possibility (or probability) that we will connect ourselves to people around us, and actually enjoy being with them. Then to the super strange place that make a human sacrifice him or herself for the good of one of those other people. That's amazing.

Love is amazing. But it also hurts really bad. I loved my friend, and now he's gone. I didn't say goodbye. We aren't going to hang out any more. We aren't going to see each other's families grow and get old and stuff. Sucks. But, we (I mean his family and friends) are all loving and supporting his family, because we love them. It's a "need". We "need" to take care of his family.

Ultimately, complaining and whining about his death is pointless. It happened. But the fact is that we weren't ready for that to happen to our friend. We are never ready, and we don't know how to deal with it. I feel like I never get to a point that I'm like, "OK. I am OK with it, and that's that". Never. I always am like, "Shit. This sucks, and it's gonna suck, so I am accepting that it sucks". That's how we deal with death. We don't believe it actually happens, then we investigate and get angry at the circumstances, then we might look for a way to

not deal with it, then we get super sad about it, then we accept that it sucks balls and stay sad. Then someone says some inspiring or hilarious anecdote and everyone takes a deep breath, hugs the survivors and moves on. Some move on with a scrape, some with a limp, some with an amputation. Weeks later you get all philosophical and cathartically write an article for a subculture local zine.

And then another loss happens. Shit.

So, initially I mentioned my belief (or idea) that we are not wired for Death. I know, it's odd to think about. I don't know what your belief in God is, but I have a belief in God, and a sort of explanation for it. I'm not going to try to convince you of anything, don't worry, you can keep reading. Just explaining how I deal with death. So, I believe the Bible and the story that God created Adam and Eve and that He made them with the intent that there wasn't going to be death. They screwed up and through a series of revelations and truths that were hidden from them, the outcome was that Death came into the world. Call it a fairy tale or myth or whatever, but I feel like we have to have something to start with and base an idea or belief on. So, in my scenario, death wasn't in the plans. relationships, sex, eating, self awareness, more sex, babies, gardening, love, and all that cool stuff was in the plans for sure, but not death. So, that (for me) answers why it's so hard and why it feels like a tearing of meat from a bone, you know, like when you eat fried chicken.

If I were an Agnostic or Atheist, I'd presumably say that death is an inevitable part of life on earth. You start from nothing and end as nothing. No matter what relationships or community or inventions or deep thoughts you might have, it's all for nothing. In this view, I assume the appropriate reaction to death would be to shrug your shoulders. I'm not an Atheist. And my argument sounds biased...and it is. The truth is, I know Atheists feel "shit on" when death of a loved one happens. Because it's shitty. I also understand the fact that believing in God doesn't necessarily fix anything. For me, it gives me hope that there is something after this life, but I can also understand that death is quite possibly a reason that people turn away from God. That the temptation to place blame on a being outside of accountability is not something that brings comfort. Personally, I don't believe that God "takes" people away, and it's wrong to say that it's "God's will" for death's to happen.

Anyway, I stand on my idea that we are not wired to understand or deal with Death. Death is inevitable, and our lives are fragile, but something is just not right about it. Something feels wasted when death happens. Like it's not supposed to happen.

Like every expectant parent, we had started making plans for our new little girl. I had begun to re-categorize and re-organize spaces in my heart for her. There's a hole there now. She was rewiring everything in my life. She was beginning to be connected to every single thing that I knew and loved and hoped for. She was changing everything. She changed everything.

Death fucking sucks. And it sucks every time it happens.
—JORGE GOYCO

DEAR CARRIE BROWNSTEIN

I feel like I know you, so I'm writing this review of your memoir *Hunger Makes Me A Modern Girl* as a semi-direct letter to you. More specifically, I feel like I know what it's like to live life near you, which sounds somewhat exhausting. Actually, I find this refreshing as I can only imagine that life near me—a dude ripped with similar anxieties and fears and intentional distances as you—must be somewhat exhausting for others as well. In fact, at times I felt I was reading my own story in your story, except that you're crazy talented and funny and musical and you probably wear a bra. Granted, it is 2015, so I could do that last thing and no one could Constitutionally bat an eye. Still.

Carrie, I've read 27 books this year (I feel permission to boast my reading habits because you ridiculously boast your reading habits in your book that I can now boast having read), and your book is by far the best book I've read this year. On the short, I loved how *Hunger* was as much a memoir of 90s music, of the Riot Grrrl movement, of life in-a-band as it was the memoir of an individual life. As a Gen-X'er, I enjoyed the attention you gave to the geographical nature of pre-internet music, how certain cities you toured had certain sounds, each scene possessed a unique feel. As a participating publisher of a small-town zine, I appreciate your repeated attribution to the necessity of zines and mixed tapes and traded 7" vinyls to your own musical literacy. And as a burgeoning "writer" (I feel anxious even typing that title), I took note, maybe even threw your book against the wall a few times, at how well you crafted your story. You're the remarkable memoirist who made art out of your life story. Good on you.

Still, two aspects of *Hunger* make me both glad to own a copy and hopeful to return to it: First, the story of your family is fascinating, especially your telling of it. Honestly, their story could have comprised the book's entire 241 pages, and I would not have felt cheated. You capitalize on selecting minute details to introduce your mother's eating disorder and your father's difficult admission of homosexuality. I underlined and read aloud to my wife the story of your father coming out to you. How he'd always been a hidden man. A secretive man. A two-dimensional person with insignificant facts and a profound silence. Then he reveals the one thing you most suspected and you said, "Despite all my initial conflicts about trying to reconcile the father I had as a child to the one I have now, I am thankful that he is happy, that he did not waste another second. Now there is someone to know." Such a powerful declaration! I read this section repeatedly, imagining the magnitude of you seeing your father step forward into a third, fully realized dimension. It was the thing you most wanted for your mother, but she found other avenues to free herself. Your writing in this first third of the book is your most succinct and poetic and moving. I hope, for yourself and for them, that you continue writing your parents' stories.

Secondly, as a large fan of Sleater-Kinney (I saw Janet—I mean, all of you—this past spring: she was bucket-list worthy), I relished the two-thirds of your book chronicling, album by album, Sleater-Kinney's career. Particularly interesting was your interactions with other bands, most notably 7 Year Bitch, Bikini Kill, Helium, the White

Stripes, and Pearl Jam. Admittedly, I'm not a big fan of Pearl Jam, so learning how fervently Eddie Vedder (my wife's primary rock-n-roll crush) has championed Sleater-Kinney challenged my coolness towards Pearl Jam. You also prove fearless in confessing the intimacy of your romance, then break-up, with fellow band-mate Corin Tucker. I bought *Dig Me Out* on vinyl after reading your realization that Corin's lyrics on that album were equally balanced between breaking-up with you and falling-in-love with her now husband, Lance. Yeah, it's a different record for me now. It's stepped into the third dimension.

But my favorite part of your telling Sleater-Kinney's story is your constant praise of your band mates. Of hearing Corin sing with her first band Heavens to Betsy: "It was a combination of Corin Tucker's voice and the lyrics. The beautiful parts were edged in disgrace and disgust; it bordered right on ugly the whole time. The singing was louder than it needed to be - did she even need a mic? . . . The voice asked to be listened to but it did not beg or plead, it dared and challenged, it confronted but needed no reply from the listener." Of hiring Janet Weiss on the third album: "Janet was the best decision we ever made. . . . Forget drummer jokes, Janet is one of the most musically intelligent people I know. And she was certainly the most musically gifted member of the band, the one with the largest musical lexicon and sphere from which to draw influence and reference." No doubt: Janet Weiss is my Eddie Vedder.

Admittedly, I'm curious that *Portlandia* won only a single sentence while you and Janet's interim super-group, Wild Flag, earned zero mention in your book. Surely, you have your reasons, which spike my curiosities. Your pets, on the other hand, comprised an entire chapter. In fact, your writing about your animals showcases your literary strength. In Chapter 3, adequately titled "Disappearance", the story of Buffy, your neglected family dog who was put down for no other reason than because she was in the way, succinctly represents each member of the Brownstein family. Later, in Chapter 20, double entendre-titled "Shelter", the story of your dogs murdering your cat—"There wasn't any blood. But when I could bring myself to return upstairs, it looked like a crime scene, the entire battle told in the deep, desperate scratches on the wood floor."—perfectly symbolizes your role in Sleater-Kinney, representing your anxiety and panic attacks and hospitalizations in Brussels: you punching your own face as Corin and Janet pleaded your fists to stop. It's beautiful story-telling. And I'm glad you won the Oregon Humane Society Volunteer of the Year award at least once. Fuck you, Grammys!

Carrie, your book could have been twice as long and I would have relished every word. Shopping lists. Catalogues of mix-tapes song choices. More tidbits about Elliot Smith pursuing Janet Weiss (who could blame him) and you seeing Madonna in concert as a child. Any book that leaves the reader in grief at its closing, wanting more and ready to reread, is a success. Please, dear distant friend, let this be the first of several titles beneath your pen.

Sincerely, a thirsty fan,
KEVIN STILL

THE SKINNY ON CHULAS FRONTERAS

If you enjoy looking at a bunch of Mexicans eat, dance, laugh, work, get drunk and (most of all) make music (the literal kind), then Les Blank's *Chulas Fronteras* (1976) is the film for you. If you don't enjoy watching a bunch of Mexicans do those things, then please give it a shot.

The movie is available through Arhoolie Records, the company that has brought you "Down Home Music Since 1960". Arhoolie has an extensive collection of regional music (Blues, Jazz, Country, World Music, Cajun, Tex-Mex, Zydeco) that they have helped preserve by recording artists or republishing old records. I first bumped into it as an undergraduate when I was looking for Mexican *corridos* (ballads) of the revolution. (They have some excellent original recordings that date back to 1904!) Those of you familiar with the company can probably already form an idea about what this movie looks like. It is a documentary about south Texas music and its people but it is mostly about *conjunto* music. [At this point the writer would like to disclose that he is a Texan of Mexican descent from one of the towns filmed in the movie. The writer would also like to promise the reader that even though he is from Eagle Pass and has always loved *conjunto* music, he will follow the tradition of most documentary filmmaking and remain completely biased in writing about this glorious movie.]

The movie features many musicians from the south Texas region when many of them were in their prime (not to be confused with rich and successful). One of the big names in the film is the legendary accordion player, Flaco Jimenez. He was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award in the same year that George Harrison, The Bee Gees, and Buddy Guy were awarded the same honor. He squeezed out some chords and a soft solo on the Rolling Stones' "Sweethearts Together" and played alongside Bob Dylan and Dr. John on Doug Sahm's *Doug Sahm and Band*. You

may recognize his name from those YouTube videos of the Netherland born and raised Dwayne Verheyden playing and singing (in Spanish!) *conjunto* music for Flaco Jimenez's birthday. Or from that concert he did next to a Tiny Desk for NPR. Or you may have heard him play in downtown Bryan when the Texas Tornadoes headlined one of those beef and booze festivals two or three years ago. You won't only be able to experience music, though. I once offered this movie to a friend who will not be named. I thought she would love it. She told me that she made it through some of the movie but was really not interested in that type of music. I said, "Susan Dennis! This is about more than just music!" And it is. There are all kinds of culturally interesting vignettes. There is an entire sequence when we can witness the great (not to be confused with rich and successful) Lydia Mendoza cooking a great big batch of tamales in her own kitchen (You may remember her

from that awesome postage stamp booklet that looks like a record.) Another sequence showcases migrant workers' cars being blessed by a white preacher before their long trek across the US. And there is a sequence that lets you watch records being made one at a time by an old man in a dungeon-like room.

Speaking of records, I searched the Waterloo Records website for a Flaco Jimenez album and was surprised to see only one vinyl copy in stock. I was pleased to see that they had plenty of his stuff in some kind of digital format, but was then hurt to see that they had classified his genre as "Reggae/World". "Reggae/World" on a site that has a hole list of genres titled, "Hear Texas here," "Shiner TX Top 10," "Texas Alt/Indie," "Texas Rock/Pop," "Texas Folk/Country" and "Texas Blues/Jazz." I once again used the phrase that my friend Alicia Zavala made up when she saw the Little Texas video for "God Bless Texas" and that I repeated after seeing that bullshit Super Bowl commercial that Dodge made about the cuddly, hardworking farmers. "Where are all the brown people?"—ALEX GARZA



PEDAL PUSHING

EHX BIG MUFF TONE WICKER

I love fuzz pedals in other guitarists' rigs but I hate them in mine. I don't like the compromises most fuzz circuits have. Either very little control in the Fuzzface/Tone



Blender circuit or the "sonic carpet" aspect of Big Muffs with the mid scoop. There are boutique exceptions to both rules but they generally cost a lot to A LOT and are often really complicated. Heck, the Blackout Effectors Musket Fuzz has six knobs! Some have even more, making them really complicated for a

dirt pedal.

Lately though, I've been thinking that I should keep my eyes open for a cheap fuzz of some sort, just to have at the house to record with. Recently, I stumbled upon a really good deal on a used Electro-Harmonix Big Muff with Tone Wicker pedal at Guitar Center that was too cheap to pass up. I'd been curious about this particular pedal for awhile, as it is designed to deal with some of the issues some people have with the Big Muff burying the guitar in a live mix.

First off, it's small. It's in the mid-sized EHX enclosure. Second, it has a Boss style 9V power outlet so it's easy to pedalboard/daisychain. It is built like a normal run-of-the-mill current production Big Muff except for the two switches up top. The first is the "tone wicker" which adds three high frequency filters to the tone circuit. In many ways this is very similar to the old trick of placing a strong EQ'ed overdrive after a Big Muff to better shape the tone of the fuzz. Many folks place Tubescreamers, Klon clones, Timmy pedals, etc. after a Big Muff to help dial some of the mids and highs back in, or to cut some of the fizz in the high end. The tone wicker circuit helps to overcome that somewhat. It's not as strong a control as using another pedal after a Big Muff but it also means you don't have to have the extra pedal or stomp on two pedals at once. The other switch turns the tone circuit entirely off. Be prepared when you flip this switch because it increases the output of the pedal significantly. It also raises the noise floor significantly. This makes for an excellent way to "send your tone to 11" literally, as it will clobber the front end of your signal chain. Behind a good overdrive is even better because then you have all that signal but with some coloration. I still find the pedal decidedly "fizzy" hitting a clean amp at lower volume. This fuzz really likes to hit an amp that's already cooking. At that point this pedal comes on like a big burly lumberjack.

Is this the fuzz pedal that makes me a convert? Doubtful, but I have already begun to put this pedal to good use recording at home for bass and guitar and I'm beginning to scheme about putting on the live board to see what I think. The best part of this is that the EHX pedal comes in at a decidedly budget friendly \$79 most places, half the cost of even the lower end of the boutique fuzz spectrum. Used prices come in often below \$50. At that price it's definitely worth giving a shot.—**KELLY MINNIS**

STILL POETRY

Delicate

Your jagged fingernails scratch off the surface of my skin.

Blabber on, carry on, I'm painted stiff.

Peel away the shades of pride and arrogance; vivid
Chip away my smiles and laughs; somber
My streaked lies and swirled truths; opaque.

And there, at the center of my broken, raped core, it's gold. Defiled from the start, I kept it hidden.

You spent so long stripping and searching;
Yelling and pleading to see the end.
Your fingers are bleeding.

Finally, after so long, here I lay.
Naked, exposed, have mercy on me.
Out of secrets, shining dully,
I'll blabber on. I'll carry on.

—**JESSICA LITTLE**

Drink Away

If you want to talk about this tendency I have to destroy good things,
Or to listen to my bad jokes, you're welcome to.
Fuck, why not? They all do it.

So, sit and have a laugh with me.

At my expense, encourage my stupidity.

Sit here and have a drink with me for the hefty fee of bullshitting.

But it's not funny when the jokes are aimed at each other,

Lying inside the grasp of our own egos.

No, it's not funny sitting here like milk long soured,

But somebody soon must swallow.

Let us laugh at this poor excuse of a gracious and willing host,

Because tonight I'm all alone and my mouth needs an ear

To hold the clutter of my mind, help me avoid the subject.

So, come all who are as miserable as I.

Heed my call to have a drink, help me to avoid the subject.

Let's leave our ponderings for tomorrow,

When the booze has run dry and our hangovers are too hellish

For finding the next escape or to even fucking try.

Let's leave our thoughts here until morning,

Where we can wrap ourselves in empty sheets like shrouds.

Because tonight we're going to drink this confusion numb

Until it's gone.

Come all you who are as miserable as I.

Heed this call to have a drink and a laugh.

Come, and together we can kill as much time between now and when

We must pour ourselves into empty beds

Falling asleep, smiling at how easy it is

To rid ourselves of the desperate thoughts that

Get stuck in our hearts and our heads.

—**VERA OVIRI**

RECORD REVIEWS



Dorthia Cottrell
Dorthia Cottrell

If the new release by stoner-doom metal heavyweights Windhand, *Grief's Infernal Flower*, is not on your Best of 2015 list that's only because you have not yet heard it. Our own Kelly Minnis explained why last month when he referenced the album as evidence of a potential "stoner-grunge band": a 2015 release that screams early-90s sensibilities and sounds. Truly, *G.I.F.* is the Sierra Nevada Pale Ale of metal records, serving as a gateway from Wal-Mart friendly radio metal to more profound genre-shifting game-changing metal. As Minnis also declared, lead-singer Dorthia Cottrell "is the band's secret weapon". Agreed, even if Cottrell's vocals have often appeared an afterthought in Windhand's career.

Minnis also mentioned Dorthia Cottrell's self-titled solo record, released in March on Forcefield Records, featuring her signature "smoky voice in a country-noir setting". As with her work on Windhand's new album, a failure to include Cottrell's solo record on a favorites list is an exposure of ignorance more than indifference. To hear this record is to be enchanted. Slow, methodical, acoustically quiet with thick textures of lap steel guitars and hollow-cabin echoes, Cottrell has successfully crafted a set of songs as much "whisper-metal" as they are folk-country. This is midnight whiskey sipping music. Dreary skies and rainy day book-cradling music. Crawl down a hole and feast on crusty memories kinda music. And it's goddam beautiful.

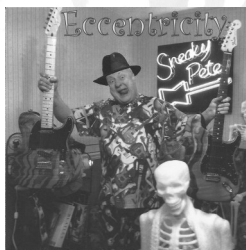
Similar themes appear on Cottrell's solo record as on any Windhand release: doomed visions of the forlorn earth journey. Cottrell's album opens with the "Cemetery Song" declaration "And God knows, ain't nothing easy anywhere down here" before bleeding into the break-up dirge, "Gold":

"Hey my lover made of glass and skin/Oh you promised me once I'd never cry again/But I know, yea I know where you've been." (Take notes, Taylor Swift!) The mood refuses to lighten as Cottrell moves from Nathaniel Hawthorne-esque confessions—"I'm the kinda girl who needs a devil in a man" ("Oak Grove")—to William Blake-ish prophetic visions—"I have found the open jaw of the mermaid virgin queen" ("Vessel"). My primary complaint with Windhand, at this point, is that I've never been able to enjoy Cottrell's poetry, drowned beneath the swamp water of Windhand's Cthulhu-heavy guitar crawl. Also, in all these aforementioned references, we haven't even left the first side of the record.

The second track on Side Two directly references the literature inspiring Cottrell's storytelling: "Annabelle Lee, will you bury your prayers in your garden/Abandon your children/Will you replace your flowers with weeds" ("Kneeler"). In true Edgar Allan Poe fashion, Cottrell's vocals echo with the sound of icy surroundings, as if we can hear the breath-steam of winter on her voice, hands gloved around frozen strings. It's a song that creates as much a portrait of the artist as its characters. From here Cottrell moves into covers of Townes Van Zant ("Rake") and Gram Parsons ("Song For You"), tracks that reveal titles in her musical library alongside the literary. Cottrell makes these covers personal, so much that they flow seamlessly in the mix. Still, these covers lack the conviction of Cottrell's personal tracks, serving as mere compliments among exorcisms.

Of all eleven tracks, the stand out, at least for this reviewer, is the closer of Side One: "Maybe It's True". On this simple girl-and-guitar number, Cottrell positions herself among the bar-stool songwriters she's long covered mantra-style. "And maybe it's true/Maybe I'll just never be that take home kinda girl!" Cottrell sings in true Kris Kristofferson "Sunday Morning Coming Down" fashion before dropping the closing bomb: "I brushed your hair back/away from your eyes/I've never been too good at these long drawn out kinda goodbyes." Songs such as this will eventually put Cottrell on the map, as they slip into the performances of other, more popular songwriters—

most likely, from outside the stoner or doom worlds. There's a timelessness to Cottrell's music that transcends the immediacy of the internet music stage. Hers is solo record that will stand, a talent that will continue racking up Best-Of accolades from multiple angles even as the Wal-Mart metal audience blissfully listens elsewhere.—KEVIN STILL



Sneaky Pete
Eccentricity

"Sneaky Pete" Rizzo is still cranking out his original DIY low-fi music with his latest CD of...yes, eccentric tunes. The former Texas A&M University biology professor retired a few years ago after more than three decades of a double-life as mild-mannered professor by day and fun-loving musician/recording artist by night.

The *Eccentricity* album—recorded in Rizzo's home studio, now in Massachusetts—boasts a talking corpse, a couple of parody songs, an instrumental, a leavening of sound effects, and plenty of fuzzed-out guitar (and organ). That retro messy guitar Rizzo featured on "The Lachrymator" and "Control Freak"—in addition to being catchy tunes—likely led to the songs' airplay on music programs in California, Berlin, the UK, and other parts of Europe. While the rhythmic "Corpuscule Shuffle (Ode to My Blood)" could easily fit on "Sesame Street" or the Learning Channel, the same could not be said for "Streetwalker" with its "Do it, do it, do it, do it" chorus. Nor for "Perks of Divorce" or "The Devil Wears Panties" or the Beatles' parody ("She's A Teaser") where "cookie" is rhymed with a certain euphemism for sex.

Despite the aforementioned "serious" songs, the core sense of humor that permeates all of Rizzo's work is apparent throughout. This includes "Perfect Match" that references eHarmony and Facebook as

well as "Sue Nahmi" about a disaster-prone woman (love the surprise bagpipes).

Sneaky Pete Rizzo—still rocking as he nears 75. Check him out. —MIKE L. DOWNEY



The Ex-Optimists
Phantom Freight

What do you get when you take four weirdos from a college town, give them an array of foot pedals, jazzmasters, and allow them to turn the volume up to the point of deafening the crowd? Well, you get the Ex-Optimists and their third album *Phantom Freight*.

Side A starts the album off with "True Evil", in which there is a beautiful Pink Floyd essence that lasts for about eight minutes. It's wind chimes, reverberation, pedal play, and a ghostly synthesizer that makes the serotonin in your brain elevate and the dopamine run rabid. During this eight minute trip, a genius play was made, and the addition of some confession of an awful crime was placed ever so lightly in the background. Under all the fuzz and static, under all the guitar and wind chime, is a man speaking of rape and other unjust casualties. It's hauntingly artistic. The entire song lasts for about 15 min, but it's completely worth it. The artistic quality of this whole A side is brilliant. I urge take notice of the lead guitar. This is one of the best aspects of this song. The rich, dreamy, grungy sound in the duration of the song is beautiful. Then, it explodes with doom for a millisecond at the end, and makes you beg for more. Seeing this performed live is not much different in amazement, but instead of quick ending like on the album, it goes on into this doom jam of pure bliss. I was disappointed to hear that this was not on the record, but none the less, "True Evil" is one of the greater songs of *Phantom Freight*.

"Husbands" has this west coast,

CONCERT CALENDAR

12/3—DJ Skullbone @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

12/4—Hazy Ray @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

12/5—The Ex-Optimists (LP release party), Golden Sombrero, Economy Island, Only Beast @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

12/7—Hot Club of Cowtown @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

12/10—Jaeger Wells, Kyle Cook, Anna Montie, Leavenworth @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

12/11—The Inators, Jealous Creatures, Vast Massive Satellite @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/12—This Is Where Two Oceans Meet, LUCA, First Thought Worst Thought, Cool Lookin' Dudes @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/31—Corusco, Odd Folks, Neon Noah, King & Nation @ Revolution, Bryan. 8pm

1/7—DJ Skullbone @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

1/9—Oh Sleeper, In the Trench, Myra Maybelle, Isonomist, Morningside, Distance/Here, Aphotic Contrivance @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 6:30pm

1/9—MyDolls, The Prof. Fuzz 63, Girlband, The Ex-Optimists @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

1/30—Second Runner Up, A Deathbed Promise, Electric Astronaut, Corpus Angel @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

happy quality. For some reason it brings The Beach Boys album *Pet Sounds* to mind. It's the soft, smooth vocals and the beachy undertones of the bass and guitar. It's fun without being repetitive or clogged with extra nonsense sounds. The bass drum goes through about four change ups, but the rest of "Husbands" is decadently simple. "Don't Let Go" is another song to pay attention to. The drums on this track are phenomenal. The timing and high energy of the beat is spot on. It seriously separates this song from being lost in the sea of Xops songs. Recently the drummer departed from the band, so, the next person to take that spot will have very big shoes to fill. There is a certain sound that must be captured, and I cannot stress that enough. "Don't Let Go" is one of those hidden treasures you find on the album after you've stressed the first two hits. You sit there, wondering how on earth you are just now finding this song, and why haven't you listened to it sooner. Do yourself a favor and get on this before waste time.

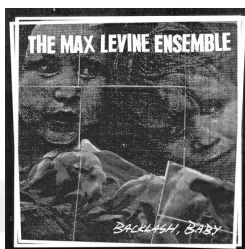
"Whoop Stop" Holy mother of change ups, Batman. This entire song goes through three big transitions: one at the beginning, one at the middle, and one at the end. It's a roller coaster of unity. What I mean by that, is that you can't denote one instrument over another. I can't tell you to pay attention to one instrument, because the sound made is recognized by each person, and not just the guitar, or the bass or drum. Also, it has one of the best breakdowns The Ex-Optimists have ever created. At about 3 min and 30 sec, "Whoop Stop" goes through this rhythmic change that makes you bang

your indie head, and pump your college-rock fists. I can't stress this section of the song enough. It's **FUCKING** killer. "Something in the Way," a Nirvana cover done right! Drone; so much drone. It's absolutely delightful! The Ex-Optimists have this incredible gift of making things sound dreamy without being cheesy. Once again, the lead guitar is something to adore on this track. It has this beautiful thick sound that makes you sway in a way that maybe Kurt couldn't. The vocals are beautifully smooth. Once again, dreamy. It's like melting caramel and pouring it over fuzz. "Something in the Way" is one of those songs were you discover a new sound buried beneath all the drone and fuzz each time you listen. It's incredibly clever. Also, a cute little change up, Zoot is mentioned in the last few lyrics which make smiles appear on the most serious faces. If you don't know who Zoot is, Zoot Dog is the owner of Michael (lead guitarist) and Katie (bassist.)

Compared to Their previous album *Bee Corps Collector*, The Ex-Optimists seem to have tapped into a slightly heavier sound that fits them VERY well. More drone, more fuzz, more bass drum, and more killer breakdowns set this album apart from any other album created by the four piece indie rock band, but, they still manage to keep you in that infamous dream state.

The few disappointments with this album is that not all of the songs recorded are played like they are played live. And, there are certain songs played during a live show that didn't make it

to the album which probably should have, like, "Nights and Days of Rain," or "Wrecking Ball". But, that only give us the excuse to see every live show we possibly can to catch that Xop magic.—**JESSICA LITTLE**



Max Levine Ensemble
Backlash, Baby

This punk hit has put out its tenth album after its 15 years together, and this latest finds them doing what they do best while stretching out a bit as well. The most ambitious tune—and the best on the album—is the likely autobiographical "American," which begins with the singer's recitation that he "was born in 1984/post Vietnam, post Cold War/In a world my parents had worked hard for". The character grows up to question his role as evidenced by the strong chorus repeating the title, punk guitars augmented by pounding keyboard. None of the other tunes rise to this epic stature, but that's not a bad thing. "You Were a Fighter" strives to be as powerful while "Fall of the Constellations" boasts a great bass intro. The title cut, "Sun's Early Rays," and "Big Problems, USA" are fairly-traditional punk full-tilt tunes. "My Valerian" is likely to garner interest with its catchy mid-tempo sound although the band sounds like Ludo at times. The album closes with an unexpected guitar/voice two-

part song that picks up very nicely to rock the boys to the finish: "Going Home Part 1 and Part II." All in all, not a bad entry in the punk pantheon.—**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



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