

# STORERPRESENT



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for the discerning dirtbag.**

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<http://www.979represent.com>

emails to

[redchapterjubilee@yahoo.com](mailto:redchapterjubilee@yahoo.com)

materials for review & bribery can be sent to:

979represent

15530 creek meadow blvd. n.  
college station, tx 77845



## A NEW CAMELOT

This month calls to close the second and last term of presidency for Barack Hussein Obama, the 44th President of the United States of America. Although

Barry still rides the executive office chair in style, many in the media (including myself) have started giving thought to the legacy of the last eight years. I do not think it is bluster to say that the mythologizing of the Obama presidency has already begun in earnest and the man hasn't even vacated the premises yet.

It's hard to not want to hyperbolize this era. You have to go back generations to find a presidency that was not marred by some sort of scandal or embarrassment to the (inter)national façade of this country. You have to go back to Pres. Roosevelt the 2nd to find that sort of sense of pride in a president. Truman presided over the beginnings of the Cold War; Eisenhower ramped it up while supporting the red baiting of Americans through the McCarthy era; JFK had the Bay of Pigs; Johnson had Vietnam; Nixon had Watergate; Ford had airplane stairs; Carter had Iran; Reagan had Iran Contra; H.W. Bush raised taxes when he said he wouldn't and had Desert Storm; Clinton had Monica; Dubya had 9/11 and the endless war in the Middle East...and then Obama, who spent much of his term helping to ease the tensions previous administrations created in the world and changing the overall perception of our country. No scandals, no cum stains on intern dresses, no illicit arms deals, no "malaise", no tape erasing, etc. But to say that Obama's term was free of conflict...well, that's certainly not true.

The media is ready to turn the Obamas into the 21st century Kennedys. Americans seem to love their political dynasties and the Obama family is certainly ripe for that sort of deification. It is important to remember that Obama spent many years and political capital on the Affordable Care Act, an arguably positive program that helped insure more people in this country that needed it but at the same time punished the poorest of Americans for happening to live in states who for political reasons refused to participate in opening their own ACA Medicare exchanges, causing those who needed the insurance the most to be price gouged in the worst way. Obama's mere presence as a man of African descent gave millions of Americans their "hood pass" to pretend racism doesn't exist while many African American communities in the country burned with cop on white violence and rioting protesters. Obama did not outwardly support marriage equality until its support would not hurt him politically. Drone warfare killed hundreds of innocents in the Middle East. Obama's inability to back-up his "line in the sand" on violence against Syrian protesters is a humanitarian disaster. No one is perfect, and his mistakes should not be washed over entirely.

But you can understand the desire to gloss over these issues and place the Obamas upon a pedestal. The GOP has Reagan so firmly bronzed that no one seems to remember what his politics really were. The left hasn't had that sort of rallying emblem since JFK, and we are well over 50 years since his assassination. Obama is still relatively young and has 20 years or more of goodwill and good works left in him, not to mention the works to come from Mrs. Obama and their two daughters. The urge to perhaps remember '08-'16 in a way that defies the truth is strong and it is understandable, and expect in the months to come many tributes, news programming and long magazine think-pieces about the merits of the Obama administration, considering the long trainwreck of European fiasco-populist style politics that the Trumps are about to make de rigueur in Washington DC. Perhaps it's not so bad to indulge a little bit in looking through rose colored lens. —KELLY MINNIS

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# TRUMP OR NOT, WE ARE STILL FORGOTTEN



Many people and the news lately seem to be concerned with two things—President-Elect Trump and repealing Obamacare. Many on the Left criticize Trump and his supporters of wanting to tarnish President Obama's legacy, the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act", or simply "Obamacare" as many currently call it, because they fear many will be left without coverage of any kind once the executive pen hits the paper and Trump's new and improved privatized healthcare 2.0 takes its place. Those on the Right worry of the increased premiums said to be hitting many states this year via Obamacare, while receiving the same care they were just getting at a fraction of the price prior to the law. Both are valid concerns. Albeit neither affects me much, as I have still yet to be covered—EVER. Mandatory privatization under Obama just saw me penalized for not being able to afford the cost of getting sick, and Trump's proposals so far will likely only ensure that I am still not covered, and that I still can't afford to get sick.

There was one candidate who had people like myself—the disenfranchised—in mind when eyeing the presidency back in '15 and that was Sen. Bernie Sanders who proposed the unthinkable Universal Healthcare Act. There would still be privatized health plans for those who want that added sense of comfort and appeal that comes with a price tag, but ANYONE regardless of income level could go see a doctor when they needed too without reprimand by simply putting a %1 tax on all speculative Wall Street trading—Universal Healthcare and Higher Education would be more than covered cost wise. I could go get a checkup, and finish my degrees with little more effort than attending my doctor's appointments and showing up to class and doing my work. Instead, we're arguing about new ways to forcibly charge people money most can't afford, for the very things that will help change their stations in life—their health and education and ultimately change the course of their family's lives. A healthy educated family has better odds at this rat race world we made for ourselves over a sick uneducated family any day. You guys have seen the Third World right? Oh yea, most other modernized First and Second World nations already have these things and they are beating us at everything, production, life expectancy, quality of life, income, etc.

Of course, I can see the benefits of not being required to purchase a plan you can't afford, because I already cannot, and at the same time I can see the benefit of guaranteeing coverage for all who can pay. As this is something I believe that should be a most basic tier of a privatized healthcare system. Unfortunately, unless Trump's plan is to "do what Bernie said", I think we (the general American people) are going to have a rough time in the immediate future regardless. I hope you guys and gals can get something that works for you and yours in the meantime. I'll just most likely stick with the old time tradition of not getting sick. I mean seriously, a little over a year ago I had to have last minute emergency surgery for a appendicitis that ended up costing me \$33,000 uninsured to survive, that cost—wait for it—insured through Obamacare was estimated

at roughly \$29,000. So yea either way, that leaves me out of the game and in debt. Fortunately, for me the hospital was a religious one and—to my knowledge—forgave most of my debt so I am not completely crushed in Medical debt, just student loan debt (insert laugh track here). . debt, just student loan debt (insert laugh track here). So much for the good of the people after all, eh?

So what is my point to all of this? My point being, that though I may feel disproportionate, I am not the minority here. There are plenty of good Americans with jobs like myself who are doing worse off than those on Welfare who are unemployed. While there will still be plenty of those who can do for themselves who just choose not to, there are plenty who can't and deserve these things. The system we love is broken. What if we had Health and Education services much like the Police and Fire Department and people could just take care of what needed to be taken care of? If you didn't want to finish school or go to the doctor—simply don't go—you won't be fined for doing so, just don't be mad when your quality of life isn't where it could be. But to charge and fine—to capitalize—off people for being alive and attempting take care of themselves?? That is a whole other level of wickedness. And people wonder why our great nation is crumbling.

Yes, the call to make America Great Again was answered with a loud orange shouty man from the TV who doesn't understand basic verbal communication, but his message resonated so well because there truly are a growing number of problems in this country that are creating a great divide. As my history professors used to muse and warn "Another revolutionary civil war is coming, but it won't be the race war everybody's been getting so worked up about, it will be a class war. The haves against the have nots." I believe them more and more every day. It is a divide that a billionaire businessman TV personality who is inducted in the WWE Hall of Fame might not be the best to heal, but only time will tell. Hopefully, he will listen as well as he talks and maybe, just maybe he can help keep an eye on the little people who need someone in their corner from time to time. Maybe we need a president who is louder than life, and managed by the likes of Don King—to keep the spirit of the people alive? To borrow a quote "He might not be the president we need, but he's the president we deserve." Here's to hoping he can be both, and remember you are not alone when you feel the walls are closing in on you, extend your arm to your neighbor and say hello even when you don't really want to or feel capable, let someone go before you on occasion, smile and laugh even when the world is its bleakest. There is always day to come following the dark. We are strong, energetic, generally good natured people, though it might escape us from time to time, but we are. Now let's be positive to all these negatives and make the best possible lives we can for each other, and instead of being jealous of the things we don't have, let's be grateful for those we do.—BILL DANIELS





# ASK CREEPY HORSE

I recently complained that I was lonely and depressed because of my injury to my therapist.

Without even a moment's hesitation, she told me to get a hobby but she really said it like "GET A FUCKING LIFE! Loser."

I haven't had a steady hobby in my entire life. Didn't have the interest or time, money or availability. So then what would I do? Like what would be a really fun thing for me to do? I love to learn new things or find things out I had always wondered about. I'd love to do something that falls on my culinary background but I can't travel, I tire easily, I still don't have a lot of money, cooking exhausts me right now and I live in Pasadena, TX.

Thanks to my good friend Mr. MacBook Pro, I started looking at things online in my range of tastes. Things I knew little about or had pondered before were now my focus. I love music, but I don't have the time or the money to start a new vinyl collection and Spotify does the job. It was in Culinary School at Le Cordon Bleu that I really found myself in a world of many different things I was amazed by or enthralled with. I did sugar sculpture, cheese tastings, I assembled a croque en bouche, I got to use kitchen torches and flambe shit in skillets and organized the first Dia de los Muertos festival there, and I was President of our beer brewing club. I loved brewing beer. I loved the entire process. I loved tasting the beers and learning the nuances. I can't do that, I got an arm that's still broken with metal plates and titanium screws. With no use of my right arm, the one I write with and make love to myself with, I'm basically a clumsy one armed bandit. And I spend a lot of time alone by myself. I'm also on a lot of high doses of random prescriptions and I don't want to die on a toilet seat like Elvis, so I don't really want to tie one on.

My options were limited and I couldn't think of anything new that I'd be interested in doing because I'm being apathetic and sad right now because I'm sulking. Then, fate finally smiled it's gaze upon me and Rented Mule told me we needed a coffee maker. Typically, I'd go to the closet and get the \$10 machine I got from a thrift store out of the box it's sitting in under the clothes and call my best friend and tell him to give me back my coffee pot I've been asking him to return to me for the last few months but then we both forget and run some vinegar water through it and good as new.

But this time was different. There was caution in the wind and I seized an actual bolt of lightning. Okay, that's a lie but the visual really is like what I was feeling. Because FUCK \$10 thrift store coffee makers. I was tired of existing. I was tired of marching in sync with the sheep that just exist. I long for more and then I recall two weeks prior. Rented Mule and I had run some errands and I

started whining for coffee as A.) I have fucking loved coffee since I was 11; B.) It's coffee! It's fucking delicious; and C.) It really helps with Severe ADHD, especially if you're coming down. Really.

I pull out my phone and google the nearest coffee to me and we are less than a mile away from "Siphon Coffee". As we head there, I remember seeing a Siphon Coffee maker before and wanting it. It wasn't even in use, I just thought it looked really fucking cool. It's so fucking pretentious, it's hilarious! All I can do is laugh when I see a Siphon because I seriously can't imagine ANYTHING ANY MORE snobby in the world of coffee than that fucking thing. Seriously, go google image it real quick. You'll crap your pants laughing. Ever feel sad? Watch Siphon Coffee tutorials on Youtube. You won't be able to breathe you'll be laughing so fucking hard.

This is the first tutorial on Siphon coffee brewing I ever watched:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3pVahLZgAM>

Because real, for real coffee snobs are amazing and they are aplenty in the comments section of this video. These are some of my favorite comments I've found thus far: "French presses are for dad's that think they like coffee, but can't even do a three stage flavor profile of a natural sun-dried single origin Ethiopian. GTF outta here till you learn to properly reduce your fines in a final hydrolysis stage. 2nd wave twat..." or these comments replying to a criticism of using Siphons: "that's not even the proper ratio or pressure required for espresso. Do you even coffee bro?" followed by a supportive "he doesn't even know the difference between emulsion and solution brew techniques. what a 2nd wave twat..."

Look, I love me some coffee. A siphon looks hella rad. The coffee it brews tastes niiiiice. I love partaking in rich people shit. Now, if I ever fucking call someone a 2nd wave twat because they can't even do a three stage flavor profile of anything, promptly slap the shit out of me until all of my teeth are gone. I like stuff but I'll never be the type that seriously chastises in anger over knowledge of terroir and whatever the fuck that person said. I like to enjoy the finer things, sure. I was a chef and we fucking love gadgets. We especially love gadgets that involve fire and is something your friends will ooooooh and ahhhh over when they come over. So when I received a gift card for a major department store, I went from "What the fuck am I going to do with this?" to, "I know exactly what I'm going to do with this!" and promptly ordered a *I fucking shit you not it really is named* The HEISENBERG Siphon. To get Sean Bean on us, "One does not simply just buy a Siphon coffee maker."

Starting out, no hobby is cheap when you really want to dip your toe in right. To have the proper supplies even for a novice level, there obviously will be an investment in

time and in money. I have made espresso and espresso beverages since I was 14. I've actually had to do coffee tastings at le Cordon Bleu. I love the taste of coffee and the various profiles of complexity, body, bouquet and color. I also can be seen enjoying Folger's at work so there's that. I'm really into coffee and this is my opportunity to share my experiences as they occur in brewing and tasting coffees and what I learn as I decide to have fun doing something I really love and fully assert that I am better than everyone else because I have a fucking Siphon and you don't.

My Siphon came in today. I also received the butane for the butane burner I decided on. Everyone says the alcohol burners are shit and Halogen Beam Burners start at like \$300-400 I don't fucking have, I wanted to see if my Volcano would work on it but decided I should probably go ahead and get the damn burner. I went with a butane burner I found made *especially* for Siphons for a good deal and am waiting for that and the special kettle I had to buy. Because OF COURSE it demands a *special and very specific* Kettle. Why wouldn't it? AND the best ones tend to come from Japan and are made of copper and can even be digitally programmed to hold the temperature so as to not burn the coffee beans. Precious.

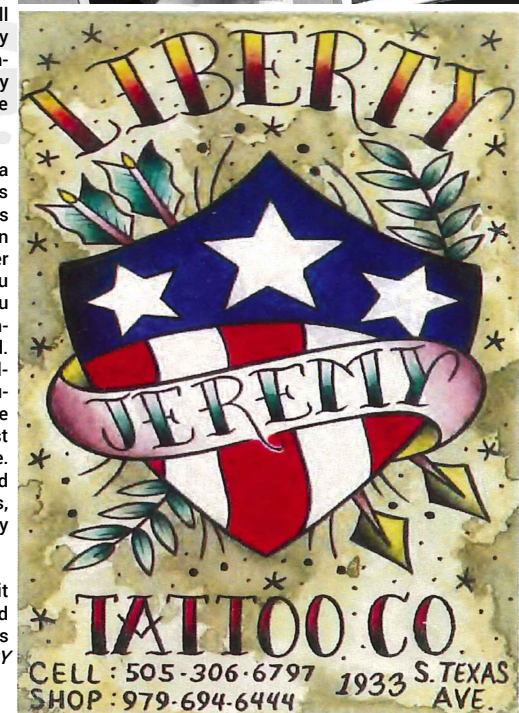
Using a promo code and a deal, I got a ridiculous price on a Stainless Steel Gooseneck Electric Kettle and am still waiting for it to be delivered. I guess the spout properly hydrates the beans or tea leaves without burning or damaging them and that's a good thing because it can destroy the subtleties of the bouquet or angel babies die. Also the spout makes pouring more controllable.

Basically you boil the water first because waiting for a butane burner to boil water is boring and takes about as long as cooking the family tofurky. The butane burner is to hold the heat as your coffee is brewing and maintain pressure of which direction the liquids go. After the water has returned to near boiling and fills the top chamber, you add *preferably* a light to medium roast coffee that you grind just before it's time to brew to a "fine sea salt" consistency. You treat your beans like a loaf of fresh bread. It's best in a cool dry place like the pantry, freezers actually dry out the beans and both them and refrigerators actually kind of mildew the whole thing. The beans are to be used within 2 weeks of their roasting date, ground just before use and...Fuck, now I need a grinder and a scale. The mere fact I have ordered a glass beaker system called a "Heisenberg" and have an online order list of burners, butane, a gram based scale and a grinder make me pretty sure the DEA will be busting my door in soon.

Now you have a back story, since I don't have all my shit yet, I'll write about my first experience next month and share learning how this thing actually works as well as trying different roasts and brewing methods. —CREEPY HORSE

FRIDAYS 7-9 pm

Paolo's Italian Kitchen  
(next to the Hilton on University)



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# STILL DRINKING

To whom it may reach first at Spoetzl Brewery,

First, allow me to congratulate you for the frequency with which the illustrious Jeff Bridges held and sipped a bottle of **Shiner Bock** in the film *Hell Or High Water*. Admittedly, seeing Bridges kicked back in a West Texas hotel replacing Shiner Bock empties into a sixer case while chiding his partner was way cooler than seeing Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis in *Friends With Benefits* (2011) holding (did they sip?) Shiner Bocks (labels flashed fully to the camera) while debating their sexual politics from a New York penthouse sofa, city skyline cresting their youthful mounds as boldly as that Bock label in their hands. Still, regardless of any new Jeff Bridges' role, to a certain generation of men he will always be **The Dude**. And now, because of *Hell or High Water*, we may all believe The Dude abides with a Shiner Bock as easily as a White Russian: "Hey, man, I've got a Shiner Bock here!". Cheers to that, Spoetzl.

Second, I feel a full disclaimer is in order as to what's up here. I write a monthly beer review column for a small time operation in Bryan/College Station. Our readership is small, and we pride ourselves on it. We aim for discriminating tastes—which is why I have, for years now, felt permission to shit on Shiner Bock in print. Admittedly, I do not love Shiner Bock, but I am quick to say I do not love Shiner Bock because Spoetzl Brewing makes so many other fine beers. Seriously, I am amazed so many good breweries choose a lesser beer to run as their flagship. **New Belgium** has **Fat Tire**. **Boulevard** has the **Wheat**. **Goose Island** has **Honkers**. **Hale**. Even **Sierra Nevada** runs **Sierra Nevada Pale Ale**. . . . well, nevermind: that's a damn beautiful beer. Still, I'm sorry to say, Shiner Bock is not a damn beautiful beer.

(Ironically, my neighbor, with whom we rarely speak, left me a gift wrapped package on Christmas Eve whilst I walked **my pugs**. We were gone all of five minutes because they shit faster than I do, and when we returned the gifted package sat outside our door. I took the package in the house and called my bride. "Honey, we have a gifted package!" She lilted from the kitchen, her floured apron poofing a domestic cloud about her. "Dear my", she said, "what ever could it be?" I dare not respond verbally. Rather, I answered with the swiping of furious hands, ripping paper and slashing open the adjoining card, which read **"From the Cats next door."** The package contained six Shiner Bocks in a commercial ready sixer. My wife exclaimed, "But you don't like Shiner Bock!" To which I replied, "Well, I like *these* Shiner Bocks!")

Regardless, as parenthetically mentioned, I can easily purpose myself to enjoy a Shiner Bock, as when my dear friend **Myles** married in Waco and **Gretchen** flew in from New York and Shiner Bock was the only beer at the reception and me and Gretchen got drunk. Or when I went on a beer fast in 2014 and showed up at my buddy Nate's house and he said, **"You want a beer?"** and I hadn't had a beer in three weeks so I said "Sure" and then he brought me a can of Shiner Bock and I didn't .blink twice and it tasted as good as anything Ben-n-Jerry's could fit into a single tablespoon all cold and hello and hell-yes.

I say all this because, **Spoetzl**, I realize, in some

bizarrely patriotic way, that I love you. I love you as a Texan. The same way my wife, who hates country music, sometimes grins to spite herself and says "Willie!" when an outlaw country classic plays in public. Yep, that's me and you. And I'm concerned that you guys have relegated your best efforts to your Limited Offerings, such as your Birthday Beers and Seasonals. Sure, I can appreciate your **Shiner Black** and your **Ruby Redbird** (conditions allowing), but your year-long offerings are—how you say—a rip-off.

Nevertheless, your **Winter Warmer** this year was, in the words of my friend Kelly, "everything Shiner Bock *should* be". This year's Winter Warmer, sold only in bombers (that sold out immediately in BCS) and on-tap in three B/CS bars, was malty, caramel rich, yet capped still by some dry-ish hop goodness. An exquisite beer. Your Bock is Amber, Amber, Ambery—thinly malted/amply hopped so to be a bit overly balanced: a.k.a. bland. **Shiner Winter Warmer** is densely malted, syrupy sweet, yet still drinkable. Winter Warmer could and should be your flagship. Notice how you sold out with the bland Bock! Then again, you may be right: Shiner Bock sells like proverbial hotcakes throughout the Midwest and Timberlake regions.

Likewise, **Shiner's Birthday Beers** could provide new year-long offerings. Even now I'm sipping **Austin Reserve Gin** and tonic from a **Shiner 101 Czech-Style Pilsner** glass: the best beer I believe you guys have ever made. Yes, and you triumphed as well with your **#96 Marzen/Oktoberfest** (now in seasonal rotation), your **#97 Bohemian Black Lager** (now in year-round rotation), your **#104 White Wing Belgian White Ale** (also year round). However, **#101 Czech-Style**, **#107 Hoppypilsner**, and, now, **#108 Cold-Brew Coffee Ale** all deserve far more shelf space and rotation than their quick life allowed. I drank my weight—easily, and not difficult—in both the 101 and 107 Birthday Beers. Your new Cold-Brew Coffee-Ale might require a slower roll on the drinker's part, but it is still a brilliantly executed beer. I was so excited about your Cold-Brew Coffee Ale that I bought several bottles of Ready-To-Drink Iced Coffees from your partnered Austin roaster—**Chameleon Cold Brew Coffees**. Subsequently, I nearly shit my pants after each bottle. It's tasty but treacherous. Still, this is a *beautiful* beer. As I've said to several, "Stockpile **Shiner Coffee Ale** like the apocalypse just hit the horizon, and you plan to go Cormac McCarthy on that shit." (I am proud of that line.) You Spoetzl guys do good stuff when it's not your regular stuff. Could you just please kick the regular stuff up to not-so-regular quality? That's all I'm writing to request.

With that and, to bring it full circle, I guess for you guys it doesn't get much better than seeing a bottle of Shiner Bock next to Sidney Pointer's daughter's legs in Quentin Tarantino's **Death Proof**. Whatever. I buy more beer annually than Tarantino's movie set did the one time, and I have a readership of about 12 people who buy as much beer as I do. So I hope you will consider transitioning a few of the above mentioned Birthday Beers, and the Winter Warmer, into your regular, year long, six-pack rotation. That would be beyond swell.

Sincerely,  
Kevin Still

PS. I was quite buzzed on your product when I wrote this. I hope you were, as well, when you read it.



# PEDAL PUSHING

## THE 5E3 TWEED DELUXE

Attractive.

I have had a hard time with little amps. I think this is because at home or onstage they usual sound like little amps to me. I want to make a BIG SOUND, even at home when I'm just dickin' around. So I usually just play my big amps at home at really low volume, or really, I just play unplugged at home most of the time. But early last year The Ex-Optimists found ourselves practicing in a storage facility. Drums in the storage room, amps and guitarists in the hallway. Storage facilities are all exposed concrete and steel so our big amps were gonna be WAY too much BRAGH for that hallway.

Surprisingly, even our moderately sized combo amps were way too much. We couldn't hear anything and our ears were getting shredded. So I suggested maybe we needed to use smaller combos that were more directional in nature to confine the throw of audio signal. Wonko T. Sane owns nearly every amplifier in existence and has numerous small combos to choose from. Me, I didn't own a single one. So I had to find one, and in a hurry. The sort of Coca Cola of little amps these days is the **Fender Blues Deluxe** (of course Wonko has one) but I knew I didn't really want one of those. If I was gonna buy a little combo I wanted it to be something I could also record with, something to keep. After trying to make a **Vox AC10** and **Mesa 5:25 Express** work I opted to follow an earlier instinct of mine and go for a **Fender 5E3 Tweed Deluxe** clone built by **Carl's Custom Amps**.

For years I had been curious about picking up a tweed Deluxe. Tweed Fender circuits are more mid heavy and don't have the scooped blackface Fender sound. It is the tweed Bassman that Marshall designed their original amps around. Vintage 5E3's are a very expensive but plenty of builders make clones and a lot of kit builders supply parts and instructions for rolling your own. In fact, Wonko has one he built himself. Me, I do not have a steady hand with the soldering iron (**FredTech** can attest to the barely adequate quality of my soldering) so I opted to keep an eye open for a cheap 5E3 build. And I found mine at an unbelievable price. You can see it in the photo above. The price was too good, so who cares if it's ugly! And Carl's Custom Amps is a reputable builder. So I bought it. Six months later it is still sticking with me, a fantastic choice.

What makes the 5E3 so fabulous to me? In short, it's a lot louder than the other little combo amps I tried and could be heard at Xops practice AND not be completely compressed and breathing fire. Plus as I began to record with it I enjoyed what it could do under mic. It is a roughly 12w 2x6V6 1x12 combo. It has two channels (regular and bright) with two inputs each (0dB and -6dB) and a tone control. A vintage appropriate Jensen-style speaker helps to absorb some of the power it kicks out but gives it the right amount of top and bottom. Perhaps TOO much bottom. More on this later. It should be built into a pine cabinet, as the softer pine also absorbs some of the volume of the speaker. As a result, the amp is super light and very portable. While that is certainly appreciated, it's the sound that is so



The 5E3 is a surprisingly complicated little amp for something with so few controls. For starters, the two volume controls interact with one another and the tone control interacts with them as well. At high volumes the tone control is bypassed. The unused channel volume acts in a way like a tone control. The higher you turn up the unused channel, the less bass the amp passes, and this amp passes an AMAZING amount of low end for small an amp. The low end is loose though, based on the speaker and cabinet, and many users find it flubby. If you crank the unused channel volume it attenuates the volume and will lower the volume and/or gain of the other channel. And it shorts out the tone control entirely. The two channels can also be jumped (like on pre-master volume Marshalls) to gain even more control over the volume

and breakup. It is an amp that requires a lot of experimentation and fiddling with to figure out how to dial it in the exact way you want. It responds very well to boost and overdrive pedals and still maintains a healthy amount of mids under scooped fuzz pedals. It is also very touch sensitive and reacts to volume and tone knob adjustments on the guitar very well. In fact, many famous guitarists will dime all three controls and affect their amount of breakup and tone from their guitar's controls instead of messing with the amp.

Downsides? Well, it's not an amp you plug into and figure out immediately. The controls are highly interactive and turning one pot can radically alter the settings for the other controls. If you like to palm mute and want a "tighter" sound, this amp will not be for you. There's no master volume so to get it to break up (and it breaks up gloriously...as Wonko says, the best Marshall for the job is always a Fender) it has to be turned up, and for 12w it is *very* loud. That said, humbuckers hit it hard and you can get it to break up at a somewhat more reasonable volume. That said, it also has limited headroom with humbuckers, which may be a concern for some. Also, you can't just go and try one at Guitar Center. Fender makes one now, a "The Edge signature model" (which is weird...when I think U2 I think AC30) but it is \$1800. The boutique builds are more affordable (\$900-1200) but that's a lot for a little combo. Used are more reasonable, but some are built by people with more questionable soldering skills than yours truly so you have to be careful who you buy one from. The biggest downside? The 5E3 created a powerful desire in me to have this tone at Xops gigging levels, which led me towards a 5F6A tweed Bassman. Now I want a low powered Tweed Twin too or a Harvard. Or a 5f1 Champ. I want to collect them all now, and that's a VERY expensive adventure.

Every guitarist should probably own a 5E3 at some point. So many famous guitar tones come from them (Don Felder's "Hotel California" solo, Joe Walsh, Neil Young, etc.). They are also hard amps to get to know and require a bit of time and patience. With that time and patience comes great rewards. — KELLY MINNIS

# FASTER PUSSYCAT VS. BULLETBOYS


The Proof Rooftop Lounge is a hybrid of a really cheesy sports bar and a Hip Hop/Dance club (with obligatory "If your name is on the list you get a bottle of champagne and are escorted to a private VIP room to drink it"). Said establishment specializes in "RSVP shows", meaning that if you click on their website and ask for tickets they will e-mail them to you. Mostly, the caliber of acts Proof books are B-team rap/dance acts (the remnants of C&C Music Factory are playing there in January) and B-Team hair metal acts of the 1980's. Faster Pussycat and The Bulletboys fall into the latter category.

All things considered, I have to give props to the fans of Faster Pussycat and Bulletboys. For the most part they were washed up, old, overweight metal fans who probably contemplated suicide after Mötley Crüe's farewell tour. However, nearly 100 of them were tough (tuff?) enough to brave 30 degree weather and stand in drizzling rain as their B-Team metal heroes kept the flames (unfortunately not literal flames though; in this weather that would have been useful) of hair metal alive. Imagine white privilege indie rock fans doing that; that wouldn't happen unless they were attending a festival they had sunk of dollars into (irony level increases as the cost increases evidentially). My excuse for attending? The Houston Music Press awards ceremony was so lame that this seemed like a better option—and the tickets were free (honestly the DJ playing tunes between bands was better at Proof than the DJ at Houston press).

As I was scribbling notes for this review I was mistaken for a band member by one of the few younger "fans" attending the show. She assumed that I was writing a set list (who WRITES out a set list in 2016?). At least I'm at a show where I match the age demographic of the audience and band. Said young lady claimed she just "moved back" to Houston and "happened" to hear about the show. After 2-3 minutes of trite and polite talk, a member of the Bulletboys found her, took her under his arm and escorted her to one of the VIP rooms mentioned earlier. It is great to know that some rock

and roll traditions have not yet died.

Honestly, I don't remember a single Bulletboys song back in the day and still couldn't tell you what their "hit" was. Weather be damned, they played like they were headlining Madison Square Garden; choreographed jumps, audience participation bits ("How ya DOOOOIIINNNNNGGGG TOOOOO-NIGHT HOO-OUUUUSTON!") and partying like it was 1989. It was refreshing to see non-jaded music fans actually enjoying the band they were watching. Faster Pussycat hit the stage next. They were a bit grittier; basically a poor man's Mötley Crüe. However, as was the case with the Bulletboys, Faster Pussy-cat were pros, delivering the "hits" such as "Number 1 with a Bullet" and "House of Pain" with as much enthusiasm as they could muster.



Unfortunately, I left the show after a friend was escorted (manhandled really) out of the venue by the not too friendly Proof Rooftop Lounge Security team for dancing too enthusiastically (hair 'n' all). The band stopped that everyone could use their cellphones) the next day. This sort of put the kibosh on the show left shortly thereafter. The band played their cover of the most perfect cover a

It takes a special kind of focus to continue playing hair metal circa now. To deny that rap, grunge, alternative, indie rock and a hundred other musical trends killed hair metal as dead as the asteroid collision killing the dinosaurs happened requires myopia few other musical genres could muster. However, The Bulletboys and Faster Pussycat have this focus/myopia in spades. Neither of these bands changed the course of musical history and never pretended that they would or could. That lack of pretention is refreshing. Hopefully, hipsters won't catch on to hair metal and ruin that too as I've got free tickets for the L.A. GUNS and Trixter. Rock on guys.....—*RENTED MULE*



# MICKY FITZ R.I.P.



I'm not sure when I fell in love with Oi! Music, but I remember the song. It was "Harry May" by The Business, and while I had no idea the impact that music or the lifestyle would have for me the next decade or so, The Business quickly became one of my favorite bands. The next few years were a haze of shaved heads, bomber jackets, cheap beer, cigarettes, girls with chelsea cuts and old cars driving fast. I was given a street name and stage name, took to playing in an Oi! Band, saw a riot or two, and plenty of brawls. Though the whole thing, the soundtrack to the chaos of my youth always had a Business track in it.

The best news of my twenty something life came in '95 or

'96... The Business was releasing a new album called *Keep The Faith* and they were going to tour in Texas. My best friend Gilbert and I were stoked for months as we planned to go. The day of the trip to Houston, I pulled up to his house he was hanging up the phone and walked to the car. "Who was that?" I asked. "Work..." he said, "They wanted me to come in so I quit. I'm not missing The Business."

He was right to quit that day. This was the first Houston show, and they played *The Abyss* to a packed room. The crowd was teeming with energy of rough wild kids and old timers. It was hard to tell the difference between the pit and people legitimately fighting. It was a level of violence I hadn't seen yet from punks and skins from all over the state and Mexico. At one point, "Smash The Discos" came on, and I took a cue from others and rushed the stage, soon I found myself standing next to Micky Fitz, the man himself. We finished the song together, one of my buddies took a picture when it was over with a disposable camera (we used those then). It is printed above. The look on my face is priceless. I was the happiest I think I could have been in that moment, on a stage before a scene of flying bodies, blood and fights... I still have that record I bought on the way out.

A few years later, The Business was coming through

again to support *Death II Dance*.

After the show we went to a bar close by and saw Micky Fitz sitting by himself enjoying a margarita. I approached him to tell him I was a fan and then leave him alone, but he invited us to sit with him and drink. We had a great conversation about Oi! and punk and the

state of things as they were. He loved Texas. It was a night I won't forget. Again, there is another picture taken that night I still have and treasure.

Those first two encounters became many. I saw them play many times, happy of the fact that America was going

through an Oi! Revival in the 90's and The Business was doing well touring here. Micky was the real deal. He was a cool dude. He bridged the gap on punk for the subcultures of punk rockers and skinheads. He said himself in a few interviews that they were a punk band and he couldn't understand why there was so much fighting between the youth cultures. He spoke out against sensationalism of the Oi! scene in England. His lyrics were speaking out for things he believed in. "They're scared of Oi! It's real," he said. And a fierce love of his fans... "We respect the people we play for, they pay the money to get in, the run the roost, not the band. If you go up there with a half eyed attitude on that stage you don't deserve any respect."

Micky lost his battle with cancer on December 1st. I was always kind of hoping that he could kick it, maybe come back for one more tour. I am mad at myself for missing their last one. Social Media was filled with posts of his passing to people in the know of such things, many old friends sharing stories and memories. 2016 was filled with a lot of celebrity deaths. I don't really care for that. I do care about the deaths of the musicians and artists that have inspired me and changed me in some way. Micky Fitz was one of those guys. And he'll be missed in this house. -TIMOTHY DANGER



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I wasn't sure about *Rogue One* through the first half of the movie, but man did that second half deliver. When it was all said and done, the amount of exposition for an entirely new set of characters was about right, giving us enough time with each character in the band of misfits in order to care about the movie as it approached its climax. Other than the ending being completely great, my favorite aspect of *Rogue One* was how we were able to see for the first time, in my opinion, just how impressive in force (no pun intended) and size the Empire was after Palpatine consolidated power. The McGuffin of the film focuses on the Death Star, the favorite object of peril in the Star Wars universe, but as we learn about our new band of heroes and the existence of the Death Star plans we also get to see Imperial soldiers, staff, and installations in a variety of settings and contexts. At first I was a bit annoyed at all of the planet-hopping the film took us on, complete with planet name labels and subtitles, but in retrospect it was beneficial to quickly know where we were seeing on screen.

We see stormtroopers and probe droids patrolling martial law-style in the main city of desert-esque Jedha, looming over everyone metaphorically around every street corner and literally in the shadow cast by the Star Destroyer hovering directly overhead in the sky. We see the Imperial research facility on rainy and rocky Eadu where Jyn Erso's father and his team of scientists have worked on developing the Death Star and ever-present Tie Fighters are at the ready. Most dramatically we see security databank base on would-be beach resort Scarif, complete with horizontal elevators leading to the giant antenna tower, multiple immaculately-emerging AT-AT walkers, and shield-stargate to access the whole operation. Along with the massive ground attack on Scarif's surface and space battle many miles overhead, we get to a sense of scale of the Empire beyond what we've ever seen in the original trilogy, typically a Death Star and a bunch of ships hanging out in one spot. Of course this is partially due to the modern capabilities of CGI and digital filmmaking, but lots of credit should also go to the world-building, or in this case universe-building that went into *Rogue One*. Hopefully the upcoming stand-alone films follow its example of daring to show us more.—TODD HANSEN

I love Star Wars, it's air to me. It came around at the magical part of my life when it just made sense. I was lucky enough to be born in the time I can see them in the theater. So when a new Star Wars movie comes out... I'm all aboard. It's like Christmas to me, even more than Christmas itself. And that's what *Rogue One* was for me. I've seen every Star Wars movie in the theater at least six times. This one is no different.

*Rogue One* was a good movie. It's a fine addition to the Star Wars Mythos. It's got action, great ships, cameos... a lot. But... it's not the best one. And when I see people saying it is... I gotta intercede.

1. You can't compare it to the rest of the canon films. The other films are a space opera. Because of this, it's missing something. Something special. This was the first movie I feel had limited engagement to the audience. *Rogue One*, as many internet bandwagoners will tell you, is a war movie. It's not bad, it's just different. You can't compare apples and oranges.
2. It needs a crawl and the fanfare. You can't have a Star Wars film without it. Now just because Kathleen Kennedy from Lucasfilm says it didn't need it since it's not a mainline entry doesn't make it true. It's not like Lucasfilm has been wrong before (cough cough Han shot first). Besides the crawl came out in The Clone Wars animated movie which made it into theaters and is not a mainline entry so that lie is pretty much lawyered.

# THE ROQUE ONE ONCE AROUND

## THE 979REP STAFF ROUND-ROBIN THE NEW STAR WARS FILM

Look... You need a crawl. You need a John Williams score. It's what makes Star Wars...Star Wars. Anything else makes it open like a well made fan film. The biggest complaint from reviewers is that the first part of the movie spent too much time jumping from planet to planet introducing characters. Things the other films fixed by... I don't know... adding a fucking crawl.

It's tradition and protocol. You don't jump into a car and drive without putting a seatbelt on first. I mean you could, and you would probably make it to your destination alive, but that doesn't make it cool, it makes you an irresponsible asshole. And the fans are even more of an asshole if they accept it because they are in love with the newness of this movie. Yes it's dark and different, but don't be afraid to let the creators know what you think because if you don't they'll keep taking liberties with it.

*Rogue One* was good, it could have been great.—TIM DANGER

I'm not as big a fan of Star Wars as Tim or Wonko, but I have made my way around the Star Wars Universe quite a bit. I've read many of the pre-Disney non-canon licensed series (particularly those by Timothy Zahn), the burgeoning current canon book series from Claudia Gray and Chuck Wendig, and I've even played the D6 Star Wars roleplaying game a few times. However, I'm not such a fan that I am inflexible with Star Wars. There are some things missing from *Rogue One*, as Tim pointed out, that do disturb somewhat the overall pacing and feel of the movie. Like Todd, I found the jumping around in the first part of the movie enlightening. It does lend to scope. In the original trilogy fans see very little of the Star Wars universe. Endor, Tatooine, Hoth, a couple of Death Stars...that's about it. It sure seems like a larger galaxy...and at the same time I much smaller rebellion than what I perceived in the original trilogy. That is a rather small group gathered on Yavin to hear out Jyn Erso's case. I do concur with Tim's assessment of the score. I get that John Williams is inimitable. But the parts of the score that were not based on his original themes sound too "modern", too much like some other movie. George Lucas originally scored his storyboarding with "the classics" from Wagner, Mozart, and Beethoven. I'm sure someone could have written a score with those grandiose masters in mind and come up with something more cinematic than what was used.

No, my gripes with the movie come later. It was recently Festivus, so let me list my rather minor list of grievances.

1. I'm sorry, but I don't like Forest Whitaker in anything. I can't lose the actor inside the role like I can with many other better actors. I suppose it's a good thing that his role is so minor.
2. There is a definite lack of character development. You don't really get why Jyn Erso is in prison, the remorse that Cassian Andor and his fellow rebels from the rebellion felt at having done some evil things in the name of bringing down the Empire. There is supposedly some moral relativism but the movie runs past it so fast it's only barely apparent upon repeated viewing.
3. Actors raised up from the dead. Look, it's pretty nifty that Peter Cushing can revive his role as Grand Moff Tarkin decades after his death but...the first time I saw the movie his scenes pulled me entirely outside of the film. Like buying a new, awesome record and discovering that every time it spins around to a certain part of the record it

skips. After my first two viewings of *Rogue One* I, like many of your readers I suspect, watched *Star Wars* and the lighting during all of Tarkin's scenes is all wrong. It makes his skin almost red. I would have preferred that they had just found a different actor to play his role. Oddly enough, I do not have a problem with the digital jiggerypokey they did to Carrie Fisher at the end of the movie.

4. The cameos for R2-D2, C3PO, and Baba and Evazan (the two ruffians from the Mos Eisley cantina in *Star Wars*) were unnecessary.

5. Darth Vader does not sound unhinged like he does in the opening scenes of *Star Wars*. In fact, he looks awfully calm watching Leia's ship take off, much unlike he appears a few days later when he boards her ship.

Now that I've aired my niggles, this is what I loved about *Rogue One*.

1. My God, the battle scenes. I love the juxtaposition of AT-AT's and palm trees. Like a surreal WWII film.
2. This movie *feels* like Star Wars. The controls on the equipment look right, the costuming, even the creatures feel right.
3. The movie pacing in the last third of the movie builds to a right nice frenzy and kept me right on the edge of my seat the whole time, even though I knew ultimately how the battle would turn out.
4. Felicity Jones' Jyn Erso is a serious badass. Mads Mikkelsen as her father Galen even more so. I highly recommend picking up *Catalyst*, the Galen Erso backstory novel that was just published a week before *Rogue One* opened for reference.
5. K2SO rules. Yeah, he's a smartass but he was an excellent sidekick and sacrifice.
6. Chirrut Imwe and the Guardians of the Whills. A blind near-Jedi master who kicks much ass. I want to know more about the Guardians. I'm sure canon novels will enlighten me eventually.
7. Orson Krennic made an *excellent* bad guy. So much subtle dark humor with that character. Ben Mendelsohn did a fantastic job with that character.

Overall I found the movie fascinating and I enjoyed it far more than *The Force Awakens*, though I think it is somewhat unfair to compare the two. It tells me that so far Disney is handling the legacy of Star Wars in a commanding fashion. Many of the complaints I or Tim have are really stylistic. Overall, this film cannot be faulted. If you want to know how bad it could have turned out, I recommend you drop back in on *Attack of the Clone* and remind yourself how bad the legacy of Star Wars has been treated.—KELLY MINNIS

*Rogue One* ended up being every inch the "Pander to the Star Wars nerds/keep the franchise on the radar" placeholder movie that I thought it would be. That isn't to say it was a particularly bad film. In fact there were moments that were quite good. The snarky droid was very entertaining and ought to push quite a few toys for the franchise. Though nerdom probably has very strong opinions about this, I thought the stand-ins for Leia or Vader were about as good as could be expected. In particular, the moral relativism of both the Rebel Alliance and the Empire and their "ends justify the means" actions were quite compelling viewing—almost adult like. Therein lies the rub. At the end of the day—no matter how much real or imagined "cultural significance" Star Wars may or may not have—the films are basically adventure films for kids and the young at heart (or folks who have never left the comfort of

their parent's house). Grafting dark themes onto it to score "cool points" works about as well as grafting camel's head onto a horse's body. Still, it was better than the first three episodes of the franchise, so the folks at Star Wars Inc. are at least aiming high(er). Twenty years ago, this movie would have set the world on fire. However, timing is everything and now *Rogue One* is an adequate, workman like film that at least didn't impede the march toward the next "real" Star Wars film.—RENTED MULE

*Rogue One* is the first Western of its kind. For decades, Hollywood (and TV) made fortunes churning out hundreds and hundreds of Westerns, scenarios set within a certain universe with set structures, comfortable tropes, familiar environments: the Old West, gunfights, good guys, bad guys. That said, *Rogue One* does a pretty good job for a first take in this new genre. Despite a slow start with back history for a few characters, this Star Wars picks up the pace with the disturbing introduction of troubled rebel Cassian Andor played by Diego Luna. I don't think it's an accident that one of Luna's better previous roles was a Kevin Costner Western with Robert Duvall where he held his own with these Academy Award winners (Personal aside—*Open Range* is one of my favorites).

The movie's plot to steal the Death Star's plans is well-known to a generation who have never not had Star Wars around. Like the rich literature that grew up around the George Lucas movies that filled in the myths, *Rogue One* does its part to tell more of the gaps in the never-ending story. Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) does a credible job assembling her "pitiful little band," but we could have seen more development of them all (particularly Donnie Yen as Chirrut Imwe who almost steals the movie). These Western-like stories of the Force and the Empire are also close to myths like *Robin Hood*, *King Arthur*, *The Mummy*, and *Frankenstein* that will be retold and reshaped by each generation.

On a personal note, this year will be 40 years of a world with Star Wars in it, and I've been here for it all (saw the first Star Wars movie three times in the theatre in 1977 because that's what you did). For me, *Star Wars* was always about joy and fun, but it's becoming more poignant with time.

That joyous fun in the new set of movies has been replaced by grit and grimness, which is easier (see the superhero movies for more darkness). How can any movie live up to the weight of the Star Wars mythology? It likely can't. However, my daughter called the seventh Star Wars movie the first one for her generation, as joyous for her and her friends as the first one had been for me (she relished *Rogue One* as well).

The mythology is with us, always.—MIKE L. DOWNEY

# CARRIE FISHER WAS A BADASS

In *A New Hope*, the first of the Star Wars Trilogies, we first met Princess Leia. She's young, solemn, collected and she's just smuggled the Death Star plans onto a droid and shipped them to Darth Vader's former Jedi trainer and adversary, Obi Wan Kenobi, setting forth the most amazing story of the 20th century. At 19, Carrie Fisher played the titular role of Princess Leia Organa. This was no damsel in distress, this was a Princess that did not give up plans of the rebel base and watched as her home planet and even her adoptive parents were literally destroyed in front of her. She was tortured, kidnapped, detained, enslaved several times throughout the trilogy and retaliated by getting the Death Star plans to the rebel base undetected, going into deep cover to rescue "her man" even pulling a bomb out, killing her



captor with the very chains she was shackled to, chasing stormtroopers on a 74-Z speeder bike, befriending the Ewoks and being overall pretty cool that Luke is her brother and Darth Vader is her dad *considering*. The last time we really get to see the now General Leia Organa, she has still yet to be seduced by the dark side, she presides over important military decisions despite the loss of her son, death of her partner and the absence of her twin brother. She is alone and stronger than ever in a fight she knew she'd fight her entire life.

The real person, Carrie Fisher, was not Leia. Her life was surreal much like that of her character except that Ms. Fisher struggled with mental health, addiction and issues that would take her most of her life to work through. She's quoted as making the parallels herself between that of herself and Leia, "Leia's real father left her mother when she was pregnant, so her mother married this King Organa. I was adopted and grew up set apart from other people because I was a princess," Fisher said. "A lot of parallels, me and Leia. Dad goes off to the dark side, and Mom marries a millionaire. My brother and I went in different directions on the Debbie and Eddie issue. He's gotten involved with Jesus, and I do active work on myself, trying to make myself better and better. It's funny." In the end she came out tougher than her character's own general. She was very

outspoken about her mental health, addiction issues and taking it all out of the shadows and telling people it's a very real and common thing. In time, she'd pour her heart out but in her way. She'd perform spoken-words and monologues about her past. Her one woman

show *Wishful Drinking* she details with an almost crude, "this is how messed up this is" candor. It was crass, it was shocking, it was all true and she said it with the swagger of someone that survived many battles. Because she had. Serious drug use began at age 13 and by the time she had bipolar disorder diagnosis, she'd go through painful electroshock treatments and myriads of different medications.

*Postcards from the Edge* was when I really came to identify with Carrie Fisher. My mother had told me for years I re-

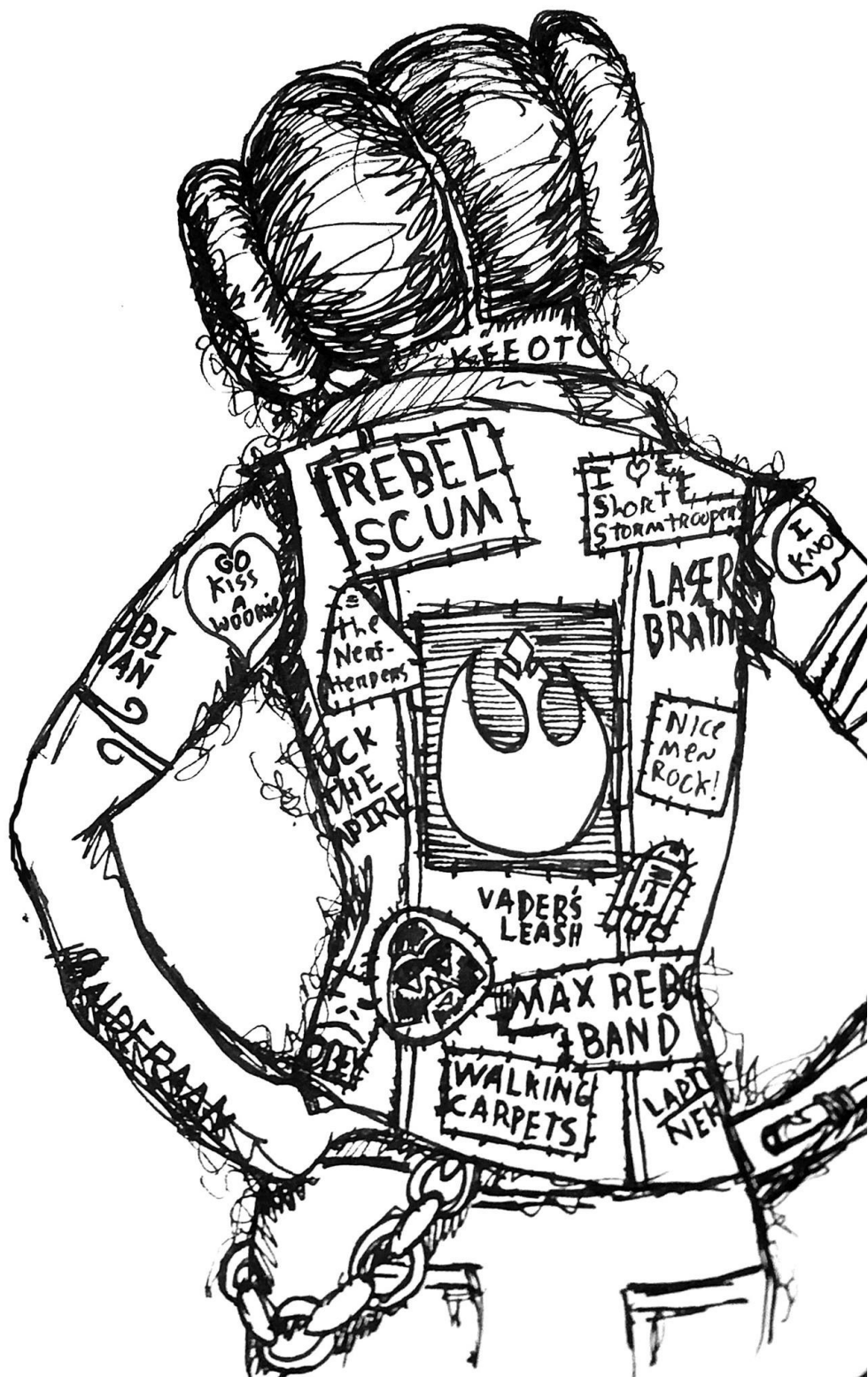
minded her of Princess Leia. When I saw this movie as a teen, I immediately connected to Meryl Streep's character, the thin autobiographical veil that was really Fisher. As I watched her appearances and interviews over the years, I began to feel a connection to her, that someone could be traumatized, abused, mentally ill and still be a very strong and firm woman.

In *Wishful Drinking* she tells how she would like her obituary to state she was "strangled by her underwear", after George Lucas famously told her not to wear a bra under her Star Wars costume because they did not exist in space. "I want it reported that 'I drowned in moonlight, strangled by my own bra'".

On the morning of December 27th, we lost a valuable warrior loved by many. She was royalty. She was real. She was human. She was only 60 years old and had been through more battles and struggles in her short time here with us, than many will encounter their entire lives. She showed girls all over the world they could be a princess and still be a warrior on the front lines in character and in her personal life. Sadly, her life was tragically cut off when she drowned in moonlight, strangled by her own bra.

Carrie Fisher, you will be missed. —CREEPY HORSE

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# TODD LIVES IN A FILM

## MANCHESTER BY THE SEA

I hate being back here. Just breathing the saltiness in the air again makes me sick to my stomach. Hell, I was sick to my stomach before I even made it all the way back into town. I may have grown up in Manchester, but it sure as shit spat me out good. I moved away for a reason, so I wouldn't have to deal with this shit anymore. Sure, these people may not say it to my face, but I know what they're really thinking, what they say about me when I leave the room, what I wish they'd say to my fucking face. "There goes the prodigal drunk. You heard what he did a few years back, right?" I can see it in the pity in their eyes, just like they can see the sadness I wear in mine.

It doesn't matter what I waste away my days doing now. Moved far enough away to get the air out of my lungs but close enough that they couldn't claim I wasn't available to come by. Spend each day fixing up one of these dumbass tenant's apartments, they stand there watching me work to make sure I do a good job, as if they could fucking fix it themselves if they wanted to, get upset at me for being the messenger, as if I'm the reason their frickin' pipes are broken. The nearest bar never quite does the trick the way it needs to, but sometimes I can get through a night just sitting there with my beers and no one talking to me. Work is the curse of the drinking class, indeed—stupid fucking signs too clever for their own good. If the pubs weren't filled with douchebags glaring at me I could just fight the sign one of these times. Haven't needed to yet, I can see the pity in their eyes, too. Doesn't seem to matter that they don't know me from Adam, they can still see me enough to know what a miserable sack a shit I must be.

And yet I'm the guy that has to get called, because I'm the only one left for my brother. I never thought I'd actually make it to this day, and now that I have I don't have a clue what to do. Sure, there'd been health scares before, but he always pulled through after a little

bit of time in bed, back out of the hospital and working soon enough. I never wanted to think about him really going this time, so I never actually prepared for what would happen next. And yet, every time I saw that area code calling I knew there was a chance. Wouldn't be calling for any other reason. I told them a long time ago to stop calling to ask how I was, so all the calls after that were only for bad news. And now there's the arrangements and the will and the house and the boat and my nephew—my nephew that I definitely can't handle—and all I can do is put my head down, nod, and figure out the best way to not fuck it up from now on.

He just wants to keep going to high school, play on his hockey team, fool around with his girlfriends. I have to stop myself from getting angry when I think he should be acting more beat up about all of this. Because I get it. He's been bracing himself for his dad to pass for a while now, been through the agony of it already enough times that he just wants to get back to being a teenager and taking the boat out on the water and living in Manchester. I didn't prepare like he did, but I, too, want to get back to my normal routine to as soon as possible—out of Manchester, away from its ghosts; my ghosts. Sure, there's a couple old friends and neighbors lending a hand to help out, and I don't despise them, but sometimes I catch them looking at me, too, even if they don't mean to be.

Which is why I left years ago, why I have to get back to my shit job and all that doesn't come with it. It may not be the least bit fulfilling, but it's better than living here every day, unable to shake what I've done. I'm holding out as long as I can, trying to take care of what needs to be taken care of, for my brother's son, but the weight doesn't come off no matter how I try. That saying "Time heals all wounds"—it ain't true. You can dull the wounds, sure, you can try to flat out ignore them, move far away from them, and pour liquor directly into them. But they'd don't heal. They'll always be just right there, right back where you left them. — TODD HANSEN



# STILL POETRY

## A SINGLE STRAND

Nothing about the serious task of dying should be funny, except that, at some point, you will pluck a hair from the soap in the shower before looking down at yourself and wondering "Where?", as if you are St. Matthew's God with a precisely tallied follicle count (split-ends excluded), divined from meticulous inspection of miraculously documented pubic-graphs, able to arrive, there with a rubber duck between your pruned feet, upon a subtracted and revised hair-to-age ratio (this fallen hair like a ring ripped from the trunk of a GREAT oak), affording you here and now - so far from the whiskey decanter - solid reasons to wonder, provoked by the grotesque nature of shedding yourself so wantonly, (hell, you're holding your own dead appendage between your fingertips like a snake-skin in a bush) could this single hair -

- once preciously nestled  
between Jenny Spencer's fingertips  
on a Sunday drive between Conway and Dalkar,  
Arkansas, through that vast and oily stretch  
of Confederately inbred cornbread dinners  
on deer stands, down HWY 7 slicing an air  
constructed by unspoken prayer requests  
and CB radio calls asking for a spot  
where a brother could catch a fish with a wish,  
her fingers followed your gaze toward a band  
of negro children running with a ball and a dog the color  
of their barefeet, and you all driving past gas stations  
and churches where shoes and teeth are equally  
optional but people are not, and Jenny never once  
hiccupped her delicate swirling flow around your crown  
even as her soft fingers read the braille pause  
of your not quite Costanza sized bald spot,  
you slick son of a -

- contaminate this soap  
made from the same springs as Guinness Stout,  
which, incidentally, in a draught pint, resembles  
the color of this rogue hair between your fingers,  
this hair troubling your mind like a physician's eerily  
furrowed brow. .... Oh man, are you falling apart  
here? You are. You are falling apart here, peeling like  
an Aspen tree in winter. Hell, the way you're shedding  
you may not even make it to that Def Leppard reunion  
show in April. But, hey, listen, there's something  
you should know, and I'm sorry to be the one to tell you  
this: not even the soap - without the gross hair curled  
on its tenderly sloped corner like a sleeping cat -  
can protect you from becoming a quiz question  
on the med school's cadaver day. (Don't worry,  
bud, we're all small on ice.) Just remember,  
keep remembering, to get yourself through moments  
like this, just remember all the fingers that have held you  
the way you're holding yourself here so carefully,  
so small because you, like them, are a hair.  
A single strand. And you, like them, will fall away.  
But, hey, you know, if you're lucky, maybe  
you too can fall away in the shower  
and God can pluck you from His soap, look down  
at Himself, and wonder, "Where?"  
- KEVIN STILL

## MY SUPER POWER IS KINDA LAME



Something strange happens to me. I'd like to say it's happened at least a dozen times in my life. What happens is that I am having some sort of "mind wandering" session, and then...well...it's hard to explain.

Let me explain with an example. I was at a choir recital for my kids. I try to encourage my kids to talk to other kids, especially the opposite sex. I want it to not be weird. I believe their apprehension is learned behavior because of movies and TV shows where characters are bashful when talking to the opposite sex. That's another story.

So, my boy was sitting next to a girl who had expressed to my daughters that she thought he was cute. I was sitting there listening to the boring Christmas music being sung by my kids and the kids of 50+ other parents, and I started to imagine a scenario. It involved my boy turning to her and saying something like, "I like your necklace." She was wearing a large shiny necklace. It would be an easy icebreaker. Suddenly, she looked down at her necklace and hid it inside her shirt. How? What? Why did that just happen? I was a good 50 feet away from the choir, and to my knowledge, I hadn't yelled it out. So strange.

Another example is while walking behind a girl with a really short skirt, I thought to myself that her skirt was really short. Then suddenly, without her turning around and seeing where my eyes were, she grabs the hem of the skirt and tugs it down like she felt uncomfortable.

Are they deciphering my brain waves? Do I have a special power? That's impossible, right? I haven't ingested any gamma rays or been part of a mad scientist's experiments...unless that's been erased and will be revealed to me in time. I guess we will see.

I've had it happen with dogs as well, especially if I am in an altered state. Where they would normally be chill and normal, they will bark and growl and be nervous around me. Maybe my energy is big and overlaps people's personal space.

Here's the thing, I've tried to do it on purpose, and it never works. Kind of a lame super power. You can call me "The Fluky Afflictor". Why couldn't I be "The Clothes Taker" or "The Gift Receiver"? Those would be way cooler. - JORGE GOYCO

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It's the spring of 1990. I am in high school at Hume Fogg Academic in downtown Nashville, a magnet school for all the smart kids in town, where the kids too poor to attend the University school but too smart to languish in their zoned high schools go. Not only does it focus on academics but it also focuses on the arts. The school has an orchestra, a concert band, and a rock & roll band for credit. I didn't have my own drums yet, or otherwise I'd have been playing drums in this band all the time. Fortunately for me the drummer in the school band broke his leg playing soccer. So I was asked to fill in for him on his drums for the spring concert. I'm told the songs we'll be learning. One is Dave Brubeck Quartet's "Take Five". I do not yet at 15 know this song. So I took a trip downtown to the public library. They have the largest A/V section of all the branches so I figure this is my best bet.

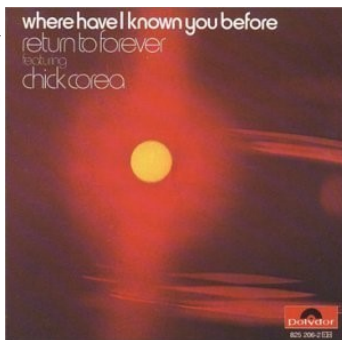
The A/V section is upstairs. I walked in and strode towards the librarian's desk. Behind it sat a man that looked just like Milton from *Office Space*. Messy balding hair, thick glasses, a short sleeved white shirt and wide 1970's tie. I asked him if they had a copy of "Take Five" I could borrow. He said that they did. But he stopped speaking and took my measure. Me, I'm 15. That means I had a nice mid-back length mullet and a Led Zeppelin t-shirt on. He asked me if I'd heard much jazz besides Dave Brubeck. I confessed I'd never heard Brubeck. All I knew was a few tapes I'd borrowed from my brother that I wasn't all that into. I had *Bitches Brew* but it was a dub of my brother's cassette from the mid '80s digital remasters and that mastering job was famously awful. It turns that album into a murky mess and in 1990 that album was impenetrable. He asked me if he prepared me a package of albums that he thought I'd like would I take them home and listen to them? I said I would. And so he did.

I was sent home with a package of five albums. The aforementioned *Time Out*, an album called *Heavy Weather* by Weather Report, an album called *Spectrum* by Billy Cobham, Miles Davis' *Live Evil* double album, and an album called *Where Have I Known You Before* by Return To Forever featuring Chick Corea. I didn't care much for *Heavy Weather* (and still don't, though I do like the more impressionistic Euro-centric earlier Weather Report stuff). *Live Evil* was also a heady mess to me but at least I could hear all the instruments and I could tell it would grow on me in time (and it did). *Spectrum* was immediate. I know who Cobham was because I read *Modern Drummer* and his Tama Drums ads were in every issue. The first song "Quadrant 4" showed where exactly Alex Van Halen cribbed his drum part for "Hot For Teacher" from. But it was *Where Have I Known You Before* that stuck with me, hit me like a bullet.

Return To Forever was a 70s jazz fusion band that consisted, like most of the good ones, of Miles Davis band alumni. Keyboardist Chick Corea had played on *Bitches Brew*, as had drummer Lenny White. Stanley Clarke I knew from seeing his name in *Musician*

## HYDROGEN JUKEBOX

magazine as another all star bassist. I had no idea who Al di Meola was.



This was not jazz. Nothing swung. There were no horns. This was rock music. These songs had far more in common with the progressive rock of Yes, Rush, Genesis, and King Crimson, music I had just discovered in the previous year or two and had fallen hard for. The songs are long, there are tons of guitar, keyboard, and bass solos, lots of musicianly passages where the band plays very technically difficult stuff. I find that young musicians are particularly susceptible to being impressed by speed and technicality, and I was no exception. But mostly I was under the spell of the atmosphere created by the tones. The cover of the album depicts a warm, blurry sunset over the ocean. The album *sounds* like that too, like looking at amateur color

photos from the 60s and 70s where the colors have faded. Al di Meola's Les Paul sounds wooly, the drums are all cardboard attack. Corea's Fender Rhodes is often phased or tremolo'ed and washes across the mix. When he plays his ARP Odyssey and MiniMoog it is less to imitate an electric guitar (like Jan Hammer with Billy Cobham) or a horn section (like Joe Zawinul with Weather Report) but to sound like a Venutian creature calling out to its fellows on a distant planet, or the song of a Vulcan princess. It sounds *otherworldly*. When Chick solos softly atop the ballad "The Shadow of Lo" it sounds like an alien singing to its lover. There are times like on "Beyond the Seventh Galaxy" where the band puts its head down and rocks out hard. There are also times like on "Earth Juice" where the band attempts and fails at playing disco, heralding where fusion would go in the coming years, away from rock and towards soul and funk. There are piano interludes between the major songs so you know these are *serious* musicians, the sort who call their songs "pieces". There is the 15 minute tour de force "Song To The Pharaoh Kings" in which Chick's synthesizer mimics the reedy oboe tone of Egyptian music with additional Latin percussion and an interesting off-kilter way of interpreting 6/8.

There are more RTF albums before and after this one. The band only made four albums in this vein. Earlier albums are Latin jazz with vocals and flute (though still with a sort of cosmic kind of sound). Later albums are all out paeons to the band's new conversion to Scientology, featuring harps and choirs. But from 1973-1976 Chick Corea and Return To Forever absolutely HAD IT on LP. Several years back I attended a reunion concert for Return To Forever in Nashville. I was beyond excited to finally see a band I'd spent so many years listening to play live. It was terrible. It had none of the rock edge of the albums, the band was self-serious to the point of parody, and a solo that may have been two minutes on tape became ten minutes live. It was beyond boring and masturbatory. Perhaps you can't go back.

I have often thought of this unnamed librarian and how on that trip and many more afterward he shaped my tastes in music. I am forever thankful to him. —KELLY MINNIS



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DAWG  
WANNA  
PARTY?



# RECORD REVIEWS



**Frustration**  
*Empires of Shame*

Once in a while, the internet actually fulfills its potential as a tool to impart useful information. I found out about the band Frustration on the CVLT Nation website (their spelling, not mine). Frustration received an honorable mention on CVLT Nation's list of best deathrock releases of 2016 (I guess they weren't Goth enough to make the actual list). Frustration are a French Post Punk band that take a variety of influences and meld them into a sound all their own. Their sound hovers between anarcho-punk, post punk, new wave, and cold wave. Frustration's most obvious influences are Crass and Wire. However, occasional nods to Warsaw/Joy Division, New Order, The Fall, and Killing Joke can be found along even more iconoclast bands such as Proletariat and Zounds. Frustration's biggest strength is their ability to combine several types of musical genres seamlessly.

The album opens with "Dreams, Laws, Rights, and Duties" which sounds like what Wire would have sounded like had they been an anarcho-punk band (imagine Steve Ignorant as guest vocalist for Wire). "Excess" wouldn't sound out of place on Warsaw's demo while the song "Just Wanna Hide" is what would have happened if Warsaw had skipped Joy Division and gone straight to New Order. The title track "Empire of Shame" recalls the fury of early Killing Joke while "Arrows of Arrangence" is a superb neo-folk song minus the baggage (fascism) of neo-folk. "Cause you Run Away" is a superb cold wave song made more interesting by a guitar line that recalls New Order circa "Brotherhood". The stand out track for me was "Mother Earth in Rags" which starts off as a cold wave song with Mark E. Smith like vocals and slowly builds to a chaotic ending. Lyrically, their lyrics are political without being sloganeering.

Don't let my comparison of Frustration to the aforementioned bands lead you to conclude that Frustration are Post Punk revivalists. Nothing

further could be from the truth. Frustration have been inspired by the right bands and have used this as starting point to come up with something unique. *Empire of Shame* harkens back to post punk at its most creative when bands could have—and were expected to have—songs from several different genres on one album. I haven't heard a band that can get you to dance, think, and rock as Frustration can in quite a while. This is easily one of my favorite releases best of 2016. —RENTED MULE



**case/lang/veirs**  
*case/lang/veirs*

It starts out like the headiest of coffeehouse daydreams hatched in the North Face aisle at REI. "What if two of the most amazing, iconoclastic singers of the last 25 years got together with one of the best but mostly unheard of songwriters of the past 10 years? It would make NPR explode!" I kid a bit, mainly to mask my love for the concept and for the album itself. Case would be Neko Case, the wandering truckstop poet of the Northwest, whose atmospheric noir take on roots country helped to spark a new subgenre of alt-country; Lang would be k.d. lang, one of the most commercially viable voices of the major label country roots movement of the mid 1980s (along with Steve Earle and Dwight Yoakam); and Veirs would be Laura Veirs, an indie famous Northwest singer/songwriter lauded for her narrative songwriting and plaintive voice. The three together on one album? Gee, how does THAT work?

It works like this. They trade off songs. It doesn't seem like they collaborate much except to harmonize with one another every now and then. But the same crack band, featuring the drumming of Wilco member Glen Kotche, backs everyone up and helps to make the album feel more like a unified statement. Case's "Atomic Number" starts out the album with a voice the size of the Cascades, dipped in reverb, and when the three voices come together in the chorus you can tell their timbres match each

other perfectly. And this is a beautiful album, a great road-trip across vast expanses kind of album. But music can't just always get over on beauty. There's gotta be songs in there. Neko brings her B+ game. Lang is coasting (she's never been much of a songwriter) but her voice...smoky, languid, smooth...so much so that you can kind of forgive her songwriting chops. It's Laura Veirs who brings her A+ songwriting game. And she kinda needed to, because vocally she is seriously outgunned in this company. Her voice is more girly and, well, modern than the effortless timelessness of Neko and k.d. Veirs sings "You loved the Sons of the Pioneers/and the Hollywood cowboy stars/You were just trying to put a hand to where we are" in "Song For Judee" that benefits from a languid cello and the train shuffle of Kotche's drums. There's enough of a narrative to draw you in and so little it makes you want to know more about the person she's singing about. Her "Best Kept Secret" is the single for the album. It blasts away with breezy Bacharach horns with Veirs' Jackson Browne-esque vocal cadences. "I talked about my misery/You called it 'pain of pain'/'How we let it pile upon/Until we go insane" before the three thrillingly chime in amongst the horns and the strident string quartet "You're the best kept secret in Silver Lake!"

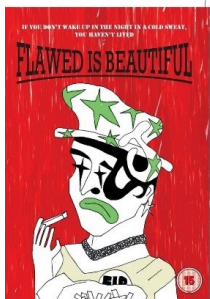
Joy. You get that feeling when the three of them open up together on a good song. You get it even more from watching the Youtube video of their first ever show earlier this year debuting the album front to back. Probably even more so live than on the album, where you can sense that the three of them are overjoyed to be singing with another. This album isn't going to change your life and you're not gonna want to tattoo any of the lyrics on your arm but its simple and disarming beauty is worth the 45 minutes it takes to listen to it. And you'll find yourself reaching for it again and again. —KELLY MINNIS

*Flawed Is Beautiful*  
(DVD documentary)

Pop Music History—like history itself—is written by the winners. In music history, the "winners" are those that sell the most records or have the most significance and influence. Hindsight being 20/20, it may seem inevitable that some musical trends happened. However, such inevitability is hardly inevitable and is assigned after the fact; usually by music journalists along for the ride when it happened. The documentary *Flawed Is Beautiful* explores a potential pop music history trend that almost happened—the so called "New Wave of the New Wave". This was supposed to be "The Next Big thing" in the United Kingdom after Grunge had broken but before Brit Pop happened.

Initially funded by a Pledge Music fan funded campaign, *Flawed Is Beautiful* chronicles the very quick rise and equally quick fall of two bands: These Animal Men and S\*M\*A\*S\*H. These Animal Men came off as a brit pop band on speed. In this case, "speed" is probably not a metaphor as their first single was called "Speed King" and had as an album cover a pile of white powder with four straws in it. S\*M\*A\*S\*H were a more politically punk band somewhat reminiscent of The Clash at times but a bit darker and more introspective lyrically. Both bands had built a loyal following as club acts when the UK music scene dubbed S\*M\*A\*S\*H and These Animal Men as "The New Wave of the New Wave". As the documentary shows, the British Music Press excels like no other at building a music "movement" and then tossing it aside when "the next big thing" (Brit Pop) comes along. Both bands started off strong with one top 40 single each and then fizzled within 2-3 years. Music press lost interest in them along with the standard reasons bands break up: drugs, in fighting and mismanagement.

What makes *Flawed Is Beautiful* work is the honesty, humility, humor, and lack of bitterness members of both bands have at their fate. Watch any VH1 Behind the Music and you will probably see some faded rock star who had it all fallow in pity and bitterness about losing it all. That isn't the case with These Animal Men and S\*M\*A\*S\*H. Any band that answers the question "What's it like being in a band?" with "Being in a band is 10% amazing and 90% 'your fucked'" understands rock and roll pretty well. Would music had been better had New Wave of



# CONCERT CALENDAR

**1/6—Vast Massive Satellite, Cornish Game Hen, The Prof. Fuzz 63 @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**1/7—Magic Girl @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**1/13—Wellborn Road, Death Will Tremble, Suicide Pandemic, Aphotic Contrivance, Hoping All Theories Exist, Sick Culture @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 6pm**

**1/13—Tame...Tame & Quiet, The Ex-Optimists, Only Beast, Kamikaze Pilots @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**

**1/14—The Dead Chachis, Girlband, Pizza Planet, The Hammer Party, Unicornog @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm**

**1/19—LUCA, Televangelist, Interracial Dionysus, Electric Astronaut @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**1/20—Quel Night, The Excerpts, Stoner Pop Culture @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**1/21—Girlband @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm**

**1/27—Steph Steph Steph Fest feat. My Twilight Pilot, Omotai, No I'm The Leader, Electric Astronaut @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm**

**1/31—Ripped Genes @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**2/2—Missing Sibling, Don't Call Me Shirley, Unicornog @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**2/3—The Ex-Optimists, Economy Island (split single release), Jay Satellite @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**2/4—Confused, Lower Depths, Dethtruck, Pizza Planet, ASS @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm**

**2/9—Alteras, Thieves, Hand Me Down Adventure, The Bragg Light, A Deathbed Promise @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 6pm**

**2/10—Leavenworth, The Inators @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 9pm**

**2/10—Cursus, Dethtruck, Funeral Horse @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**2/11—Sik Mule @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**2/17—Justin Furstenfeld (Blue October) @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**

the New Wave caught on? I'm not sure; though I doubt it would have been any worse. Bands nearly making it and then crashing and burning are as old as music itself. However, *Flawed is Beautiful* does show that the back catalog of both bands is pretty good. Both S\*M\*A\*S\*H's album *Self Abused* and These Animal Men's second album *Accident and Emergency* are well worth a listen. Giving these two bands another look and listen is enough to justify *Flawed is Beautiful*. —RENTED MULE

## MUSICIAN WANTED

Hi I'm new to the area and am looking for a few good people. Are you interested in taking over the music world with a catchy college pop prog rock super group? If so, keep reading, because this project is for you! Posers need not apply. I am looking for serious musicians to take this dream to the next stage. I am currently seeking a dynamic Lead & rhythm, a creative bassist, and a catchy pop drummer who are serious about having fun and making some good radio music. We will also need a vocalist with a good range and stage presence. Once we get a good set of originals we will be needing a proper manager to handle our booking & PR as we will be playing many shows frequently in and around the Texas area.

Once we have our sound set, which will be a combination of Nickleback, Nirvana, Creed, & Sonic Youth, we will make some merchandise to generate more interest in us. If you know anyone who has artistic talent that could maybe make our logos and image, that would be a good start. I've been planning this band for many years, and now I think it can actually happen. I've been involved in A LOT of bands before, so this post is extremely serious. We can potentially be making a million dollars next year, maybe even more than that!

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