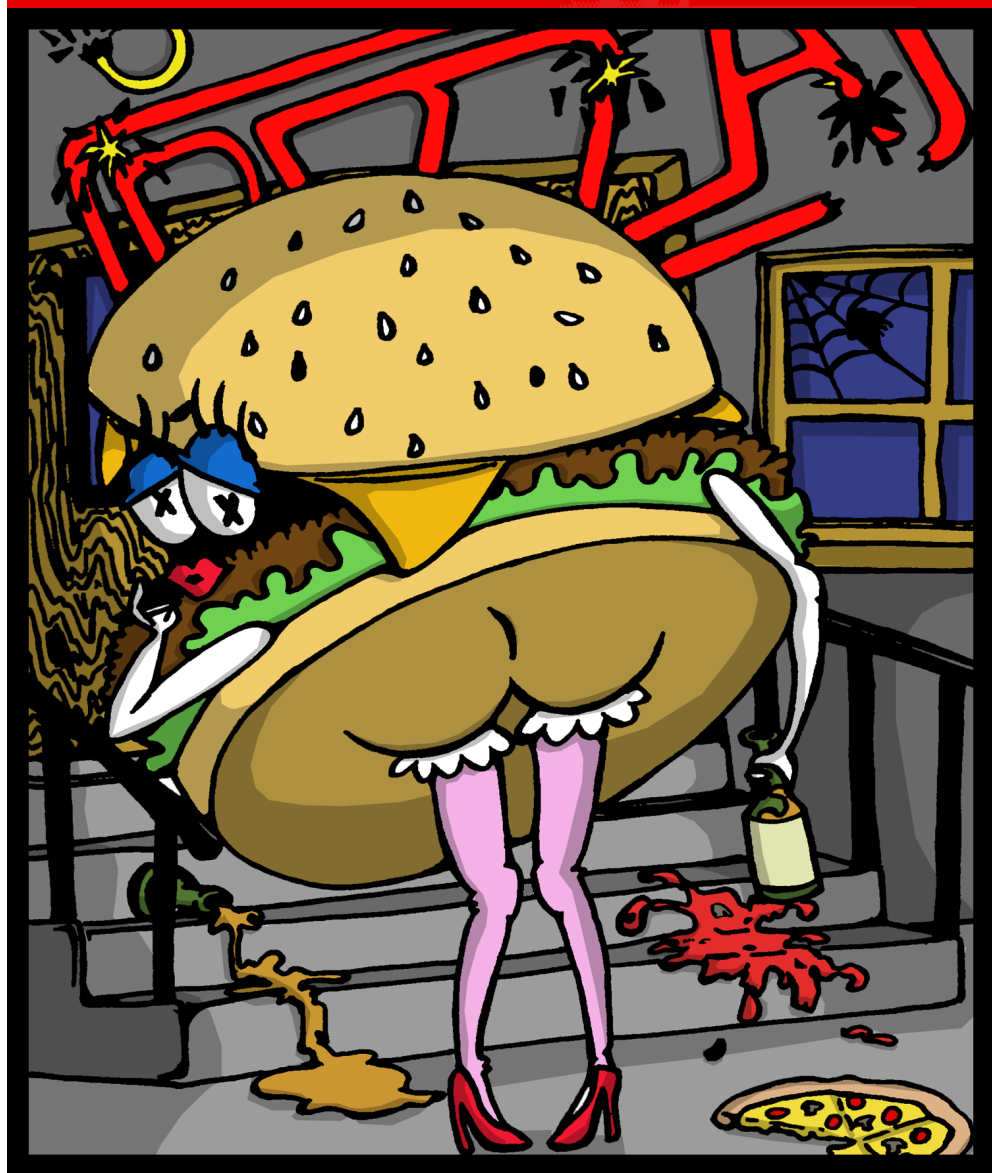


STOGE REPRESENT



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*inside: the year of the latent ism - you're not punk - the wall of bass -
guilty pleasures - brazos valley comic con ii - clash of the nerds -
lighter side of nuthin - creepy horse gets hurt - pedal pushing -
lp reviews - concert calendar*



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

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2016: YEAR OF LATENT ISMS

If anything has been learned from the very crazy year of 2016, it's that we as a society have a long way to go to put to bed the larger issues of prejudice and discrimination that we swore had already been dealt with. Racism was defeated by the civil rights movement, women's liberation put sexism to death, marriage equality has deleted homophobia, etc. The Black Lives Matter movement has helped to remind the country that there is still a portion of our populace that believe the worst about young black men and will act upon that bias. We have learned during the presidential race of 2016 that sexism is also still a rampant problem.

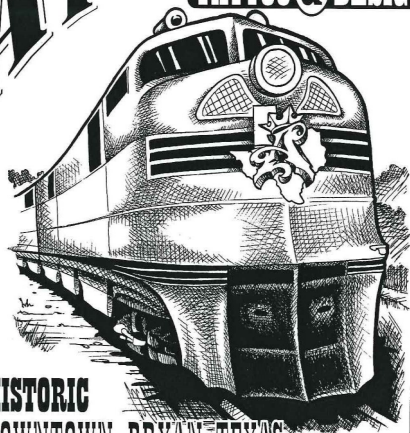
We have Donald Trump to thank for reminding us that at our base the United States of America still has a lot of work to do. To many there is no problem. It was something our parents or grandparents dealt with. There is no overt racism or sexism. We all share the same water fountains, nobody has to go to the back of the bus, etc. Racism and sexism have gone underground. The terms "implicit bias" and "latency" have long been used in sociology to explain the concept of an imprinted point of view upon the national psyche that isn't obvious and perhaps not an everyday phenomenon but is structured into our DNA in such a way that its subtle programming informs how we deal with "the other". That is a very interesting idea. I think it's more that our interactions with people are done largely through the anonymity of web activity and it's harder for someone to punch you in the face for being a racist, sexist sack of shit over a modern. But I think it's important to remember that you can display signs of implicit bias without being aware that you are doing it.

I sold a guitar amplifier to a person in Magnolia earlier this year. All the texting activity leading up to the sale was with a person named Sheridan. On the day of the sale I'm looking for a silver Honda Civic in the parking lot of Brooks Brothers. I drive all around the parking lot but the only Civic I see has a middle aged woman in it so I keep looking around. Of course, this is Sheridan. A woman with a hat on (she'd had chemotherapy recently and was covering her bald head). I had assumed this woman couldn't be after this guitar amp based on my own implicit bias. I apologized to her profusely and she laughed it off. But it shook me and reminded me that although I pride myself on treating people differently that sometimes my default to bias will show itself. It reminded me that I have a lot to learn, that I am always going to be a work in progress, and that I should NEVER assume that I'm not a shithead and I will always have to choose to treat people the right way.

I see this in the allegations of sexual assault made by former associates of Donald Trump against him. I see this in the lewd commentary that got several TAMU student senators removed from office recently. It reminds me that this is a widespread issue and that, while my situation was largely harmless and a definite learning experience for me, that it is still a problem with harmful, devastating effects that ripple across society at large. It is important that we pay attention to this implicit bias, the latent "isms" that have been pointed out to us in the events of this year, to discuss them, look for them, work on them ourselves, to use them as a way to improve ourselves and how we treat one another. Recently we have had a sort of backslide against political correctness and its pervasiveness turning us all into overly sensitive, bare wire "pussies". The events of this year remind me that there is a reason that being "PC" is less about being a pussy than it is about being respectful and recognizing that words may not themselves hurt but they help to perpetuate a culture of hurt. Hopefully in that way 2016 will be redeemed. —KELLY MINNIS

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YOU MUST LOVE WHAT YOU DO



On some nights, when we aren't playing a gig, Brea and I like to go out for a drink. There's a bar outside our regular venue. Nice patio for me to smoke a cigar, and the Lone Stars are super cheap. On some nights, there is a band playing on the patio. Not a cool band mind you, a cover band. You know the type. The kind that someone can yell "Play Freebird" at and they actually will do it.

I have a rocky relationship with cover bands. I have had more than one friend leave the underground scene to "make a little money" and never come back. I also live in a town that isn't very supportive of original music and musicians. You see, in my town Joe Sixpack would rather just go to a local watering hole and drink himself stupid as someone plays a white bread version of "Mustang Sally". That's the culture of music here.

Because of this, local cover bands get paid. I don't mean just a little. A cover band that has been in the bar circuit here will usually cash in with a full crew including full time sound guy and a bus (no shit, a real bus with their name on the side) which they use all the time for no good reason. It is not uncommon for a local "country" band to park that monstrosity downtown in front of the bar they are playing knowing full well they could have just taken their own car to the venue that night.

It is because of this that every punk or underground musician has had the "talk" with a family member or girlfriend about the choice of music we play. As a kid, even my mom asked me if I thought it was time I finally "got paid".

I never questioned it. My path. As cheesy as it sounds, punk rock saved my life. It turned me from an awkward kid who didn't fit in to an angry kid who did. It gave me an outlet. I HATED the songs on the radio. Why on earth would I ever want to play them?

I'm reminded of this when we are sitting at the patio watching the band for the night set up. We plan on leaving before they start to play. As they finish setting up. The drummer asks if he can take a seat next to us at our table. The only reason I can assume is because the crowd is a little geriatric and Brea and I are the only ones with visible tattoos. Once he sits, his guitar player joins him shortly and they start talking about music. I

nod politely at the bands they are referencing. The conversation goes on to include their busy schedule and how dedicated they are to their profession when I mention casually to Brea what our load in time is the next night, the drummer looks up with his eyes raised. "You guys play?" he asked "What band?"

We tell him the band names and he looks blankly because he has clearly never heard of us before. I'm not surprised. We travel in different circles after all. It never ceases to surprise me how they think they are in legitimate bands as he asks me what places we play (he seems surprised we travel and have music on web streaming services). Then he asks us how much we get paid. Brea answers "A lot less than you." He nods and shrugs. "I won't get behind that kit for less than a hundred and fifty dollars tonight." We laugh... "the whole band gets paid less than that" we tell him. He looks shocked... and shakes his head in disbelief. "You must really love what you do," he says.

I stop and take stock of those words. I want to tell him that when I first heard Butthole Surfers' *Lucust Abortion Technician* album, I was lost in a wall of sound and distortion that for the first time sounded like what I felt, when I heard The Exploited's "Dead Cities" I wanted to swing bats at bullies. I wanted to tell him he has no idea what it's like to hear your song on college radio and have your Ritchie Valens moment, or see kids ripping apart a club as they dance to your music, and having a person tell you that you are the reason they started a band or a podcast or even have a guy tell you he met his wife at your show. You can't take that away. I wanted to tell him that this life we choose isn't the easy one, but it was the one worthwhile. I wanted to tell him that nothing can take away that show high after a great performance, or seeing your friends grow to be even bigger than you are, and knowing you supported them along the way. Having a band sleep on your couch and getting tacos with them the next day to talk about music or life. Those are the moments that a payday at the bar can't buy. While a tour bus would be nice, I know I didn't get it from playing someone else's songs.

"You must love what you do." Damn right I do.—TIM DANGER

www.idiotboxeffects.com



I recently received an injury that ah hell I'm so fucking tired of talking about it, let's just fast forward and say the end result required surgery and maybe metal plates and titanium screws.

CREEPY HORSE GETS HURT

I am or how I want to be perceived. I had to get out of this. Being unhappy is a pet peeve. I truly can't stand being miserable, it hurts. Being angry as I was for so many years is exhausting.

The first two days of what will be a very long recovery, I couldn't have fought off well wishers with a stick. Of dynamite. I was taking between 8-12 pills per dosage and let's just say I was somewhere between twiddling my finger between my lips and Candyland.

It was awesome.

No, not because of the drugs but to see the kindness of strangers and the size of heart your friends have.

I can barely remember incidents of the first 3-4 days but I remember the moments somehow. As I had no family to help me, my roommate's own parents came and took me to the hospital for my surgery and care-took for me the days leading up to my surgery and the entire day of.

My roommate himself, in my state has done so much for me. All of the house cleaning has fallen on him, as has grocery shopping, cooking and giving me my medications. It really sucks to sit on a couch and watch someone sweating as they clean up after you, trust me.

That night my best friend Craig showed up and cooked dinner for all of us, entertained me and stayed up far past his bedtime to make sure I was comfortable before he left. One married couple, great friends of mine Chad and Amber made it not only a point to come and care-take for me the day after my surgery, but they literally brought me food and hand fed me. The best part is I remember them making me laugh and just feeling so happy to have them there. We also watched The Village People movie *Can't stop the music* with Steve Guttenberg and Caitlyn Jenner when she was still known as Bruce.

I'd be visited by a new friend Alicia, who went out of her way from Katy to come and just be there and get me whatever I needed. It wasn't like I was the life of the party, I was pretty much talking like someone on several pain pills and just exhausted from the healing process, it's boring as hell. Another married couple I must out, as I believe people should be honored for their kindness. That married couple was Danielle and John of the band Only Beast. To me, at that point in time, they were perfect strangers. Sure, I have been to a number of their shows and we've crossed paths at other shows, also they had come to the party I threw at The Wheel Worker's Craig's home while he was on vacation in Mexico and partied into the wee hours but that's really not the same. This had an intimacy you just can't get at a bar or loud music venue. It was just us. Danielle

messaged me asking what kind of treats vegans (me) can eat and I gave her a list so she had choices. After driving across Houston into Pasadena during rush hour traffic after a long day of work, I was met at my front door with smiling faces and bags of food. Not only had they bought me EVERY treat I had listed, but they went rogue and found vegan TV dinners for me so I could have something to eat when I was alone. Now there's some fucking thought put into that. Danielle carefully brushed my now matted hair and the two stayed and talked and laughed with me. I can't tell you what we talked about as again I have no memory, I just remember feeling very happy and seeing John's big smile next to me.

To let someone take care of me is almost embarrassing for me. I'm just not used to it and I believe you do for your guests as they are coming in to your home where you should make them feel welcomed and offer them drinks and food. I'm not used to others doing things like this and I feel bad because then I feel like I should have done better. It's my job to make them feel at home.

So when I tried to get up to do something, Danielle snapped at me to sit back down and just let her take care of me. And I fucking did like a scolded child. Danielle was the tough love mom with understanding emanating from her large brown eyes and John was the sweet dad that makes you feel better just with his laugh.

For their actions, I cried for a couple days. I am proud and also, I am Mexican. We are a culture that actions mean so much to. We value and treasure when others do for us beyond compare. I was so touched and overwhelmed by their kindness I literally was speechless and it took me nearly two weeks to even find the words I needed to thank them. From that, I will never forget those acts of kindness. They will never have any idea truly how much it all really meant to me.

After a few weeks, I was just well enough to be able to go to a very good friend's home for dinner. While I was there, one of the two hosting, came to me and apologized for my injuries and felt that they were to blame. I could see the guilt in their eyes and that they genuinely felt responsible. What had happened was a freak accident. I mean no one could have anticipated what happened to happen and I truly believe my injuries were the best outcome of the event.



She stated since she was next to me that she should have "stopped it" or intervened somehow. I was almost angry that she was hurting for thinking it was in any way her fault and explained had she tried to "grab me" as stated not only would there be two very injured

parties, but that the injuries WOULD have been worse. I also reminded her that she was the one that stayed with me when I was injured and that she herself had taken on getting me help. That's what I remembered, NOT that "she didn't save me." Even in my most painful of moments, I must remember who did what for me.

I even had other friends that felt because they had invited me to the location that it was somehow their fault. Again, there's no way at all anyone could have known and I know they didn't invite me with the intention of me receiving a very random, freak injury. The fact that they could even conceive the idea they were to blame is still preposterous to me.

Then life happened.

All of my wonderful and caring well wishers had to return to their lives. They had their own problems and struggles and day to day living to tend to and I absolutely get that. I sat at home for over two weeks by myself in incredulous pain. I cried out of pain, out of frustration of all the freedoms I had lost and what I couldn't do. Also, all the meds I was on were most likely contributing as well. I was and still am so vulnerable and isolated. Loneliness crept in. I can be alone. I can enjoy myself alone, but when you can't drive or you can't go anywhere for any period of time because you just get exhausted so easily.

I became so lonely that if someone had just kicked in the door and stuck their butt in and farted and left, I'd of been delighted the whole rest of the day. I became so overwhelmed with the intensity of the pain I was in, the miserable three hours of sleep I was maybe getting and going hungry because I couldn't feed myself that I had damn near a nervous breakdown, if not just the meltdown equivalent to a two year old.

Fatigue finally suffocated me until I was sleeping 18+ hour days that were like blackouts. I slept hard and was virtually unawakeable. I took pity on myself. I allowed myself to become drunk with my problems and pain and I wasn't at all being "me". This wasn't me, this isn't who

I had been showing flashes of bitterness and resentment, I was hurting and not in my right mind but I knew despite all I was going through these thoughts and feelings were doing me no good at all. I'd have to change my temporary perceptions and find something better.

I hate not having resolve for an issue or an answer for something. I hate when I am indifferent to someone as I genuinely try to find something special or wonderful about everyone I meet. Really.

So within my control and means, how could I make things better?

Well, even if it's only temporary, I started eating very healthy. I began the exercises I was given for physical therapy and although they hurt worse than my injuries at times, I followed directions and actually started feeling physically much better. I had stopped taking all the pain meds I was given and even though I continued to hurt, I began to feel better.

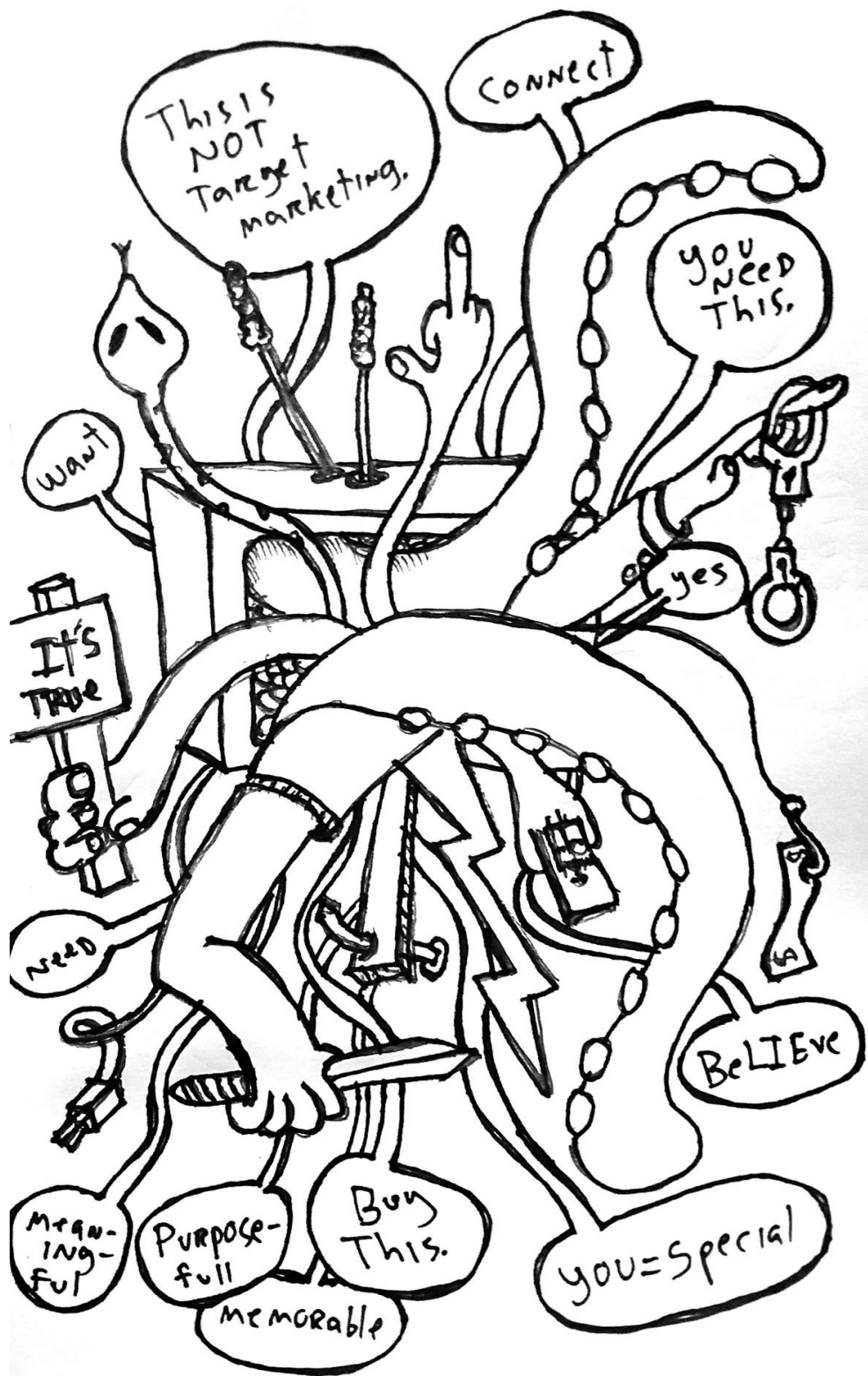
As for mentally, I had to get myself in a better mindset. I forced myself to enjoy things, kind of fake it til you make it. I reminded myself of how many people were out there that cared for me and in my need were there instead of who wasn't. The actions of all of those around me whether they were there when I was injured or while I recuperated willed me into graciousness and eventually happiness.

Sometimes the world shits on us and it sucks and I can't say it won't. Sometimes terrible things happen and it's going to take awhile to come back to yourself, just don't get lost. Sure, I could've sucked into the void of a temporary moment in my life, but then again that's just not who I want to be. I didn't start feeling better until I started really thinking long and hard about all those around me and how they divested their time to be there for me in their ways. Because not for a moment would I want one person to think I didn't value them or their kindness in my time of need.

I never forget a kindness and at the end of the day, I'd rather hold on to that than any amount of misery or suffering. I am aware these moments of pain or being down are temporary and so are the relationships that come in to our lives. I choose to feed the soul and starve the ego. What will you choose? —*CREEPY HORSE*

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I don't really like the concept of the "guilty pleasure" when it comes to art, that somehow you have to measure something that you enjoy or has meaning to you against the generally agreed-upon acceptability rating of people who are cooler than you, the art critic, Rotten Tomatoes, the stereotypical record store clerk, etc. Whether or not you can admit to liking a film, album, photo, or book depends upon where it rates on the critic scale. If the critics hail it, then it is cool to like it. If the critics pan it, it is not cool to like it. And I'm not talking about professional popular culture critics. I don't think most of us care what the music critic in *Time* says about Lykke Li or if someone at *The Eagle* says the new *Ghostbusters* flick is great cinema. I'm talking about critics that somehow have managed to earn respect amongst certain circles. Pitchfork, Stereogum, Village Voice, Houston Press, Maximum Rock&Roll, whatever it may be.

Then there's the stuff that I think we all know is "trash". Vanilla Ice sucks. Fred Durst is awful. Nickelback is craven. Michael Bay is shameless. If you happen to like any of those creators then there is something wrong with you. You aren't cool. So you hide that away, tuck it inside so it can't be used against you. Even well-meaning friends will flip you shit over the movies and records you like. I despise this attitude but I understand it. What we like informs our basic personalities. In high school it was our identity. You liked metal, you had long hair, you were a dirtbag. You liked punk rock, you had a skateboard, you had bangs that swept down over one side of your face or you had a Mohawk. You liked The Cure, you wore black, you painted your fingernails black. You liked hip-hop, you wore Jordans or shelltoes, you had a clock around your neck or an Africa medallion, you wore red black and green. It was part of who you were. Culture Club and Slayer didn't mix. Hell, Dokken and Slayer didn't mix. You ran the risk of being called a "poser" and ostracized.

I am married to a non-music snob. She likes what she likes and really doesn't care what anyone thinks. I admired that quality 20+ years ago when we met and I still admire it today. I spent the better part of the first ten years of our marriage at dinner parties with her high school and college friends who were also non-music snobs. They bought a few CD's a year. Their collections looked like the Columbia House ad in the back of the Sunday newspaper circa 1997, and most likely that's where the lion's share of those CD's came from. My experience suffering through helped me be much less of a music snob. Now, it didn't make my record collection that much more populist, not in the least bit. But it helped me come to grips with people in this world who just don't dig into the minutiae of music like I do. It doesn't mean they love it any less. On the contrary, they may have a deeper relationship with their copies of *No Fences*, *No Strings Attached*, *25*, or *The Fame Monster* than I do with, say, *Pet Sounds* or *Tago Mago*. It doesn't make one better than the other.

But I do have to say that I pride myself on having no shame and enjoying foisting my "bad" singles collection on B/CS audiences under the guise of DJ Skullbone. I get intense subversive pleasure from spinning Fat Boys and Doug E. Fresh 12" singles. There's nothing more thrilling and annoying than human beat box exploding out the speaker propped up on the bar while you try in vain to order your drinks. I fantasize that the spit from Doug E. or Human Beat Box's mouth was somehow captured on 24-track mylar, stamped into the grooves of the wax, electrified through my turntables until it slithers through the cables and rains out the speakers all over the bar, like Pete Venkman drowning in Slimer slime.

THE GUILTY PLEASURE

I suppose were I to be nailed down to something that most of you think is bloody awful but I delight in, howabout Starbuck's "Moonlight Feels Right"? I remember hearing this song on the radio in the back of my mom's 1977 Thunderbird yacht cruising around the backroads of Daviess County, KY at night. The song is smooth and breezy, the soft padding feet of Fender Rhodes, the warm tides of Minimoog breaking over shore, the skitter of congas, the raindrops of ride cymbal washing over the beat, and the most honest-to-goodness righteous marimba solo you'll ever hear in a pop song. Let's be frank, it's probably the *only* marimba solo you'll ever hear in a pop song. And with the skeezy, date rapey, knowing throaty leer of vocalist Bruce Blackman. "I'll take you on a drive beside the ocean/and drop the top at Chesapeake Bay/Ain't nothing like the sky to dose a potion/The moon will send you on your way," before Bruce chuckles and sings "Moonlight feels right". This is either because Bruce knows the rohypnol will be in effect by the end of the song and he's having his way with you, or because maybe he's just exhilarated by how hot his car is with you in the back of it and the top down. At this point it could go either way. Before the last chorus he sings "The eastern moon looks ready for a wet kiss/to make the tide rise again" and again, this is either innocent nautical imagery, the worst double entendre come-on of the '70s (move over, Rupert Holmes), or something seriously unsettling. He's either got breath mints or a roll of duct tape in the glove box, and there's no telling which one he's reaching for or if he's going for both and what his intentions are with either.

It's a goofy song that in the right light can seem somewhat sinister. It elicits a pretty powerful response in folks. One night several years ago after a show a bunch of Austin band dudes were gathered over at Casa de Wonko and we were talking about songs that represented the '70s. And I fired this one up. And made the Austin dudes delightfully uncomfortable and eventually kind of angry by song's end. I guess they were hoping for "Layla" or "Stairway To Heaven" or "Tangled Up in Blue" or such. But I still stand by "Moonlight Feels Right" as a pretty accurate bellwether for that decade. Goofy, shiny, giddy with some seriously sinister undertones. — KELLY MINNIS

My guilty pleasure has always been The Moody Blues (and two Neil Diamond albums), but not to the point that I relish everything the band has done. I love their first half-dozen albums in the '60s and '70s. I don't think I've even heard hardly any of their albums since the 1980s. As a teenager growing up in rural Texas, I found the Moodies' psychedelic other-worldly music and hippie lyrics ready escapism.

Sure, they are pretentious and pompous, but that's part of the appeal. I appreciated their love songs, but I really enjoyed the odder excursions into science fiction (most of *To Our Children's Children's Children*) and alternative realities (most of *In Search of the Lost Chord*). However, what launched me to fandom was their 1969 *On the Threshold of a Dream* album. I remember sitting in my tiny room by myself playing the vinyl album from start to finish on my portable turntable. From the goofy sound-effects-laden spoken-word intro to the sonic closer that ran the needle all the way to the label (how cool was

that?), I was hooked by this group that shared songwriting and vocal duties while all played several instruments. On *Threshold*, it could have been the reference to the King Arthur legend or the casual mention of someone exploding an H-bomb or catchy tunes or the overall classical bombast that drew me in at first. But with those first several albums, I think it was that the group made the serious sound like so much fun.

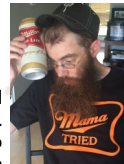
So, crank up the chorus to "Legend of a Mind," and let's sing about Timothy Leary. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

My right calf features a permanent, black-n-grey depiction of a phoenix flying upward through a plume of smoke and feathers. It was my third tattoo. The one that would "define" me. The one I would gaze upon to remember that I weren't no tar-feather sissy. That my life had led me to this moment through a myriad of choices—some mine, some not, some not even choices—which I would own inwardly as boldly as the ink on my outward skin. Yeah, I was that noseblower, reading T.S. Eliot and J.D. Salinger and C.S. Lewis, dreaming of also notching myself into the Tree of Life with mere initials instead of a full-name. I was propelled by art in those days although I was quite dumb, but I burned with a propane I often envy in the middle of a Tuesday that feels like the middle of my life. So it goes. And so swims the phoenix, up my calf, over my knee, past my hips, twitching the hairs on my chin, reminding me as it passes: none of us are as precious as when we planned our first tattoos.

My phoenix illustrates a song lyric: "And God help you if you are phoenix/And you dare to rise up from the ash/A thousand eyes will smolder with jealousy/While you are just flying past." I remember that line speaking something damn profound to me at one time, something I'd rather not get into here but I'd chuckle about over a beer with anyone bored enough to listen. Back during my propane days, when I wanted to be K.A. Still more than Kevin, my torch was lit most by a little guitar-wielding lady spewing poetic lyrics about phoenixes and loving women and revolution. I managed to see her sing the phoenix song live five times. I've worn her shirts and memorized her poems. I own everything she's printed on CD. Even now, I'm building a small nostalgic collection of her vinyl. And though I rarely listen to her still, I can't deny her power.

I can't deny her power, but I'm cautious where I speak my appreciation for her. Not a lot of people, especially in punk rock crowds, have much affection for Ani DiFranco. So she remains my dirty little art-school secret. One I still turn to occasionally when I want permission to feel melodramatic for a spell (like now maybe?). Ani's voice was huge in my life right about the time I discovered Social Distortion: another band I hold in secret affection. You learn quickly who people poopoo. And while I've never cared that people poopoo my affections for Katy Perry or Britney Spears, even my karaoke enthusiasm for Garth Brooks and early career Counting Crows, I hold Ani DiFranco and Mike Ness like little urns of yesteryear on my highest mantle. That was a different life when they guided me. A much different season. But if Ani taught me anything it's that a person can reinvent themselves as often as necessary. So it goes with K.A. Still back in the Midwest. That guy was precious, so certain a picture of a poem on his leg could pull him to the surface—"up from the ash"—on just the right side of a dire moment. But, you know, sometimes it does. Sometimes the phoenix does its work. So much so that now I'm thinking, hell, I might just cue up some Ani tonight and see if a little propane ain't still sloshing around the old tank yet. — KEVIN STILL

STILL DRINKING



On a recent trip to Corpus Christi, I visited the local Lorelei Brewing Company. According to Google, only one of the two breweries in Corpus were open to the public on Monday evenings, which was the only time I had available for a visit. Lucky for me, Lorelei was the brewery most highly recommended by locals. Twice when I asked bartenders to surprise me between either a pint of Lorelei or the other Corpus brewery, the bartender turned and immediately reached for the Lorelei handle. Several patrons at the Executive Surf Club Bar also championed Lorelei and recommended a visit to the brewery. Nothing in Corpus seems very close to anything else. Lorelei was a solid half-hour plus drive from my hotel. But, I thought, what the hell? I'm hear for two days. Make it count. Dadgum I'm glad I did.

I drove past the brewery twice. It's not only small: it's also unassuming, packed back from the road appearing more like a quaint diner than a highly acclaimed craft brewery. The taproom was even smaller. One four person table and two person standing bar-top were all that could fit. Maximum occupancy must top-out at eight people. Bar matron, Brittney, served me a four sample flight from the six beers on tap. For the most part, the beers read standard. My flight consisted of two blondes, an Oktoberfest, and an Oatmeal Stout. The head brewer, Varian Crise, sat the bar-top with a buddy. I asked how long they'd been open. He said eight months. I thought, yeah, that seems about right from what I'm seeing. I found a place to sit outside, grabbed my nerd notes, and set into my flight.

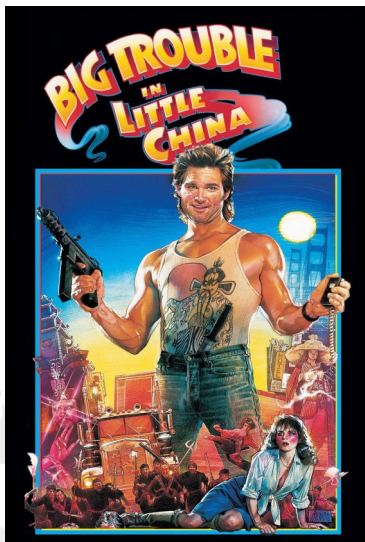
My immediate impression was that nothing here tasted like a mere eight months worth brewing. Every beer was not only good, each one set something of a new standard in the style. Most notably, **Lorelei's Breakfast Is The Most Important Meal Of the Day Oatmeal Stout (5.8% ABV / 43 IBUs)** drank super dark with a complex dryness showcasing a thick dirty, tobacco like flavor as if this sucker were brewed with actual sin. I'm not much for Oatmeal Stouts because they generally run a bit thin—barely interesting enough to serve as a porter with richly sweet cola flavors. No, sir. Lorelei's Oatmeal Stout was massive but tenderly palatable. I could have easily sipped down several servings, even as I sat outside with the aromas of the beach wafting in from mere blocks away. Also, according to my notes from that night, **Lorelei's Commission IPA (6.1% ABV / ?? IBUs)** is a "mold breaker" and the "first straight-up IPA I've found exciting since I cracked my tooth on a Bell's Two-Hearted back in the day." (You know it's good when it takes you "back in the day".) Commission is very American. Big body and sturdy balance. Complex coppery/piney tinge on the edges with a hint of mango on the end. And, like my note said, this sucker stopped me dead. I had two glasses chatting with Varian, sipping slowly, marveling that a plain old IPA could have so much depth. I visit a fair share of breweries, but I am rarely sad to see one fade into my rearview. Everything on their tap board was top-notch. This is a brewery I'd make the trip for. And that's saying much cause there one damn other thing in Corpus worth the drive. — KEVIN STILL

CLASH OF THE NERDS

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

We have seen John Carpenter's various characters seek some form of truth throughout many of his movies. His characters are many times alone attempting to find some sort of lost puzzle piece that would bring them some kind of salvation. In some way or another we have seen his characters seek their truth in *Halloween*, *The Thing* and in the subtlest of his films, *They Live*. What seems unforgivable to me is that not enough care be applied to his execution of this exploration. This theme is once again in *Big Trouble in Little China*, which on the surface appears to be a masterpiece depicting the challenges that many Asians and Asian-Americans face in their day to day lives. This portrayal and the search for truth are almost immediately undermined, though.

A movie will usually state its thesis in the first scene or the first five minutes of running time, and this movie is no different. Two men sit across from each other in a room that is lit solely by the rays of the sun that creep in through window blinds. There is a Caucasian man sitting at a desk with rays of light falling on the wall behind him interviewing an Asian man with rays of sunlight falling on his face. The interviewer asks for the truth and the interviewee claims he will tell it. The movie and the question regarding truth lose all gravitas when we consider that there is sunlight coming down at two different angles. How seriously could one choose to explore themes regarding the Asian-American plight in the United States, sex trafficking, the recurring cycle of gang violence, the need/requirement in a movie that the Hero and his love interest be Caucasian, the existence of Garbage Pail Kids-looking supernatural martial arts experts who explode, and, above all, TRUTH, if we cannot rely on the most meaningless of details like which direction the sun points. It is for this reason that *Big Trouble In Little China* must rank extremely low on my Must See movie list. Right between the highly unlikely boy-and-his-dog tale known as *E.T.* and the silent film, *Schindler's List* (which for some reason decided to include sound). Of course the point could be made about the futility of seeking truth within the illusion of moving pictures, but I say "nice try Carpenter."—ALEX "POPCORN CAKES" GARZA



In *Little China* is a travesty in comparison to what the young Carpaneski original script. Set in The People's Republic of China, Carpaneski wrote the entire script in

Mandarin, setting his dramatic period piece in a feudal society where a young "lao wei" (Chinese for "foreign devil") disrupts the traditions of a small village with his charm and Christ-figure presence. Carpaneski's film school profs were uncomfortable with the magnitude of such a script. Rather than film on location in Hubei Province, they suggested an American Chinatown neighborhood. Instead of a tense Messiah saga, they recommended a splash of comedy. Carpaneski, who hoped to rival *Gone With The Wind* in scope and vitality, was devastated to find his mentors even simplified the film's title. Carpaneski, again, was dumbfounded when the administrator of his Flagstaff County Film School demanded that, if Carpaneski wanted the "unfortunate colander in the swimming pool incident" erased from his school record, he would feature

the administrators lackey son in the film's lead role. A trombone player by day and a blackjack addict by night, Kurt Russell—the lackey son, needed quick money to pay sharks on his tail. Russell had never acted. Nor had he shaken his French-Canadian Accent. (Russell is cousin to famed Canadian leading man John Candy.) Russell agreed to the film on one condition: he would wear an eye patch. Carpaneski denied his wish. Russell, needing a "Happy Days bad-ass-boy" image to ward deter assailants, remained vigilant, knowing what lay at stake for Carpaneski if Russell did not win the lead. The men struck a deal when Carpaneski suggested that if *Big Trouble Little China* did well, he'd write a special eye-patch script for Russell. (The forgotten *Escape From New York* was Russell's final film before losing more than his thumb to blackjack sharks.) Inasmuch, *Big Trouble Little China* remains a masterpiece of serendipity. Neither Russell or Carpaneski, who changed his name to Carpenter in the credits to escape the colander incident, knew the talent they possessed—in fact, we still don't. Although neither man achieved considerable fame, *Big Trouble Little China* shines as a beacon of what could have been. In closing, Carpenter finally saw his Chinese feudal society successfully delivered by a Caucasian Christ-hero when, in 2003, acclaimed director Edward Zwick brought Carpenter's original period piece to the big screen featuring Carpenter's original working title: *The Last Samurai*—the film that introduced American audiences to yet unknown Thomas J. Cruise. Indeed, John Carpenter's greatest achievement was his evolved knack for remaining ever in the fog of others accomplishments.—KEVIN "ON FLEEK" STILLI

Big Trouble In Little China (1986) stands apart from other Carpenter films because it was, in fact, his directoral debut. Carpenter created the shoe-string budget indie comedy as a film-school project, back when he still went by the name Jonathon Carpaneski. Although considered his crowning work, many believe *Big Trouble*

THE WALL OF BASS

I was literally "blown away". Even though I put that in quotes and that probably means it wasn't actually "literally". But it was close anyway.

There's about two feet of wind coming from the speakers that is not so much a rumble, but kind of its own weather system. Tornadoes, barometric pressure, wind, climate change, thunder.

This system is appropriately called the "Wall of Bass" (WOB), and is owned by a Houston company named Gritsy. They've been abusing ears with it for just over 10 years. In fact, their anniversary (Gritsy 10) happened in Houston on July 9th.

You might be thinking, "I've heard bass, and it's alright." Well, then you haven't really heard bass. The WOB is an experience, not just a concert.

At first, you walk into the venue and sure, the stack of bass cabinets is impressive. I've seen it as a two high stack of six across, and a three stack high of five across. These are 2x18s mind you, and tuned to freakin' perfection.

Yeah, it's impressive at first glance, but in my first experience (and also my WOB virgin friend's experience), the sound was unimpressive...at least for the first hour. I couldn't help but be underwhelmed. I've heard better. Then after about an hour, they cranked the sound, and my teeth started humming. My noob friend was nodding his head happily...but I knew this was nothing. The system was probably on "2".

Around every hour, they turned up the volume again. And the thing about bass is that where at a rock concert, you "might" hear a difference in loudness, in the high and mid frequencies mostly, but with the WOB, holy crap, you feel it in your bowels.

So you understand the experience better, you aren't going to hear rock or punk or country on this system (although I would venture to say that Tejano would bring the noise). What you are going to hear is DJs selecting bass heavy tracks from bass heavy genres. That would include Drum and Bass, Jungle, Trap,

Dancehall, Dubstep, HipHop and maybe some Bass House. Electronic anyway. And Gritsy has done very well to bring known and unknown headliners, and always opens up (and closes up) with several local talent.

My noob friend leveled up at the WOB in my book. He decided to lean his back up to the system and proceeded to stay there for about two hours. I tried, and the only way I could deal with the full body vibration was if I yelled. I couldn't handle it. I'm telling you...my whole body was vibrating.

I could handle being about three feet away from the WOB. Uncomfortable for most, but I could handle it. There were bass tones that vibrated my nostrils, and some that made me feel like I had a loose wig on my head. Some that made my pant legs flow like they were underwater, and some that tickled the base of my snardlies. Yes, my balls were wiggling. Freaking amazing.

The bass became like a friend. A friend who was warm and comfortable. Like a pool of water at a temperature that feels like you weren't in water at all. Like a warm full body hug from someone who didn't have any ulterior motives. They didn't want to hook up or try to get your number or be super clingy all night. This new friend was patient and beckoning, and when he went away, it felt cold and alone.

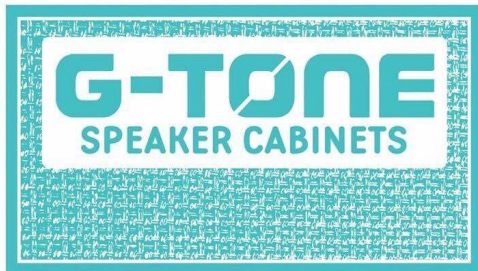
But then he came back. He's such a good friend.

Sure, I love this type of music (and you may not), but the experience alone is worth attending...although you will run the risk of becoming addicted to immense bass (and possibly have a new appreciation for Drum and Bass or Dubstep). I am addicted. So is pretty much everyone who attends a WOB event.

The next Gritsy event is in Houston on November 18th with Mala. It's gonna be a mostly Deep, Dark Dubstep night. Look up "Gritsy" on Facebook.

I asked my friend if he wanted to go back and he didn't hesitate for a second. —JORGE GOYCO

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BRAZOS VALLEY COMIC CON

It has become a lot cooler to admit to being a geek in recent years. The prolificacy of comic book movies, obscure animation, webstream TV binge and purge, and the continued reverence of nostalgia has made geekdom big business. Promoters discovered there's an audience for animators, voice actors, comic book artists, b-movie actors, and cosplayers to converge together to meet the public and the comic convention industry was hatched. STX Events head Ben Fritzsching decided that the 979 needed its own comic con and a year ago the first Brazos Valley Comic Con was launched. November 5-6 marks round two of BVCC. In celebration, we spoke with Ben about how he got started and who he thinks is the most exciting guest of this year's convention.

KM: When did you get involved with the idea of bringing a con to B/CS?

BF: Back when STX Events was started in June of 2014, producing small scale, old school hotel based collector shows in the Houston area, I felt we should look into bringing something to the B/CS area. I grew up in Hempstead, currently live in Waller, and I prefer heading up to Bryan instead of going anywhere near Houston. BCS is like home to me, so doing something in the area seemed like a no-brainer. Starting in early September of that year I started coming into town and hanging out with my cousin Frank, who tends bar at Revolution, and getting a feel for the people here so I could get a better idea of whether or not it was feasible to bring an event like I wanted into town or not. It didn't take very many trips for it change from "we're thinking of putting on a comic con." to "we're going to be putting on a comic con."

With our proximity to Houston, SATX, Austin, D/FW, etc. and their annual cons, what do you think will make BVCC stand out? What makes yours unique?

What makes ours stand out is the heart we put into it. We are one of the very few cons that CARE about everyone who comes through the door. We do everything we can to treat our vendors and attendees like no other con does. The hard work we put into it pays off when we hear the positive comments, and when reading that we "raised the

bar" in comparison to bigger corporate run comic cons as those in the cities you mentioned.

Who was the one booking for this year's con that made you shout when you finally booked them? What are you most looking forward to?

That was when we got the double-header of Alan Oppenheimer and Melendy Britt. The two of them provided voices for SO many characters on the He-Man and She-Ra cartoons, along with all the other work they've done, that we couldn't believe they were actually interested in doing our "little" con. Not that we aren't equally excited about any of our other guests, but those two basically WERE mine and my wife's childhoods.

What I'm most looking forward to is pretty simple, actually. I'm looking forward to this years event being a success and being behind us so that my wife Krystal and I can just sleep for a week or two before barreling full bore into the planning for next year.

How do you plan to grow BVCC in subsequent years?

We would like for the con to be successful enough to warrant being a three day event. In order for that to happen, we need the support of the people in the community as well as local businesses. The support we've received from those who understand the value of an event like ours has been amazing; but it seems that for every one person who "gets it" there are a hundred who are in the dark. We are really and truly an old-school grass roots convention. We don't have the deep pockets similar events in larger cities, and we aren't willing to sell out our integrity to get those deep pockets, either. We'd also love for this to become an event where things such as concerts and shows featuring celebrity guests could take place throughout the week leading up to the con itself. All of this, of course, depends upon the people. If they want Brazos Valley Comic Con to continue, then they should let us know by coming out and attending. We definitely want it to continue, and hope everyone reading this does, too. To quote AtariMatt, "He's putting on something pretty damn cool that nobody else is willing to try, so y'all should support him."

BVCC WELCOMES DENNIS HASKINS, ANTONIO FARGAS, PARKER STEVENSON AND DOZENS OF OTHER ACTORS, WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND VENDORS TO THE BRAZOS COUNTY EXPO CENTER NOVEMBER 5-6. TICKETS AND MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.STXCON.COM

PEDAL PUSHING

It seems odd that almost 10 years into playing guitar onstage, owning countless numbers of guitar pedals along the way, that until recently I had never owned a Zvex pedal. I dunno, maybe I had the opinion that Zvex pedals were for noise making, studio layering, for \m/ metal dudes or desert stoner rock or something. I never thought any of the pedals really applied to my sound. But I found myself a couple of months ago without the use of my beloved Upstate Analog Modified Rat distortion pedal due to a faulty footswitch (a chronic problem with this pedal) and its backup, a VFE Killer Rabbit 2-in-1, also in the midst of some switch issues (popping when pressed, a well-known manufacturer's defect). Both were in the shop at the same time. I tried to roll with two overdrives to get the gain I was after, but it just isn't the same.

I spent a bit of time online searching "rat alternative". The two pedals that came back with the most returns were both Zvex: the Box of Rock and Distortron pedals. Both are based on the same circuit: Box of Rock has a boost channel; Distortron trades the boost for more control. I speak to the Distortron. Zvex owner and chief designer Zachary Vex intended for the Distortron to give a reasonable facsimile of his personal Marshall JTM45 amp dived. I would say this is a reasonable comparison. The Distortron is topky with a definite upper mid/high focus. It has what folks online refer to as the "Marshall sizzle". There are controls for volume, tone, and drive. It dishes out an insane amount of volume for a distortion. Unity is at about 10 o'clock. This allows for the pedal to be used less as a distortion and more as a colored boost or overdrive. There's a simple tone control with a 3-way switch that changes the bass response of the circuit. 1-3 in degrees of how much low end you want. Shredders may prefer less, blues players may want more. The drive has two ranges, low and high. The intention is that on low gain it has the sound of a single channel JTM45 on 11, with the high gain more like the same amp with both channels jumped. I find the two options less about gain than about how the pedal behaves: low is more open, high is more compressed.

I plugged the pedal into my Carl's Custom 5E3 tweed

Deluxe clone and wailed away. I found the distortion to be tighter and have a focus on that high end sizzle. It seemed to work well under mic with the 5E3 already cooking a bit. Later, when tested with a blackface Dual Showman, a brownface 63 Vibroverb reissue, and a Mesa Mark I that the Distortron's character overwhelmed the front end of all three of the bigger amps. Most pedals that advertise themselves as "amps in a box" really are glorified distortions or overdrives. The

Distortron has that JTM45 character so much that it overwhelms the amps you plug it into. This can be a good or a bad thing, depending on your aim. If you have an amp that you wish sounded more Marshall'y then plugging this pedal into it and pretending it is the

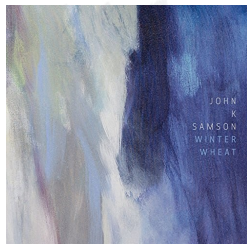
front end of your amp would allow you to successfully turn one amp into a different beast. If you are looking for a distortion pedal to enhance the tone of your amp, give you more of what the amp already gives you but with maybe a slightly different color or focus, well, the Distortron really isn't for you.

The pedal is built very well. At this point Zvex has two lines of pedals: the ones he still wires by hand at home and paints weird designs on (like his original pedals) and a series called Vextron, that are stamped out overseas. Mine is the latter, but I can't really say that's a bad thing. It certainly kept the price down to half of Vex's handwired series. The drive pot will crackle when turned but the manual warns you this is normal and you shouldn't freak out. I found the "sideways MXR" housing to be largely annoying though. I and a majority of pedalboard users all use Pedaltrain boards. The slats are great for organizing pedals and wires and cables and such but this pedal is pretty much the same depth as a pedalboard slat. That makes it hard to line up with my other pedals and makes it wider than it needs to be. Were it turned north to south with the pots and switches realigned it would be a lot easier to make room for on a board. Small niggly though.

At \$159 the price is not so bad for a well-designed, very nice sounding pedal. Ultimately it is not going to stick on my pedalboard, not even as a backup to my beloved weird Rats. But I will be keeping it, as I think there will be times when I want that Marshall sound and I can't rationalize buying an entire amp to cop that sound on a recording every once in a while. — KELLY MINNIS



RECORD REVIEWS

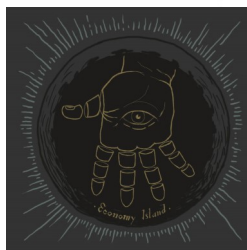


John K. Samson
Winter Wheat

This is Samson's second solo album after the wonderfully-quirky *Provincial* in 2012. Samson was a member of a fairly-popular Canadian indie rock band called The Weakerthans that released four albums from 1997-2007. *Winter Wheat* finds Samson more somber than not, so it may take a couple of listens for the lyrics to hit home since the music is so quiet, but there are still plenty of catchy jewels.

"Prayer for Ruby Elm" is a nice comfortable romp while "Fellow Traveler" is a chirpy Robyn Hitchcock-weird tune. "Postdoc Blues" is a peppy study of academia layered on real life (much like the rocking "When I Write my Master's Thesis" on his first solo outing). "Oldest Oak at Brookside" is a gentler rocker about a time "before the phone told us where to go."

Samson sings so strongly of place, namely his native Canada, but his tunes of lost love, loneliness, and simple address ring true wherever you hang your hat. So when he croons in "Alpha Adept" about a place where we are all "happier and tall," you can identify. And we know the sadness of the patients in the "17th Street Treatment Centre." So, don't follow Samson's advice on the first tune - "Select All Delete" - and give this a listen. — **MIKE L. DOWNEY**



Economy Island
Economy Island

I hear a lot of music each year. Stuff from more established artists, bands I've been following for decades. But as far as

hearing completely new music, usually the Pitchfork brigade leaves me cold. I find that the best music I hear is by bands I share bills with. It's how I've enjoyed great music by band besties SkyAcres, A Sundae Drive, Jealous Creatures, Only Beast, Cornish Game Hen, Brand New Hearts, The Escatonnes, and so many others. Austin's Economy Island is my new band crush.

This quartet of veteran punk and indie rock journeymen draw on the legacy of Neil Young & Crazy Horse and mix it with a distinctly Northeastern late '80s college radio rock aesthetic. *Economy Island*, the band's debut platter, could very easily have been recorded by Slade and Kolderie at Fort Apache in 1989. It has that sort of wistful, self-deprecating mid-tempo jangle about it informed by the loping beat and guitar heroics of classic rock. El singer Richi Fatheree has a unique, nasal voice has some of the keening quality of Neil Young with a bit of Doug Martsch thrown in there. Referencing Built To Spill is not out of hand in talking about this band and album. The album's centerpiece, "Typically Weak", has the pining quality of the best Crazy Horse high plains epic blasts with a lyric pulled straight from the slacker songbook: "Wasted opportunity/Squandered very foolishly" before the song takes the exit to a poignant guitar solo from string slinger John Michael, who leads the band off on a lyrical, melodic double stop backroad before crashing back in with a headbanging unison riff and Richi beating himself up, "Typically weak, typically weak". The rest of the album shows great guitar interplay between Fatheree and Michael, a great turn at the mic from bassist Mark Twistworthy ("Nothing Left To Say"), and my second favorite, "Flower". I guess I lost a little flower/I sorta had it now it's gone" with howling, bent note guitars. "I wish I never had to look at you again/But I do, but I do". On paper *Economy Island* seems straight Dinosaur Jr., in practice it's more nuanced with the flavor Buffalo Tom or Gigolo Aunts. Fatheree laments on "Ranch Style Jealousy" before Michael bends his Telecaster strings two whole steps, slamming home the sentiment. Love is redeemed with closer "Anna" with a breezy feel and an upbeat note of optimism.

In short, *Economy Island* is full of good pop songs tucked inside a dirty rock wrapper. This is one you definitely oughta check out. — **KELLY MINNIS**

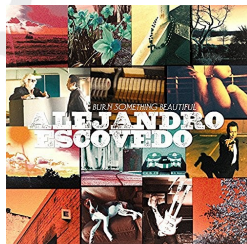


Shovels & Rope
Little Seeds

I had heard of this husband and wife duo—Michael Trent and Cary Ann Hearst—but I'd not actually heard their music until catching them on a radio interview that featured them playing a couple of tunes. It was those songs that brought me to their latest album, and it's not bad, just not the killer recording I was expecting.

"I Know" is a fun rocker about the music industry while "Botched Execution" is a rollicking word-crammed romp about a killer that comes back to life...I think. "Invisible Man" is another rocker featuring just Hearst on lead vocals. However, except for the emotional "The Last Hawk" ("Flying over Woodstock/I can see the treetops/Praying for rain"), the rest of *Little Seeds* never advances beyond just another solid acoustic folk album. "St. Anne's Parade" and "Mourning Song" could have been done by Arlo (even Woody) Guthrie while "Missionary Ridge" sounds right out of the Civil War.

It's not that tunes like "Buffalo Nickel" or "San Andreas Fault Line Blues" are bad; it's just that they don't showcase the rocking potential of the fast songs with electric guitar. There's even some kind of spoken word dialogue—"Eric's Birthday"—just before the last tune that likely has some meaning that I missed. The end tune—"Last Ride"—does have some nice wordplay that includes "Hate how it ends/But you can't get enough." We've all been there. —**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



Alejandro Escovedo
Burn Something Beautiful

While a number of the tunes on the Austin music legend's latest album hint at mortality ("I Don't Want to Play Guitar Anymore," "Horizontal," "Farewell to the Good Times"), there is certainly nothing retiring about the fierce guitar-based tunes that compose the bulk of this disc. From the ear-candy rocker "Beauty of Your Smile" to the Stones-like stomp of "Shake the Cat" through the ringing guitar rocking through "Heartbeat Smile," Escovedo sounds more alive than ever before. It's hard to find a favorite among so many top-notch tunes, whether the evocative "Sunday Morning Feeling" or the searing "thousand guitars" that seem to inhabit the opening cut: "Horizontal"...or any of the aforementioned songs.

Much has been touted about this new album after a four-year break, but I don't hear much influence of Peter Dinklage from REM on Escovedo's sound. There are a few slower tunes to break up the pace—the slower "Johnny Volume" (an ironic title), "Redemption Blues," or "Suit of Lights"—but then there're the fast-paced "Luna de Miel" and "Beauty and the Buzz" that tear the rafters down.

I saw Escovedo in a small intimate room a couple of years ago, but this music calls for a sweaty bar or small concert hall to be properly heard. Of course, in a fair world, he would be filling stadiums, but that's another issue. — **MIKE L. DOWNEY**

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CONCERT CALENDAR

11/3—Judah & The Lion @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

11/4—Quiet Company, Shark Rider, Nic Armstrong & The Thieves, The Ex-Optimists @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

11/4—Brazos Valley Comic-Con Pre-Show 80s Dance Party feat. DJ Skullbone, Jonny Cerveza @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

11/5-6—Brazos Valley Comic Con @ Brazos Valley Expo Center, Bryan

11/5—Thunderosa The Beer Joint, College Station. 9pm

11/5—Mangata, Total Strangers, Tenino, Side-show Tragedy @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/11—Forever Today, Electric Astronaut, Hello Monica, A Deathbed Promise @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

11/11—Satanic Overlords of Rock, Rock N Roll Damnation, The Bang Shifts @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/12—Trapper, Out of Bloom, The Ex-Optimists @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/18—Odd Folks, Mutant Love, Electric Astronaut, Jonathan Richter @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/19—Johnny Falstaff @ The Beer Joint, College Station. 9pm

11/19—Beat Bodega @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/2—Comrades of Rock II feat. SkyAcre, Linus Pauling Quartet, BULLS, The Ex-Optimists @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

12/3—Desdimona @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

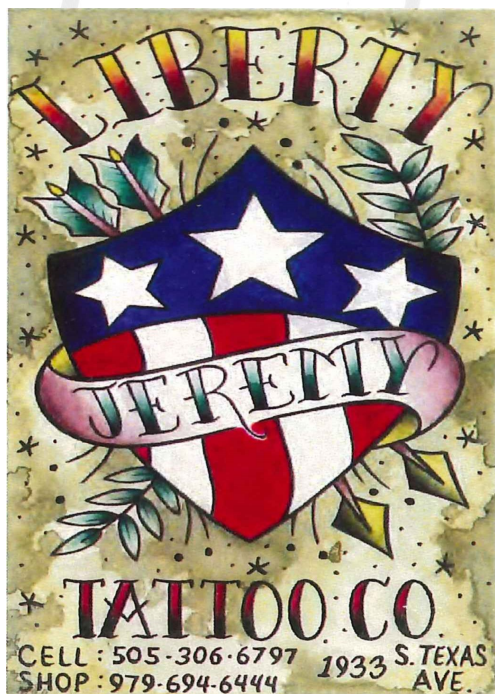
12/9—Unicorndog (CD release), Girlband, The Ex-Optimists @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/10—LUCA, Corusco, The Ex-Optimists, Mutant Love @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm

12/10—Levees, Forever Today, Interracial Dionysus, Electric Astronaut @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

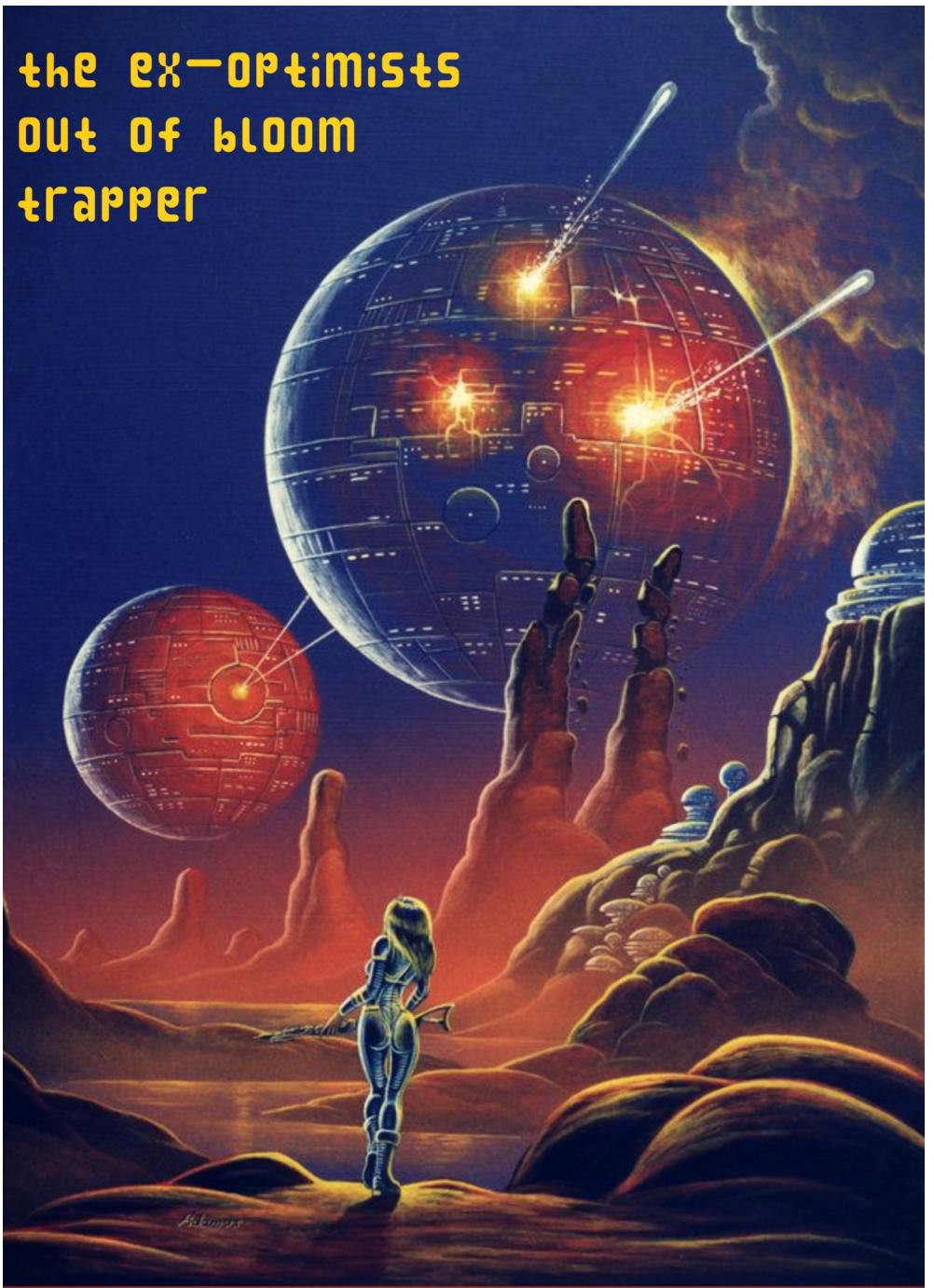
12/30—Atarimatt (cd release), great unwashed luminaries, Charlie Naked, Bryce Eiman @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

12/31—DJ Skullbone @ Revolution, Bryan. 8pm



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