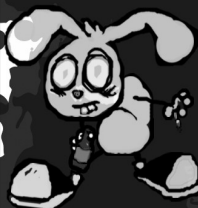


STAGE REPRESENT



september 2017
vol. 9 issue 9



inside: - the dream is over - tattoolationship - nazee fuck - if not now, when? - still drinking - silence - tales of excess & outrage - the road - the story of the man in the mirror - tom petty & grant hart - no crown, no coke - rickshaw heart - record reviews - concert calendar



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

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art splendoriness

katie killer - wonko the sane

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IS THE DREAM OVER?

Imagine at the age of 4 your family left the country you were born in and immigrated illegally to America. Your family closely guarded their status as illegal aliens in America by assimilating as closely as they

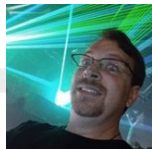
could. You were sent to American schools and you learned to speak English. In these schools you were Americanized. You learned to love the country you grew up in. By all signs you *were* Americano. You spoke like an American, you consumed pop culture like an American, you ate/drank/breathed like an American. How are you *not* an American?

It is because you are what Pres. Obama referred to as a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival "Dreamer". You came to this country against your will, because as a minor you have no rights. You are a child without a country but you were raised in this one as an American. America will defer deporting you and will grant you certain citizen's rights, provided you extend your deferment each year. Pres. Donald Trump does not consider you an American and will remove any rights DACA gave you, which will ultimately lead to your deportation back to the country you came from, a country you do not know, a country that you were not raised as a citizen thereof. It is almost as if some kid from suburbia would be lifted straight out of his high school and sent to a foreign country as an exchange student...only to never return.

What makes an American an American? Inherited birthright? Or the desire to exercise the freedoms and advantages to raise oneself up by the bootstraps from the extremes of poverty to employability, small business ownership, to make something positive of oneself? Dreamers are these sorts. Perhaps not born American, but still as American as any one of us. The end of DACA puts these folks' futures in jeopardy. Many are already employed in vital positions in this country, providing the technological infrastructure at the backbone of the Internet economy. Many are lead contractors on business construction. Many are in college on their way to fulfilling the promise of their futures. One such Dreamer, Alonso Guillen, grew up to become a radio DJ in Lufkin. Guillen was brought to this country as a child when his parents immigrated to this country illegally. During the floods in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey Alonso and two of his friends couldn't just stand by and watch as people were in danger of drowning in the floods. That's un-American. So they took a boat out to help bring people in. Alonso and another friend drowned in the floods when their boat lost control and capsized. Alonso's father had asked his son not try and rescue people in the storm, but Alonso insisted because he wanted to help people. And he lost his life for it. Alonso Guillen is an American hero. Except if Donald Trump had his way, Guillen would have been in Mexico somewhere instead, deported for having the audacity to have been born somewhere else and raised in this country illegally.

Trump wants six months to wrap up the DACA program. Granted DACA is a patch on an ungainly system granted by executive order. It is because Congress could not pass a bill in the first place that POTUS 44 established DACA through executive order in the first place. These families came to America to improve their lot in life, because they saw this country as a shining beacon of liberty and promise. I am hoping that America lives up to that reputation, that somehow Congress and my fellow citizens help to humanize the Dreamers. Urge your senators and congresspeople to do the right thing and write DACA into law. — KELLY MINNIS

TATTOOLATIONSHIP



So, I got my first tattoo. This is old hat for a bunch of you guys, but I am an overthinker, so you'll have to bear with me on this one.

The process has been quite interesting. The two big hurdles for me was permanence and content. That's probably obvious.

I'd been interested in tattoos, but never quite had a pull toward getting one. When one of our friends got one, someone who I'd never guess would get one, and then my wife deciding she wanted one, it kinda sparked something in me. I became more interested in getting one than I'd ever been. But what would it be? I'm an artist, so I had all sorts of image ideas, but what I couldn't get past was that because my art style is constantly evolving (and not always my favorite), would I be happy with something I drew in the long run? Probably not.

So, I struggled. I found some art I liked, scratched that, found something else I liked, did some conceptualizing, and then someone showed me the "New School" tattoo style. Game changer for me. Freaking love that style. Changed everything. If I could come up with a concept, but let someone do it in the New School style, I could totally live with that.

That's when a "Confidence Meter" emerged in my mind. This is an imaginary meter with a needle, sort of like on my dad's old audio components had on them. I loved watching the needle bounce wildly to the music. Anyway, so my meter was from zero to ten, zero being "walk away" and ten being "let's get it done right now". To be honest, it never really got lower than 2, but it fluctuated quite a bit, several times a day. It lived at about 7 or 8 for the most part, sometimes popping up to 10 and staying there. Such a strange thing. It became the start of a funny little relationship between me and my tattoo.

A couple weeks before the big day, my impromptu metal band (The Shooobiedoobies) did a show at Arsenal Tattoo, and I sang a song about what "permanent" means. My meter was flicking all over the place...especially during the song. Very distracting. Anxiety on top of anxiety. Whatever, it's how I thrive, I guess.

The day came, and the meter had been pegged at 10 for most of the week. I say "most" because there were still some twinges of "I probably shouldn't do this", and even one thought where my over-thinking brain was trying to convince me that I might be the type of person who shouldn't get a tattoo. Like that there might be a "type" that will be plagued by anxiety and second-guessing the decision of getting a tattoo. I had to put a pillow over that guy's face.

Holy shit it fucking hurt. But I wasn't going to quit now. I could withstand this. It was horrible, but not. I mean, I was sweating, and was having trouble making my voice be the volume it needed to be. An hour and a half later, it was done. (come to find out, it's pretty big for a first tattoo, and not the least painful placement...whatever) So, my meter was gone at this point, but the asshole relationship had kicked into high gear. I had just put myself through something terribly painful, just to have

some art on my arm. I feel like the pain was a sort of reality check. Like I was stabbing a flag in the ground, claiming that I had overcome something. It's not like I had actually overcome anything recently, and I wasn't telling the world I had accomplished something or had broken the chains off my slavery or anything like that. But it became something. I sort of felt a little inner middle finger coming up to all the opposition that was coming against me. I mean in my own mind. I was like, "Fuck you, I'm getting a tattoo!" and, "I don't care if it's not something I might regret!" and, "SHUT THE FUCK UP!"

Maybe this tattoo is a start of letting go of stuff. But maybe it's just art on my arm.

I'm 47 this year, so yeah, maybe I am needing to let go of stuff and take on new stuff and do things and not do things and say things I wouldn't and not think certain things are important and focus on things that I really, really love. Truth is, there are thoughts and long held beliefs that I have been examining lately, but I'm always doing that.

Next up was/is recovery, remembering the whole time that I did this to myself. So in a sense, I was in control of causing myself pain, then responsibly taking care of the wound through all its stages. Getting reminded by the constant ache that felt like a bad sunburn, having to wince when someone accidentally touched it or scraped it with their extra long and sharp fingernail, ripping it away from the bed sheets for a couple mornings, getting ink on a bunch of my shirts from the weeping, not picking at the scabs, all that stuff. It kept reminding me that I was a different person because of it. Well, still the same person, but maybe less of a pussy? No, not even that. I wasn't a pussy before. It really hurt though...like a hot wasp was allowed to sting me multiple times for almost two hours.

So, however much I might want another one, it's a 1 on the new meter that has emerged. I'm still not 100% healed at the time of writing this. It is itching like a mofo. Oh, and also, it hurt...a lot!

Do I feel like I've leveled up? Yeah. It was definitely a boss, but just a mini boss. The loot drop has been "ok"...not like a new weapon or armor or anything, but EXP upgrade for sure.

The process has really made me appreciate that it was super important that I had gotten art that I really liked. Pretty sure I'd be hating it if after all this I got a Teletubby, a Marvel superhero icon or shrunken heads in my armpits, but who the hell would do something like that? Maybe everyone goes through this when they get their first tattoo. Maybe most people don't overthink every single thing that happens.

For me, it's still settling in that it's permanent. Although every once in awhile, I catch a glimpse of my 80 year old self looking down at the familiar art on my arm. Maybe by that time I'll have killed "The Second-Guesser". I hope so. Because Fuck Him. He's an asshole.—JORGE GOYCO




NAZEE FUCK

In August, we had a Small News Kerfuffle when James Damore, a Google employee, sent out a memo to his fellow Googlers explaining, in a very constipated way, that chicks are lame af and diversity gives him the sads. Although he was quickly fired for making his colleagues feel totally shitty his "thoughts," though stupid, he argued were actually pretty mainstream. I find it hard to disagree with "affirmative action means unqualified people are hired" when half the country elects most of the government to ratify that very thing. (I know it's not the intent, but if most of our government believes it, that's what's going to end up happening in a government program).


But Google did not agree, and they canned his ass, so he jumped on the Sad Sexist Underground Railroad Train, where his first stop was with gross MRA alt-right Youtuber cult man, Stefan Molyneux. Then a whole lot of yowling spewed from people crying "witch hunt!" and "LEAVE WHITE MEN ALOOOONE" and, I don't know, whatever awful things come out of Tucker Carlson's fork-tongued mouth. I ignored it. Life's too short.

But just a month later, Damore has proved his former bosses at Google absolutely fucking right on the twitterverse. I would like 979represent to present: "James Damore Can't Understand Why You Are Forcing Him To Be In The KKK."




James Damore @JamesADamore 29m

The KKK is horrible and I don't support them in any way, but can we admit that their internal title names are cool, e.g. "Grand Wizard"?



James Damore @JamesADamore 24m


You know you've moralized an issue when you can't criticize its heroes or acknowledge any positive aspect of its villains.



James Damore @JamesADamore 4m

It's like teaching your child to be responsible about drugs and sex without addressing the fact that they can be fun.

In reply to James Damore



James Damore @JamesADamore

If you make the actual KKK the only place where you can acknowledge the coolness of D&D terms, then you'll just push people into the KKK.

I'm learning to understand James Damore's OBVIOUS TRUTHS:

- Truth #1 - That our popular culture hates nerds which is forcing everyone to be cool like the nazees?
- Truth #2 - Hitler had some good ideas, he was just a little flawed in the execution.
- Truth #3 - There's no way to teach children about white supremacy and its flaws because drugs are fun.
- Truth #4 - If you want to get anywhere in the world you gotta get fired from your job at Google and then start talking about how FUCKING RAD the KKK actually is in America today.

If anything it makes TOO MUCH SENSE. But really, fuck you James Damore, you are a fucking moron.—
STARKNESS

NO CROWN, NO COKE: WHISKEY REVIEWS FOR THE DISCERNING DIRTBAQ

OLD WELLER ANTIQUE 107

Who? MIKE JONES! (W.L. Weller by way of Sazerac by way of Buffalo Trace)
 What? Bourbon (undisclosed mashbill, but mostly corn and wheat)
 When? Now
 Where? Spec's, Twin Liquors, West End Elixir Co., Rough Drought, The Republic 1836
 Why? With a name like Weller, it has to be good
 How much? \$25-\$30

Recently, Buffalo Trace has been really pushing this guy's little brother, Weller Special Reserve, out to retailers. You may have seen it. Green paper label? \$23? It's not a bad dram, but the 107 is so much better and easier to find than the best of this series, Weller 12, which is pretty much perfect and only gets released twice a year in extremely limited quantities.

This series has a pretty rich history. William Larue Weller was one of the first (if not *the* first) distillers to build a mashbill with wheat as its secondary grain. (Remember: it still has to be at least 51% corn to be considered bourbon by law. Most often you'll find rye in place of the wheat.) These wheated bourbons, or, "wheaters," are softer on the palate and give you an opportunity to taste flavors in a very unique way. Think of it like having a taco on a corn tortilla and then having the same filling on flour. It's still al pastor, but accoutrements change the game with food and whiskey alike.

Sorry. I haven't had lunch yet.

Nose: It's a good balance of spice (cinnamon and nutmeg) and wood with prevalent undertones of sweet vanilla, caramel, and maybe a touch of cherry. It doesn't come with an age statement, but it's around 7-10 years old — pretty young for the amount of oak you get out of this.

Taste: It feels hotter than 53.5% ABV. There will be a spicy heat to it at first but, because it isn't actually barrel proof, it rapidly fades to smooth, oaky caramel. Almost like a charred caramel apple.

Finish: Warm, woody, and wheaty. You don't have to think about this part too hard and you don't have the time, to tell you the truth. It's pretty short and not that complex. This is a thin drink that doesn't really coat your mouth, but I promise you'll be ready for another sip by the time it fades away.

I love wheated bourbons and this is the one that started it all. 85/100 — TUCKER

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IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Las Vegas, Orlando, San Bernardino, Charleston, Newtown, Aurora, Ft. Hood, Blacksburg, Columbine ...

Here's the deal, I left a lot of places off of the above list, but you get the idea. As of the writing of this article, Vegas happened two days ago; Columbine was 18 years ago.

Like so many of us, I've spent the last two days asking all of the "how" and "why" questions. Like so many of us, I desperately want to believe in a world where people simply don't/can't do the sorts of things that have happened in Nevada, Florida, Virginia, Colorado and in practically every other state in the nation. However, the statistics and the increasing rapidity with which these incidents have occurred make it abundantly clear that despite what I want, we do live in a world where individuals can hole up in a hotel room with over 15 automatic weapons and open sniper-fire on a crowd of unsuspecting concert-goers from a 32nd floor window.

What I am unable to wrap my head around, however, is how given the statistics, given the growing list of places where mass shootings have occurred, given that we are nearly 20 years post-Columbine, why in the hell we are still not truly responding to such violence at a national level.

Yes, I know that there are specific states that have enacted stricter gun laws and I know that following these incidents, congresspersons give lip service to stopping this kind of violence, write some legislation that then gets watered down by the gun lobby, and then we move on. Until the next time.

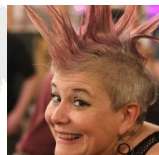
In the interest of complete transparency, I feel that I need to go on record as noting that I am not anti guns. I own guns and I have ammunition in my home. All of my guns are legal for me and my husband to own, as is all of our ammo. But here's the interesting part: despite those

who have argued incessantly over the last two days (and seemingly incessantly over the last 20 years) that we already have gun control in this country and it doesn't work ... because if it did, we wouldn't have these mass shootings, there is not a single gun in my home that I had to wait to get, that anyone checked about first to make sure that I wasn't a threat to myself or others, and, truth be told, I pretty sure there is no real record of any of our guns anywhere.

Now, granted, I don't think of myself as part of the national gun violence problem. I do not have any plans, inclinations, or desires to make headlines. But the ease with which I am able to purchase or trade weapons that can kill other human beings in the blink of an eye is somewhat alarming to me. Even if I grant an interpretation of the 2nd Amendment that grants me the ownership free and clear, I would hope that we, as a society, would want to ensure that in exercising my rights, I'm not a threat to the society that recognizes them.

Obviously, I don't have all of the answers. But I would be somewhat comforted if we would simply start asking some of the questions. Even I, in my idealistic, hippified mind-set don't think that there is a solution that would solve every issue or cover every contingency. But my hippified self does think that it would be helpful to at least begin putting legislation in place that has shown to reduce gun violence in other countries (Australia being the most notable).

If our current elected officials are too much in the pocket of the gun lobby, then we need to make it abundantly clear that we will elect those who are not. This isn't a political issue. Those gunned down in Vegas and Columbine and Aurora and Newtown and all of the places in between were people of all stripes. This is a human issue and until we start addressing it as such, we will be embracing the inhumanity that we continue to witness in these atrocious acts. — PAMALYN ROSE-BEELER



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We eat cold macaroni and cheese from the saucepan while the newscaster tells us that the adverbs will go first. *First* is difficult for her. Each time they cut from the international footage to her rote summary of the crisis, she pauses too long with her teeth against her lower lip. By the fifth time, you can see the bloody spot where she's bitten down in frustration. By the tenth, she's leaving a blank space in her sentences and waving her hands as if to say *You know what I mean*.

We didn't go to work today. Some people may have, I didn't care what they were doing. This morning Martin saw a couple of kids spray-painting "FUCK" in wobbly red-orange letters on the door of the house across the street, closed the curtains, and went back to bed. Dim blue light filters into the house. We pad around in the matching slippers my mother gave us last Christmas. The television spews out noise: sirens, shouting voices, whirring helicopter blades.

When Martin isn't watching me, I examine his ear, the dark curl of hair that spirals around it. Today is the last day I'll be able to ask him, *Do you love me?*

My sister calls around noon. It could be the last phone call I ever take. I stay calm, because what else am I going to do? What will phones be used for? I guess games.

After I get off the phone, I go into the living room where Martin has balanced the cheese-encrusted pan and fork on the arm of the couch.

Despite earlier (handwave) reports, says the newscaster, it appears written language will also be affected. Everyone who was writing down common phrases and buying dictionaries are fucked. We won't even be able to read.

"My sister called," I say.

Martin gives me an inquiring eyebrow, his face still half-turned to the screen. Are we saying less already, for fear we'll reach for a word and find it gone?

I shrug and pick a dry noodle out of the pan. "She cried."

"Huh."

"What's that supposed to mean?" It sounds combative but I don't mean it to. I just want to know.

"She would."

Sometime in the afternoon, someone slips a glossy pamphlet through the mail slot. A glowing blonde Jesus cups a child's cheek. The text reads, *Are you ready for eternal*. I don't know what it says after that. There's a buzzing in my head when I look at it. It ends in a question mark. I recognize the question mark.

Martin comes up behind me. I start. He takes the paper from my hand and lets out a hard chip of a laugh. Then

SILENCE

he opens the door, looks right and left.

"Hey," he yells at a woman walking away. Long denim skirt, clogs.

"You know, you're a little late with the—" He breaks off, gesturing angrily, his mouth open.

"Come back inside," I say. I pull him by the sleeve. He lets me.

His slipper comes half off as we go over the threshold. He shoves his toes back inside. He mutters something to himself. I don't understand it.

Are you scared? I want to ask. But I've never once asked him that. *Do you love me?* Catches in my throat.

We can make this work. Gestures. Signs. *Book*, I say to Martin and open my hands. He grudgingly repeats the motion. But later, when the word is hovering above my tongue like an itch I can't scratch, it's slipped out of my hands as well. We can't talk, we can't read, we can't sign, who are we now? We have shelves of kindling in the house.

There's no news on TV anymore, there's no serial dramas, there's no laugh track comedies. At first there were mobs of people with signs, statesmen shoving each other on marble steps. Now there's soothing string music by a composer whose name I used to know, flocks of geese against pale orange sunsets, fields of bobbing daisies. Martin switches through all the channels in disgust, then leaves it on the daisies. I hate the daisies, but I don't turn it off.

I make dinner. At first I was going to cook something special, as a...celebration wasn't right. Commemoration? Consolation? But the cookbook is useless. I microwave frozen lasagna and baked potatoes and bring them to Martin in the living room on real plates. I still know *potato*. He's found a channel broadcasting an old black and white movie. Neither of us can tell what it's about. There are a man and a woman in a car. She's wearing a hat. Outside there's a sound like a metal trashcan falling over, a yowl that might be cat or human. Our forks scrape against the plates.

When the sun goes down, I walk around the house turning on lights. In each doorway I close my eyes and try to remember something important that was said in that room. Then I give up and flick the switch back off.

He's already lying in bed. The room is dark. I stand by the bed and stroke his shoulder. He turns his head, startled. We've never been a couple who casually twine our fingers together. The fingertips are a mistake. I withdraw them. I think he's looking at me, but I can't meet his eyes. Someone laughs loud and drunkenly outside. Glass breaks. I rest my head against his chest and listen to his heart thud and slow and wonder if now that we live in silence we will be happy. I never asked my question today. *I love you Martin and should have said it one last time.* — STARKNESS

RICKSHAW HEART

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

Nothing was the same, but that was okay. His name was Tom Clemmens, he was an alcoholic with dark circled eyes, an avid gambler with a winning streak and a pension for excess, a CIA operative on leave who passed as a repairman most day. He had a passion for getting even, seeing unthinkable things through and was yet another of the many former "lovers" of Rebecca St. Clair – then Gloria Jones. Things had ended in an abrupt disconnect, that had left him on the bitter side, and this was one of the many wrongs he had set out to correct.

Over the years Tom had seen a number of women, but being one to do his best to never make the same mistake twice, never allowed himself to really get that close to any of them. They were just as good as faceless blurs as far as he was concerned. Only one woman, Gloria Jones, had his heart, and he had never been the same since losing it.

Even with his government intel Gloria was a hard one to trace. Every time he thought they were about to cross paths, she would vanish and change her name. For a while Tom had thought the hunt hopeless and had subsided into a state of depression. That was until he saw that B-budget commercial featuring the aspiring starlet St. Claire. He waited to see it again to make sure it was indeed her.

.....It was.

Around this time Dan was living it up in full talent scout mode and was staying at a seedy motel because he had never really felt comfortable at The Ritz. It was here that he received a surprise visitor to his transient hotel room in Vegas. Tom was standing there with a 5 o'clock shadow that could cut glass, smoking a Pall Mall. His eyes were sunken and he reeked of unwashed clothes and vagrant deeds. Still half drunk from the night before, and half out of sheer boredom Dan decided to invite the wayward stranger in for some coffee without Tom ever even saying a word. Tom knew from his intel that there was a connection between Dan and "Gloria" and that perhaps he could use this newly christened mogul to implement his latest scheme of revenge.

Though he remained mostly silent for the first two hours, the two hit it off surprisingly well. Dan would swig some hooch and talk about this or that new trend and how he knew some of the people responsible for setting this trend or that. Tom would stare blankly at

A TEAR IN THE VEIL

the wall while taking the random swing of gin from time to time. His grunts meant he was listening. Dan didn't seemed to mind the unexpected company. It was more real than most of the snooty parties he had been attending as of late.

You see, Dan too was in a situation of his own. He needed to find a new act for his new talent firm or he would be going broke all too soon. That and he too was trying to forget his significant other who was in with the latest trend for women – diet pills—a.k.a. speed. He had never seen someone clean so much as her right before he left to hit the open road for work. She barely even noticed his departure, but she most certainly noticed that random spot on the floor in the corner by the door that had been there for quite sometime unaltered. She was so focused on it when he left that she could barely muster a proper farewell or "I love you". That was the wonder of the diet pills. Extreme focus on the unimportant. For what it's worth, she had lost the extra weight she had been struggling with since her agent called her a Heffer and introduced her to the stuff. Hurray for pharmaceuticals. Dan was never one in years prior to really touch any substance. Growing up in Detroit he had seen it hold many a good man and woman down, and was a hardworking honest man. Or so he had always thought. The "industry" has a way of changing people whether they realize it or not. Over the last handful of years he had developed a taste for pricey booze and cocaine was something he had dabbled with on occasion at various insider events. The 60's were on their way and he was going to make sure he helped shape it.

After a couple of hours Tom finally came around and snapped to his senses and began to question Dan about his estranged lover and where he stood on the whole matter. Once he began, Dan could think of nothing else. It was foolproof. And he was through playing the part of the fool. The stories went on about her ties to the Canadian Mafia, how she had bled car salesman after car salesman dry for a fancy new set of wheels, just as she had used others for their various stations in life.. How she had claimed each one to be her other half so long as the perks kept coming. That was of course till a bump in the road appeared, then some "tragic" event would self manifest and she would cut ties.

The list was long, but Dan was day drunk and couldn't help but want to know it all. It broke his heart, but he had began to assume something of that measure for some time now. Tom's tales whether entirely true or not

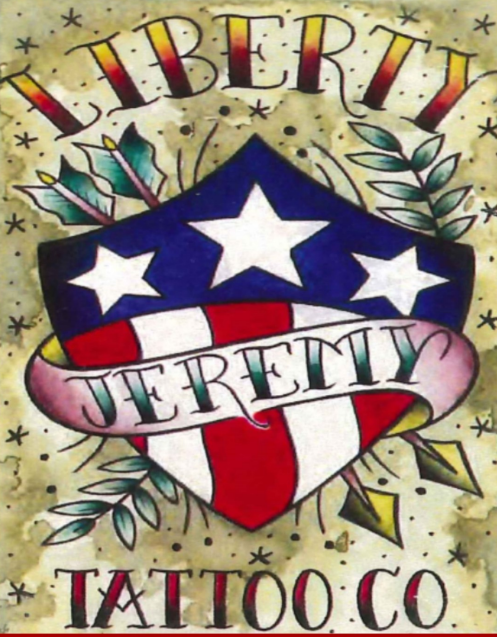
only further cemented his doubts in his love. He kept trying to tell himself, that their love was different, but was it? He played back scenario after scenario only to see each one in a new light. What a fool he had been. "No more," he thought to himself.

Dan leaned in and put his arm on the uptight dirty federal agent on leave and whispered in his ear, "Let's get the filthy hearted homewrecker" with a chuckle. Tom smiled for the first time in years. He had been waiting for this moment. Now, he thought, was the time to revise the plans. If this was going to be done it had to be done right. Thankfully, Dan had been hard at work on a plan of his own as well. It went something like this: 1) Get her to fall for him again—truly fall for him. His acting would have to be immaculate. He would make her want and truly long for him as she had never truly for any other before; 2) Then break her—mind, body, and soul. Piece by piece over an extended period of time. Allow her for once to actually experience a real tragedy and heartbreak. Not the self inflicted ones she had grown accustomed too. 3) Find real happiness elsewhere on his own and leave her where he had found her—in the gutter. This was quite a change from the good mannered low income man she had met back in Detroit that one dark chilly night years ago. He was now a man betrayed, with a empty patch where his heart once was. The booze kept the pain at bay.

Tom informed Dan that they had some calls to make to pull this thing off. The calls were to former lovers who had been wronged in similar fashions and wanted justice in their own right. They were to be conductors of the orchestra of revenge. The players were from varied backgrounds which would only add to the real life play they were scribbling. If all is truly fair in love and war then they were about to be agents of justice and saints in the brotherhood of man. This wasn't just for them, but for every man used and manipulated by a heartless succubus. They would be heroes through and through.

After all, who could judge them besides God almighty himself? There was little doubt in their minds that their work was anything but of divine fruition and that ultimately they were setting out to do a good deed. No just divine being would allow such manipulation to go unchecked for so long. They say the lord works in mysterious ways, perhaps he was working through them now.

The two laughed and stepped out for a square. The day was beginning a new and they were two it felt. Perhaps good things do come to those who wait...—WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON



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FAST TRACK FUN

2/12 - HOME - vs. MISSFITS
3/26 - HOME - vs. CONROE
4/23 - HOME - MASHUP
5/13 - AWAY - vs. KERRVILLE
6/25 - HOME - MASHUP
8/5 - AWAY-DOUBLE HEADER
8/27 - HOME - MASHUP
9/24 - HOME - MASHUP
10/1 - AWAY - vs. CONROE
10/29 - HOME - MASHUP

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The first time Tom Petty died I was teaching Composition. We were discussing bias, analyzing live *Washington Post* headlines when a red "Breaking News" banner flashed across our projection screen. I rarely open real-time news in front of my classes like this, but Monday, October 2 was a helluva day. Then suddenly—right above the day's bigger, more impressive tragedies—we're told American music legend Tom Petty has died at age sixty-six. It took a moment to register, the red banner disappearing before its message sunk in. But then I heard some garbled iterations of the words "No no no no no" falling out of me as my left hand whipped an finger over my mouth, forcing me to just breath quietly while my students looked on perplexed, perhaps even embarrassed for me. Debates regarding Petty's degree of dead-ness alluded us. I would be told later, from a "friend" in an inappropriate *Monty Python* voice, "He's not dead yet", as if such technicalities mattered. In retrospect, that whole scene from Monday's class was a bit hyperbolic and ridiculous. However, all I could think in the moment was "Do not cry". I'm glad to say I did not cry, but not by much.

Tom Petty has been with me longer than any other musician. Two years before becoming an eighth grade metal-head, I remember jamming "Free Fallin'" on my Walk-Man while practicing skate-board tricks like the hot girl in the video. During my senior year of high school, when all the kids in my Baptist youth group threw away their secular music after church camp, I tossed Meatloaf and Pantera but kept Tom Petty's *Wildflowers* and *Greatest Hits*. A few years later, my friend Cade and I road tripped across Northwest Arkansas and Southern Missouri, playing the entirety of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' *Echo* on loop, reminding ourselves with each track that these songs and that voice sound best with the country blurring and blowing outside rolled down windows. Later still, after I convinced the girl I would convince to marry me to give Tom Petty a chance, I got to finally see him in concert in Kansas City, Latonya standing beside me singing along to more songs than she realized she knew. And after Johnny Cash died I acquiesced to the fact that my love for Cash was due primarily to his *American Recordings*, most of which feature Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers as the backing band. Behind either Tom's caterwauling vocal choruses or Cash's baritone yarn-spinning, the core of Tom Petty's musical sound remained (and remains) solid. Album after album, Petty continually crafted new versions of the same idea: the literal definition of *rock-n-roll*.

And, for me, that's what sets Tom Petty apart. His songs are rooted so deeply in the notion of American *rock-n-roll*—i.e. wistful horizons, breaking loose, getting free, bad choices, consequences, dames with attitudes bigger than his swagger—that there's almost an objective quality about them. Unlike Dylan, Tom Petty never stretched himself into new fangled personalities. Petty was the "everyman" dealing with the everyday moments of *yeses* and *nos* and *what the hells?* And unlike Springsteen, Tom Petty never dug out a narrative persona. He was never the blue-collar or the white-collar. Rather, his stories remained situated in the profundity of the mundane. And while Petty will never be celebrated as a Dylan or Springsteen level poet, he could still craft a line—"Look deep in the eyes of love and find out/What you were looking for" or "I remember when he was your boss/I remember him touching your butt/I remember you counting your blessings/Yeah, honey, you had to keep your mouth shut"—that could feel dang near

IN MEMORIAM: TOM PETTY



Biblical in wisdom and depth of perspective. In the past few years, my favorite Petty track is a little number from *Hard Promises* titled "Old King's Road", which repetitively boasts the line "I'm a new world boy on an Old King's Road." I'm not sure exactly how Petty saw himself as "new world". He seemed to start out old from the beginning, already aware of the do's and don'ts of rock-n-roll. He seemed to preternaturally understand which cliches to avoid, and he had the wisdom to actually avoid them. For this reason, Tom Petty never learned how to write a bad rock-n-roll song.

The first song I ever fell stupid in love with was "Free Fallin'". I loved the strum and the hollar of that song so much I could not stand waiting for the radio or MTV to spin it around again. So I asked my mom to drive me to Wal-Mart on a school night to spend my saved allowance. *Full Moon Fever* would my first cassette tape purchase. I was proud. Buying your first music is a huge right of passage, especially for nerds like myself. Unfortunately, my mom had a bad day, so she yelled the entire way to Wal-Mart. She had not been planning this trip. We could go another time. This was all a major inconvenience for an unnecessary reason. And shouldn't I use my money for something more productive, like a model airplane or some Boy Scout swag? She dropped me directly in front of Wal-Mart where she would pick me up in ten minutes. Inside, I ran to Electronics only to find Wal-Mart sold out of *Full Moon Fever*. They had other Tom Petty tapes, but I didn't recognize the titles. Scared to walk out empty handed, I grabbed the first cassette tape I recognized, checked-out, and hustled to the front of the store. When I closed the car door my mom asked if I got what I wanted. I told her no, they did not have Tom Petty. She said, "But you bought I said, "You know, she has that song with the cartoon cat." My mom yelled the entire way home about saving money

and wasting a trip to Wal-Mart. To this day, I still despise Paula Abdul for this very reason, but buying Paula Abdul was good for me because I learned something about music from that blunder. Two weeks later, I bought *Full Moon Fever*. At twelve years old, thanks to Paula Abdul and MC Skat Cat, I already knew and recognized that Tom Petty was better than all the pop tunes on the radio and MTV combined. Tom Petty was more than the current wheel-rut of evolutionary sound. His music, in its purity, reflected as much of tomorrow as of yesterday. And, now that he's gone, that's a good thing. —KEVIN STILL

=====

"Some things are over/Some things go on
Part of me you carry/Part of me is gone,"
"Walls" – Tom Petty

I saw Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers twice back in the Eighties. He and the band were at the height of their popularity at the Austin show in 1983. Not that they weren't still riding high in 1986, but they were touring with Bob Dylan and backing him up during Bob's set when I saw them in Dallas in 1986.

To be honest, I don't recall any singular moments from either show with Petty but one; mainly, I remember how much fun the shows were. All those hits up to that time just blasted out at you, but the guitar on "American Girl" was just riveting live. I still think it's his best tune.

Petty was one of those few rock and roll stars who seemed to keep doing good work as he aged. I mean, I love Bob Seger, but he hasn't done much in the way of good new music. Petty was still writing great stuff on his last album; who does that?

I read an early biography of Petty, and it's amazing that he didn't become bitter after the rough childhood he had, and then to have someone set fire to your house in what likely was an effort to burn him and his family alive, whew.

He was one of those dependable rock artists who seemed to stay just one of the guys. He managed to turn out some fantastic tunes every few years, and he didn't do anything stupid in public. Granted, that heroin addiction wasn't smart, but he didn't run naked down the street or anything.

I loved the Traveling Wilburys for their sound and for what they represented. Just a handful of friends who happened to be some of the most amazing musicians of our time—hey, let's do a record. A Beatle, a Dylan, that ELO guy, and Tom Petty—that fun is what was behind all of Petty's music despite everything.

I had all of Petty's early albums on vinyl at one time (I remember the price fight), but my first wife was a fan as well, and she got all but one of the Petty albums when we divorced at the end of the Eighties. I got lazy, and I just have the greatest hits on CD now. However, I do have this Petty and the Heartbreakers 45 though with this amazing B-side called "Trailer." It's just this loping tune where you can feel Petty grinning on it as he sings. It's how I'll remember him, just rocking along with a smile on his face. Thanks for the music, Tom. —MIKE L. DOWNEY

GRANT HART

These days Husker Du guitarist/singer Bob Mould has become an elder statesman for '80s American punk rock. There have been high profile documentaries, autobiographies, tours, and new albums for Bob. His counterpart in Husker Du, drummer/vocalist Grant Hart, was just as crucial to the sound of the band as Bob. Grant's punishing 16th note and ride cymbal blur set the pace as much as Bob's dimed-out guitar. The band was widely touted throughout much of the early 1980s as America's fastest punk rock band. The Huskers noted that reputation jokingly by naming an early album *Land Speed Record*. The band became much more interesting as their patronage to hardcore punk rock waned. Just like The Replacements and Black Flag before them, they grew tired of being a backdrop for stupid "punks" to slamdance, stagedive, and beat up people. In Black Flag's case, they grew their hair long like dirty fucking hippies, and slowed the music down, daring to open shows with 10 minute proto punk/prog fusion instrumentals, an idea that took off later in the decade in Seattle. For The 'Mats it meant playing drunken country and R&B covers until they ran the punks off while singer/guitarist Paul Westerberg created the archetype for the '90s slacker poet a good decade before Ethan Hawke ran with it. For Husker Du, it meant writing their own introspective Beatles/Dylan folk rock pop singles and playing them at bullet velocity. Husker Du were the first of that era's punk bands to sign a major label record deal, beating The Replacements by months, a move the band could not survive, breaking up in an ugly divorce at the end of 1987. That public acrimony continued for most of the next 30 years.

People who knew Grant would tell you that he was a mercurial genius. Addiction, mental illness, and a general punk rock "fuck you" attitude kept Grant from receiving the accolades afforded to Bob Mould in the later years of his career. It is because Grant was "difficult" that his praises haven't been sung quite like they should have. At a Guided By Voices show in 2002, I heard someone between songs ask Bob Pollard to say something outrageous. He said, "Ok, Bob Mould sucks!" The crowd booed and hissed, but GBV guitarist Doug Gillard stepped up the mic and said simply, "C'mon, you all know that Grant Hart wrote all the good Husker Du songs." BLASPHEMY! But not entirely untrue. Many of the band's more memorable songs were Grant's. "Somewhere," "Pink To Blue," "Sorry Somehow", I'M Never Talking To You Again", "Don't Want To Know If You Are Lonely", "Books About UFO's", "Green Eyes", "Keep Hanging On", "Dead Set On Destruction"...and "Diane". It's one of the eeriest, most harrowing rock songs ever recorded. Like Suicide's "Frankie Teardrop", "Diane" is about a killer, and like Alan Vega, somehow Grant inhabited the character and presented the pathos in a way that music isn't nearly as good for like a novel or a film. "Diane" can scare the shit out of you.

Punk rock was about Reagan or your parents or being on the dole line or some other bullshit that I couldn't really relate to. But when Grant sang, "There are things that I'd like to say/but I'm never talking to you again", I knew what that felt like. "Somewhere, satisfaction has no name". These were things I could relate to. Emo is generally attributed to Rites of Spring and Sunny Day Real Estate, but Husker Du were EMOTIONAL HARD-CORE and greatly expanded the parameters of what a punk rock song could be about. Your politics could be of the heart rather than of the government. I am proud that Bob Mould gets his just desserts right now but if there is any justice in the world Grant Hart will win his propers now in death that he definitely deserved in life. —KELLY MINNIS



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STILL DRINKING



The wife and I recently brunchd at **Cafe Eccell**, where we generally guzzle Bloody Marys (me) and mimosas (her) on Sunday mornings. Having not eaten this particular morning, I approached Eccell feeling a bit dramatic, as if the earth were not only about to swallow me whole but was also pulling me into its gullet with fiendish toad tongues. Protein-less, the world felt void. So when LT asked if I wanted to sit at the bar to skip a 15 minute table wait, I barked my disdain. I'm going dry for a spell, so I did not want reminders of what I could not have. Booze-less, the world antagonized.

But, under the duress of hunger, I recanted and saddled up to the bar. Our ginger haired waitress welcomed us chipper-ly, which I was not feeling. She's a great gal, but I was despondent. She asked if we wanted anything to drink besides water. Of course I did! I wanted a double of everything with a chaser pour from each tap handle! "Water's fine," I lied, attempting to return her kindness. But then I saw _____, the dude who made the **most banging Bloody Mary** I'd ever had earlier this summer, and a light-bulb sparked. I called for _____. He hopped over. I praised his Mary skills, told him I was avoiding alcohol, and asked if he could still hook me up. He said you bet and, in fact, he promised to make something special.

That boy weren't lying.

Dude filled my glass with prosciutto, pickled green beans and bell peppers, spicy corn relish, and a skewer of cucumber and celery and green olives. Plus, he blended a solid spice of vinegary red Tabasco with a splash of jalapeno juice. Worcestershire sauce and black pepper swirled through the relish and shaved prosciutto rather than lumping at the bottom. The whole shebang blessed me. Even better: not a drop of booze. _____ proved that the fun of a good Bloody Mary isn't in the booze: it's in the flair, the frivolous gratuity of the whole brunch-treat enterprise. I felt dramatic in response, but not because of protein-deficiency. The chicken and waffles took care of that. I finished my brunch at Eccell fat on grease and tipsy with cheer, returning to our ginger haired waitress the legitimacy of a humane salutation.

One week later, inspired by the beauty of my first virgin Bloody Mary, I hobbled back onto a brunch bar-stool at Eccell eager to try a different style of Mary. The week before, I asked _____ (for the sake of this story, I'll call him Mary 1) to make my Bloody Mary, knowing Mary 1 worked in spices the way some artists work in oils and pastels. This week, I asked another fellow (we'll call him Mary 2) to make my Bloody Mary. Mary 2 has a different, more unorthodox approach, preferring garlic and green flavors over spices. I called Mary 2 over, told him I'm still dry, so I wanted a massive, creative Mary crafted

in his unique style. He slapped the bar, signaling he was up for the challenge.

Five minutes later, Mary 2 sat down a bold red glass holding a perched skewer of olives and limes. The brightness of the beverage announced a lack of Worcestershire sauce and black pepper, which I previously considered Mary staples. I was wrong. **This Bloody Mary** boasted bold minced garlic and pickled onion flavors, mellowed by muddled cilantro and a few drops of briny green olive juice. Mary 2 didn't spruce the glass with meats and various stalks. It was a modest Bloody Mary. Simple. Straight-forward. And, again, it was totally booze-free. Not to mention, I slammed it a bit too easily and could have sat for several more, but wisdom recalled the notion of "moderation", which is something new I'm trying in my fourth decade. Moderation is not nearly as fun as the alternative. However, it sure feels better the next day.

Writing my Still Drinking September 2017 column about "Beer (and bloating) at 40" set something—I guess you call "conviction"—into motion. I decided to give myself a dry season to see how my body responds. I'm two weeks dry and already my whole situation feels different, like I got a physical promotion or something. I'm also exploring other options for Happy Hour treats. Perhaps alternatives that are cheaper and less cumbersome than the sixers I usually down in the afternoon.

So far, I'm knocking back at least two of my signature Coff-Tails a day. **What is a Coff-Tail you might ask?** Simple, it's a boozeless mixed drink that begins with a can of La Croix Pure Flavored Sparkling Water aggressively poured into a glass and topped off with the cold coffee marinating in the morning's leftover pot. Coff-Tails are glorious! La Croix makes those damn sparkling waters in every flavor except the only one that matters: caffeine. So I had to take matters into my own hands. Plus, I have to drink a week or more worth of Coff-Tails to equal the dough I was spending on a one-night stand with a single six-pack. And, surprisingly, I'm actually sleeping like a baby. It's like I get the best of both worlds! More coffee AND better sleep! Was beer rattling me that much?

I have no clue how long this dry spell will last. All I do know is that Still Drinking has plenty of dry fodder to float us indefinitely. However, I will say that going from a self-proclaimed Beer Hero to a bona fide beer zero overnight does feel super weird. But that's precisely why it's a worth a shot. There's got to be more out there than this little pocket of blurs I've burrowed myself into. And if any of it is half as good as the virgin Marys and Coff-Tails I've discovered, this dry spell might prove a grand venture. —KEVIN STILL

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TALES OF EXCESS & OUTRAGE:

First of all, I have to explain Assisi. It's a truly holy place, and an UNESCO World Peace site. The home of Saints Francis and Clare, two of the few persons who ever truly lived what Christ taught. It's also the place where Pam and I chilled for vacation.

BROTHER GIULIO

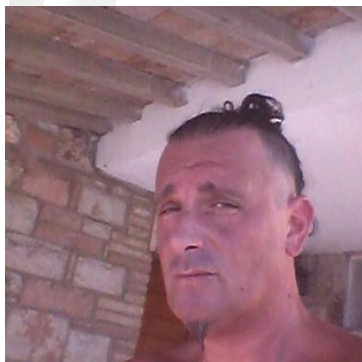
that we get lit and jump off something. Just

kidding. Giulio invited us to go to the very top of Mt. Subasio to a place that was special to him. I immediately said "Yes!" then, in my halting Italian asked the barmaid whether Giulio was on the up-and-up. He was.

Or so we thought.

See, that's the point of adventures: you don't get to dictate the fine-print details. And in Italy, the fine print is commanded by the likes of Giulio, via the all-encompassing "Va bene" (a catch phrase that means that everything from hangnails to hemorrhoids is a-okay). Giulio imparted to us the fine print when we willingly jumped into his Volkswagen, and he handed me his gin-&-Campari to hold for him as he gleefully drove past the Carabinieri (Italian for "police of some sort").

Before we were to have our *tete-a-tete* with the peak of Mt. Subasio, though, Giulio took us on a detour to his pad three kilometers outside of Assisi, where we were to meet with one Simoné, a high-school biology teacher who also happened to have the herbal refreshment that Giulio considered a prerequisite to our ascent of the Mount. Turns out that Italian herb is cut with tobacco, which a-sent me a-coughing from hell to breakfast. *Va bene!*



This would be Assisi.

Why? Well, we didn't want to do all the tourist things—we'd already been there previously. We just wanted to hole up in a Medieval walled town and drink and smoke and

enjoy Italians.

Uh, we got that in spades ... the day we met Giulio (see the picture).



This would be Giulio.

Now before y'all cast the first stone, be aware that Giulio is 100-percent Italian male, with a love of life and camaraderie bigger than Mount Subasio (the peak one-half the way up on which Assisi is perched). We saw him the night before cavorting in the Piazza di Comune with his five-year-old daughter, Gaia, who was riding her bike around the Piazza like she owned the place (she did).

We daily and nightly roosted our happy white Americani butts in the Minerva Bar di Assisi (which we affectionately christened "Revolution di Assisi"), and the locals soon differentiated us from the turisti *vis a vi* our tats, faux mohawk, beard, and ability to quaff alcohol. (That and the fact that we didn't look like Capuchin friars or Poor Claire Sisters or elderly Catholics agog with cameras and a penchant for buying every St. Francis souvenir t-shirt. Yes, they sell those and a myriad of other kitsch—a real testimonial to the Saint of Poverty.)

It seems that Giulio also had scoped us out because the next day, he sat down beside me and treated me like his *il mio amico* from Etruscan times. Being the Italophile that I am, I immediately warmed up to Giulio's proposal

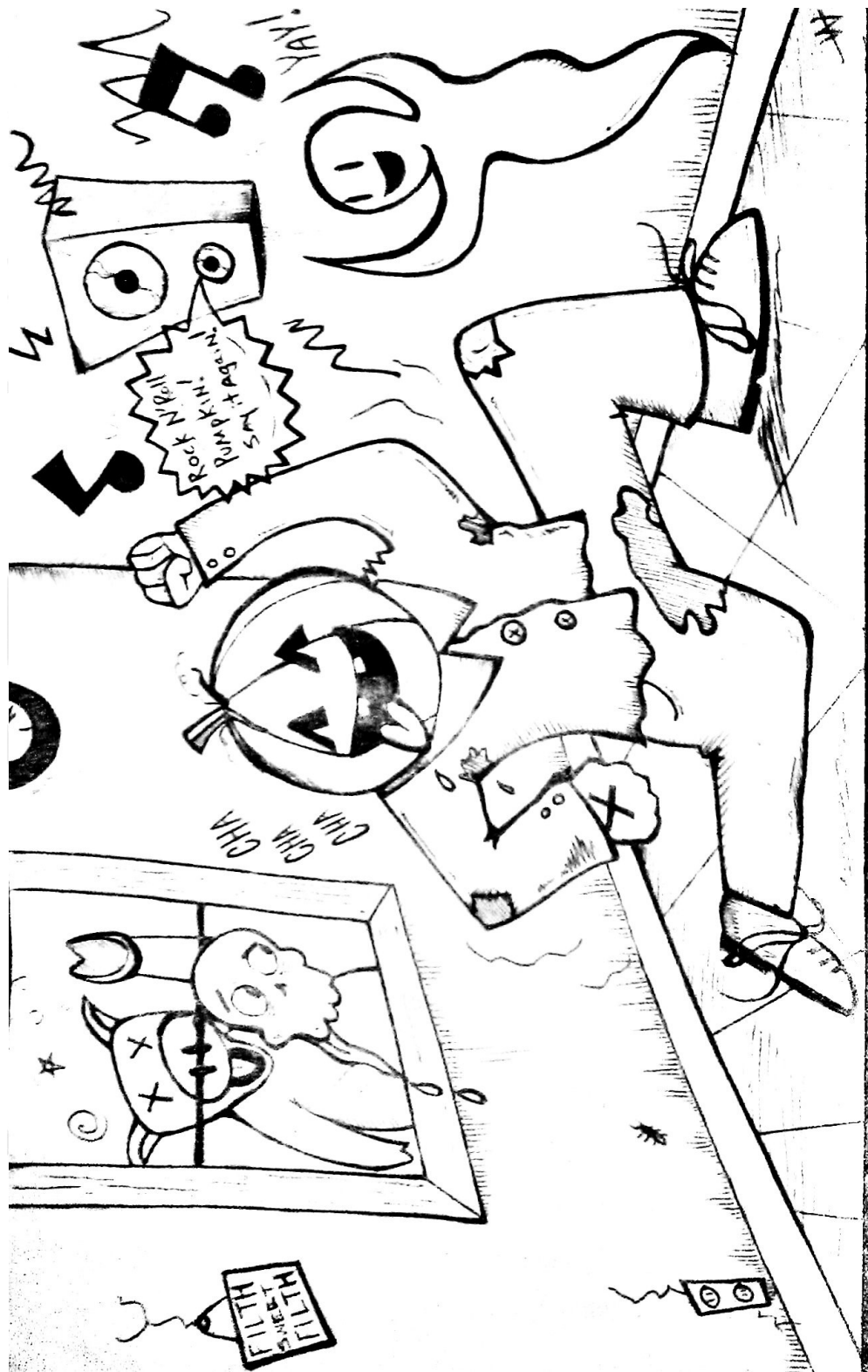
We then, sans Simoné, again piled into Giulio's VW and did so many switchbacks up Subasio that I think I changed genders and back again (uh, that's strictly a cis observation, but a valid one nonetheless). True to his word, though, after a hike, Giulio delivered a panoramic view not to be matched!

This would be the view (and Giulio).

Then, Giulio drove us back to the Minerva Bar (I, alternating with Giulio's drink and joint in hand, depending on which one he was pausing from, all the while waving at the Carabinieri with my free hand). We saw Giulio many more times after that, and he is now our best Italian friend.

We owe a lot to this crazy ("pazzo" in Italiano) man who took a couple of pazzi Americani under his wing in the name of La Vita Bella.

The moral of the story is: *Italians are bad-ass, and this makes up for asswipe politicians and dumbshit world events. Our heart is in an Assisi that is everywhere, if you dare find it.* — RANDY BEELER



They made up their minds and started packing.

"Should we bring our medicine?" She asked.

He smiled at her. For the first time in a month his wife managed to maintain a coherent conversation. She usually fades in and out, often stopping in mid sentence --her train of thought derailing. Moments of clarity became rare jewels that he treasured. Equally as rare, his shaking had stopped. For a second, their decision was a cure.

"Let's leave it behind," he said. "It hasn't been working all that well anyway."

They put their single suitcase in the backseat of their old Buick and left before the sun came up. He drove south, sticking to the back roads, he never liked free-ways. He saw her looking up at the mountains. The glow of the rising sun silhouetted their outline. He had forgotten how beautiful dawn could be.

"The kids will be worried," he said.

"We have kids?"

She grinned at his double-take. She never used to miss a cue. It was what he loved most about her.

"The kids have kids who are having kids. They have their own lives and we are a burden." She squeezed his hand. Seemingly a hundred miles away, she continued, "We never wanted to be a burden."

They drove to a diner they used to enjoy when they dated. It was boarded up so he pulled into a fast food restaurant across the street.

"You have pancakes?" She asked the girl across the counter, name-tagged Helen.

Helen sighed like she had answered this question a hundred times of the same woman. "No, Ma'am. Would you like French toast sticks?"

He slid a hand under her arm and led her out.

"I really wanted pancakes," she said.

"I know."

They continued south. Mid-afternoon he watched her fade, sitting silently and staring straight ahead, submerging deeper into her fog. He contemplated turning back. A few minutes later his shaking started up. She set a hand on his arm. His shaking quieted.

THE ROAD

"We're going to see this through together," they promised each other.

They stopped at an old beachside hotel just as the sun turned orange, its edge just beyond the horizon. He became worried when she stood in the center of the room and stared at the thirty-year-old decor.

"You okay?"

"This is the place. The very room."

"It is very nice."

"You don't know what I'm talking about, do you?"

He followed her into the bathroom. She got on her hands and knees and peered under the sink. She grabbed his hand and pulled.

"Get down here and see for yourself."

"Okay, but I don't know if I'll be able to get back up."

She pointed at an engraving on the wall behind the drainpipe. It was their initials inside of a heart.

"I did that with your pocketknife while you were sleeping. This is where we first got pregnant."

"Well, I'll be damned. All the stuff you forgot and you remember this?"

She grinned wide. She appeared as youthful and eager as the girl he married sixty years ago.

"It's a sign."

He groaned as he rose to his feet. "Quite a coincidence." "Our whole life has been a coincidence. How we met, how we fell in love, our children, jobs, this place--all coincidences. This is a sign. You'll see."

They held each other like they used to as they slept, her back nestled into him as his chin rested above her head. They rose in time to see the sun rise over the mountains.

"Where should we go today?" she asked.

"The desert. We always drove into the mountains like we were going to go but never made it. I don't think we ever did, did we?"

"You expect me to remember?"

They drove to a roadside restaurant they ate at when they were kids. The menu hadn't changed, nor had the waitress' long skirts and checkered uniforms. He left a hundred dollars on the table for his wife's pancakes. They headed into the mountains east. He found a gas station with old-style pumps. A man in a crisp white uniform came out, washed his windows, and pumped their gas.

"Haven't seen service like this in decades," he said to the serviceman as he handed him a twenty. The serviceman made change and thanked him.

He stared at the ten and five. "Can't remember the last time I filled the tank on five bucks," he said.

He turned out of the station. Saw a sign for the desert. The sun was beginning to set. He drove east. The road was dark and winding, just as he remembered. He could feel the wind in his hair. It felt full and alive like it hadn't in years. She snuggled in next to him and set her hand onto his. He glanced at her slender finger, wrinkle free with nails painted red. He gripped the wheel with hands that were full and strong and looked down at his girl. She smiled up at her man with her tanned, teen-aged face -- her long black hair, whipping in the breeze. The Buick had become a convertible, the night had given way to a noonday sky, and the road paved in gold.

Jim gripped the rope and scaled down a cliff. The rescuer pounded a safety stake into the rock wall and peered into a Buick. The car was lodged between two boulders and obscured from view under a westbound freeway.

"I think we found the missing grandparents," he said into his radio.

"Damn shame," said Blake, his partner, from two hundred feet above. "Road's been closed for years. Poor folks drove right off the edge. I wonder where they were going?"

Jim edged his way to the driver's side and dusted off the windshield. He tilted his head and leaned in.

"I don't know where they were going but judging by the expressions on their faces, I hope I get there one day."
— STARKNESS

THE STORY OF THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

This is the story of the man in the mirror. He lived his life wishing to see clearer. He lost all the things that he held dear, because he was always lost in the mirror. The sun shown down and challenged his frown to reflect in puddles upside down. The hot was cold and the cold was hot, he lived day to day in a pocket screen and thought he was a bot. People would pass, smile, and wave because of the person they thought the bot to be. His mind was cloudy from other bots' thoughts projected in his mind through his pocket bot screen. Day to day became so routine, he himself in cyberscape dreams. Adventures ceased in the flesh as mind went from matter to wired mesh.

Flash photography helped him see that person on the bot screen. In the mirror he would look, trying to see what images the camera took. Open pores and laugh lines added only to his vague bot mystique. Days turned to minutes and minutes into weeks all while awaiting other bots to speak. Passers by seldom questioned why the man in the mirror thought he was a bot, as they too lived locked in their screens chasing mirror people bot like dreams while escaping reality. Since it's all subjective and purely speculative the words and actions seemed normal to most.

Charging this and charging that, always asking "where's the charger at?" Sleep became hibernation as fans needed to cool a mind circuit board over worked from school. Type became his voice and his throat shriveled up. No one noticed as they did the same. The man in mirror couldn't tell why when he opened his mouth one day and no one could hear what he had to say. Their ears heard numbers and eyes saw only flesh, not the neural wired mesh the mirror man portrayed. His skin grew cold and his posture grew week as his mirror companions quickly abandoned their cyber cipher. He fell while walking and needed a hand, only no one was around to offer one.

Mirror people have no hands, you see, only cameras attached to twig poles showing the world where they were at. Some filmed, while others trolled. While the poor man in mirror howled and rolled. Alone in a see of false idols and fake nobody somebodies detached from their souls with wired hearts fueled by only by likes and coal. The pain made the man in the mirror tear, and for once again he began to feel. The cyber life he had thought he lived was no longer real. He was not the bot he once had thought, and fought to come to grips with it. His channels plummeted but pockets jingled as he was now once again free from that tangled web of deceit.

Walking instead of thought talking, he began to see that the mirror reality was in fact no reality at all. He was a man with human hands who could do things no bot could do. He became hungry for stimulation and the adoration of himself as opposed to the rows of other bot friend foes. He was mostly alone in a sea of drones, wearing only his existence on his sleeve. Some bots noticed and chatted a bit, but their interest soon faded for some other bot trend. The mirror man knew that in order to grow he would have to live and breathe and challenge the sea. His looks grew more rugged and the other's screens loved him as they casually snapped and stole moments of his soul. He grew old with time but was finally alive as the man in the mirror faded from the cyber sphere....The bots went without blinking an eye, a person of blood would die but their profiles lived on, so no bot noticed or remembered too long.—WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON

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RECORD REVIEWS



Ben Gibbard

Bandwagonesque

What an interesting pairing. A defining album of the early 1990's alt-rock movement covered en toto by a defining figure of the 2000's indie rock scene...in a 2010's marketplace that finds both the subject matter and the covering artist somewhat out of sync.

It is the punchline of the decade that *Spin* magazine picked Scottish rockers Teenage Fanclub's second album *Bandwagonesque* as the album of 1991. The joke, of course, is that another little album, *Nevermind* by a little band called Nirvana, was also released later that same year and let's be honest, most of you have no idea who Teenage Fanclub is but you probably know Nirvana. *Spin* had to eat a lot of crow for getting this one wrong. Except, well, they didn't get it entirely wrong. *Bandwagonesque* was a very large album in England and Europe, has amazing power pop songs, and had a big buzz on U.S. college radio. Had *Nevermind* not been released that year I don't think most rock writers would have found the decision to be wide of the mark.

A nascent Ben Gibbard found *Bandwagonesque* in high school and fell in love with it. That the Death Cab For Cutie frontman should come back to this album 26 years after its release is not odd. This album is in some ways like classic rock for indie rock. What is odd is that it's kind of a lost opportunity that has a few moments of real promise that are never fully delivered upon.

What made *Bandwagonesque* such an interesting album in 1991 was that Teenage Fanclub somehow learned how to write really good early '70s style glam/power pop songs. The band's previous album was long on guitar hysteria and rock poses but short on songs. *Bandwagonesque* feels like it was played by a band that had no control and had to somehow find the patience and discipline to keep it together long enough to deliver these sweet little love songs before the band exploded into Crazy Horse-meets-MY

Bloody Valentine guitar terrorism. There is no other album like this in the Fanclub's 30 year discography. The discipline stuck and they have been a fine power pop band ever since. But on *Bandwagonesque* there are taught moments of friction between the pop and the freakout that makes the album so memorable.

I love Death Cab For Cutie but there are almost no moments of utter abandon in the band's recorded work. The band is all about control, even when the band is trying to explode it does so in a very studied and controlled sort of way. How would an artist whose career is about control approach an album that is more about barely taming wildness? With control, of course.

Most of Gibbard's take on *Bandwagonesque* is just kind of boring. There is no danger of the train going off the rails. The guitars don't leap out to the speakers to grab the listener by the throat. Gibbard largely honors Teenage Fanclub's arrangements of the material. It is when Gibbard attempts to do something different that the album becomes more interesting.

Album opener "The Concept" is a bit of a manifesto for the original album. It's a clarion call for the next 45 minutes of music. Warm, fuzzy guitars strummed easily, insouciant pop melodies with harmony vocals, with moments of careening lead guitar and a "Layla"-like coda with prominent string quartet that shows the dichotomy between the band's rock history and its pop future. Gibbard opens the album in a similar fashion, giving it a '10's DCFC makeover. Synthesizer pads wash to shore through the shimmerverb (a '10s production cliché like gated reverb was to the '80s) before Gibbard sings the verses. The coda is very similar to the original but the song already has a "Marching Bands of Manhattan" feel to it. I don't care for the approach, but at least it's no pale imitation of the original like much of Gibbard's reading of the album. Gibbard begins "Pet Rock" over affected organ with layers of harmony vocals a la The Beach Boys but abruptly ends the song after the vocal. Album closer "Is This Music?" is an odd MBV-esque instrumental on the original and Gibbard bends it more towards his DCFC sound. The song is largely a blank slate and it is open to Gibbard to reshape it.

The lone standout on Gibbard's tribute is "I Don't Know". It is

originally a midtempo cool guitar workout. Gibbard approaches this song like he was recording a demo in 1999. It sounds like he has the cassette 8-track out again. The drums strut, the bass carries the melody, and the guitars are largely arpeggiated, picking the melody through the chord rather than pushing the notes forward in unison. There are washes of tremolo guitar and synthesizer, and Gibbard sings the song as though he wrote it.

Overall Gibbard does an admirable job of paying tribute to an album that helped form the songwriter he became. I am being harder on it than maybe I should be. It is because of the promise of "I Don't Know" that I am somewhat disappointed in the rest. What could this album have been like if Gibbard had spent more time reimagining the album rather than lovingly reproducing it? I will continue to listen to "I Don't Know" on repeat and imagine. — KELLY MINNIS



Neil Young

Hitchhiker

The most amazing thing about this four-decades-old album is the then-22-year-old Young had a couple of the arguably best songs of the rock and roll era done so soon. "Pocahantas" is just eerie in its perfection with just Young and his guitar rendering a poignant slice of American history—"Marlon Brando, Pocahantas, and me" indeed. "Powderfinger" is equally powerful lyrically in this slower acoustic version, but the stunning guitar riff is missed and leaves it shy of the masterpiece it became: "Cover me with the thought that pulled the trigger."

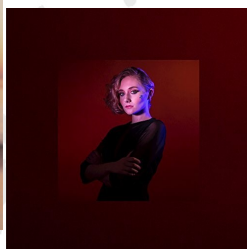
There aren't any real surprises on this long-shelved album, but it will please Young completists. Fans who like the country-rock side of Young will appreciate it most, but I doubt it will attract any new fans. However, it's not a bad early collection, certainly less expensive a greatest hits than *Decade*.

"Captain Kennedy" still declares that "I hope that I can kill good" while "Ride My

Llama" still mixes Mars, Peru, and "I remember the Alamo/ When help was on the way." "Human Highway" still wonders "How could people get so unkind?" and "Campaigner" is still surprised that "Even Richard Nixon has got soul" and "People steal from their own kind." "Give Me Strength" is not a bad folk song about the loss of love, and "Hitchhiker" is a drug-filled travelogue that is somewhat interesting.

The album closes with what has become something of a life anthem for Young with its lyrics: "The Old Country Waltz." With lines like "I just need to play" and "This old music has kept me on top," the young singer is prophetic about his future in the profession.

Young continues to come out with new music while not ignoring his past. Hearing these new/old tunes makes me wish I could see him live again (1985 was too long ago)—rocking in the free world one last time. — MIKE L. DOWNEY



Jessica Lea Mayfield

Sorry Is Gone

Jessica Lea Mayfield continues to forge her own path and tow the line between alt-country and spacey grunge on her new album *Sorry Is Gone*. The most striking thing about Mayfield's music has always been her unmistakable singing voice, a lower-than-usual register which simultaneously carries a certain sweetness to it along with a perpetual sense of weariness and longing. She wields her voice with great effect to deliver moments of pain, deadpan humor, or heartache all alike. On her prior release, *Make My Head Sing...*, Mayfield surprised fans by veering away from her unique folk sound she had been known for, trading in acoustic guitars and steady drums for super-low reverb and drone. *Sorry Is Gone* continues that energy but tightens the focus of her songs and subject matter to excellent results. At times Mayfield wears her angsty teen influences like Nirvana and *The Colour* and *The Shape* on her sleeve in tracks such as "Bum Me Out" and "Maybe

CONCERT CALENDAR

10/1—KEOS Lone Star Jam feat. Charm Bomb, High Fidelity, TMW Live, Brooke Graham, The Great American Boxcar Chorus @ Lakeside Ice House, Bryan. 12pm

10/5—TGTG, The Fox In the Ground @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/6—Cake Ranger, Jay Satellite, Only Beast, The Ex-Optimists @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

10/7—Mark Drew, Miears, JC Juice & HYAH! @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/12—Unicorndog, The Shutups, Mutant Love, When Particles Collide @ Fullhouse, Bryan. 8pm

10/13—Texas Grand Slam Poetry @ Revolution, Bryan. 4pm

10/13—DJ Skullbone @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

10/14—Texas Grand Slam Poetry @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

Whatever". Album opener "Wish You Could See Me Now" even has a bit of a fuzzed-out Jets To Brazil vibe with its driving chords and rhythm. She can also push her way into near-shoegaze territory, as evidenced on "Soaked Through" and "WTF", the former's chorus beginning with the line "My heart wants all the bad things/I used to let it have." It's in songs like these that the message and story behind the album really start to hit you if you're paying attention.

Throughout *Sorry Is Gone* Mayfield sings about a previous abusive relationship and all of the pain and confusion that came with it, not knowing if you're still loved or in love, not able to leave even when all signs tell you to do so. That Mayfield addresses her recent past so directly in this collection of songs is quite a testament to her strength and ability to turn difficult subject matter into something accessible. When desired she can wrap the hurt in a seemingly-upbeat package in songs like the title track and "Offa My Hands", the latter of which is a truly great pop song no matter how you slice it. She tends to favor simple lead guitar melodies which stand out in the arrangements and make her songs real earworms that stick with you. And she can still strip things down to more simplistic style

like on "Safe 2 Connect 2" and "Too Much Trouble", both quite beautiful in the mood executed. *Sorry Is Gone* is another winning entry in Mayfield's catalog and should be picked up by fans of 90s rock and/or alt-country alike. — **TODD HANSEN**



GWAR
The Blood of Gods

So it appears that legendary costumed shock rockers from planet Scumdogia have once again awoken from their Atrix slumber and are returning to ear holes across the globe with a new offering of blistering metal that most are certainly unworthy of hearing. Their latest offering is the group's first since the passing of their faithful leader Oderus Urungus in 2014 and sees The Beseker Blothar (the original Beefcake the Mighty) take his place as front man. While the controversial group has been performing in this manner for some time

10/19—Zero Detail, YeeHa!, Wartime Afternoon @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/20—Stone Machine Electric, The Dirty Seeds, Unicorndog @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/21—Zombie Pub Crawl Downtown Bryan. 3pm

10/21—Punk Rock Prom feat. Killer Hearts, Girlband, Mutant Love, Charm Bomb, The Cops, The Genzales @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

10/27—The Maples, Piss Penny @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/28—Odd Folks, LUCA, Corusco, Daniel Gonzalez Band @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/2—Hitting Subset, Unicorndog, Girlband @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/3—DJ Skullbone @ Revolution, Bryan. 6pm

11/3—Scattered Guts, GFF, ASS @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

now, this is their first album with Blothar helming the lead position.


About the record the band has issued the following statement on their website Gwar.net "The *Blood of Gods* is nothing less than a sacred text chronicling the rise of humanity against their makers, and the massive battle between **GWAR** and the forces of all that is uptight and wrong with the world. Along the way, the band challenges the sins of their great mistake, from politics, pollution, and organized religion, to fast food, and factory farming. Humans are shown as what they are; a parasitic disease that must be eradicated before they suck the planet dry."

The first single / live video from the album is aptly called "Fuck this Place" a suiting title that pretty much sums up the crack addled alien overloads take on things. The song is hard hitting and very much GWAR, but it is distinctly different with only the occasional Oderus croon thrown in for added measure. "Fuck this Place" is a tune that many thrash metalheads from the 80's wish they had written back then. That said it is still very much relevant with the resurgence of the 80's & 90's culture in the mainstream and good music is well, timeless after all right? "El Presidente", which is about, well I'm pretty sure you can guess who. It

features solid back and forth most noticeable on the Scumdogs of the Universe album and features heavy synths which really make the track pop.

All in all this seems like a promising offering from a band that no longer has any of its original members and likes it that way. Before passing founding member Dave Brockie stated that the band would live on forever as there is always more to every story and that after all one of the beauties of costumes is, you never really know for certain who is wearing what. In that vain I hope there will be GWAR for eons to come. Hopefully, this new record will be followed by a companion full length feature further chronically the misadventures of our favorite Scumdogs of the Universe. If you're uncertain as to what I speak of, do yourself a favor and look into the Gwar movies, you'll be glad you did!

The Blood of the Gods is a 12 song full length chock full of the tongue in cheek sass that has made Gwar a staple for decades! As a fan of the band for years and someone who has seen the group pre-Oderus passing at least 3 or 4 times I went into this record not expecting much, I was pleasantly surprised. **GWAR** still has it. — **WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON**



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