

# STARGO REPRESENT



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*inside: 6 minutes 20 seconds - drunk detective starkness - no crown no coke - too fast for jorge - ask creepy horse - hypocrisy is the new integrity - still poetry - a transgender post - perspectives - hit & run - salacious vegan crumbs - record reviews - concert calendar*



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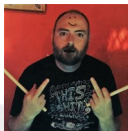
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**6 MINUTES 20 SECONDS**

On Saturdays I take long bike rides. You know, for my health. I came in one Saturday last month from a 19 mile ride and plopped down on the ottoman in the living room to cool off under the ceiling fan. My wife had left the TV on CNN, as she often does. Coverage of March For Our Lives, the student protest to raise attention to gun law reform in this country, was on. I watched as student after student climbed up to the podium and told their story. Some of it was goofy. Do remember that we are talking about *high school students* here, and in some cases the pull to use skills honed in high school theater productions was great. And I reminded myself that these kids had been through an horrific event without the adult language or experience to wrap around the emotions of that day. Many musical performers sang the gospel, both secular and religious. Many placards were carried. Hundreds of thousands swarmed the nation's capital, and many more marched throughout the country in other cities. But it was six minutes and twenty seconds of silence, marked by a Parkland survivor, that riveted me to the television.

Emma Gonzalez has been one of the two or three most visible Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students. She has told her story many times and has helped to organize her fellow students to make something positive come out of this tragedy. She has faced a lot of scrutiny for it. She and her fellow students have been accused by right wing media of being brainwashed by liberal adults at best and planted crisis actors at worst. It was with an amazing amount of poise that Emma approached the podium that afternoon and began to talk about her friends that were murdered that day. Then...Emma just stopped talking. It was like the emotion was too much for her. But rather than gather herself momentarily and forge on, she stood silently and cried. The audience had no idea what to do. Some shouted encouragement, some cheered for her. Some began chanting. Emma stood still and cried. I sat and watched this person do nothing but cry in front of all these people. And it made me cry too. I felt her pain. I felt her frustration. I felt her anxiety. I could do nothing but cry with her.

The TV producers were nervous. The coverage jumped from camera to camera, then back to Emma, a crying statue, then back again. Then an alarm went off, and Emma began to speak again. "Six and minutes and 20 seconds," she said. "In a little over six minutes, 17 of our friends were taken from us, 15 were injured, and everyone in the Douglas community was forever altered." If that silence seemed uncomfortable on TV I could only imagine what it seemed like huddled under desks with shots going off all around, with dead classmates lying next to you. It was one of the most breathtaking pieces of television I have seen in my life. An iconic moment when the world stopped for a time and grieved with those who survived one of the most terrifying things that could happen. If all those watching in DC and on television could have voted that instant the 2nd Amendment would have been repealed on the spot. Later, the NRA would do damage control, namecall Gonzalez and her fellow students, and attempt to get on with business as usual. But I fear it will not go as planned for the gun lobby this time. These Parkland students have sparked a movement that will not be swayed, will not be quashed, cannot be silenced. I may be naïve or just very much inspired by these students, but I do believe that a sea change has just occurred and I can't wait to see what happens at the ballot box this November. — KELLY MINNIS

# ASK CREEPY HORSE



Yes I am pot calling the kettle black. I want you to stop with all the drama, self-loathing and self deprecating. Oh me? Moi? Yeah, I know I can go toe to toe with the best or worst of them when it comes to who's more morose. I'll probably win too. But that really all changes.

Yes, I stepped back and hid under the covers for the past year. I had to hear some heavy and hard shit and was treated like shit for a little while. I went through some really hard shit that was unfair and I also went through some shit that was totally on me. It sucked and seemed like shit poured in from everywhere around me but it really is time to move on and to try and grow some.

It is my personal belief that our lives are futile and worthless because we die and that's it. Once we are gone, it's just that, we're gone. Feeling like shit all the time or treating someone like shit doesn't further us in the least. So why waste such beautiful and precious time making enemies with ourselves and others? We must all get out of our heads and stop polarizing issues that just don't matter. Try to right the wrongs, and I mean legitimately make an effort because that shit can heal. Just because we decide something isn't that big of a deal to us or maybe deep down is too embarrassing for us to face, doesn't mean we can't make it better for those affected. To truly be a maker of merriment, we must face the music of our wrongs yet be able to let go once we've done our personal best to right that wrong. We may not fix everything but at least fucking trying is far better than nothing at all. What can't be fixed we reflect on and move forward. You just can't continue to hold on to the evils of our conscience.

Also, no one really cares about things you may stress over or feel overwhelmed by. I've heard women have total and complete meltdowns about their hair or makeup flaws that no one else seems to even notice. You're beautiful baby and you've got far too much to do than to worry about gray hair or a facial blemish. Be the good you. The you, you feel is the best of you. Build up genuinely and never tear down.

I'm not asking you to be some morbid Frankenstein's monster of Stepford Wives meets The Six Million Dollar Man replete with compliments and overjoyous outlooks. I'm still a shit talker and prone to bouts of flawed judgments. I just want you to be happy and in return try to be better and make other's happy. We get in our own heads and fester resentments that don't further us in

the least. True, it is OUR life and it's delicate and vulnerable but everyone is going through this and we are doing nothing more than shoveling our shit onto theirs and vice versa. Last year I was a wreck and was hurting very deeply. I absolutely had to step away and went into solitude. In time, I healed and I learned new things. I met new people and came into some really great new things. I also began a career path that put me in a situation to genuinely help others, the beauty industry. There is nothing more gratifying, more satisfying than making someone truly and deeply feel great when you have provided a service for them. Seeing a person's face light up, being an ear for their troubles and woes, seeing that smile. I can truly attest there ain't a drug out there that can do that.

I want you the reader to have that. All of that. I want you to have that feeling. I want you to have that life.

I can't think of a single person I want to feel the way I have or the way I have heard other's that have shared similar sentiments. I want all of y'all happy and leading your best lives as you. I had to hear that in my own way and experience it. I had to witness others' suffering and misfortune to let go myself. I try very hard to think of others and sometimes I absolutely fail and am still oblivious. I make the effort however to try and thus far that has taken me quite far. Even folks we are indifferent to, you have to imagine are not unscathed by their own troubles.

I hope this doesn't come across as implying the need for myself or for you to embrace meaningless platitudes. Life can still suck. Hell, I recently went through a shit storm that came out of nowhere like a Sharknado. Life is going to suck. Life is going to be great. Sometimes we lock our keys in the car and sometimes we when the lottery. Shit's going to be unfair and even really fucked at times, but it's also going to be great and grand and wonderful and we need to assess whether we are going to clean the shit off or let it continue to cake on and be a shitty person in return.

LOUDFEST is right around the corner. I cannot wait to see everyone. To laugh, to experience, to enjoy, to be shirtless and sweaty, to live. I look forward to keeping company with all those who attend and sharing in those experiences. I hope if anything, maybe my ramblings help one single forlorn soul out there. I'll see you at LOUDFEST and let's go and make some merriment together. —CREEPY HORSE

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# STILL POETRY

## *A Really Big Hunch*

Yes, I have often referred to myself as a "writer".  
In reality, I am a gluttonous gourmand of a reader  
Who occasionally needs to make room.

Absolutely, I could write more if I read less

- I've already sacrificed booze to the craft but  
The hollow produced other hungers I can't fill  
No matter how many spines I clean in a week.

We reach limits before reaching capacity,

And I'm left questioning the reasons

I relinquish much and easily.

The written word is both

My milk and my meat

- my birdsong and ripe summer wind.

I have been healed miraculously by Willa Cather's

Nebraska (all day long still) and Billy Collins'

Bowl of oranges on the table, although

Merely lulled - frequently - to unrequited repose

By the Doppler magic of Linda Ronstadt.

(And is cinema to Art as dog turds to foot wear?)

My fingers itch. My mind rattles

Like a tin can full of dead bees

- buzzes still intact. Meanwhile

My pugs snore in my bed as if they've earned it.

Perhaps they have. I've not scribbled enough miles

To fester a proper appetite, but tonight it's tough to put

Jim Harrison down, even though - my reading

Paused - he's the reason I got this far.

— KEVIN STILL

## *Darkling*

When heavy, wet air smothers over-lush lawns

In the neighborhood by campus

Where insects swim in puddles at evening

And the birds amble, overfed

And the vanity of the yard doesn't recede

With the darkling verdure

When the plant's decadence weighs it earthward

And the spoil of spring molests the skin of

Those who stroll blissful through the trellised avenues

(The drowsy sun hardly rouses on those dripping days)

When new growth so drowns the intellect

And mute mentions of despair are remote

I can forgive my shortcomings

— DAVID LANDER

## *Leviathan, Of The Tarshishan Sea*

I openly bless you

As far as light tries in water.

I cannot promise not to bend you

Beyond recognition to myself.

Sound compounds down here -

Voices refract into perpetual yawnings.

When my prayers warp that way,

I will dig deep and chew up

Your name from among

The lesser detritus I've collected.

My limbs - paltry - washed away

Long ago, so when I reach for you

I do so as the current - completely,

Swollen with shipwrecked Selahs.

Remember: More night rages

Beneath you than above

Where a great tempest stirs.

Enjoy the pull.

— KEVIN STILL



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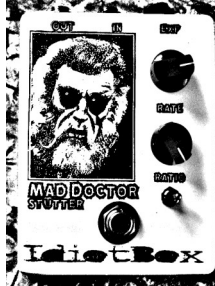
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# IN MY HEAD



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# THE ALBUM COVER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Sure, the title is probably a bit misleading, but I'm talking about Motley Crue's *Too Fast For Love*.

It's got some dude's pelvis area (which I always figured it was Vince's crotch) in lace-up leather pants. He's wearing all the belts and gloves and shit that they spearheaded at a time when junior high and high school kids would freak out over for the next several years, as would follow suit a bunch of other bands in their own similar costumes. He's also got spikes and handcuffs. I guess that means S&M or something. Whatever. They were cool.

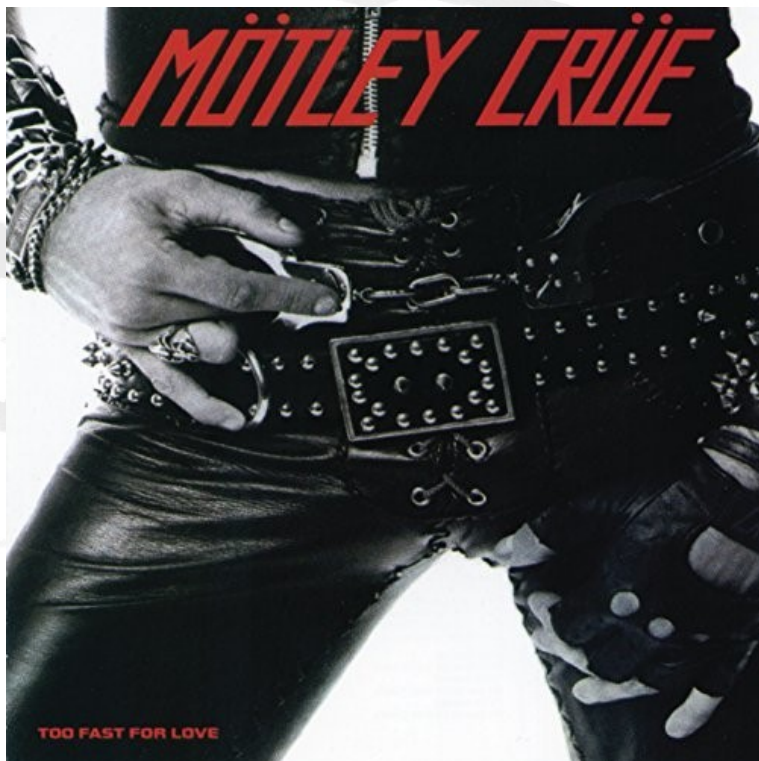
Ok, so I wasn't in Los Angeles when and where they came from, so I have no idea if this was what people were wearing, but I could easily convince myself that this was a record label "stunt" so to speak, but I'm always suspicious of "the man". Apparently, this was the "scene" in L.A., and it got picked up by labels when they saw it could make money. And it did in fact make money...a lot of it. Especially thanks to MTV, Quiet Riot's "Cum On Feel The Noise" and Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It", but that's another part of the story.

Around that time, parents had just really started to freak out about the influence of this kind of stuff. They were against it. Ozzy was making kids commit suicide, Alice Cooper was biting heads off bats (or whatever). Parents were concerned and starting to get crazy. Of course, we (the people) were magnetized to it. We studied the album covers every time we listened to records. All of it. Even the b-sides. So I'm sitting there listening to this fucking cool music, looking at the studs and leather and bracelets and gloves and ripped fabric and I wanted it. I wanted to be cool like that.

Motley Crue was rebellion. Well, I say that now cuz I think I know stuff in my old age, but I sure as shit wasn't gonna let my parents see it...well, listen to it anyway. The lyrics were inappropriate for parents. So was the guitar and the beats, oh, and the cowbell. No way. But they were "mine". It became part of who I was...or wanted to be anyway. That's when I'd slip and buy a poster of the four of them standing there in their, "fuck your parents, they have no idea" get-ups. I loved my posters. I had a W.A.S.P. Blackie Lawless poster, a Ratt poster, Motley Crue, oh, and also Iron Maiden. Eddie rocks!

Yes, I look at it now, and yeah, I had pictures of dudes on my wall that looked like chicks. Some of them were actually pretty. Don't tell me you never thought that. One word, Poison. Shit, Stryper even did it. But their agenda was blatant. There was definitely a place for Stryper in the world of time-decorating music in the 80s, and they fit right in.

I don't know if Motley Crue had a message. I think if they did, it would have been about sex and partying, and



at 14, I had just found alcohol in my life. I was in Spain (my dad was in the military), and there was no drinking age limit. I got super drunk quite a few times in my 14th year of life. So, if you look at what spawned this music, you've got Kiss, Van Halen, Bowie, Iron Maiden, and Judas Priest to name a few. I feel like it was a reactionary solution to Heavy Metal and maybe Punk to a certain extent.

Heavy Metal was too dark for some, and Classic Rock wasn't hard enough. Punk was getting too violent for venues (I read that somewhere), and so opened up an in-road to Glam Metal. Metal already had the spikes and the high singing and distorted mid-scooped guitars. The long hair, the leather, the "Devil Horns". A lot of it transferred over. Some Punk stuff transferred as well.

Maybe Metal dudes weren't getting enough "P". I mean, you don't see a ton of chicks at metal shows. It's guys being cool because they dig this type of dark, raucous music that sounds so good when you and the volume are high. They were like, well, that's not working. I like hanging out and partying with you dudes and all, but... The girls would go to the shows, guys would go even if they didn't like the music because there were a bunch of writhing, ready-and-willing hotties. It was a perfect recipe. All you needed was a studded belt and some ratted long hair and you were in with the babes.

Wait, musicians make and play music because they love making and playing music...not necessarily the

potential to get some action. I'll concede. Also the fact that some of those old Heavy Metal dudes are still playing concerts and writing Metal makes it so we can't delete the fact that Heavy Metal is a legitimate genre, as is Glam Metal.

So the point at this point is that "Glam Metal" or "80s Hair Metal" was a split from Metal and Hard Rock. And it sure stuck around. It was a commercial success. It worked...for about a decade or so...maybe a little less than a decade. But, were we asking for this genre to exist? Did it "need" to bridge the gap between Heavy Metal and Grunge? Could we have skipped directly to Guns and Roses? Or hopped over to Nirvana? I think not. It's all reactionary. One genre births another. Out of frustration maybe? Rebelling against the popularity of a preceding genre? It's pretty fun music, though. Well some of it is still listenable anyway.

Motley Crue was my gateway band...then Ratt...then Stryper and W.A.S.P. KISS tried, Def Leppard tried. I never got into Dokken or Bon Jovi or Poison, but tons of people did. I pretty quickly got turned on to weed and Thrash Metal around 1985 and have really only looked back recently. Of course, MTV happened and pushed all those Hair Bands into the limelight. MTV had perfect timing for this type of Metal, and that most assuredly moved the bands to being more dramatic... and the "Power Ballad" was born. Then Spinal Tap happened (which either pissed people off or made them chuckle and soul search). And then Guns and Roses happened.

Either way, it happened. It's part of history, and it will be there forever, bringing up memories every time you listen to it. I mean, for some people it's still going strong. There's a documentary coming on Netflix about Motley Crue called *Dirt*. That will be interesting.

I saw Motley Crue live in San Antonio on their "Theater of Pain" tour with Y&T. I got kicked out for smoking but made up a believable story at a different entrance and got back in. (I told the door guy I had to tell my dad the concert wasn't over yet).

I've been listening to *Too Fast For Love* lately, and it's OK musically, but in contrast, it brings up so many memories, and feels so historically important, that I'm not sure it's appropriate to judge it on its musical merit. Truth is, it doesn't necessarily sound thrown together without much thought. I read that they had only been playing together for about six months before they recorded it, but that doesn't mean it can't be legitimate. It's a bit difficult to think of this album in terms of musicality, but I'm not sure it needed to be at the time. It felt right. It still feels right.

Oh, how many hours I stared at a man's crotch. — JORGE GOYCO

## DRUNK DETECTIVE STARKNESS



Scene: *Phone from when you could still smoke in a fucking hospital times ringing, the great Drunk Detective Starkness pulls his head off his desk and wipes the drool from his lips. He finishes off the glass of whiskey he passed out next to, lights a cigarette and answers, extremely reluctantly*

DDS: Do you fucking realize what fucking time it is? It's 6:30 AM. Somebody better be dead and/or dying!

Me: Sorry, DDS, I wouldn't have called if it was a non-emergency. But there seems to have been an incident involving pizza, my roommate, and a TV screen. And I have to be at work in like 5. Your services are needed, ASAP. Can you make it?

DDS: Wait, pizza? Does that imply that there is some leftover pizza in your fridge that I can eat for breakfast with our customary smoke and some left over whiskey? Ya, I'll be there in like nowish, cause I am a construct in your head after all. The commute is short.

Me: Wait...does this mean I have leftover pizza? I remember none of this. Let me check... Fuck Yes! See you're helping already. My day just got 100% better. I'll fill you in on the details when you get here.

DDS (As he munches on a pretty bad slice of cold Dominos, little bits of sausage getting stuck in his mustache, cause of course he has a mustache. Can't be a world class detective without one): No need, bud. I'm kinda already here. I've already surveyed the situation. It seems that you and your roommate got really drunk, at some point somebody ordered a pizza, and at some point in the eating of that pizza process one or maybe both of you got mad enough at what was on the TV to, inexplicably, throw a piece of said pizza at the TV screen. So, good news/bad news sitch here: you're both alive and safe. You also have pizza, but there is pizza sauce all over the TV that someone will have to clean up. The "throwing pizza hypothesis" is my first guess. Alternately, you could have gotten clumsy enough to fall (maybe?) with a piece of pizza in your hand and it somehow wound up on the TV screen. Just spit balling here.

Me: But I specifically put the TV on the highest, most out of the way place I could, just so this kind of thing wouldn't happen.

DDS: You're right. The "falling theory" sounds unlikely. Damn. Fuck. Shit. Now we have to do real work. I'm gonna need to interview all the suspects. That includes Blacked Out You and Blacked Out Your Roommate. We'll need bank statements and search histories from both of them. What does Blacked Out Your Roommate have to say for himself, can we pin this on him real quick and be done with it?

Me: Afraid not, friendo. The motherfucker has a lock down alibi. After reviewing the bank statements, he was totally the one who paid for the pizza that kept us all alive, and there was no way BO Me was in a state to go pick up the pizza. Even if it was him who made a mess, we really can't be mad at him.

DDS: That sly son of a bitch. Taking the "paying for shit immunity clause." We might have had a case here, but you know as well as I, it's impossible to sue a guy in mental construct court who got life giving food and made it appear at your place at the cost of his time and/or money without the use of your time and/or money. Case closed. Go get some Windex, clean off the TV and then go to fucking work, my job here is done. — STARKNESS



# STILL READING: AMANDA PETRUSICH

In the conclusion to her Tom Petty tribute, written within hours of his passing, *New Yorker* music and culture critic Amanda Petrusich included a line that illustrates why I trust her implicitly. While gushing over the emotional effects of Petty's vocals in "Free Fallin'", Petrusich adds, "If you do not feel some sort of deep elation while screaming the 'And I'm free!' part of the chorus, I don't know what to tell you." It's that final bit there—the "I don't know what to tell you"—that sealed the deal for me. I even printed the article for my students, asking them to underline that statement. As I said in class, this is the most un-cool thing a critic could admit: she's just outed herself as someone deeply engaged with art, not analytically removed and objectively unaffected. This level of sincere give-a-damnness is also a very un-*New Yorker* style sentiment, which is why I read nearly everything Petrusich publishes. She's not detached from music. Rather, she's committed her senses to the whirlwind of sonic storytelling, even allowing herself to be struck dumb by the notion that others may not welcome the same.

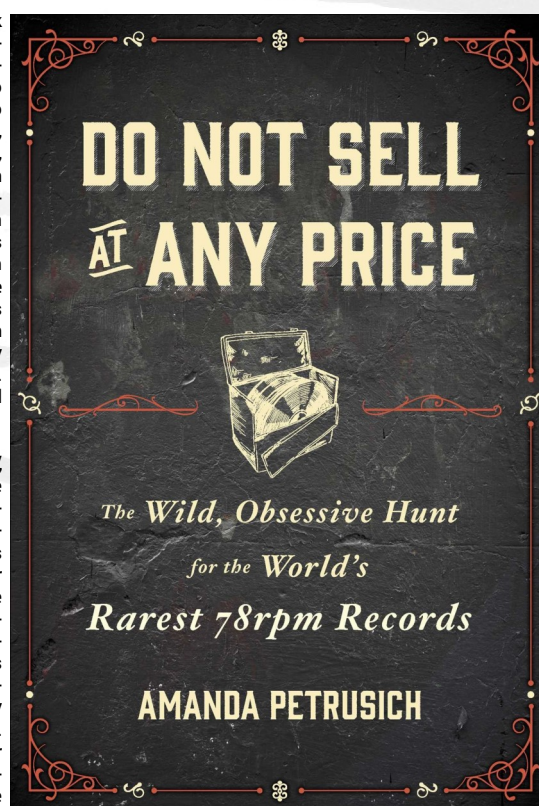
Petrusich's speechless interaction with a Tom Petty chorus helps explain why she felt compelled to write *Do Not Sell At Any Price: The Wild, Obsessive Hunt for the World's Rarest 78 rpm Records* (2014). In the opening chapter, she admits to being overwhelmed as a critic by endless stacks of CDs (up to 60 or 70 new discs a week), as well as more MP3s than she can count or manage, and each one requiring its own critical assessment. Petrusich also clarifies that this level of oversaturation is not unique to critics. It can be experienced by anyone with a computer and Web access. "An unreleased song or album can be detected, acquired, and judged in the time it takes to prepare and eat a grilled cheese sandwich." At some point, she says, access to music is simply too easy, almost thoughtless, which can leave listeners scrolling through pieces of songs rather than losing themselves in music via self-investment—"I do think that the ways in which we attain art at least partially dictate the ways in which we ultimately allow ourselves to own it."

I can relate. As a physical medium enthusiast, I prefer CDs or LPs to digital formats. I still savor covers, reading liner notes, memorizing track lists, and wondering what the crap those guys were thinking wearing *that* to the album shoot. Sans iPod, I enjoy being limited in my car to the 12 or so discs jostling under my seats or in my door pockets. Plus, I relish the search for physical albums. Online shopping has robbed me, to some degree, of the thrill of the hunt. Like Petrusich, "I missed making literal investments in music, of funneling all the time and cash and heart I could manage into the chase." Sadly, this is joyful investment I find myself sharing with fewer people the older I get, particularly as Marie Kondo-esque declutter movements gain headway with the assistance of online music libraries. (See Kondo's hell-a annoying book *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up* in bathrooms of freakishly clean houses everywhere.) Likewise, Petrusich found herself—even as a music lover and critic—scrolling but not engaging digital music files,

which led her to ask questions about a community of record collectors she discovered who dedicate their lives to obtaining, cataloguing, and anthologizing rare, nearly extinct music from the 1920s and '30s, music found exclusively on 78 rpm records. It seems a strange topic in which to compose an entire book until one considers the complexity of such collecting, or of highly devoted collecting itself. There's nothing normal about any of this.

Early in *Do Not Sell*, Petrusich asserts the notion that serious collecting is a form of minimalism. This seems paradoxical to popular consensus since the defining action of collecting is acquisition. However, true collectors prove to be quite persnickety about what they allow onto their shelves. "Just as we sweat over the minutiae of our Facebook profiles and the contents of our closets," Petrusich writes, "collectors customize an identity via the serialization of objects." The goal, in Petrusich's new community, is not to acquire loads of 78s (most collectors interviewed own over 5,000 titles) but to collect loads of *particular* 78s. And each collector has his own schtick. Some collectors obsess over pre-war blues and gospel, others seek comedy or Cajun records, while still others focus on specific recording companies, such as Paramount Records or Black Patti Records. This level of fastidiousness proves beneficial in a community dependent on trading and purchasing unwanted titles as a means of obtaining rarities.

But this minimalism in 78 rpm record collecting is also driven by a common and bizarre insistence on the objective, even empirical nature of music, which of course does not fly well with the impassioned Petrusich. Often while meeting with collectors, she was schooled on the importance of a certain text, the richness of the 78 sound over modern means, the historical significance of preserving what could easily disappear—yadda yadda yadda. All this nerdy chatter seemed innocent enough until the ball finally dropped—most collectors declared their own preferred music as being *the only music*. According to these guys, subjectivity—the notion of



differing opinions or personal tastes—simply did not apply to their collections. They were in the business of collecting the only music that ever mattered. Period. "It didn't help that, among major collectors, there was a nearly universal refusal to acknowledge that any music recorded in the last sixty-plus years was artistically valuable." Petrusich's response was to resist "the urge to force Clash or Prince CDs into collectors' closed fists," but only "because I knew it would be a dead cause." I eventually lost count of how many times Petrusich blatantly called "bullshit" on her subjects, which endeared her to me all the more.

Still, this myopic obsession for a specific style or era of music is what also motivates collectors to anthologize their favorites for the public (and, of course, for profit). The most famous being Harry Smith's six LP collection titled *The Anthology of American Folk Music*, which has become a renowned cultural artifact boasting a wide range of influence. (For giggles I searched for *The Anthology* on Amazon. A six CD reissue will run you \$62 brand new, which is reasonable. But a new vinyl set begins around \$499—just in case you had an extra kidney laying around.) Cultural figures such as Harry Smith are scattered throughout the book, and Petrusich earnestly enjoys exploring their whims and eccentricities. (Check the YouTube channel Vinyl Asides for profiles on collectors Christopher King, Nathan Salsburg, Jonathan Ward—even Amanda Petrusich—who are all featured in *Do Not Sell*.) These are strange but inspiring characters who believe, like Harry Smith did, that they are performing important cultural work by obsessing over forgotten texts. Petrusich agrees: "Collectors of 78s, maybe more than any other curators of music or music memorabilia, are doing essential preservationist work, chasing after tiny bits of art that would otherwise be lost." And thank God they do.

It's because of the collectors' contagious convictions regarding preservation—an act both academic and Sentimental—that Petrusich fully catches the bug of 78 record collecting. It's what also inspires her to close

*Do Not Sell* with a suspicious (even grievous) eye towards New York City youngsters who host cocktail and 78 record listening parties, themselves infected by an explicitly "Gatsby thing" that breathes momentary coolness into antiquity. For Petrusich—who has spent admirable time with the heirs of Harry Smith—the search for forgotten music is something far more pure, more wholesome than a chance to wear suspenders and mustache wax in public and feel cool for a night. What do these kids know anyway?

Despite my effusive praise, I have one glaring complaint with *Do Not Sell*. In the penultimate chapter, Petrusich introduces a discussion of the psychology behind collecting, and in doing so she asks compelling questions about the possible role of gender in the neuroses of collecting, about the manner in which collecting differs from hoarding, and about how the intensity of focus in extreme collecting mirrors OCD, Asperger's Syndrome, and even Autism. Personally, this was my favorite chapter of the entire book. I read it several times, making copious notes and compiling a scientific reading list I hope I'm bright enough to at least skim well. But these psychological explorations also comprised one of the shortest chapters in the book, which is only problematic when weighed alongside the two larger chapters Petrusich devoted to learning how to scuba dive so she could search for 78s in a grimy Wisconsin riverbed. Sure, the scuba chapters were a delightful illustration of Petrusich's own drinking of the 78 collecting Kool-Aid, and they were whimsically written, but the science behind a familiar kind of mania felt engrossingly pertinent, even troubling. I found myself searching for clues about myself in the OCD pages, recounting the sheer madness I experienced circa 2014 while at the height of my horror film collecting. I spent a lot of time and money in those days. I lost a lot of time and money in those days. And I've still never seen a single film by Lucio Fulci. So it goes.

Overall, as in her *New Yorker* record reviews and music columns, Petrusich calls readers to reevaluate their personal engagement with music. She challenges readers not to accept the funneled nonsense that easily appeases the masses, but, rather, to find what speaks to us as listeners—not to our social media feeds, but to the part of us that still needs to lay on the floor and stare at the ceiling with headphones blasting into the sides of our skull—and she asks us to take that need seriously. In the end, while she does not always understand why collectors operate as they do, she grants them respect. "Whatever called these folks to save these records, be it their own bodies or some unknowable celestial force, whatever sacrifices they chose to make—I'm thankful that it happened at all." I can say the same of Amanda Petrusich writing this book. Because of reading Petrusich, I've added nearly a dozen new records to my own "collection"—titles I'm excited to engage this spring. Titles no one else will find interesting or worth traveling over to see. But, then again, I'm sure those who first purchased those original 78 records thought the exact same thing. Time crafts peculiar things. — KEVIN STILL



The computerization of creative content has been a mixed bag. On one hand, it has allowed the unprecedented portability of media consumption. One can watch a movie, listen to an album, ready a novel virtually anywhere. Not only that, but one can have access to hundreds if not thousands of movies, records, comics, books, etc in one very small device, either by loading them into onboard memory or by streaming content from wi-fi or cellular internet. It is a brave new world. It is also a sad new world, as it has changed how we interact with that media. So much content is available that it is hard to see, hear, or read everything we are supposed to have seen, heard, or read. It has depersonalized our relationship with the media. Yet there are still champions of physical media who peruse bookstore shelves, dig through yard sale boxes, flea market stalls, record store bins, and pawn shop aisles for VHS tapes, 78's, first print novels, laser discs, National Geographics, etc. If it can be consumed it can be collected. And many of us do. This is a tribute to the various things we go absolutely stupid over hoarding.

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I have a ton of stuff. I never embraced the move to digital music, due likely to some stubbornness, but more related to discomfort from earplugs and headphones. I've never felt comfortable with that claustrophobic listening experience. Sure, now I could replace all my old stereo equipment and listen over my speakers (the way God intended us to listen to music), but I don't really want to.

Now, my adult kids—and I suspect my wife—may believe I am something of a hoarder, but I don't stress in keeping things just for the sake of possession. Sure, I may not read every one of the 900-some odd books in the house every day, but they are there to give me pleasure whenever I want the joy a certain physical book has. Kindles give me a headache. I read a ton from the library, but it takes too long to go there sometimes.

I also don't listen to all of my 700 or so CDs all the time. The same is true of the 300-plus DVDs—you can't watch them back to back, but my wife and I both enjoy re-watching movies. I admit we have watched a few flicks on Hulu and Netflix.

Now, I have decided that I want to listen more to my old vinyl records (around 550) that I've had for three-four decades—it's better exercise getting up to turn them over. It's too easy to just sit and listen forever to other media. I don't have any hidden gems in my LPs, and I don't think I have anything new released this millennium.

Sure, I have to admit that it's been some time since I've played my plus-100 cassettes and even longer for my 50-70 eight-track tapes, but they are both are my list to break out to enjoy . . . one of these days.

I like the idea of digital and streaming—who wouldn't want a more streamlined lifestyle (I have a shelf of books on how to de-clutter your life)—but I prefer the investment of a tangible object. It helps give me focus that it's real and worthwhile, not something ephemeral which I'll never really grasp or possess. — **MIKE L. DOWNEY**

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# STUFF, STUFF, BEAUTIFUL STUFF

I love music. I love to read. I have devoted an amazing amount of time, money, and space to the listening, reading, purchasing, packing, moving, and storing of books, records, CD's, VHS tapes, DVD's, and cassettes over the years. I've gone on buying binges and have liquidated entire collections. It's just stuff, right? It comes and goes. I have much of the same material on my hard drive as MP3's and ebooks. I love the convenience of having 148GB of music with me everywhere I go, of being able to load entire series of books in my iPad instead of carrying around a dozen or more hardbacks or even paperbacks. The convenience is undeniable.

But I learned something fairly early in the digital era. You really want to have a hard copy lying around because hard drives fail. I'm on probably my fifth iPod in 15 years. E-book files get corrupted. MP3's ripped at 128k sound like dirt and, thanks to advances in storage, there's no need to transfer audio at that low a bitrate. I've learned that you may purchase media from Apple and Amazon but you are really only renting a license to use it. Both Apple and Amazon have arbitrarily decided to either remove files from my digital media machines or render the media unusable. Apple is closing out iTunes for music purchases by the end of the year, which means likely that Apple will eventually no longer support iPod software. There's a MAJOR hole in the market for those of us that want to listen to a portable MP3 player and not stream content. Having redundancy for one's collection in these tech-turbulent times is never a bad idea.

I greatly enjoy pulling an LP from my stacks and placing it on the turntable. I like the ritual of selecting an album, pulling it out of the jacket, smelling that old record smell, looking at the artwork, reading liner notes, noticing the marks left behind by previous owners who loved these albums like I do or in some cases treated them like a redheaded stepchild. I wonder sometimes how a West German pressing of Rush's *2112* wound up in Texas, or who in God's name would let go of their entire Kate Bush catalog printed in Canada. Where did these albums come from? Who owned them before I did?

I love record shopping, though these days it is a lot harder to enjoy than it was ten or more years ago. I love flipping through the LP's, looking for that record I've been searching for and finding it at a decent price. It is the thrill of the hunt. I especially love thumbing through the \$1 bin, looking for records to just take a chance on, just to hear what's etched in the grooves. Drag race PA announcers? Japanese drums? Mad scientist looking German symphony conductors? Weird private press New Age albums? It's the thrill of the chase, though these days that thrill is tampered by crazy prices and lower inventory. I still find deals, but not as often as I used to and that makes it less fun to spend all that time bent over a cardboard box of random records.

That said, I sometimes walk into the room and look at all the stuff I have lining the shelves and I wonder why the hell I have all this stuff. I can't listen to it all, I can't read it all. It's not portable. It takes up A LOT of space. Also I've recently given thought to what having a lot of things accomplishes. My kids are not interested in Daddy's records. They do read some of the books though. An older colleague of mine passed away recently. I had read a quote at that time from someone, I paraphrase, that went like, "A person's mementos turn

Into junk the instant that person dies because it's that person that animates the items." Will anyone be interested in my Run-DMC action figures when I'm gone? Because they mean something to me is what gives them value. If I don't value them, then they are worth nothing. It is something that I think about when I'm in the mood for thinking Really Deep Thoughts, like on my bicycle or walking the dog. — **KELLY MINNIS**

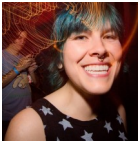
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I remain an enthusiast of physical media not only for the sentimental value but for practical reasons as well. There's something special about being able to pick up and hold in your hands the songs or the movie you've been searching, whether you're standing in the aisles of a record shop or going back to a favorite you have stashed away in your home for that specific moment. When MP3s came out it was freeing in some ways to have access to everything you wanted to hear so quickly and compactly. We were now able to take whatever we wanted without the thought and decision-making that went into purchasing media previously. The positive of this was we could afford to listen to so many more songs then we before and discover new things at lightning speed. The negative was the increased access to whatever we could possibly think of it made everything less consequential.

Even when I listen to music digitally now I still prefer to listen to albums. The album format adds another layer to the listening experience, whether it was written with the specific concepts across the tracklist or simply capturing a specific sounds/moment in time during a recording session. With CDs or records you naturally give yourself over to the album, listening to the whole body of work in a prescribed sequence. It drives me crazy when I'm sitting in a friend's car and they flip from song to song in whatever playlist they've put on until they find one they fancy for a moment, often only listening to it for a couple minutes or so until skipping to the next track. I want to listen to music the way that I watch movies—with as much immersion as possible. Sure there are great songs within subpar albums, but sometimes by continuing to listen to the album you can find hidden gems you may not have previously considered.

I miss being able to give albums and movies as gifts. It was the one area of gift-giving that I felt I could put my DJ skills to use by matching new and interesting things with the particular taste of the person in mind. There was a weight attached with giving a specific person a specific album, an amount of consideration not taken lightly. But now it seems cheap or wasteful to give someone a new CD—particularly since no one walks around with Discmans anymore, and cars are beginning to not include CD players as a standard feature. DVDs or even Blu-rays have also become inconsequential or even burden-full gifts, forcing someone to dig up their disc player to play a movie that might be available on some streaming service anyway. I still have all my movies CDs, not only because they are still a great format but also because I have things that either aren't available for streaming or could go away from Netflix at any moment. As for records, there truly is something to the warm sound that comes from them, along with purposeful choice of picking one off the shelf. — **TODD HANSEN**

## SALACIOUS VEGAN CRUMBS



Brzp. Brrrrrrbrzp. It's the first warm, sunny Sunday of spring, and the chirp of your phone has turned you from a rock into a disappointingly awake human. Twelve of your closest friends are demanding your presence at all of their favorite brunch and 'mosa spots. A barrel roll out of bed and a t-shirt change later, and your rolling with yesterday's makeup to Hullabaloo.

Mimosa #1, poured extra strong, helps you ease into socializing and temper the ubiquitous acoustic country coming from the patio. You waffle between the green chili veggie burger and the portobella cheesesteak sandwich, both sans cheese, and end up with the burger—is it ok to just spoon the chili into your gullet and forget anything else exists?

Mimosa #2, served on the patio at Fuzzy's (or Torchy's, or Mad Taco...who knows), ordered with a bean and potato taco. With guac and chips on the side, you've got to keep it light—you have four more brunch spots and eight more friends to visit on your quest to feed your hangover and keep up social appearances.

Mimosa #3 on the shaded patio of Ozona has made you feel content and generous. You order enough to share—more tacos (black bean, peppers, and mushrooms this time), rosemary potatoes, fruit, and oatmeal (you're drunk, drunk you lives in a world where oatmeal is shareable). Your brain says eat the fruit, but your heart knows that mimosas are already a fruit!

A pitifully-palated friend tries to lure you to Denny's (or was it IHOP?) with a veggie skillet, no eggs, but you're trying to NOT save up a down payment for a house, so you hitch a ride to meet your sober friends at First Watch, and order some avocado toast. You get out-Whataburgered by friends who order the vegan veggie burger on toast and the AM superfoods bowl. Baffled as to why their mimosas taste different from all the other ones that morning (it's just orange juice), you drift off...

...BRZP BRZP! Your quick nap is interrupted by your downtown friends asking where you are—they've ordered you a Chilaquiles pizza and a citrus salad, both with no cheese, at Rx Pizza because they know how to twist your arm. Reluctant, your energy picks back up when you remember they have mimosa pitchers! You're blessed with a plethora of sober friends who have cars and are on their way downtown.

Mimosa #? Stumbling down the stairs of Rx Pizza, you see your favorite bandmates on the patio at Village, and amble over. A trip inside to order a drink causes a scowl to roll over your face and incites drunken rant about the bakery case—why so many gluten-free options, but no vegan?! Two minutes later, placated by your last mimosa of the afternoon, you nibble at friends' leftover hummus + pita, oatmeal, toast + jam, and rosemary potatoes (Where the hell is the ketchup?! Oh, you ate it!).

An angel in a hatchback rolls you back home, where pass out by sundown, blissfully unaware that there's no brunch on Monday. — **KATIE KILLER**



Last year, B/CS indie rock trio **Charm Bomb** seemingly came out of nowhere. Comprised of two scene veterans Katie Keller (guitar) and Tim Horn (drums), it was a surprise to note that long-time College Station native Kyr Jackson (vocals, guitar) knew how to play guitar and could sing like she does. For a band that has one year under its belt, Charm Bomb sounds frighteningly mature. Like Athena springing fully-formed from Zeus's head, Charm Bomb arrived sounding like a band that's been around for awhile. The songs are short, sharp, melodic indie rock with a touch of punk rock. Mostly the band secretly chews pop bubblegum in its soul, and the song smarts are prevalent on their debut EP, out this month on Sinkhole Texas Inc. Records. I took the opportunity to sit down with the three Charm Bombadiers after band practice last month to learn more about the band.

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*KM: How did Charm Bomb become a thing?*

**KIRY:** We had all started having dinner at Katie's house and we talked about, "Hey we should start a band." Tim pressured me quite a bit. "You play guitar, we'll start a band. You can write some songs."

**TIM:** I remember it the opposite. You told me you wrote a bunch of songs and I should come over and play drums. Well, alright but I pretty much just play punk drums, I rip off Operation Ivy and that's all I've done for the past ten years.

**KIRY:** All of Tim's drums are punk drums!

**TIM:** Actually, I think Best Coast started our band.

**KATIE:** I don't know who that is.

**KIRY:** And that's why we don't sound like Best Coast for a good reason. Except for that one song we don't hate as much now but we still don't like it.

*Which one is that?*

**KIRY:** Song 2. What's it called? The one about murdering your husband.

*Murder Hue?*

**KIRY:** Yeah. I don't name them.

**KATIE:** Someone named their husband Hugh. You named a song AND a dude!

*See, I thought it was a color.*

**KIRY:** It is! It's the color of your shirt after murder.

*So Best Coast, huh.*

**TIM:** Best Coast and Cher!

**KIRY:** Yeah, Best Coast and Cher and Sunday dinner, that's how it started.

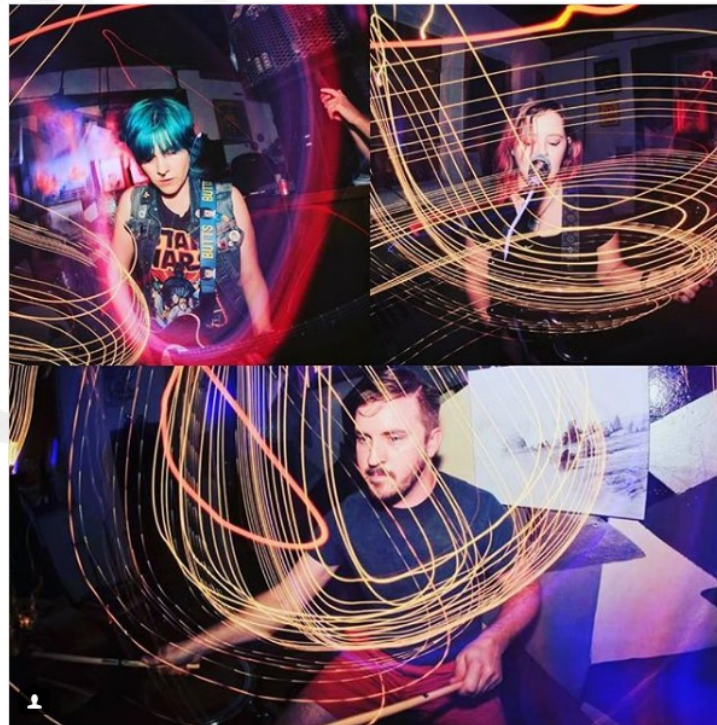
**TIM:** That part's not so much a joke either. We were doing a late night Target run and Kyr busted out her Cher impersonation in the car and I was like, "Hey she can sing!"

**KIRY:** We were in the car and Tim was like, "You can sing, you play guitar, let's start a band." I don't know anyone to start a band with, and he was like, "What do you mean you don't know anyone to start a band with? You know everyone!" And we talked about it at dinner and Katie was like, "Oh that would be fun, but I want to play guitar."

**KATIE:** I didn't know how to play guitar and that's the best way to learn, to play it in a band.

**KIRY:** So I was like cool. I've never played bass before but I also want to play guitar. Tim said he'd be the drummer. So I guess we had a band.

# CHARM BOMB



*(To Tim) How'd you start playing drums?*

**TIM:** I brought my drums up the summer I was living with (Xops) Michael, the summer of 2006.

*Did you play drums in high school?*

**TIM:** No. My brother graduated middle school and I graduated high school and my parents bought us a Peavey drum set.

**KATIE:** Like a collective graduation present for both of you?

**TIM:** Yeah.

**KIRY:** Wait, can you graduate from middle school?

**TIM:** Yeah, that did seem weird. But yeah, the drums sat in my parents garage for the first year. So I spent that summer teaching myself to play drums. I could play Ramones drums but I had no foot-hand independence so I played as slow as possible. It was like that scene in *Kill Bill* where she's learning to wiggle her toe? Just literally trying to do things in a different order and then playing faster and faster. A year later I could play decent enough that I brought them to town with me and we played a couple of Pixies songs and some other things and then six months later Clayton from The Beasts wanted to start another band and he hadn't met me yet. I just showed up and imitated Operation Ivy for four songs and the Flak Jackets started. And as each band I was in died I've been able to start something else. The Flak Jackets into Stay In Touch, then Kill the State, then as that died I was in Mike the Engineer, then I was pulled into Golden Sombrero and now this one.

**KIRY:** I played piano when I was little and I liked it for a while but my sister did it too and got better at it than me and I thought that sucked so I wanted to do something else. So I joined band in middle school and played flute.

**TIM:** What a total flautist.

**KIRY:** I'm a flautist.

**KATIE:** Yeah, you're a flavorful deep fried.

**KIRY:** Then I saw one of my friend's brother playing guitar and I thought that was a cool so I'm gonna do it and be cool too. I got an acoustic guitar. I lived in Korea at the time and my guitar was a Korean acoustic guitar. My parents got me a teacher for a month so that I knew chords and stuff. I stopped playing for awhile, picked it back up again, put it back down again. Then Tim said, "Oh hey you play guitar" and I was like maybe I do? I don't know anymore. I didn't have a guitar anymore, my brother took it. I had no gear so Tim loaned me a guitar and I started writing songs.

*Did you start writing songs before you started a band or after you had a band?*

**KIRY:** I started writing them before we started the band. It was like a seed that was planted at dinner so it was something I was thinking about, maybe I could write songs. Tim was a great coach in that regard. He's encouraged me to do a lot of things that I wouldn't probably have done otherwise, like join a band or be on the roller derby team.

**TIM:** This is the easiest place to start a band. There's a number of people here that don't even have their own

equipment and they were able to start a band.

*Everyone here is so encouraging. I moved here and I had dreams of starting a band but would never have taken the steps to start one if there wasn't that local encouragement, people like Michael or Atarimatt that said just do it, and I was like "I dunno, it won't be very good" and they said SO WHAT?! Just do it.*

**KIRY:** I was really worried about sucking and then Tim and Katie told me I didn't suck. I mean, I'm no Cher...

**TIM:** Does she even play guitar?

**KIRY:** I dunno, she's held one before.

**TIM:** She believes. She can turn back time.

**KIRY:** Singing was easy but singing and playing guitar wasn't, and I'd never played with anyone else until I played with them.

**TIM:** Our first show was the smoothest first show I've ever played.

**KATIE:** It was! But then the next weekend at that Razorcake thing and it was not as good as that first one.

**TIM:** I think we were drunker at that one. But considering our band was being led by someone who's never been in a band before it was really smooth. The Flak Jackets was designed to be a plane crash but the other bands I was in had people that had been in a lot of bands before.

**KIRY:** Justin (Mutant Love) gave me great advice. He said, "Hey, bomb is in your name. If you go out there and bomb it's okay" and I was like thank you! That's the best non-supportive supportive advice ever!

**TIM:** I think being a three piece makes it easier too. And Kyr writes good songs.

**KATIE:** Oh yeah, Kyr writes good songs!

*(To Katie) You play bass. Why not play bass in this band too?*

**KATIE:** Because I wanted to do something new. I play bass in all my bands. If I played bass it would've been the same thing I'd already been doing.

**KIRY:** And you're really good! You picked it up fast.

*Usually most people do it the other way around. Everybody wants to be the guitar player but the person who's picked on the most or isn't as good winds up being the one forced to pick up bass.*

**KIRY:** But we couldn't do that to Tim because none of us can play drums. (laughter) You set that joke up for me!

*I did pitch you that base hit didn't I.*

**KIRY:** Tim, I do love you but it was such a good joke!

*So this was six months ago?*

**KIRY:** No, it's been a year now. We started the band right before Loudfest last year. Our first practice was the last weekend of February.

*You just played your first out of town show, and you just recorded your first album. Talk a little bit about that. Brand new band, you've played probably ten shows, Kyr, is this the first time you recorded?*

**KIRY:** Yes. I had done some stuff with my friend Sean where I was just singing and last December Michael helped me record some stuff for my grandmother. But this is my first band recording.

**CONTINUED ->**

*Is this new album all from last month?*

**KIRY:** No, we recorded it in two sessions. Everything sounds consistent overall. We did an original demo session and we were recording for a compilation in Seattle that still hasn't come out. I think it's coming out later this year. That's the first time we recorded. We recorded our first five songs. Then the most recent session was three other songs. And then doing vocals and going back to fix stuff.

*Do you like recording?*

**KIRY:** I like recording the music but I do not like being in the room doing vocals. I get really uncomfortable, I get nervous burps. The beginning of every song on recording has me going, I'm ready BURP! I drink a lot to help get over that. I go in and record my first one, it's usually not good. Second is best, then third is trying too hard. I don't want to keep doing it, they get progressively worse with each try. I get more nitpicky and too in my head. Just drink some rum, pet some Zoot, get in there and sing the song. As long as the band and Michael say it doesn't suck then I'm cool with it. I don't want to hear it again.

*What's your favorite part of Charm Bomb, Tim?*

**TIM:** I like being in a three piece. It's really easy to organize things. It's pretty flexible. And being in a band with two people I really like and everybody's really accommodating. Being a drummer sucks because you got to carry everything. I guess KIRY has to carry a couple of amps. But generally it's better to help people and get help and easier to schedule shows. And when we had that first practice and holy crap it was really good! It's moving more in a punk direction but we started off and (the song) were all uniquely styled and I liked that. It was really different than what was going on downtown.

*Was that on purpose?*

**KIRY:** It really depends on what I'm listening to at the time. I don't purposely try to mimic the music I'm listening to but I get inspired. And I got really into Screaming Females and it's my happy place. A pop-punky area. There's not really a purposeful direction at all. We can go anywhere. I like that about the band. I make a song I like and then they like it too. It doesn't have to fit a mold. Eventually all bands settle into a sound, at least per album or series of songs. It's not on purpose for things to sound different.

*Katie, what's your favorite part?*

**KATIE:** I dunno. I like that it's only three of us. KIRY writes things that I'd never think of. It's more fun than if we all had the same plan and it would be boring if it all sounds the same. I get to play stuff that doesn't have to sound like a certain thing. We don't have a lot of overlap in where we are all coming from. KIRY and I have some overlap, and then Tim and I have some overlap, but it's not all the same.

*You guys must really hate bands with four members.*

**KATIE:** We might hate the 13<sup>th</sup> person. Or the 8<sup>th</sup>. Eight people is really too much.

**KIRY:** I have no idea how being in a band with more than three people is like.

**TIM:** Actually the mysterious fourth person rescheduled my haircut.

**KATIE:** I've only ever been in four people bands!

**KIRY:** We don't get the two against two thing. It's easier to make decisions with an odd number. I mean, we don't ever fight, except for over the scheduling of Tim's haircuts.

*Kiry, what's your favorite thing about being in a band?*

**KIRY:** I really like having fun with my friends. That's a very generic answer but it's really just fun. I'm just like, hey, I wrote this thing in my room when I was really high, do you want to learn it? And no one's said no yet, so it's really cool. If there were a fourth person there'd be another person for me to argue with. These guys are my friends and we behave and act like friends always. It's not something we take so seriously despite all my drunken diva behavior.

*Tim, tell me a song or an album that really makes you want to play a show.*

**TIM:** Operation Ivy. Kidding! It really is that first Best Coast album. In my mind that was what I thought we'd sound like. We were at first talking about doing a surfy thing, and that's a surfy thing too.

*Or let's say you're going to play a show. You have all your shit packed up in the car. What are you gonna listen to?*

**TIM:** NPR podcasts?

**KIRY:** The ketchup catsup podcast!

**TIM:** Yeah, the How Stuff Works podcast.

*Condiments are your biggest inspiration.*

**TIM:** I suppose.

**KIRY:** We listen to Metric.

*Kiry?*

**KIRY:** Anything would be like Screaming Females. Any of their albums. They rule my world right now completely.

**KATIE:** I have specific things I listen before practice to make really excited about playing. That Ex Hex record and anything Sleater-Kinney but lately I've really been into their *The Woods* album. And Screaming Females too.

*So what happens from here. You're gonna put this record out, rule the world, burp loudly, add Zoot as the fourth member. What's next?*

**KIRY:** I want to play some more out of town but I guess we want to grow organically? Like a really cool grass roots movement.

**TIM:** We have Loudfest this year.

**KATIE:** I would like to put out a vinyl record.

**KIRY:** We had talked with Only Beast about doing a split single. I guess we'll play more shows, write more music, and eat more dinner together.

*Charm Bomb will celebrate the release of their debut EP Friday, April 13th with a live show at Revolution Café & Bar in downtown Bryan. A Sundae Drive (Houston), Cosmic Chaos (BCS), and LUCA (BCS) support. \$5 at the door.*

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When her little sister Lauren died, Claire stopped eating up chunks of her time.

# HIT AND RUN

Claire was showing at least some kind of reaction to the tragedy. "She's getting slower and slower by the day."

At first no one noticed. She went on pretending to be the happy-go-lucky eighteen-year-old we all used to know. She was good at masking her grief as something else.

The day after the funeral, we went to see her. She was sitting on the edge of her bed. We formed a half-moon in front of her, like ants biting at a discarded lollipop.

"I'm cool," she said.

"Like hell you are," replied John, her best friend. "You loved Lauren." John threw a glance at Jeff, Gabrielle, and me. "Let us help you."

"There's no need." Claire's smile was a flash of white light at the bottom of a deep dark well. It was somehow unsettling. "Everything is going to be OK," she insisted, as if we were the ones in need of some comfort.

John's face hardened. When it came to hiding emotions, he couldn't match up with Claire. He put a hand on Claire's shoulder. I guess he needed to see, hear, maybe even touch her pain. Maybe we all needed that. Without something, we felt useless.

Happy days taste like apple pie with a touch of maple syrup. Some love them, others don't. It's a matter of preferring sweet rather than salt, a matter of taste. Salty days usually mean pain, or love, so they aren't all that bad. But Claire didn't care much for all that drama. She had stopped eating her time. She had no idea I was in love with her, none of them did.

And yet there I was, standing in Claire's room as still as a mannequin. I wished I could be alone with her, to tell her the truth instead of saying something stupid like: "It will pass, it will all be okay." I mean, how can things ever be "all right" once you lose someone so close to you? Especially to an unlicensed, stupid, drunk kid driving his father's car.

They have an expression for that kind of accident: hit and run. It sounds like a game. *Hit. Run.* And if no one catches you, boy, you're free.

"Please go home, kids." Her father was looking at us from across the room.

John retracted his hand as if caught in the act of stealing something and replied, "Sure." He looked at Claire again, opened his lips to say goodbye, but decided otherwise, smiling instead. It was more of a disappointed smile than anything else. Claire didn't seem to notice. Her mind was already somewhere else, paying attention to a couple of sparrows flying across the window, chasing each other.

=====

"She's becoming so slow now, when she blinks it's like she's having a nap or something. You can't even tell the difference." John almost sounded satisfied now that

When you stop eating chunks of time, you lose speed. You move slower, you speak slower, you exist at a rate which is different from anyone else's simply because you can't metabolize time any more, and there's nothing much anyone can do.

"You don't look too good yourself," John added. "And, you're having too much of those." He pointed at the beer I was holding.

"Like lately? I'm not drinking any more than usual."

"Yeah, but you sure as hell aren't drinking any less since the accident."

I wasn't completely drunk and, yet I felt like I was standing on pavement made of jelly, trying hard not to lose my balance. "I'm fine," I lied, and he replied with a skeptical look on his face.

"You should visit her," He said.

"Yeah, maybe I should." He had no idea how much my guilt was already killing me.

I took another sip. After a moment or two he voiced his thoughts: "Why is she doing it? I can't understand, you know." I had a theory of my own, but I preferred to keep it to myself. Anyway, I knew I had to find the courage to visit her.

Some days later I did.

Claire was lying on her bed, eyes open, staring at the ceiling. Her skin was so pale I had the impression I was looking at a porcelain doll. 1,098 dinners passed since that afternoon in her room, just a few days after Lauren's accident. Why was she doing it? Maybe she wanted to know what it feels like to be dead without being actually dead. Stasis does that to you.

The house was so silent I could hear her father preparing himself a drink in the other room. As for myself, at least it was early enough in the day that I only had the booze in me from yesterday.

Hit and run. It sounds like a game no one should ever win.

I took a deep breath, then I whispered in her ear the only thing I was supposed to say all along. Not the feelings I had for her; guilt managed to eclipse those too. It was a whole different kind of confession: "I'm sorry to be free." That same day, I repeated the same thing to the cops.

She's been in stasis ever since. Today I'll be released from prison, the timeline is a little fuzzy, because they don't make the effort to get the right ratios of time to you on the inside. Guilt though, doesn't care much for time. Unlike time, it consumes you. — STARKNESS

## NO CROWN, NO COKE: HENRY MCKENNA SINGLE BARREL

*Who?* MIKE JONES! (Heaven Hill)  
*What?* Bourbon (75% Corn, 13% Rye, 12% Malted Barley)  
*When?* Now  
*Where?* Spec's #57, Rough Draught, Republic 1836  
*Why?* Because it's one of the best values in bourbon  
*How much?* \$30

Thoreau, Ford, Fonda, McKenna, and Smith. These are the people I associate with the name Henry. Four of them are famous in their own right. One of them was my sixth grade physical science teacher.

Henry McKenna came to America in 1837 from Ireland and settled in Kentucky where he set out to create a better bourbon using his family's recipe. Now, there are two variants of Henry McKenna and this—along with the fact, that *literally every Heaven Hill bourbon (excluding the wheated) has the exact same mashbill of 75/13/12*—is a testament to how much finesse the distilling process itself truly requires. They have to cook the grain, choose yeast, ferment it, go through the sour mash process, select barrels, char them, store them, and age the final product (for up to 27 years in the case of HH). So when someone says, “recipe” in the bourbon world, they aren't fucking around. Anyway, I mention the two variants because the regular Henry McKenna—black label with a screw top—is not very good. You want the one with the white label and the green lettering. They call this one *Bottled in Bond*. To be labelled BiB, a whiskey must be the product of one distillation season (January-June or July-December) and one distiller at a single distillery, aged in a federally-bonded warehouse under U.S. government supervision for at least four years, and it must be bottled at exactly 100 proof. At 10 years, this is the oldest bourbon to carry the BiB classification.

I hope you learned something. Let's drink.

*Nose:* Pretty standard. Oak and vanilla are the most prominent players here.

*Taste:* I want to say brown sugar, but it's deeper than that. Almost molasses levels. One of my favorite things about the taste of this dram is how balanced it is. If you concentrate on oak, you get oak. Vanilla? Vanilla. If you want it to be sweet, it's there. But in the background, there's a spice that really makes you wonder if you're drinking a high-rye bourbon like Old Granddaddy, but I can't explain why that's there in a mashbill with only 13% rye.

*Finish:* I tend to visit most bourbons aged for longer than 10-12 years with a healthy dose of scrutiny because oak tends to overshadow everything else and they're often harder to really...decipher. Some of the oldest and most expensive bourbons ever made were huge letdowns for me reiterating that, when it comes to what you're drinking, older doesn't always mean better. Surprisingly, this isn't anywhere near that level. The oak is there, but so is all of the vanilla, some malt, and a nice burn to remind you that this is 100 proof. I would pay good money to try this around the 15-year mark.

This dram has gotten a lot of attention this year and I'm hoping they increase production for its next release because I haven't seen this on the shelf anywhere consistently but the Spec's on University Dr. Stop by and pick up a bottle the next time you want to drink something that's as easy as it is thoughtful and technical. 89/100

P.S. Tune in next month when I finally get around to reviewing some swill that you *shouldn't* buy. —TUCKER

# A TRANSGENDER POST

Now that I've confirmed my gender, I won't wax poetic on what it means to be Transgender. Nor what it means for me to be female. I know far too little about either topic; I'm newly learning. So, no harangues on pronouns and Trans rights—worthy subjects, but I'm simply not qualified. I'm just gonna tell you how I feel.

Over the past month of my public confirmation, folks' responses have been astonishingly loving, supportive, and generous—especially that of my amazing wife, Pam. I all too well know that I am tremendously blessed to have my confirmation go so swimmingly. And it's because of y'all.

I've had only two negative reactions: one from a family member, and the other in a Facebook post: “God does not make mistakes. Does 'he' have a penis? Then he is a man. PERIOD!! [sic]”

Geesh. Those peroid shots can make ya angry!

The loving reception I've enjoyed drowns that one ignorant comment, but here's how I feel about me and penis presence. Only in my early 50s did I become aware of my female self. Once upon a time, we, all of us, lived in a culture in which such horseshit FB comments like the one above weren't said aloud. Not because people were more decent then. But because the attitude encapsulated by such posts was so ingrained in the culture that even my loving family of origin operated with “penis = male” as something that needed no announcement.

What did I think about that as a child? I didn't. I couldn't. But I *felt* about it so profoundly that I buried it under my consciousness. Being me became the labor of overwhelming people with smarts and over-meeting expectations so that others couldn't criticize, hate, or abandon me.

Ask how that worked for me. It didn't.

I gravitated to tribes that were inimical to my efforts—jobs, churches, and communities that delineated who was in and who was out, all with the promise that, should I find myself “in,” I could enjoy the endorsement that I was on the right path.

Problem was, I was fantastic at being a chameleon. I wasn't hiding that I was female; hell, I had no idea I was.

*Take a little trip back with father Tiresias,  
Listen to the old one speak of all [s]he has lived  
through.  
I have crossed between the poles, for me there's no  
mystery.  
Once a man, like the sea I raged,  
Once a woman, like the earth I gave.  
But there is in fact more earth than sea.  
“The Cinema Show”—Peter Gabriel/Genesis*

Rather, I felt a persistent displacement, a dissociation from myself, a moodiness, fear, anger ... which always led me to calling bullshit on the tribe, and being tarred and feathered. I tried to join the tribe of the regular, normal, seemingly-at-peace-with-their-lot kids, only to be rejected as a freak because of my “smarts” (iffin you wanna call any of my journey “smart”).

I joined the tribe of the smart kids. They and I convinced ourselves that, though I was smart enough, I was still a freak. I joined the Catholic and Methodist tribes. Church tribes play by jungle rules. Though I thought I had out-holied them, I, in the process, crucified myself on the splintery wood of my inner dilemma. Heartbreakingly, before I was done as a minister and teacher of whatever “one true faith,” I had prevailed in classrooms and on social media, saying all manner of self-righteous things, including that Trans folk (definitely *not* my tribe) were “mutilating” themselves. To my shame, I broke innocent hearts on the wheel of my directionless machine.

Ask me how that made me feel. Exhausted. 'Cuz I didn't know what to *think* about it. And my thinking was fucked up 'cuz I didn't know how to *feel*. I was too busy building container after container, fortress after fortress, to hold myself, only to discover that I was choking inside self-made prisons. *I had no thought or feeling about what those containers held ... Me.*

My efforts landed me in the membership of the anxious and depressed. This is not a tribe, *per se*, but a collection of folks in therapy and/or on meds because we realize we have an illness that no amount of smarts and tribe-making can cure.

But the habit dies hard. Though the meds blessedly

treated the symptoms, I didn't address the cause. Instead, I thought I at last had the right stuff with which to navigate my displacement. My friends, family, and Pam loved me, but they knew, despite the meds, that I could turn on a dime, with a vicious anger reinforced by *fear*. Constant fear. Of what? I had no idea. But it was around every corner, under every rock, raining down from the sky. Dart, dodge, change your colors. I literally thought that this is what everybody did. That this was life.

I wish I could narrate a moment of clarity, when I realized it all. But that's not the way things work for smarties like moi. Gradually, like Eustace in C. S. Lewis' *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, I had enough of my dragon armor scraped away to reveal ... Bethany.

Goddamn or Godbless, Peeps! I didn't know what to think. But Bethany *feels* glorious! I'm me, in a way that I've never been. *I like me. No, I love me!* Without apology. Without fear. Without having to feel like I belong. 'Cuz I already do. To me.

Anticlimactic, huh? Mebbe you were expecting that road-to-Damascus moment when the heavens opened and the scales fell from my eyes? *Shit*, it's still happening. And will be. For the rest of my life. And it's fucking glorious.

You see, in the end, and, in the beginning, Trans people don't need a narrative of struggle in order to be Trans. Bully for folks like Caitlyn Jenner *et al.* who've trod that path. Whether you're Trans or LGBTQ+; Catholic or Methodist; John Bircher or Nudist Buddhist—you *don't* need a *history* to be you.

I'm just beginning to learn that.

For me, “*Once a man, like the sea, I raged. Once a woman, like the earth, I gave. Ah, but there is, in fact, more earth than sea.*”

I am exploring this earthen Bethany. You're welcome to join me. I don't know where it will take us. But I'll go there with you, even if your penis-presence is in doubt or rock-hard certain.

And the moral of the story is: *I feel good. I knew that I would.* Peace out. —BETHANY BEELER

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*The ultimate lesson all of us have to learn is unconditional love, which includes not only others but ourselves as well.*—Elizabeth Kubler Ross

It is no secret to people who know me, that I have considered the last six months of my life something of a shit show. I'll just run through some of the highlights without much description: Ryan Coffey died; one of our adult kids had a little encounter with the law; my husband came down with a mystery illness that, after three months of disability leave from his job, still remained a mystery; my mom passed out unexpectedly while on a month-long cruise; my mother-in-law had a stroke two days before Thanksgiving; our cat died; my mother-in-law died; and a little over three months ago, my husband of nearly thirty-one years came out as transgender. Like I said, a bit of a shit show.

In retrospect, there is the positive, optimistic, free-spirited part of Pam Rose-Beeler who wants to think that it wasn't really all that bad, that there were good parts interspersed among the bad, that life is what we make it and I should look for the good (spoiler alert: Pam Rose-Beeler, in addition to talking about herself in the third person, also has a lot of "should voices" that run through her head. Most of them sound like her mother).

So, when I knew that the spouse formerly known as Randy had been asked to write something about transitioning, I figured that I should have a voice in that too because the spouse now known as Bethany wasn't the only one who had undergone serious and life-changing change.

I wish that I had a nice neat box that I could put the experience in, tie it up with a bow, and say, here ya go ... this is what it is like to be the spouse of someone who is in the process of transitioning. I do not. Instead, I'm going to offer some perspectives, all of them true, all of them a part of my experience, some of them seemingly contradictory.

#### **Perspective-#1—Lifelong Ally and Flame Dame**

As someone who has had several people come out to her, I know that it is a privilege and an honor to be another person's safe place when they are at their most vulnerable. As a long-standing flame dame (think fag hag ... but out of respect for my gay friends who object, not using the "f" word; and finding "dame" preferable to "hag" when referring to myself), I also know that coming out is not a one-time event. People within the LGBTQ+ community are always in the process of coming out ... to new friends, to family who don't yet know, to employers ... and though it may get easier to say the words "I am [insert appropriate letter of the LGBT alphabet soup here]," it is usually never just easy altogether, primarily because it is something that the cis-het community never has to worry about. No one who is feels the need to have to tell anyone else that he/she/they are hetero. (Spoiler alert #2: I also worried whether or not I could consider myself a "real" ally since, although I'd lived in a heterosexual marriage for nearly thirty one years and presented as a cis-gendered, white, hetero female, I actually self-identify as bisexual.)

At any rate, ally-Pam knew when Bethany came out that

# PERSPECTIVES

the thing to do was to be positive, to offer to support and stand by her in whatever way I could, to affirm her bravery in coming out and her new-found freedom to live as her authentic self. Ally-Pam knew and believed and felt all of these things very intensely. Perspective #1 was a true and legit perspective, but it was a hard row to hoe for ally-Pam because of ...

#### **Perspective-#2—Loving Wife and Mother**

So, here's the thing, when you've lived the majority of your life a certain way, that becomes what is normal for you. I don't think that I am in any way LGBTQ+-phobic. I am not afraid of, nor do I feel animosity for, anyone who identifies as any of the letters or what those letters represent. But, like all of us, I can be happy and comfortable with where I am, so much so, that I don't want it to change.

Because of wife-and-mother-Pam, Bethany heard an awful lot of whys: Why do you have to do this? Why are you ruining everything? Why can't things just be the way they were? Why are you doing this to me? Why would you do this to our kids? Why? Why? Why? Why? To be fair, Perspective #1 Pam knew that Bethany wasn't doing these things to hurt, upset, depress, or otherwise distress her ... and because of that, Perspective #2 Pam was filled with all kinds of anger and rage and sadness, but with seemingly no logical place to direct it. This anger and rage that had no place to land ... no direction to be vented ... led to ...

#### **Perspective-#3—Depressed and Suicidal**

We (Bethany and I) decided to spend some time apart ... to give each other some space to process and be who we needed to be and feel what we needed to feel without the pressure of the other's presence. Maybe it was a good idea in theory, but in reality, it wasn't particularly successful. Was it nice to get to spend time with some of my best friends in the whole world for three weeks? Yes, that was cool AF. (Note: those best friends may have a totally different idea of how cool it actually was.)

It probably wasn't too cool that, during the first week, I was getting blackout drunk every other night, nor was it too cool when one of those same friends took away my car keys during the third week that I was away. Since I had already promised him that I wouldn't kill myself in his house ... he logically concluded that the way to save my life then, was to keep me from leaving his house (and if you're thinking, well, yes, but you could have walked away ... Ha! He clearly knows me better than you do, dear reader). I had gotten to the point where I didn't think that any of my perspectives could be resolved in a way that didn't suck.

One of the most dangerous things about depression is that it limits your scope of vision about what can be. The world becomes a series of "this or that" options, none of which contain hope for a better tomorrow until, finally, some people reach the point where it seems like

death offers the only available freedom from pain. I don't like that I was at that place. I wish I hadn't gotten to that place ... and yet, there I was ... without my fucking car keys. That's when I decided that it was time to come home ... to stop processing, stop reflecting, and come to some sort of resolution. (*Nota Bene:* I also talked to my doctor, got on some meds, and made an appointment with a counselor ... because, you may remember, my litany of shit-showiness had started with someone's death and I knew that no matter how much I might have wanted to die, there were people whom I love very much who didn't think, or wouldn't have thought, that was such a great idea.)

#### **Perspective-#4—This Took Nearly Three Months of Processing?**

When I came back home, I had reached the conclusion that I just couldn't do it ... this transgender thing, the attention in public it was going to bring, the hurt that I assumed it was going to cause for at least one of my kids. Couldn't do it, wouldn't do it, said I. Bethany and I tearfully agreed to a separation (of sorts) with me living in the apartment next door and our coming and going independently of each other, living on our own, but remaining "friends." I was a much bigger proponent of this "solution" than was Bethany, but after much discussion, she finally agreed to a trial period of "separation."

Bethany went to bed after taking some of her as-needed anxiety medication and half a sleeping pill. I stayed up ... mostly crying. I had thought that once we came to some "final" decision that I would feel better; that the angst of trying to decide what to do would be gone; that I would be at peace. I didn't; it wasn't; I was still burdened with incredible pain and sadness.

Finally, I reverted, perhaps out of habit, to the only thing I knew to do: faith and prayer. For readers who do not know, a long time ago in what seems like a galaxy far, far away, I was a pastor for ten years, three as a seminary student and seven as an ordained minister. My prayer went something like this: "Hey, G-d, it's me ... and you know that I've been pretty pissed at you of late. And you also know that sometimes I have trouble convincing myself that there is even a You listening. No matter. If there is a You and if You are listening, I am in desperate need of help. Guide me to the decision that will bring me peace. I can't keep living in despair and sadness. I can't keep subjecting my friends to my despair and sadness (I know about compassion fatigue, and I don't want to cause that in those who love me). So, whatever that decision is ... the one that will bring peace ... help me to know it and help me to do it." Most prayers end with an "Amen." Mine concluded with something more like a "So, there!" in my head.

I have no explanation for what happened next. I really don't. A miracle? I won't discount that it *could* have been, though I'm not a big proponent of that explanation in general. Had I finally just run the gamut of Elizabeth

Kubler-Ross' five stages of grief (denial, anger, depression, bargaining, acceptance) and finally arrived at acceptance? That seems equally as suspect an explanation as the miracle theory. Whatever it was, it was like those cartoons where a light bulb appears above someone's head. Suddenly I heard myself in my head saying, "What the hell is the big fucking deal, Pam Beeler? This is the person you love more than anyone in the world; with whom you have the longest continuous living-together relationship; for whom you would die; and who would die for you. What the hell do you care what she wears, how she presents or looks, what she has or doesn't have between her legs? Isn't your relationship together and the love that you share more important than all those things?"

And that, dear reader, was that. The peace that I had longed for came. Acceptance was achieved ... and not in some resigned, begrudging way ... but true, actual acceptance and peace that seemed to suggest that I had made a huge deal for nothing. Don't get me wrong. I still knew that this was a huge-ass deal, but amazingly, I was perfectly okay with this huge-ass deal.

And the rest is history. Bethany has been publically out as transgender for over a month. Under the supervision of both a therapist and a medical doctor, she will soon begin HRT (hormone replacement therapy). Though it is truly no one else's business, good friends as well as mere acquaintances have felt the need to ask about any potential surgeries and that is something that won't be decided until much further down the line.

So, the bottom line is that since Bethany began her transition, I've gone from being a bi woman in a monogamous het marriage to being a bi-woman in a monogamous lesbian marriage with a wife who happens to have a penis ... and a fantastic pair of legs. We are happy. We have received love and support from so many of our friends and family. We don't know exactly what the future holds for us, but that was true before Bethany came out as well.

#### **Epilogue**

#### **Perspective-#5 —The Aftermath**

Lest anyone think that this has all turned out happily ever after or that "acceptance and peace" have translated into absolute perfection, one of our children (the one I suspected would be the most hurt/traumatized/upset by Bethany's transition) has had the exact reaction I had anticipated. We have tried reaching out. We have expressed our unconditional love. However, our efforts have been rebuffed, and we have been excised from that adult child's life. Make no mistake, there are never any "winners" in such a situation, and I would be lying if I didn't admit that it has caused me much sadness, anger, and grief. But here is the reality: over the last few months I have seen my spouse getting to live as her authentic self. I have seen her happier, truly internally happier, than she has ever been. Her moodiness, anger, and life-long depression have not disappeared, but they are so much more reasonably handled and rarely emerge, whereas, previously they had been daily struggles. She is happy ... she is herself ... she is amazing ... and that will always be given pre-eminence over my adult children's needs at this point in their and our lives.

—PAMALYN ROSE-BEELER



# HYPOCRISY IS THE NEW INTEGRITY

I was watching a friend's band play a set at NOTSUOH in Houston Texas during Spring Break as part of this quaint and antiquated (in Houston anyway) notion of "supporting DIY music". Although the band in question was coming from Dallas. Being as the show was on a Tuesday and in Houston, turnout for this show was rather thin. Rather than being "that guy" who showed up just to see his friends band (see "supporting DIY music" above) and then leaving, I came early to see the opening acts. Perhaps I should have looked at the Facebook event first, but once upon a time people went to see bands and took their chances knowing nothing about what the night had in store; or came to see a band on somewhat sketchy word of mouth from trusted friends. Fair enough.

I arrived and the opening act started their set. As I absolutely refuse to give dreadful "bands" publicity let's just call said combo **The White Privilege Wonders** - WPW. WPW had a large Ouija board blanket (or throw, or banner or whatever you wish to call it) covering the stage immediately below them. Unfortunately I was unable to point to the word "no" during their set; though I should have. They had no musical instruments, just a shiny new Apple laptop computer on a bar stool on stage right. Then they hit their 50 dollar smoke machine and the "show" began. First of all, if your "band" can afford a new Apple laptop computer why not swing for the fences and buy a smoke machine of higher caliber than one that would be used at a junior high Halloween dance. WPW consisted of (of course) one white college aged male and one white college aged female. Their set consisted of a half-baked mélange of horrible rap and cliché industrial music that came from preset "music" samples produced by their shiny new Apple laptop computer. This toxic brew was seasoned with cheesy sci-fi movie samples (google the Strong Bad "Techno" sketch on You Tube as a reference point) and other sampled quotes that were supposed to be "inspirational". I have no doubt that they didn't get clearance to use any of these samples.

For the next 45 minutes, WPW warbled, screeched, screamed, "sang" and attempted to "rap" to get their point across. Their "point" apparently was some incoherent, half baked, anti-corporation, ant-conformity, and pro-environmental diatribe. Let me get this straight. Your "band" is going to bitch about corporations, conformity, and environmentalism whilst using a device mostly manufactured in one of the most brutal authoritarian regimes in the world with a horrible record on environmental issues (China) manufactured by essentially slave labor sold by a huge multi-national corporation (Apple). I'm sure the person who was paid pennies to manufacture WPW's laptop was very grateful for their concern. I kept looking for some sign of Irony and/or Tongue and Cheek in what they presented. No such luck. They believed in their "message" as fanatically as

a Trump supporter telling you that CNN presents "Fake News".

It gets better. At their merch table, they sold various Wicca/Hippie trinkets and books on Wicca hippie topics. They didn't write any of these books (thankfully) but were more than willing to mark up these books 3-4 dollars above what they would cost online. So while crying about corporate profiteering they were more than willing to exploit make money off of works they didn't create. Just like the samples they used, I'm *sure* they got permission from the authors to sell these works...and if you believe that then WPW is the "band" for you. Apparently their exploitation of the work of others to make money is ok but corporate profit isn't. Along with this, they were selling 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment rights stickers and "come and take it" with the usual warnings of tyranny if guns are taken that these stickers promote. The only thing missing were souvenir yellow Jewish concentration camp stars and KKK hoods. Now my head is swimming in confusion. So what we have here are anti corporate, Wicca/Hippy, quasi 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment/Libertarians. For a while the shock of the ridiculousness of I was being confronted with prevented me from mustering up any anger or even sarcasm. So how exactly does the "rule of three" apply to gun ownership and stealing copyrighted works? Do you get three bullets back for every bullet fired or three of your songs "stolen" for every song you steal?

Now I have no doubt that Crass powered their commune with electricity bought from the British Government rather than windmills and Fugazi probably used the gasoline to get to tour dates just as Nickelback does now when touring. However, to preach about political issues and to lack the basic insight that your actions represent, as much, if not more than, what you preach is something that even a 13 year old at his/her first Warped Tour understands. Just as I was about eviscerate WPW with 20+ years of anarchist punk fanzine and D.I.Y rhetoric, it hit me. Hypocrisy IS the new integrity. In the internet/entertainment driven, "fake news", hyper-capitalist culture prevalent now, it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you **VEHEMENTLY AND UNCONDITIONALLY** believe it; that is until you change your mind. Then you can **VEHEMENTLY AND UNCONDITIONALLY** believe in the next thing that captures your fancy and so on, like a Russian nesting doll that you can never get to the bottom of. This is the final culmination of the old hippie mantra "It's all good". It IS "all good". My ideology needn't have any consistency or validity as long as 5-20 of my closest online "friends" believe it. My band is bigger than the Beatles because I got over 500 likes on my band's last Facebook posting and so on and so on. To flourish in this environment requires hypocrisy. I'm absolutely certain of this as WPW said so; at least until I change my mind. - **RENTED MULE**

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# STILL DRINKING

The wife and I just now enjoyed our first (of possibly many) Happy Hours at Blake's Steaks over on University next door to the lamented Blockbuster that's now, more sadly, a frickin' Genghis Grill. Our intentions were to get a feel for Blake's, try a few treats, and check out the beer situation. I waltzed in wearing a Red Fang shirt, to which manager Justin—himself shrouded in a Sunn O))) shirt—announced over the room, “Hey, I love that band!” Recognizing I was in good company, I hurled back, “And I love finding fellow lovers!” We bonded instantly via Gildan cotton and the aroma of exquisitely hot grease. Our family's experience only escalated from there. The wife had Funnel Cake Sticks, which she pronounced, “Leslie Knope approved waffle tubes.” I had wings doused in mild sauce with garlic pepper. Possibly not the best choice for my post-operative intestinal tract, but—my Lord—I found satisfaction in both the sauce and the fry. If the snackable vittles are any indication of Blake's Steaks real food, they'll have no problem becoming a BCS tradition.

As for the beer situation, did I mention that this was merely our first Happy Hour at Blake's? These guys sport eight tap handles of constantly rotating Texas craft beer. Tonight I found brews from our own **New Republic Brewing**, Houston's **8th Wonder**, Fredricksberg's **Altstadt Kolsch**—and there were more, which I didn't write down, because I was so happy that they didn't have Shiner Bock and that I was able to try a new brew and brewery: Houston's **Eureka Heights Brewing Company's Space Train IPA** (5.5% ABV / 65 IBUs). The pour was stellar, especially since my bartender poured the beer, stood back and watched it, then poured more. What is this? A legit bar?! I did not receive a fast food quick-and-gimme half-foam half-assed pint. Love it! The Space Train was also noteworthy in itself: diffusing big floral notes that made for an easy sipping IPA all on its own. I could have had several.

But what caught my eye—and actually brought me into Blake's Steaks—was their growler station. If you're not familiar with growlers, take note. Growlers are exactly like big-glass bottle growlers, only growlers are poured and sealed into aluminum cans, which means growlers emit zero light, zero air, and can sit in your fridge for much longer than a growler. The downfall to a growler is that once you open one you're committed. Unlike a growler, growlers do not reseal for tomorrow's expedited enjoyment. Freshness is key. Blake's Steaks, as far as this guy knows, is the first to offer growler service in the BCS area. Fill your growler elsewhere if you're feeling immediately frisky. Otherwise, for \$12.99 you can take home 32 ounces of fine Texas craft beer—of course with exceptions to the heavy hitters. For instance, tonight I noticed a handle for **Maximum Deluxery Imperial Porter** (10.4% ABV) from Houston's Sigma Brewing. One should expect a 32 ounce growler of massive Imperial porter, aged in Bourbon barrels with cocoa nibs and figs, to exceed the cost of a Hefeweizen from 8th Wonder. It just stands to reason. Plus, at 32 ounces, you're either making friends happy or teasing yourself into becoming another of America's great drunken poets . . . but who's kidding anyone in the latter.

In other news, keep your eye open for two 12 ounce bottles worth your dollars and time. The first comes from our own **Saint Arnold**. This year's **Divine Reserve #18** is an Imperial Stout weighing in at 13.4% ABV and 48 IBUs. According to their website, Saint Arnold utilized “four times the amount of grain as Fancy Lawnmower, dosed in two additions of Belgian candi syrup during fermentation to provide an adrenaline shot to the yeast, and let the beer rest for three months before adding a small amount of Madagascar vanilla beans as an added layer of complexity.” Alright, that sounds nerdy enough, but how does that translate into a drinkable experience? Well, poured into a snifter glass and left to itself for half an hour it tasted pretty damn good. Big, big coffee, tobacco, and dried fruit notes clobbered me, while the sheer knowledge of those Madagascar beans seemed to convince my palette—by some Pavlovian trick—that those big chewy flavors were rounded out and mellowed by the vanilla, even though I couldn't quite put my taste buds on the vanilla. The alcohol heat was pronounced, which leads me to believe that, successfully cellared (looking at you, Wonko!), this sucker will be even finer in about three to six months. While I cannot rightfully compare this Divine Reserve to those in the past, I can say that this one is worth buying in bulk (around \$5 a bottle), trying a few soon with friends, and then sticking the spoils in the hall closet. You know Texas: some random summer storm will kick the electric come July and we'll all need some levity around the Scrabble board. That's when this Divine Reserve will feel like a God-send, even to non-believers.

In a similar vein, Delaware's **Dogfish Head**—the state's only current claim to fame and culinary whimsy—recently released a **Wood-Aged Bitches Brew Imperial Stout** brewed with honey. The W.A.B.B. is a big beer, even at a mere 9% ABV and 38 IBUs. I first had the original Bitches Brew several years ago with my good friend Splat B.B. while listening to Miles Davis B.B. record. Don't laugh. You've already fantasized about it this far into the paragraph. And it elevated our friendship by unspoken degrees. I can't say musically the same for W.A.B.B., which I split in 12 ounce formation in my driveway with the illustrious Pepe Guzman, to which he said several times, “Whew! This makes the entire week worth it!” I agreed. And while I also cannot speak comparatively to the original B.B., I do find W.A.B.B. also worth every bit of its five dollar pull. Like those Madagascar vanilla beans in the Divine Reserve, the honey here is mellow, quietly muting Dogfish Head's gnarly ego and allowing the Imperial stout to sing—not growl—in the bottle. With a little research on Dogfish Head's website, I learned that the honey added to Bitches Brew is not just honey; rather, it's the inclusion of a whole other ale called “Tej—a native African honey beer”—like mead, that is aged by Dogfish Head in their South American Palo wood tanks. These guys are culturally appropriating left-and-right! And if I wasn't drinking 9% beer I'd be WOKE enough to care as much! Bottom line here: get some. Share now. Save till later. You can't lose. And brush off your old Miles Davis record for this one. It's fun to be so intolerable.—KEVIN STILL



# RECORD REVIEWS



**Genocide Pact**  
*Order of Torment*

Metal often has a pattern of producing some of the best music when faced with internal opposition, like when thrash emerged as a reaction to glam metal. In the last ten years, a new wave of extreme metal has arisen to combat the repulsive tide that was the metalcore and deathcore scene of the early 2000's (Fight me!). However, the influence of punk has not waned. Many emergent extreme metal bands have begun incorporating punk influences into their music, but the result is something different altogether. A band who has done so is Genocide Pact, a three-piece death metal act from Washington D.C.

Following up from their first full-length album in 2015, Genocide Pact has released their sophomore record, *Order of Torment*, which has garnered some significant attention. One look at this record's cover immediately tells you its death metal. What's very cool is the blue and gold color scheme, which is different for death metal album art. Like the artwork, the music itself is something different.

What about *Order of Torment* is death metal? The vocals, guitars, lyrics, and the heaviness. Low, guttural growls and the thrumming of dark, rhythmic guitars are a constant. Throw in some dystopian political lyrics into mix, and there you have it. As for the death metal mood, Genocide Pact has nailed it, but despite this accuracy, there is still a lucid punk presence. The guitars may be heavy, but as mentioned before, they have a distinctive thrum that is all too crust punk. There is also an obvious lack of guitar solos and blast beats throughout the record. Distinctive solos appear in "Pain Reprisal" and "Authoritarian Impulse", but for the most part, *Order of Torment* is driven by rhythms, riffs, and grooves. In addition, even though the vocals and lyrics fit the death metal mold, that lingering punk influence persists. Rather than traditional death metal vocals, we get death metal vocals with a tinge

of crust. And sure, political lyrics are present in death metal, but these lyrics are tamer than what most death metal artists would put out; yet another nod to punk.

I'm biased when it comes to death metal. As a general rule, I like my death metal free from punk influences. However, I do make one notable exception; Bolt Thrower (RIP) is one of my favorite death metal bands who is rhythm guitar driven, lacks blast beats, and has punk influences, yet they retain a truly death metal sound. For certain, Genocide Pact's death metal + punk formula is not the blasphemy that is deathcore, but it's not exactly death metal in its truest form either. That said, *Order of Torment* is not my cup of tea. For my own personal rating, I'd give this record a 2.6/5. Not terrible, but not great either. However, for those with tastes for music put out by bands like Gatecreeper, Mammoth Grinder, and Young and In the Way, *Order of Torment* is sure to please. For that crowd, I give it a 3.5/5. —CALEB MUL-LINS



**Andrew W.K.**  
*You're Not Alone*

*The beat is yours forever  
The beat is always true  
And when you really really need it the most  
That's when rock and roll dreams come through*  
—Meat Loaf singing Jim Steinman

The empowering and liberating capacity of rock music has been apparent since the Fifties, so it's not surprising that Andrew W.K. would continue to tap into the same energizing stream that fueled the *Bat out of Hell* albums.

*You're Not Alone* is pretentious, preachy, powerful, pure rock and roll. So it's everything one'd want from an Andrew W.K. album: careening from party anthems (naturally) to grand Mobyesque musical structures to spoken word (mercifully short). There are even two instrumentals among its 16 tracks. It's almost too much. It's like Andrew W.K.

wanted to be so encouraging to every possible listener that life is worth living, that he or she is valuable, to not kill yourself, that he piled everything into this album including the three spoken word passages. The music should have been enough, but he's the artist, so the feeling that it's a bit overkill is this listener's bias. But then over the top is part of rock and roll, just like the Meat Loaf albums; hence, it's not a bad thing.

The tunes are there: the Sex Pistols anarchy of "I Don't Know Anything" ("I don't know what to say/But that's okay"), the soaring piano-driven "Total Freedom," and the David Bowie-channeling-Phil Spector's Wall of Sound "Ever Again." And there's more. The affirmation of "Music Is Worth Living For" is that life is worth living although the slowed-down chorus undermines that statement. The pounding piano and guitars of the title cut resonate with promise: "Your journey's not over/It's just begun."

In some ways, the music alone is more supportive than the lyrical messages. The majestic piano of the last half of "Break the Curse," the crescendo-filled "The Party Never Dies," and the instrumentals are as riveting as anything out there ("The beat is always true"). How the revival fervor of "You're Not Alone" will play with the "I Get Wet" fans from 2001 remains to be seen although "The Wolf" hinted at this predilection ("Never Let Down," "I Love Music").

Darkness is easier in these times, but Andrew W.K. is working for the light. —MIKE L. DOWNEY



**The Breeders**  
*All Nerve*

Much is being made of *All Nerve* being the true sequel to The Breeders' landmark 1993 album *Last Splash* because for the first time in 25 years the "classic" Breeders lineup has reassembled. Technically, this is true. In the ensuing 25 years Kim Deal has been the lone original member to remain in The Breeders. Her sister Kelley

Josephine Wiggs, and Jim McDermott went off to do other things. So while this is a reunion of personnel, this is no return to the 1993 sound. The bubbly, effortless effervescence of *Last Splash* is largely absent. In its place the band has slotted a darker, sparser claustrophobia, more akin to the starkness of their debut album *Pod*. The reflections on the room were bright in 1990, but in 2018 those echoes are murkier, somewhat dirtier. In no other place is this apparent than on "Space Woman", the centerpiece of the album.

The song starts off with muted guitars at a stately pace with menacing synthesizer filter sweeps. "Space woman, space woman," Deal sings with hushed wonder, "how lonely does it feel?/you're spinning round and round/I look up/I'm down here rolling around too". The Breeders have always been aces at the loud/quiet thing (duh, Kim Deal along with her fellow former Pixies bandmates invented it) and the palmed guitars give way to the big crash. The female astronaut replies, "There's a beach ball in the stadium/playing baseball out there having fun/hitting home runs and long drives/with the sun in their eyes". That's the surface of humanity as seen from afar. But she adds, "I'm lonely too". Deal responds, "I watch you disappear/You have no gravity" still with wonder, but Space Woman squashes that wonder from her eagle eye perch. "When you look out at your big rock show do you ever want to turn around and go/hitting every green light on the long way home?" Everything looks great from afar but up close we are all miserable. What a hard universal truth to understand, conveyed in the context of an entertaining four minute pop song. This is the mastery of The Breeders.

This song is so good that it allows the album to grow very broad shoulders to bear the weight of the other 10 songs. It's not that they are bad, because they are not. The other songs, aside from Wiggs' Joy Division ode "MetaGoth", just aren't as good. Let's put it this way. On first listen to this album I stopped at "Space Woman" (song #5) and then listened to it easily three dozen times in a row before I listened to the rest of the album. The rest of the album has its moments. "Skinhead #2" has a pleasant image of crushing beetles on your lips as lipstick, "Walking With a Killer" evokes images of empty corn fields along east 35. It's a lazy, somewhat languid experience, this album, punctuated in the



# CONCERT CALENDAR

**4/5—Prairie Switch, Desdimona, Colton French @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**  
**4/5—Poly Action, The Fox In the Ground @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**4/6—Deep Cuts, Wartime Afternoon @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**  
**4/6—Corusco @ Murphy's, Bryan. 8pm**  
**4/6—Mad Rant, Beige Watch, HYAH!, Cosmic Chaos @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**

**4/7—Thunderosa, The Boleys, Randall Conrad Ollinger @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**4/8—Cindy's Birthday Party with Mutant Love, Unicorncomdog @ Revolution, Bryan. 5pm**  
**4/8—The Gray Havens @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm**

**4/10—Josh Willis, Mike Frazier, Nathan Perry, Michael Witt @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**

**4/12—Band of Heathens @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**  
**4/12—Kal Marks, The Ex-Optimists @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

by the perfect song.

As I have said many times this decade, we have been spoiled rotten by elder statesperson bands continuing to put out vital work well into their careers or in some cases to reunite after years dormant to create music as challenging as in their initial runs. The Breeders embody this spirit as well. —  
**KELLY MINNIS**

Late in finding them, but fuck the notion that I can't get into a band on their latest album.

Truth is, this latest album is pretty different from their other releases, and it's so fantastic. It's heavy, it's heartfelt, it's crafted, it's careful and purposeful. I love songs that sound like they were creepily written about what I'm thinking about lately. This album does that. "Every night you were tripping out/In the morning you were coming down/If it's breaking your heart, if nothing is fun/Don't lose hope, my son/This is the last one/Cause every night had you laid low/It's going to feel so good to let it go/It's all in your head, your race is run/Don't give up, my son, this is the last one."

There seems to be something remarkable in every single song...this isn't the case in so many albums in the history of albums. Feels like soul searching, peppered with anxiety and coming to terms with the shitty parts of the most wonderful things in life. It sometimes sounds like someone battling life-long teachings and unconscious slavery to blindly held religious beliefs. So interesting. "In the valley of your slowly fading memory/Are there pastures bathed in some uncertain light where you won't graze?/Paths you won't take?" Plus amazing musicality.—  
**JORGE GOYCO**

**4/13—Isonomist, Trepanation, Distance/Here, Khan, Dawn of Dissolution @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm**  
**4/13—Charm Bomb (CD release), A Sundae Drive, Cosmic Chaos, LUCA @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**

**4/14—Corusco, Electric Astronaut, Michael Witt @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**

**4/19—David Ramirez, Andrew James @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm**  
**4/19—Guilla, Oliver Penn @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

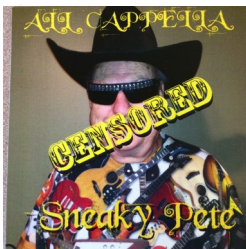
**4/20—Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**4/21—Jay Satellite, Magic Girl, Guys Named Todd @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**4/24—Howardian Scott Yoder, Beige Watch, Mutant Love @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**

**4/27—Hand Me Down Adventure @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**

**5/1—North By North, Wartime Afternoon, Electric Astronaut @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**



**Sneaky Pete**  
*All Cappella*

expect from a retired biology professor...or maybe not.

The closest tunes to vocals are on the appropriately-titled "Mumblin' Mummy" with a raw guitar vibe fitting for a cheesy horror flick and the bouncy harmonica-tinged "Mmmmm!" featuring various yummy noises. "Duane Diddle" is a paean to the instrumental contributions of Duane Eddy and Bo Diddle while "Metronome" and "Metro Gnome" are both tranquil and brighter versions of a theme.

The 24<sup>th</sup> album from the longtime novelty tunesmith is a compilation of the instrumental songs he's sprinkled among his records over the years. *All Cappella* is Sneaky Pete Rizzo's second release this year with a third album of new tunes coming soon from his home studio in College Station. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, the majority of the 14 tunes are straightforward musical compositions with only the titles indicative of the performer whose songs were featured for decades on "The Dr. Demento Show."

There's the sound experiment of "Sperm Whale Nursery," the upbeat "Liver Rot Rhapsody" with nice slide guitar, and the ominous spaghetti Westernish "March of the Army Slugs." Also, "Super Hadron Kollider" with its other-worldly buzz that settles into a nice melodic roll is what you'd

Two of the best tunes are those named for his daughters: "Summer's Lullaby" and "Autumn's Lullaby." Both are serene yet layered arrangements with the former evoking a surf instrumental influence while the latter boasts a quiet haunting beauty. Subtle percussive elements accent the tunes that both close with chimes. "Dance of the Galaxies" is a sprightly cut highlighting a low-key guitar-keyboard interplay while "Dance of the Butterflies" is a more sedate rendition with a flute flitting about. "Pocketful of Whimsy" is a quiet mix of harmonica, keyboards, and guitar.

All in all, *All Cappella* is a solid collection of relatively laid-back instrumentals that continue a tradition in rock music going back a half century. Rock on, Sneaky Pete.—  
**MIKE L. DOWNEY**



**Brand New**  
*Science Fiction*

Man, every once in a while I go to Pitchfork to sift through all the shit on there, rarely finding much good. Then I cross check that research with HasItLeaked.com. I like that site because it's fueled by expectation from fans, which tells me that it might actually be good. I mean, if fans are expecting and looking for a leaked album from their favorite band...that sounds like the fame I dream of for my projects. Well, I found Brand New.



CHARM  
BOMB  
CD RELEASE  
A SUNDAE  
DRIVE  
COSMIC  
CHAOS  
FRIDAY  
APRIL  
13 LUCA

REVOLUTION 10PM