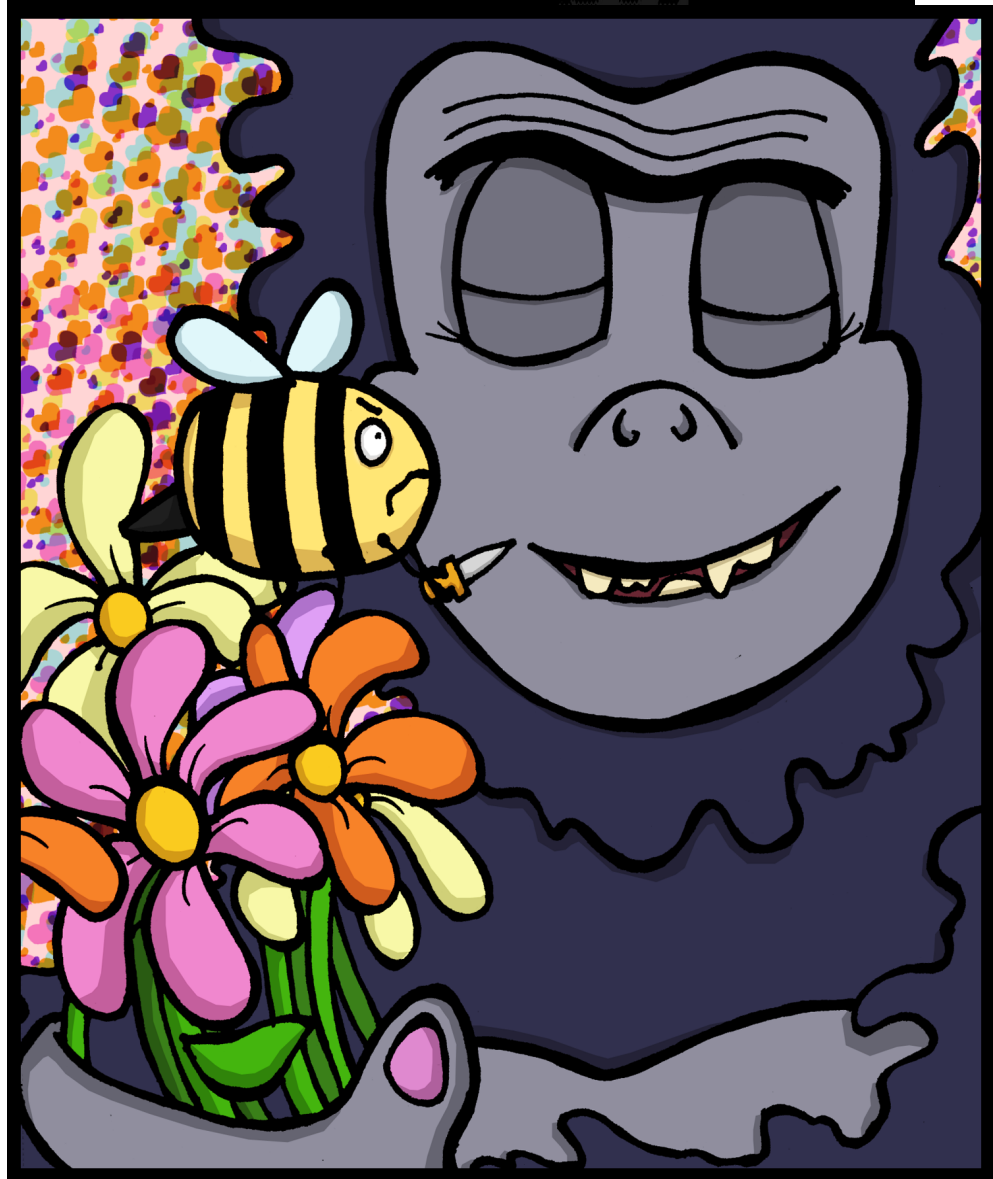


979 REPRESENT



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*inside: point/counterpoint david bowie - still drinking -
you're not punk & i'm telling everyone - iowans pick corn -
still poetry - record reviews - concert calendar*



979represent is a local magazine for the discerning dirtbag.

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STILL POETRY

COMPILATION

I like two types of songs:
those that rally youth
when my bones ache, and
those that kindle wisdom
when I wake with regret.

—KEVIN STILL

OFF THE HOOK

My waitress—whose hair
left her shoulders for the
small of her back since
we met—pointed to the
Daniel Woodrell novel, and
asked, "Doing a little reading?"
I said, "Yeah. My semester
begins Tuesday as well. If
I don't start a good book now
I'll spend my evenings glued
to the TV." She nodded,
saying something about
Anatomy 2 and needing
to make flashcards, and
I realized we see words as
differently as the bear and
the worm see the fish.

—KEVIN STILL



IOWANS PICK CORN BUT...

The saying goes that Iowans pick corn but in *New Hampshire presidents are selected*. It is a rather nice and polite way for New Englanders to tell Podunk bread basket farmers to take their caucus and shove it up their combines. Early this month Iowans braved an oncoming blizzard to get together in rooms and discuss who they think should be their particular political party's nominee, and then pick one. If you have never caucused it is a very interesting process. It is part church potluck, part serious political wonkfest. I caucused in Washinton state in 2004 and it was an unforgettable experience. The caucus is a throwback to the days of yore and yesteryear, the fabled smoke-filled rooms where the powerful get together to make things happen. In Iowa this year, the general populace queued up to select Texas senator Ted Cruz on one side and, well, who knows exactly on the other side. The caucus selection was so close in several key precincts that a mere flip of the coin decided who won that particular precinct.

So what did we learn exactly? Well, Ted Cruz may not be the all-star bully that famed loudmouth Donald Trump is, but he's enough of an asshole that he can draw the same sort of voters that Trump does but also appeal to the Christian sect of the far right that Trump just can't fool into believing he be a man of the LORD. Florida senator Marco Rubio spun his third placing as a victory and even gave a victory speech after the results were filed. Considering that Rubio has poled third consistently for most of the last year shows that of Marco got some elephant-sized hubris. Trump didn't fail outright and was only beaten by a couple of percentage points. There's a fair chance that he's gonna clean up this month in New Hampshire and South Carolina. It does mean that we ought to see more of the "kids table" GOP candidates give up the ghost. Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee and Kentucky congressman Rand Paul have already dropped out. Expect to see several others walk away by month's end. Poor Jeb Bush. The former Florida governor, who was slated early on as a shoo-in for the nomination, barely moved the meter.

On the Democratic side, we have a bit of false hope for the Bernie peoples. That Vermont senator Bernie Sanders basically tied with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is an amazing feat, considering that most Democrats weren't interested in running against Hillary. The party apparatchiks threw their lot in with the Clintons decades ago and President Barrack Obama's nomination came as a surprise to nearly everyone in the party's elite. So it has been expected for eight years that 2016 would be Hillary's year. Sanders has upset that apple cart by appealing to the youth vote. Clinton has a real hard time appealing to young voters. Sanders is expected to clean up in New Hampshire this month, but elsewhere in the country he will have to endure some big losses, especially down South and in the rust belt. Sanders has said that he will remain in the race until the convention, no matter how he fares in the primaries.

Texans have to wait until March 1st when we, along with six other states, line up on what's known as *Super Tuesday* to pull the levers. How will you vote? Well, you've got exactly 29 days to figure it out. Primaries tend to be low turnout, but as you can see, the contest is still up for grabs. Your vote counts.—KELLY MINNIS



STILL DRINKING

Karbach Brewing Co. is a polarizing operation, to say the least. Their brews have won staple space in many beer geeks' fridge crispers. At the same time, I've collected ample ire from many who've utterly dismissed Karbach, unwilling even to sample new releases. Personally, I sympathize with the pro-Karbach camp, as I keep several Karbach brews on affectionate rotation. Karbach's new **Zee German Pils Seasonal** joins such ranks. In true Karbach fashion, Zee (40 IBUs / 4.9% ABV) is subtle, quiet, pleasant: more Nora Jones than Amy Winehouse. Zee pours like a dadgum Budweiser: golden, bubbly, energetic, and topped with a solid head of cappuccino foam. The nose wafts yellow-earth tones, and the flavor politely—with some reverence, I should say—blends the malts and hops into a fine Old-Recipe balance. Zee is a backporch/good read/backgammon/fine record/long-ass chat/crossword puzzle/poetry-penning/sunset watching kinda beer. Don't open one unless you've time for three more. I'm already stoked for my first twelve-pack.

Recently I had the privilege of attending the **Chupacabra Craft Beer** bar in Salado, TX. If you're unfamiliar with Salado, drop your finger on a Rand McNally halfway between Georgetown (north of Austin) and Temple (south of Waco), and right about there you've got Salado. Chupacabra boasts 41 Texas brewed craft beers on tap, featuring rare jewels from **Deep Ellum** and Karbach, as well as fine standards from **512, Eastciders, and Adelbert's**. A flight of four 5 oz samples costs \$10 with a Chupacabra pint glass tossed in *pro bono*. Okay. Stop here. Did you just see that? A flight of Texas craft samples and cool ass glassware costs \$10. Brother, gas the jalopy! The food situation at Chupacabra is interesting. Popcorn is free, and the bar offers a few appetizer trays and baskets for purchase. But with 41 beers on tap, you'll want some carbs. I recommend **McCain's Bakery and Cafe** across the street for sandwiches and homemade pie. Good stuff. McCain's makes our own Must Be Heaven look downright unholy.

During my all too brief visit to Chupacabra Craft Beer, I tried two new Texas based breweries, though only one is worth mentioning. From **Rentsch Brewing (Georgetown)**, I tried a Hefeweizen and a Prussian Imperial Stout. According to their website, Rentsch Brewing, born from the founder's beer themed trip to Germany, "adheres to the Reinheitsgebot, or German purity law". This suggests that Rentsch is a malt-forward brewery, as can be attested from the two ridiculously good samples I tried at Chupacabra. Although I am not usually a fan of American made Hefes, Rentsch has crafted something special. **Rentsch Hefeweizen (5.5% ABV)**, a true breakfast/brunch brew, features huge banana and honey notes. In keeping with the Reinheitsgebot rule, these flavors can be accessed from particular malts in the roasting process. The density of these flavors, which are generally muted or drowned out by heavy doses of wheat or coriander spice (additions that would violate the German purity law) in most American made Hefes, attests to the dedication to artistry at this brewery. My flight also offered **Rentsch Prussian Imperial Stout (9.9% ABV)**. Admitting ignorance: I've no damn clue what a Prussian Imperial Stout is supposed to be. Forget it. This is one of the better Imperial Stouts I've had. The menu descriptor claims "thick texture like a coffee stout", which, if your access to coffee stouts is **Real Ale Coffee Porter** or even **Santa Fe Java Stout**, is a massive understatement akin to labeling Slayer "rock-n-roll". With this Rentsch Prussian, we're talking dark dark dark chocolate. 98% cocoa. 2% Indonesian based espresso beans. Super rich, demanding vanilla bean ice cream or sea salt coated bacon strips as a pairing. Beautiful beautiful beautiful beer. Would it be dramatic to say my toes curled while sipping this flight? They did. I'll not soon forget that.—KEVIN STILL

THE SHITTY NEIGHBOR



We moved into a house last month. I'm still getting used to it. I'm pushing 40, but the first part of my adulthood was spent being pretty nomadic. Peter Pan syndrome ran rampant when I moved out at 17 and kept going. I think at some point in my 30's I woke up in an ancient drafty rent house I shared with my band sometime in February, the cold seeping in from outside, I had several gallons of water near my bed in case someone needed to use the toilet, and I put a few layers of clothes on as I braved the house outside my room, I felt like I was living in a run down garrison in Europe, only I was in my hometown minutes from where I graduated. I walked outside the massive porch in our little house in the hood, waved at the neighbors who were nice enough not to rob us (I guess they didn't shit where they eat even though we didn't have a back door to the house) and I decided I was just getting too old for this shit.

Brea (my wife and singer for TSS) and I decided to get our own apartment, one with a door and heat, and we started living in some comfort for awhile. I was used to apartment life. I hated lawns. I hated upkeep, I just wanted to rock out and pass out in my bed. That lasted a few more years then my hatred of other people came stronger than my hatred of lawn work.

If you want to know the real reason I bought a house, I'll tell you... People are shitty. I can't think of a neighbor who didn't have something wrong with them. Either they had shitty kids who liked to climb my stairs and play outside my window while I tried to sleep, or they decided to herd elephants in their spare time upstairs, or they would illegally house other people any given day of the week, people became the catalyst to my desire to buy a house.

This meant conquering my fear of settling in a place. It was new to my former vagabond lifestyle and scared the shit out of me. So my wife and I talked for close to a year. Where would we settle? B/CS? Houston? San Antonio? Austin? (just kidding Austin is a hell hole don't believe the hype and avoid it like a virus NOTE: the opinions of Timothy Danger do not reflect 979represent but yeah he thinks Austin can choke a dick) [ed. note: the entire staff of 979represent concurs with Mr. Danger's opinion of Austin] We weren't sure where to go. We'd let fate decide.

Then fate stepped in as the form of a three bedroom house in Stout City. It had three bedrooms (one for sleeping, one for an office for Brea and a study for me). A living room, a dining room (we turned it into a bar) as well as a room for the band to practice and a small house in the back for art projects. It was a dream come true. So we bought it. Turns out living as a vagabond with a cash existence and no credit cards keeps your credit pretty damn clean.

It's weird living in a house. It's quiet except for the noise that I make. I like the big kitchen. But I really love my study, where I am writing this now. It allows me to write, it allows me to smoke cigars and listen to music before 1980, I have a creative refuge I never had. Heaven help me, I even like the damn yard.

I don't think I'll miss moving around so much. The band keeps us visiting cities and Brea caught the travel bug with me when we took a road trip across America last year, so it looks like everyone is stuck.

Funny thing is, when we took down the patriotic flag and hoisted a Jolly Roger onto the flag pole on our front yard I realized... Holy shit. Now I'm the shitty neighbor.

Game on.—TIMOTHY DANGER

What did Bowie do, really?

POINT/COUNTERPO

OK, short of "Space Oddity" I mean. Oh, and "dick in tights" bad guy. Everyone is all, "Oh, David Bowie died! So tragic!" But you know what? His music mostly sucked. I mean, yeah, there's a handful of songs that are cool, and in the history of music he did things that were kinda oddball and artsy, but so did Zappa (who's music is super lame) and so did Lady Gaga.

I listened through his newest album and I got the same feeling I always get when I listen to Bowie...it's OK...kinda strange...interesting at best...maybe one or two songs I'd listen to again.

It feels like his music is "pretend" drug music. Like it's "almost" weird enough to be cool, but it will never be as cool as Pink Floyd or The Cure or Ween. Just weird to be weird, but not as "cool" weird as something like Gwar.

Seriously. I'll count how many songs that I think are actually cool that he wrote: "Changes?" Maybe. "Ziggy Stardust?" sure. "Space Oddity?" Yes, of course. "Heroes?" OK. "Moonage Daydream", but only after it came out on the *Guardians of the Galaxy* soundtrack. "Let's Dance?" Sure. "Fame?" Great. What is that, 6 or 7? Add "Under Pressure" with Queen, but that is most definitely a Queen song featuring Bowie. "I'm Afraid of Americans" with Trent Reznor? Possibly, but have you even heard of it? And honestly, it sounds like Trent had a lot more to do with the song than Bowie did.

I guess I'm just not convinced that a handful of songs constitutes "legendary". Did he influence the world? Yes. Did he inspire? Probably. Did he have amazing hairstyles? Definitely.

Again, yes, he did some strange and interesting things, but so did Kiss. So did Alice Cooper or Ozzy, but I can name more than five songs from each of those guys.

Some of you are fuming right now saying that I am not a "true fan" in that I didn't mention any "B" sides. OK, granted, I am not a true fan, but to be honest, it just always took too much effort to even try to get into any other songs than the ones that played on the radio or MTV or were covered and redone on *Moulin Rouge*...and I ALWAYS turned over the record. I love "B" sides. In an effort to do ol' Ziggy justice, I'm gonna go on a search for "Hardcore Fan" David Bowie songs. We'll see.

"London Bye Ta Ta?" Nope. "Holy Holy?" Stuck with me for a bit, then got tired of it. "Andy Warhol?" Nope. "Always Crashing?" Ugh. OK, "Heathen" is not so bad. In fact, it kinda reminds me of "Blackstar" on the newest album. By the way, I'm going through a list on Rolling Stone's website called, "20 Insanely Great David Bowie Songs Only Hardcore Fans Know". "Something in the Air" I can understand why it was chosen for *American Psycho* and *Memento*. I am surprised by this song. It's really good.

So, OK, Maybe I found a couple of new songs I would say are cool, but I'm still no fanboy. In fact, I have to say that I'm quite the opposite. I mean that I won't be suggesting that people listen to David Bowie.

That list of "20 Insanely Great" songs was a pathetic jumble of 50s meets Dylan meets Cohen with a little Beatles, *Revolver*. Also, I am picky and opinionated.

Maybe I would just have to be really high, fairly depressed and a gender-bender to appreciate his music.

It sucks that he's dead. I care that he's dead. I guess I just don't care much about what he did while he was here. I feel a little like a disrespectful asshole to be talking about someone who just died. Sorry.

David Bowie is/was overrated.—JORGE GOYCO

=====

I have been told many a time in arguments both in person and over the internet by people older and cooler than me that context is extremely important in evaluating a piece of creative work, be it a film, photograph, play, poem, novel, song, album, etc. You will never fully understand or "get it" if you weren't there at the actual time the piece of art was created. You have to fully appreciate the times and the environment in which the piece was created to understand its place in that environment. And I would argue until I was blue in the face or my carpal tunnel syndrome acted up that the concept of context was complete and utter shite. A good piece of work can transcend context and speak to anyone in or out of the work's initial time and space. I don't think *A Tale of Two Cities* or *Metropolis* or, as Jorge mentioned in his piece, *Revolver* loses anything outside of its initial context. Now, can you appreciate something on maybe multiple levels if you understand that just two years before The Beatles released *Revolver* they were still aping American soul and rock & roll and somehow began to *transcend* their influences and become some completely other beast? Context lends that complexity.

I come to this piece perhaps with an apology to my usenet adversaries of yore, that perhaps there is more to this context argument than I gave them credit for. I think the point of view I held in my youth was perhaps formed because I had no context myself. I didn't entirely understand that 25 years after Nirvana's *Nevermind* that I would interact with people half my age who weren't even born and didn't understand what a counter-reaction it, and Husker Du, The Replacements, Jane's Addiction, etc. were to what was in the mainstream at the time (saccharine hair metal, polished Minneapolis pop, the birth of sampladelic NYC and gangsta LA hip-hop). Like *White Light/White Heat* and *Raw Power* before me, *Nevermind* would be the kids' classic rock.

I proffer this discussion to set up why I think Jorge doesn't "get" Bowie. Because, in all truth, I didn't get Bowie right away. My first interaction with the man's music



POINT: DAVID BOWIE



was like most children of the '80s: on the radio and MTV during his pop phase. Singles like "Let's Dance", "China Girl", and "Modern Love" were super catchy soul-influenced pop radio fodder. Earworms and such, but nothing *deep* (see the original Iggy Pop version of "China Girl" to catch all the menace Bowie ironed out for his version). I missed on Bowie until late in the decade when I saw his band Tin Machine play on an awards show and I thought maybe I should check that record out. And to this day I defend the Tin Machine LP to a lot of Bowie diehards because I think it's a rather good hard rock record. But it wasn't until later into high school when I began collecting records in earnest that I began to understand why my older bandmates and music pals spoke in the same hushed tones about Bowie that they did about Zeppelin, Hendrix, Black Sabbath, and the like.

In 1990 you could take a \$20 bill into most used record stores and come out with an armload of vinyl. If you were the least bit curious about an artist you'd heard about you could most likely find one of his/her/their records in the \$1 bin. You could take a chance on something completely unheard. Nowadays you can hear someone talk about someone cool then point your phone towards Youtube and hear it right away. Bowie was one of these artists. I had read in *Musician* (RIP—that was a cool magazine) an interview with Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails in 1992 that David Bowie's so-called "Berlin trilogy" was his favorite albums and they kept him from going Columbine on his southwest Pennsylvania townsfolk in high school. Seemed like a good enough reason for me to pay \$2 each for *Low*, "Heroes", and *Lodger*. And I tried. Boy, did I try to get into those records. But they are dense, alien creatures, full of bizarre sounds, fractured pop songs, proto-ambient/new age instrumentals...music that I had never heard before. And other than *Low*, I pretty much pushed those records away.

I cannot discount how important an album *Low* was for me. I can still put on my thinking cap and picture in my head listening to the second side of that album in the dark with the light from my R2D2-esque kerosene heater throwing hieroglyphics upon the wood paneled walls of my basement apartment. The hushed, dark, nearly classical tones of "Warszawa", the African marimbas in "Art Decade", the cigarette-stained cabaret elegance of "Subterraneans". This was ART MUSIC made without a single commercial care in the world. It took me somewhere else, away from that cold, shitty apartment to

somewhere else entirely in my mind.

There is a scene in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky where the characters hear

Bowie's "Heroes" on the radio late one night and pierces their hearts. The DJ never backsells the song, so the characters wait many years to find out who the song was by and what it was called. That song is perhaps Bowie's strongest moment. If you read the lyrics, they are asinine. When you put them together with the otherworldly wail of Robert Fripp's guitar as channeled through Brian Eno's synthesizer, the coked-out paranoia of Bowie screaming "and we kissed as though nothing could fall". It's pure feeling. Catching something so elusive via microphone and electronics, captured for posterity. It is a starkly beautiful seven minutes that few could ever hope to recreate. And that is outside of the context of punk rock, disco, The Osmonds on television, the Laurel Canyon denim post-hippie singer-songwriter hush, and the dinosaur plod of arena-sized hard rock. The impact of "Heroes" outside of its context for the book's characters rural Ohio in the 1980s or outside of mine own in the stripmine-blasted ruins of western Kentucky in 1992 does not lessen the power. Perhaps I wasn't wrong to argue against context.

Context can also somewhat hinder an artist. After 1980's *Scary Monsters* Bowie stopped pushing the artistic envelope. The wild rush of stylistic changes from folky to metalhead to gay cabaret to blue-eyed soul to motorik to art-damaged hard rock would induce whiplash in even the most ardent fan. The 1980s were not kind to Bowie and most of the work, beyond *Let's Dance* is lazy and uninspired. In the '90s Bowie became a follower instead of a leader. His *Outside* LP sounds like he wanted to become Nine Inch Nails; *Earthling* took on the style of jungle and drum-and-bass that was so popular in English clubs in the late 90s. His last two albums seem to have come from a place where he just didn't give a damn anymore. I am somewhat ashamed to have not listened to them yet. But one in their 20s could be forgiven for not getting Bowie. If someone like Jorge within my own generational context only listens to Bowie post-mortem and takes the music purely on the music's value that person could miss why much of the English-speaking world mourned his death. For nearly all my British friends, losing Bowie was like losing one of our former presidents. Bowie begat punk rock. He was not single-handedly responsible for it, but there were few contemporary artists embraced by the ground zero of English punk rock aside from Bowie and Roxy Music (one cannot consider Bowie without considering his most frequent foil, Roxy Music's Brian Eno). This is not to mention those that grew up on the imagery of Bowie. His turn in in *Labyrinth* was well-remembered by many children of the '80s. I watched *Zoolander* the other night and forgot he played a bit part in that movie. There are a good two dozen films he has either acted or starred in.

In a very roundabout way I have become that older guy telling the younger dudes that perhaps context matters at least somewhat. In 20 years they will tell people the same when others will not comprehend why anyone should care about TV On the Radio or Vampire Weekend or The Arcade Fire. You can't just evaluate it on its own terms, you have to evaluate *the context, man*. Within context, David Bowie was a nuclear bomb. Outside of context, well, as Jorge said, perhaps Bowie the musician was maybe overrated. — KELLY MINNIS

RECORD REVIEWS



Bloodiest
Bloodiest

Bloodiest debuted their new self-titled album January of this year, and to no disappointment topped their previous works by a landslide. The first song on the Bloodiest album is "Mesmerize". This song was released as a teaser. This was wise for Bloodiest. Catchy, deep, loud bass drums and a dirty guitar will have you begging for more. Those smooth high pitch vocals paired with the deep beat of the bass drum will have you on the edge of your seat. Towards the end of the song the vocals gain aggression long with the crescendo of the melody. It's a trance you don't want to escape from. "Mesmerize". "The Widow" is another favorite. It seems as though Bloodiest tapped into the adding lie of the bass drum, because this song thrives off of it, and the actual bass itself. There's also this classical acoustic undertone which slowly builds in a droning heavy guitar. There are choir-esque backing vocals, matched by front man Bruce Lamont. It sends an avant-garde, metal-religious chill up your spine. Throughout the entire song there are operatic points to pay attention to. The orchestrations of "The Widow" touch a special part of your drone loving soul. Lyrically, it's sorrow, heavy, and transcends you into a realm of wallow and beauty. There are so many layers to uncover to this single song, it's unreal. Brilliantly mixed, masterfully tuned, "The Widow" is the hit song of the album. Throughout *Bloodiest* there are tracks that focus on instrumentals more than actual lyrics. Songs like "Condition" have a very sentimental classical sound. It's sweet, simple, and at times you forget this is a band named Bloodiest coming through your speakers. Songs like "Mind Overlaps" bring you into a world of drone and distortion with that ever so famous classical music touch. Once you get comfortable with their

infamous classical rhythm, sound crashes with metallic guitar riffs, shaking bass lines, and their attack of snares and cymbals with Bruce's operatic screaming. It's gorgeous. Lastly, "Suffer", the most metal song of the album, has no ease. It's strictly heavy basslines, crunchy guitars, a hard floor tom, and that beautiful bass drum. Vocals are intense in an instant. There's no easing into "Suffer", which again, cleverly titled appropriately rhythmic wise. It's an interesting song, because if you listen to "Mesmerize", and then skip to "Suffer", they sound almost identical. Ending the album on almost the exact same note—except with a harder, faster pace—you began with was a surprise that is to be adored.

Only when I realized that this album is not focused on metal, but rather progressive rock, and avant-garde, with metal to sharpen its blade, did I understand this was a masterpiece of classical layers and distorted drone. Do not mistake this album for strictly metal because there will be a great amount of disappointment, and you will miss the opportunity to experience this brilliant trance. This album will be filed in with artists like Black Math Horseman, Sub Rosa, U.S Christmas, and even Holly Hunt.—*JESSICA LITTLE*

I would add nothing to the conversation regarding Bloodiest's self-titled sophomore release by discussing its complexity. That has been well established. Still, I'd like to discuss the record's complexity. It is, by all connotations, a strange album. As it should be. Released on January 15, 2016 by Relapse Records from a congregation of members from Russian Circles, YOB, Correction House, and Minsk, this record should feel like a smorgasbord of metal influences and definitions.

I bought this sucker on CD at Waterloo Records in Austin, and for the next week I drove around with Bloodiest blaring in my car, sputtering out aggressive, down-tuned bits and pieces between work and home, red light to red light, a few minutes here and there, the same way I digest most music I appreciate quickly in the intimacy of my Protege. But Bloodiest wasn't giving up that easily, and I found myself despising the record. In fact,

Jessica Little and I agreed to write dual reviews of Bloodiest due to our polar takes on the record. She loved it. I regretted dollars lost. And so it went for a short season.

Until the night I put Bloodiest on my headphones, cranked the volume, and stared at blank pages in a notebook. The entire album played. Then it played again. And by the end of the second listen I felt convinced Bloodiest would easily make any Top Metal Records of 2016 list.

My friend Andrew, who I am learning to trust implicitly with musical recommendations (even when I do not love his offerings, I learn a lot), claims that Bloodiest is metal-jazz. I get that. There's a method of conceptualizing this record that is not the same as, say, Red Fang or Windhand or Rwake or any of the cores. That's not to say it is superior, but it is interesting and demanding, in the same sense that albums like *A Love Supreme* and *Bitches Brew* (I will skip the temptation to mention *Kid A*) do not make themselves immediately available. You have to want it.

So what does that mean? Where is this complexity? Well, that's where I hit the wall: how to express the emotional and mental maneuvering of music. The best I can do is commentate on a single track.

Track two "The Widow" paints a solid representation of the whole record. It's aggressive. Loud. Unrushed. Cycling thick-sound through a growing loop of thematic rhythms while adding, slowly, hints of new noise. (Pretty standard so far.) "The Widow" opens with fairly stock bass and drum lines, thumping and grumpy, before moving into an atmospheric slither of vocals, acoustic guitars, and a quietly sneaky minor tuned piano. Then the electric guitars slip in with higher tinted notes, even hope, hovering over the Gregorian "om" of hollow chants and lead vocals—"Into that fire that will give us some light". The track grows suddenly quiet. Back to acoustic and light electric guitars, swirling around quiet chambered vocals—"Falling from the edge of the cliff/Falling from the edge into the night". Then the bass comes back, more aggressive. Drums harder. The piano keyed down a notch. Pretty guitar adds crunch, drops octave. "We

Fall, fall deep into the night." And then a transition guitar riff that moves the surface of the track into a new direction, although the undercurrent stays the same. Building. Darkening. Stretching out. THAT DAMN PIANO! Suddenly, everything grows quiet, downward swirling acoustic guitar. Entering the five minute mark. And then Vesuvius erupts. Improv takes over. Total lack of structure. Something thicker, more purposeful, more angry than Phish jamming. Several movements happening at once. THAT DIABOLICAL PIANO! WHO IS THIS WOMAN? Where do I listen? What do I attach myself to? The surface? The rhythm? The vocals? Emotion? Three pieces moving in three directions, but still somehow together. I don't know what I'm talking about anymore than I know what I'm listening to. As a critic, I'm in Freshmen Lit reading Faulkner for an essay test tomorrow. Caffeine or alcohol? One will get me through this text.

So it goes with most of the album. Stand outs on *Bloodiest*: "Mesmerize", "The Widow", and "Broken Teeth". The rest of the album wraps around these tracks. However, my go-to, the repeat in car and on Discman, is "He Is Disease". Maybe this feels, on some level, a bit more like straight-up sludge with a dash of doom. If you want the kind of metal that sells t-shirts, here's your track. Still, there's something special about it. You wouldn't take this track out for cheese fries: you'd take her out for an actual baked potato. The attraction is there. The natural beauty. If you can just hold her still long enough to look her in



Ringo Deathstarr
Pure Mood

The latest offering from this psychedelic dream-pop trio will likely satisfy their hard-core fans, but it's unlikely to garner any new converts. *Pure Mood* pulls together elements from

CONCERT CALENDAR

2/5—LUCA, Leavenworth @ Village Café, Bryan. 8pm
2/5—Brazos Valley Derby Girl Art Show feat. **Girlband, Mutant Love** @ Riddle Gallery, Bryan. 9pm

2/10—Vox Vocis, And Then Suddenly, Forever Today, Luca, Electric Astronaut @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7:30pm

2/12—The Sideshow Tragedy @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/13—Wonderbitch, No I'm the Leader, Electric Astronaut @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/18—DJ Spooky presents **Peace Symphony** @ Rudder Theater, College Station. 7pm

2/18—The Punknecks @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/20—LUCA, Exit Glaciers, First Thought Worst Thought, The Inators @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/23—DJ Jonny Cerveza @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

2/27—Odd Folks, Nominee, Corusco, Hand Me Down Adventure @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm

3/12—The Ex-Optimists, A Sundae Drive, Slow Future @ New Republic Brewing Company, College Station. 9pm

3/25—David Ramirez, Daniel Gonzalez @ New Republic Brewing Company, College Station. 8pm

their last two albums—*God's Dream* and *Mauve*—as well as a smattering from their best release, 2011's pop gem *Colour Trip*. Unfortunately, it's an uneven collection of those sounds.

"Stare at the Sun" and "Acid Tongue" are the best of the lot. "Stare at the Sun" features bassist Alex Gehring on vocals, and her dreamy tones are countered by the jangly guitars. "Acid Tongue" has set closer written all over it with its feisty rhythms and raging guitar from leader Elliott Frazier. "Show me the Truth of Your Love" also is a solid shoegaze tune with its interwoven vocals from Frazier and Gehring. It also boasts an odd fade with the last minute or so being a soft instrumental and an undercurrent of another song altogether. Weird, but it works. "Never" alternates the catchy and the atonal well.

What doesn't work as well are the tunes that don't have enough variety. "Big Bopper", "Guilt", and "Frisbee" (except for the instrumental fade) are pretty much the same tune. Gehring's lush vocals are enjoyable enough, but on "Dream Again", "California Car Collection", and "Old Again", the tunes aren't strong enough for her voice to carry the load. And I can't tell if "Heavy Metal Suicide" is supposed to be a joke or not—the band sure sounds like it's having fun playing it. Perhaps more of their fun pop would fit the bill, but hey, I'm just a fan. Maybe I'll look into a vinyl copy of *Colour Trip* instead... hmmm.—MIKE L.

DOWNNEY



Baroness
Purple

With each new release since their 2007 debut, *Red*, Baroness has built a reputation for publishing better songs than albums. On their sophomore follow-up, *Blue* (2009), Baroness attempted a darker, heavier sound, blending influences of sludge and some kinda grind-type-thing that felt like a cartoonish sidekick to Mastodon's *Leviathan*. With *Yellow & Green* (2012), Baroness released two albums worth of slower, more emotive, methodically blended hard-rock that left most listeners wondering if *Y&G* was a conceptual project. The lack of cohesiveness across the packaged individual records, not to mention the entire project, firmly answer the concept question, but so did the meandering musical rabbit trails that seemed to have no damn clue where certain songs wanted to go. How could listeners plant both feet into *Y&G* when the band—or maybe their producers—had not? *Y&G* is not a complete disaster; nevertheless, a double-album offering four of five good tracks is hardly worth admission price.

Still, I am a Baroness fan, and I enjoy aspects of all their albums. For this reason, I was glad to spend time with *Purple*, released December 18, 2015 from the band's own label, Abraxan Hymns. *Purple* negates the old Baroness

reputation: from cover to cover, with minor exceptions, *Purple* is a damn good album. Also, cohesively speaking, *Purple* works as a concept piece. It's impossible to fully engage *Purple* without considering the 2012 bus-crash that injured two members into early retirement and nearly stole guitarist/vocalist/artist John Baizley's ability to play and paint. After the crash, Baizley stated on the Official Baroness webpage: "I can say, after nearly 6 weeks of reflection, that I feel more resolute and passionate about our music than ever. I have come to realize the importance of time in this particular equation, that is, I have none to waste and none to spare." This urgency marks a primary hallmark of *Purple*'s success.

Purple opens explosively with "Morningstar", satisfying the band's Mastodon crush. "Dry your tears, my darling/There's a pistol-whipped look in your eyes/The captain was gentle/He left you alive." Baizley charges with an immediacy he's not yet possessed. His vocals contain greater diversity, even in a single track here, than he's previously challenged of himself. That being said, Baizley, at times on *Purple*, trades early Baroness screams for a more vulnerable singer-songwriter crooning that, even if it's not pretty, offers an authenticity that reminds listeners of what birthed this album. Such rawness can be heard on "Shock Me" (poppy finger-snapper) and "Kerosene" (cheesy hi-hat titter-tat opener bleeds into symphonic gang-chant: "When I am done/I'll lay in the sun"). Super nice! These solid tracks are unfortunately followed by *Purple*'s weakest spot: the instrumental "Fugue", which invalidates its denotation while also detracting from the conceptual impact thus far. Odd choice.

The other high point of *Purple* is the new percussive line-up. Sebastian Thomas on drums and Nick Jost on bass together add a layered foundation beneath most tracks. Thomas' punk quick roots surface during particular intros and outros, calling listeners back to his bizarre complexity in the track's body. Jost's background as a jazz bassist is found in his improvisational nature. More than a repetitive rhythm keeper, Jost stomps around the track adding emotional transitions between various hooks and breaks. Tracks like "Try to Disappear" and "The Iron Bell" showcase Thomas and Jost's benefit to the band.

Still, the guttural punch of *Purple* lands in track six, just over the half-way point. "Chlorine and Wine" is Baroness at their best. A simple, pretty drum and guitar instrumental opener erupts into a battered catharsis of thickly layered riffs and crashes topped with Baizley's Walt Whitman-urgent "yawp". Then verse two. Jost's bass line opens wide. Verse three. Then Baizley and Peter Adam's dual layered guitar solo, punctuated by hi-hat ellipses and Jost's piano interlude. And then the band's gang-chant finale: "Please/Don't lay me down/Under the rocks where I've found/My place in the ground/Home for the fathers and sons." This is a fucking good track. Goose-bumps and fist-pumps from open to end. Religious music. Healing music. A song wielded as a weapon and tear-gagging belly-romp laugh in the face of death. Not yet, sucker. There's more to be done. And these guys are doing it.—KEVIN STILL

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