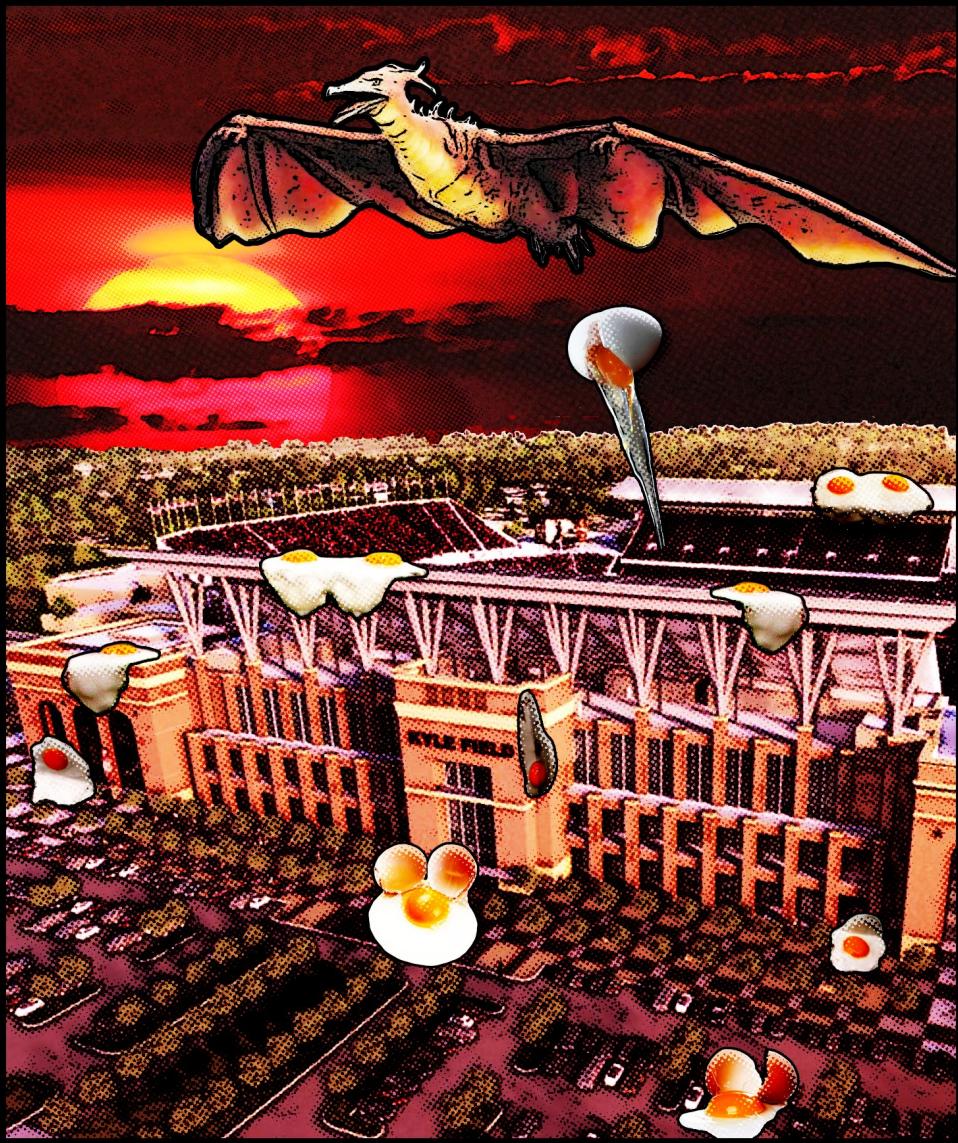


STEREOPRESIDENT



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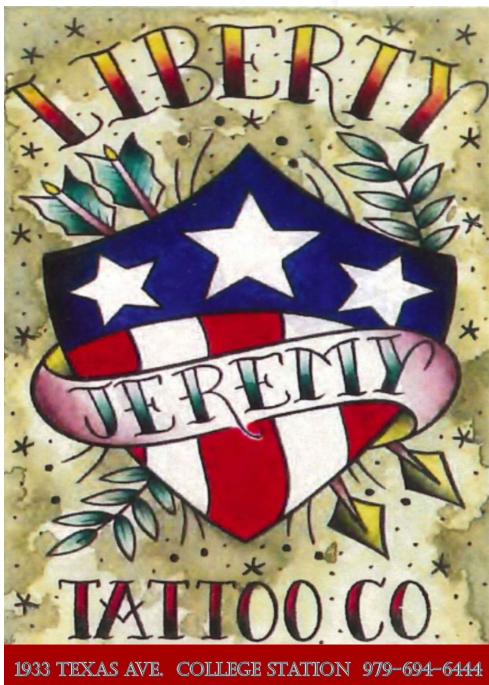
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CRIMINAL IN CHIEF



That Donald Trump always has taken pride in skirting the law has been apparent throughout his public life. Why else would he have been sued thousands of times? He feels laws are for other people, the poor people. Trump doesn't care about the law, and he doesn't know the law.

Recently, when two of his partners-in-crime (Manafort and Cohen) were either found guilty or pleaded guilty to breaking the law, Trump whined that what they were guilty of wasn't really criminal. Of course, Trump knows the law better than anyone else in the entire universe. His arrogance and ignorance are appalling. He even bragged during the election about not paying taxes because he was "smart."

It is becoming more readily apparent that Trump and his henchmen conspired to fix the presidential election in order to get him elected. Now, I know Trump has been caterwauling for months about "no collusion." He spews it out so much (often misspelled) that I'm reminded of the scene in *The Princess Bride* where Inigo keeps saying "inconceivable" until Inigo remarks: "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

Knowing Trump's limited vocabulary and aversion to reading, he likely doesn't know "collusion" means "conspiracy," which is exactly what he and his underlings did concerning the election. They planned, conspired, to cheat during the election by employing the help of an enemy foreign government, namely Russia.

The president of the United States is a criminal, a crook. He has even started playing the role of a criminal even more with his squealing about how his longtime lawyer Cohen flipped. Now who uses the term "flipped"? Mobsters. Criminals. Crooks.

It is ironic that a criminal like Trump would squawk about how "flipping" should be against the law. That Trump is sounding like a mob boss is not unusual, given his father's history with organized crime as well as Trump's own squalid ties over the years.

The late Senator John McCain knew how corrupt Trump is. Why else would the Senator request Trump not attend his funeral? Of course, Trump has no respect for Senator McCain since he spent more than half a century serving America instead of lining his pockets. Trump despises military veterans like Senator McCain since they serve the country instead of themselves like Trump has always done. His treatment of war hero McCain is disgusting.

So, a felon in the White House – what now? Luckily, we live in a democracy where the wheels of justice turn, sometimes slow, but they do turn. Trump was elected in a democratic way, and he will be booted from office in a democratic way. America survived a venal hooligan like Nixon; it can survive a tyrant like Trump.

Finally, the Mueller investigation will go on; more indictments would crop up; more Trump-lite criminals will be heading to prison. Eventually, even Congress will have to act to remove Trump from office by impeaching him. Then, he can be charged with treason, among other crimes against America. Whether Trump will ever do the perp walk is an unknown, but we can dream about that part. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

THE CONSEQUENCES OF BIGTIME SPORTSBALL

I'm pretty sure everyone around here is aware that Texas A&M University Athletics left the Big 12 sports conference and moved over to the South Eastern Conference. It was a big deal five years ago when it happened and, in this writer's opinion, has helped to trigger the boom in enrollment and national recognition for our humble little farmers college. While it has made interesting impacts on a variety of programs within the college, I believe the move was done solely to allow our football program to compete with the best of the best of the best. The last five years have proved interesting for the football program, from the rise and fall of Johnny Football Manzel, the successes and challenges in the NFL for Ryan Tannehill, the Bennett Brothers, and Von Miller, to the celebrated hiring and controversial firing of former University of Houston head coach Kevin Sumlin. But it can be said TAMU did not *truly* enter into the SEC until it made its first major head coaching choice, the poaching of Florida State University head coach Jimbo Fisher.

The Fisher hire had mixed reviews. Many stalwart Aggies were excited to finally get a coach of national caliber to lead their program. Some felt like Ag fans needed to be more realistic in their expectations of their football program. Coach Sumlin was 51-26 during his time at TAMU. The recruiting was solid, aside from some interesting quarterback mishaps, and TAMU had made some key position coaching upgrades. Some felt it may have been better to let the program build slowly. It is reported that TAMU Board of Regents chancellor John Sharp upon hiring Jimbo Fisher handed him a replica SEC Championship trophy with his name on it sans a date, expecting Fisher to etch that date in for realz. That's some high pressure. Turns out that we have now seen a tiny little bit of what that pressure actually looks like when applied to the student athletes whose arms, legs, and brains are expected to provide them w's for Fisher and Sharp, all from the point of view of former TAMU linebacker Santino Marchiol.

Late last month Marchiol's allegations concerning illicit practices and recruiting techniques came up as a part of an NCAA transfer waiver request. Marchiol no longer wished to play at TAMU and, having already red-shirted a year, could not do a simple transfer without giving up another year's eligibility. He needed to use an arcane NCAA bylaw to request eligibility for playing out his last year at University of Arizona. In order to accept a transfer, the student athlete has to present "mitigating circumstances that are outside...the student athlete's control and directly impact the health, safety and well-being of the student-athlete" that would force the player to leave a program and transfer to another. In essence, in exchange for eligibility the NCAA turns the pleading student-athlete into a rat against his/her current team to let them out. In his claim, Marchiol attested that a.) he was given hundreds of dollars on two different occasions to show recruits a good time on the town (the NCAA only allows a student host to spend \$40 a day on recruits during visits and never to give the money to recruits...Marchiol does not claim he gave money to recruits but he did pocket what he didn't use); b.) players were required to attend unsanctioned offseason workouts because the players were treated too gently by the previous coaching regime; and c.) because of the

attitude that the players were coddled Marchiol was required to practice through a significant foot injury (Marchiol says he and other teammates were constantly sworn at and torn down psychologically and physically by position coaches).



Marchiol's concerns are certainly notable but the NCAA won't think so. They will quite quietly grant Marchiol's transfer and sweep the other allegations under the rug. Or a cursory investigation will occur and TAMU will argue out of it or get slapped on the wrist and warned to never do that again. And, of course, TAMU will comply on the surface.

Aggies should pay very close attention to these allegations. Not necessarily because they scrape the surface of what other recruiting and moral violations the TAMU coaching staff may or may not have committed, but because it really is only a matter of time until Texas A&M University, a school founded upon tradition and morality, finds itself under the microscope of a legit for-reals big time NCAA investigation. Whether or not it merits such scrutiny is beside the point. When you big time sportsball on the sort of national scale that Jimbo Fisher and the SEC operate on there is bound to be the sort of hanky and/or the panky that goes along with it. While that sort of thing may play out in other SEC schools it will not stand here. It will bring forth the sort of moral dilemma that old Ags will tell you got started when they let "women and coloreds" in. The continued evolution of the student body and the changed nature of what being a Texas A&M Aggie is about can possibly be told in one fable of how the chancellor and his buddies sold the soul of the university and its millions of former students in order to bring a big time sportsball trophy to Kyle Field. Is it worth mortgaging what it means to wear the Aggie Ring, to live by the Aggie Code of Honor, to declare with love that one "bleeds maroon" just to put another name and date up on the stadium's walls? "You're goddamn right it is worth that risk!" some will say. Look at all the multi-million dollar investments in the school, its athletics, and the towns of College Station and Bryan. It is Progress with a capital P, y'all. And for some that progress is worth the potential challenges it bears with it. For some, it makes them wary because with big pride can come a very, very big fall. Pray that TAMU's strong commitment to ethics will play out in this instance a lot better than it did for Hannah Shaw, the student who was sexually assaulted by a member of TAMU's swimming and diving team. Her attacker was allowed to return to TAMU after a semester's suspension not only as an on-campus student but as a representative of the University through its athletics program.

TAMU has grown enormously in a very short period of time. That growth is not without its challenges and mistakes. When you big time, your mistakes are aired all over the world on cable TV news clickers and social media forwards. TAMU has a long way to fall with a potentially very hard landing for the very reason that it holds itself publicly to such high standards. Hopefully Marchiol's transfer request will sound the alarm that will trigger TAMU to begin policing itself in efforts to stop such a fall before it occurs. — KELLY MINNIS

6 STEPS TO BREAK THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S MONSTER OF ABUSE

Outraged at the bursting pustules of evil that are the Catholic abuse scandals? Pennsylvania, Boston, Dallas, Chile, Australia, nuns abused by priests, *ad nauseam*. We can take concrete steps to break the monster's back. But first it helps to know the monster we're dealing with.

The Crowd-Control Monster

Faith is an encounter with the heart of reality. For the hierarchical church, encounters with the Real are anathema ... because those encounters make crowd control impossible. The institutional church encrusts the catholic imagination with power, intrigue, and prestidigitation and so draws abusers of dominion, sex, money, and manipulation like flies to a cow patty. Sound like the Cardinal Sins? Theological accusation is the hierarchy's *only* form of confession.

The crowd-control Church wields a 1,600-year-old narrative (dating from Constantine) that has shaped the identity of entire civilizations. Like millions of faithful over those centuries, I believed that g-d put people (including myself) into a position to do hopeful, loving, good things.

I left the Catholic Church in 1994 when the Diocese of Dallas was mired in scandal. Even so, I just thought it was the incompetence of Bishops Thomas Tschoepe and Charles Grahmann. Returning to the Church in 2005, thinking its scandal had been fully unearthed, I trusted the damage-control story that a few predators had infiltrated the church. The so-called "Dallas Plan" authored in 2002 by the Conference of Catholic Bishops to address the clergy abuse scandal was not about justice but an attempt to tourniquet the billions of dollars the bishops have nonetheless since had to pay out.

What the plan couldn't account for is that the abuse is inextricably woven into the church's narrative and the weavers are the bishops themselves. Sadly, though we, too, in the pews, are netted.

How We've Been Controlled

Crowd control is not "peer pressure"—It's systemic evil. We do evil not because we think it evil but because we've pegged the deed as necessary to the survival of the institutions we mistakenly believe maintain our lives. We therein deny our hearts—and the hearts of others—in the name of righteousness. We think our leaders act for the blessing of humanity, all the while crucifying the truth standing in front of us. That's how I failed to see that the organizational church was dysfunctional to the point of blatant evil.

None of this excuses me or you. The best way I can describe the process of being freed from these crowd-



control clutches is to recommend Faulkner's masterful short story, "Barn Burning." Then you will see the terror and beauty of letting go.

The loss is real; the gain is your self. That's the way adventures go! Institutions don't make our identities; we make the institutions and vest them with power over us.

Six Steps to Break the Monster's Back

If you, like me, are angry, here are six concrete steps to break the monster's back:

(1) If you feel able and so called, stop gracing the door of your local house of crowd-control. Cease to aid and abet evil by participation or passivity.

(2) If you believe you can effect change by staying, withhold your donations to your local house of crowd control. By all means, continue to fund charities that ensure funds go to the causes they serve. *But every dollar given to a parish or diocese in some way funds the bishops and lawyers who are sugar-coating the organizational church's evil.*

(3) Call **BULLSHIT** when someone in the church—especially bishops and spokespersons—tells you that they have a plan to address the abuse or that "It's not rape if the child isn't penetrated."

(4) Per the wise words of Kevin Smith's *Dogma*, face down anyone who treats God like a burden instead of a blessing. Celebrate your faith in the face of the crowd controllers who would have you mourn it.

(5) Mercifully, despite the worst efforts of the organizational church, I was rescued by the 5,000-year-old+ practice of contemplative prayer, which empowered me to balance both the good and the evil of the church. I saw that the institutional church is about identity building—beautiful and true identities, as well as hideous ones. Contemplation keeps you from throwing out the beautiful with the abused bathwater.

(6) To paraphrase Mark Shea, we laity run the police departments, staff the courts, and run the jails. It's time for the bishops to know public humiliation, removal from office, and prison terms. Demand the extension of statutes of limitations. We do not have to take this shit.

Blessedly, much of the laity know better than to sip the false piety of this den of thieves. We—especially women—will see this through to a church that looks a lot more like St. Francis' Christ smiling at us from the dimples of creation. Look there for the heart of faith and identity. —*BETHANY BEELER*

STILL DRINKING...HIJACKED

It is rare these days that I drink enough "new" beer to have a reason to hijack my erstwhile esteemed co-editor's column inches but on my current Texas bonus round I have managed to sample most of the wares of four different Texas breweries in the last month and I feels the needs to talks about it. Let's do this in chronological order.

I found myself in Austin one Sunday afternoon on an errand with a friend that led me way down South Congress. And I mean WAY down South Congress. My colleague suggested we hitch our horses to the posts at **St. Elmo Brewing** and so we did exactly that. It is a nice post-modern industrial looking place on the inside with lots of open space and white tile. There is plenty of seating inside and out. St. Elmo is a fairly new brewery and has quite the lineup of beers with something for all craft beer tastes, all named after people of some sort. In my four hour epic stay I managed to down six different pints, what my beer drinking companion that day called "a big boy flight". I started off with **Bruce**, a black kolsch (5.1 ABV). I dunno how kolsch'y it tasted but there was a nice steady char that any good black ale or such should have. Next, I tried a **Mahalo**, a pineapple pale ale (5.2 ABV) that rather surprised me. I'm not a hop dude but the hint of pineapple rounded off the sharp piney hop front and smoothed it out considerably. I found it rather enjoyable in the 100 degree heat. I do not see a name for this one, but I also enjoyed two different hefeweizen styles with one being much more like an American hefe (big ups on cloudy wheatiness) and the other like a Euro hefe (big ups on banana and nut esters). **Carl**, the classic kolsch (4.6 ABV) was a near AOR style crowd pleaser "session" style beer. The last, **Angus** (5.1 ABV) was a rather dry and toasty stout in the Murphy's vein. None of the beers knocked me out but none of them were awful either. A good solid fare of beers that tells me St. Elmo is serious about brewing beer for consumption.

I also found myself on a somewhat haphazard beer tour of Dallas/Fort Worth, drinking at three different breweries over two days. The first was **The Collective Brewing Project**. Their taproom has that nice "downtown" feel with high ceilings, large windows, stainless steel, and exposed brick. They offered a dozen or so beers, all in the current sour beer trend. Goses, saisons, Berliner Weisses, etc. And I mean *every pour* was a sour. Their website is scarce on information so I can't tell you exactly what I drank but I can tell you that if you are a fan of this trend then you will love drinking here. If you are not down with vinaigrette beer (and yours truly really isn't), then it's gonna be a long lonely belly-up session at the bar.

The next day we spent the better part of an afternoon enjoying ourselves at **New Main Brewing Company**, an Aggie owned and operated taproom in Panhandle. It's a weird but cool building. We couldn't figure out if it was formerly a roller skating rink, department store, or small factory with what had to have been the factory showroom of a grandmother furniture outlet from 1978 in the middle of the room. In either case, it was warm, friendly, and their drink selection was the strongest I've seen

from any place I've been in Texas outside of Houston. I had two flights to start out the afternoon. The day was all about New Main's **Nueces County Hazelnut Brown**. As some of you may know, I love brown ales. So few breweries do them up though. Many beer drinkers have had at least one stab at the style, **Newcastle**. That is a muddy brown, soft nitro ale with a bit of nut dryness and sweetness. It is probably the benchmark of the style for most people in the world. Some other notable examples hail from Texas (**Real Ale Brewhouse Brown**) and Mississippi (**Lazy Magnolia Southern Pecan Brown**). It is the latter of these two beers that I hold up as the pinnacle of brown ales. The roasted pecan adds that toastiness to the malt sweetness that I enjoy so much. Well, Southern Pecan has now met its match. I was shocked at first quaff of Nueces County by an intense malt sweetness that had that syrupy alcoholic treacle that I associate with beers much bigger than its 5% ABV, then settling in to a complex nut bitterness mixed with an almost crème coffee finish. It was an amazing beer on a flight and was easily the best new beer I've enjoyed all year. So much so that, even after another flight of beers, I still managed to put two more pints of it away and nearly sobbed into my collar when I found out they didn't have enough of it on hand to allow me to buy a growler or growler of it to take home. It knocked me the fuck out, let's say that. Not that the other beers I had were not enjoyable. New Main offers two different hefeweizens brewed hard on orange peels, one faintly sour with a hint of sugarless orange, the other like a less complex and sour version of a European hefe. But the legend of Nueces County Hazelnut Brown looms large. It's a beer worth driving 150 miles to try out.

Our evening culminated in a trip to **Division Brewing** in Arlington, a frequent destination for yours truly. Wade and company deliver a dozen or so beers that offer a variety of beers, but a good half or more of the fare focuses on the hop bomb and the sour. I avoid that side of the menu usually and am I always happy to turn to **Distant Cousin** (4 ABV), a much more flavorful and less bitter dark English mild. It is a good old fashioned pub ale, like Bass that is a fine session beer. I cheated on it with a taste of **Udder Blackness** (6.5 ABV), a whiskey barrel-aged milk stout, that wasn't exactly the best example I've had but definitely enjoyable, and because I could not resist, a pint or two of **Leon the Brute Brown Ale** (5.9 ABV). Now, if I had not had more than my fill of Nueces County I may have been much more impressed with Leon the Brute than I was, because the two beers are not all that dissimilar, both being more on the malty side of the brown ale coin. It does my heart good to see such an interest in the Metroplex for the pursuit of brown ale. Division rotates the taps out frequently and often run small casks of new styles, plus they offer the best selection of live dirtbag rock at the record/comic store they run next to the brewery. Nothing like having beer brewed on the spot to slosh all over some vinyl while listening to some sweet metal punx and garage rock trash.

This was only three different places. There are so many breweries up there that D/FW operates a craft beer tour with its own passport to be stamped. Check it out at <http://fortworth.com/aletrail/> — **KELLY MINNIS**



WHEN YOU'VE GOTTA GO (OR DON'T)

I've developed an affectionate affinity for public bathrooms. Yeah, that's probably one of the strangest sentences I've ever written. The thing is, I feel it's a missed opportunity by most businesses, but some have taken the extra step necessary to add finesse to the experience of their patrons. I'm hoping more businesses take advantage of this idea. I mean, sure, we are a captive audience, so why waste time on the details of sprucing up the bathroom? Well, I feel it's like a ridged decoration on an otherwise boring sheet cake. It's interesting visuals during the end credits of a movie. It's a "versus" tip jar battle (you know, like, who would win between Darth Vader and Batman, and people "vote" by putting their tip in the side with their choice).

So, I hope you need to go to the bathroom when you are out drinking or eating or trying to get laid or whatever. You probably will notice bathrooms from now on. Good.

Most of these are men's bathrooms. I don't make it a habit to peek into women's bathrooms, but I've been known to do it. <shrug>

The George is a hotel/bar/restaurant close to the University. Super interesting decorations around the lobby. Sheep that get moved periodically, a wall of colored books, etc. The bathroom area is a trip. First, there's a sign on the floor that takes a bit to decipher. Then you'll notice that the bathrooms aren't gender specific. It's almost a puzzle that you think is gonna be hard, but then you are like, I got this. You just pick one that's vacant. You can tell because of the little airplane type sign that says "vacant" or "occupied" in red or green. I love the wallpaper in there.

Mad Taco has amazing tacos and margaritas. Their decor is artsy and sugar-skulley and bright. The bathrooms are fairly normal, but the art and feel bleeds in from the rest of the restaurant. Their "gender signs" are fun.

Urban Brick has tasty pizza. I've only been there once as of this writing, but it's a fairly large pizza for a great price...and you can pile a ton of shit on it...like a Freebirds, but with pizza. Anyway, I didn't go into the bathroom here, but my Alzheimer's dad did when he was visiting. In fact, he went into the girls bathroom, which I think is hilarious, because I was even kinda confused whether it was the girls bathroom or not. One of the bathroom doors has a slice of pizza, and the other has a whole pizza with one slice missing. My dad went into the one with one slice missing. This is apropos for my forgetful dad.

Yogurtland is a family favorite. We are so happy that it's still here, I mean, we all remember the Frozen Yogurt explosion a few years back, right? Their bathroom is

actually kinda boring, but the hallway to the bathroom is what I love. It's pink. Like, ALL the walls are pink. It's very surreal. I like walking to the bathroom there.

Harvey Washbangers has saved us many times when our washer or dryer has shit on itself. So many beers. Super tasty food. Awesome idea to have a restaurant and laundromat. Someone should make a coffee shop with the same idea. Anyway, the gender signs on the bathroom doors are fantastic. I'm not even gonna tell you what they are...you gotta go see for yourself. Go eat a burger...or their Porkaholic fries.

Revolution Bar is one of my favorite places ever. It is for a bunch of people. Their bathrooms are some of my favorite bathrooms in town. Not because of anything else other than the graffiti. People write shit on all the walls in there, and it's (mostly) just so clever. Bands throw their stickers all over the walls in there too. It's like a living, ever-evolving history of music and drunkenness. There's a stencil artist in town that every once in a while leaves a little of his magic in there. Also, those bathrooms are not gender specific, so you can experience a different type of cleverness each time you gotta go.

Chuy's is just a cool place. The bar area is also the "dog room". Look on the walls. There's a little secret that you can bring in a framed picture of your dog (or just "a" dog) and get a free appetizer. Maybe it's not a secret, but not everyone knows about it. Anyway, you walk through the dog room, and get to the bathrooms with cool art on the doors, and inside it's fun, quirky and interesting, with vintage looking flyers and ads all over the walls. Oh, and the floor tiles are cool too.

Proudest Monkey has such good food. Their Chorizo burger is the bomb, and don't miss their yucca fries and sweet plantain sides. The Yuppie fries are amazing as well. Then go to the bathroom. Neon, TV in the mirror, chalkboard and chalk so you can leave a message. So fun. I like to write messages to people who I came with.

Village Cafe is a funky little restaurant and art space. They really take the time to smooth out the details, and there's art in their bathrooms. The last time I was in there, the girls' bathroom had a bunch of "art bras" hanging in there. Yeah, like "art cars", except bras.

So, get over your weird aversion to going to the bathroom in public. Maybe it's fear or germs or you need your privacy. Whatever it is, there's a world of beauty out there that you might be missing. Sometimes the smell is just part of the experience, you know?

Suggestion: turn off the camera shutter sound on your phone. It's way awkward to hear a picture being taken in an otherwise quiet bathroom. — JORGE GOYCO

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FRIDAY 8PM
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It started as a weird thing on reddit. Then it became an app. You download it after all your friends do it first and you pretend it's as cool as you think they think it is. The app asks for permission to use your camera and contacts and who knows what else and you accept because at this point, fuck it all.

You open it and log in through Facebook, because who honestly wants another profile and password to remember. The app prompts you to take a five second video of whatever is directly in front of you. You record five seconds of your desk at work. Another on-screen prompt appears.

"Hey new user! Congrats on your first video! Now add something!"

You stare at the screen blankly, not understanding, but your friend – peeking over the cubicle wall – comes to the rescue.

"Just say anything, it can figure it out," Tilden says.

"Like what? What should I say?" you reply.

"Doesn't matter. Just tell it to add a rabbit or something to your desk."

"Ok. Put a rabbit on my desk?"

"Like this?" It replies.

The video you took of your workspace auto plays. It is the same, except now there is a white fluffy rabbit sitting on your desk. It looks perfectly real. As if it had been in the original video.

You laugh and are mildly impressed. Deep down you know you should probably be more impressed, but you don't really know enough about technology to know how impressed you should be. You decide to be as impressed as everyone else seems to be. After all, it's just an app.

At lunch the next day, someone takes a video of you while you are talking and eating. Everyone looks at their phones and laughs. You ask to see, and chuckle when you see your head replaced with Abraham Lincoln's. It looks like a video of Lincoln saying what you said with your voice. While you are smiling, you feel mildly uneasy but you won't know why. Not yet.

A few weeks later it happens. The video circulates through the office in hushed tones and stifled laughs. The boss having sex with Shiloh in his office. You laugh like the rest, but you feel mildly anxious and for the first time in a long time, moderately curious.

"Who did this?" you ask.

DEEPEFAKE

"I don't know, but isn't it hilarious?"

"Yes."

Demonstrating a zeal you rarely feel for your actual work, you find out who made it.

"Tilden, how did you do it?"

"It's pretty fucking easy. I just pretended to have sex with a blow up doll while Michael was out of his office."

"You got naked in his office?"

"Fuck no, you kidding me? With Jake fucking videotaping me?"

"I don't understand."

"Have you even used the app? I fed it pictures from Michael's Facebook, all those horrible shirtless pictures from Cabo right after his divorce. Threw in a few pictures from Shiloh's Facebook, too."

"That's all it took? It filled in the rest?"

"Well I fed it a few videos from a certain website, of someone that kinda looks like her. Just to get all the... details in. But yeah, it spliced perfectly. Really only took me like ten minutes."

The next day a meeting is held, and the app is banned from the workplace. A few days after that everyone in the downloaded it.

Several nights later when you're bored and mildly lonely you have an idea. In truth, it isn't the first time you've had the idea, just the first time you've let it out, acknowledged it. You hesitate. Try to distract yourself. You send a text to Jake. Ask if he wants to hang out. He doesn't reply.

What's the harm? You ask yourself.

You download a video from a certain website. You visit Shiloh's Facebook page. You open the app.

A few minutes later you feel mildly guilty. But then Jake replies, and you forget all about it.

You spend your evenings making videos. Mostly alone. Sometimes you invite the guys over and you make funny videos. Different from the ones you make alone. Tilden says that he spends all his nights making porn of the other women in the office. You laugh politely but look down at your phone. You don't want them to know. You're not like Tilden.

You arrive at work. Sit down at your desk. Check the news. The president's been assassinated.

You click to unlock mature content and watch the president's head get blown off. You check the comments to see if it's real, but no one knows.

You open another news app. It says it's fake. You feel only mildly relieved. Everyone else in the office discovers the news seconds later. You don't react, because you already know it's fake. But you don't say anything either.

You watch your friends' reactions quietly.

The next day the app is taken off the app store. But they can't wipe it off everyone's device who already had it. The software exists.

A video of you fucking a rabbit circulates around the office. You don't laugh—not even politely. Shiloh throws up. You don't know how to feel about that. You wonder if she finds you disgusting now.

You report Tilden.

Tilden is fired.

You arrive at work, saying hi to Shiloh on your way in. She smiles. You smile back. Michael calls you into his office.

"I fired Tilden because of the video he made of you."

"Thank you."

"Shut up. What is this?"

Michael turns his monitor around so you can see. It's security footage of you and Tilden in the stairwell. You are telling him to make a video of you fucking a rabbit. You tell him that it will be funny.

"That's fake."

"This isn't the fucking app man. This is security footage." Michael nods at the security guard standing in the corner. You didn't see him before. You gather your things and leave. You don't say goodbye to Shiloh.

"How did you do it, Tilden?" you ask him at the bar. He laughs. He doesn't know you're recording him.

"It was easy, took like ten minutes. I walked into the security office when the guard was out and input that video."

"I don't understand."

"Why don't you think for once in your life. You think the app is the only way to access this software? You think I'm running my website through the app? God, how dumb are you?"

"Not as dumb as you."

"I know you're recording me, dumbass. You think a recording taken on your phone is going to hold up anywhere anymore? You think Michael is going to let you into his office to show him the video on your phone? I'm outta here, man. I've got my site to run. That shit prints cash."

Later that night you start a video recording. You livestream it to Facebook. You lean your phone against the bathroom mirror, and make sure the camera can see you. You have a lot you want to say but you don't know how to say it. You shake for a few seconds. Then you put the gun in your mouth and pull the trigger and send your brains and blood all over the shower curtain.

The first person to see your video reports it.

One friend leaves a comment on the video. Their comment says: "fb buys the app today and already im seeing the fake shit on here jesus.."

The video is removed. — STARKNESS

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IT'S METAL, DUDE!!

Yngwie Malmsteen - 8/8/18 Proof Rooftop Lounge
Quiet Riot - 8/23/18 Proof Rooftop Lounge

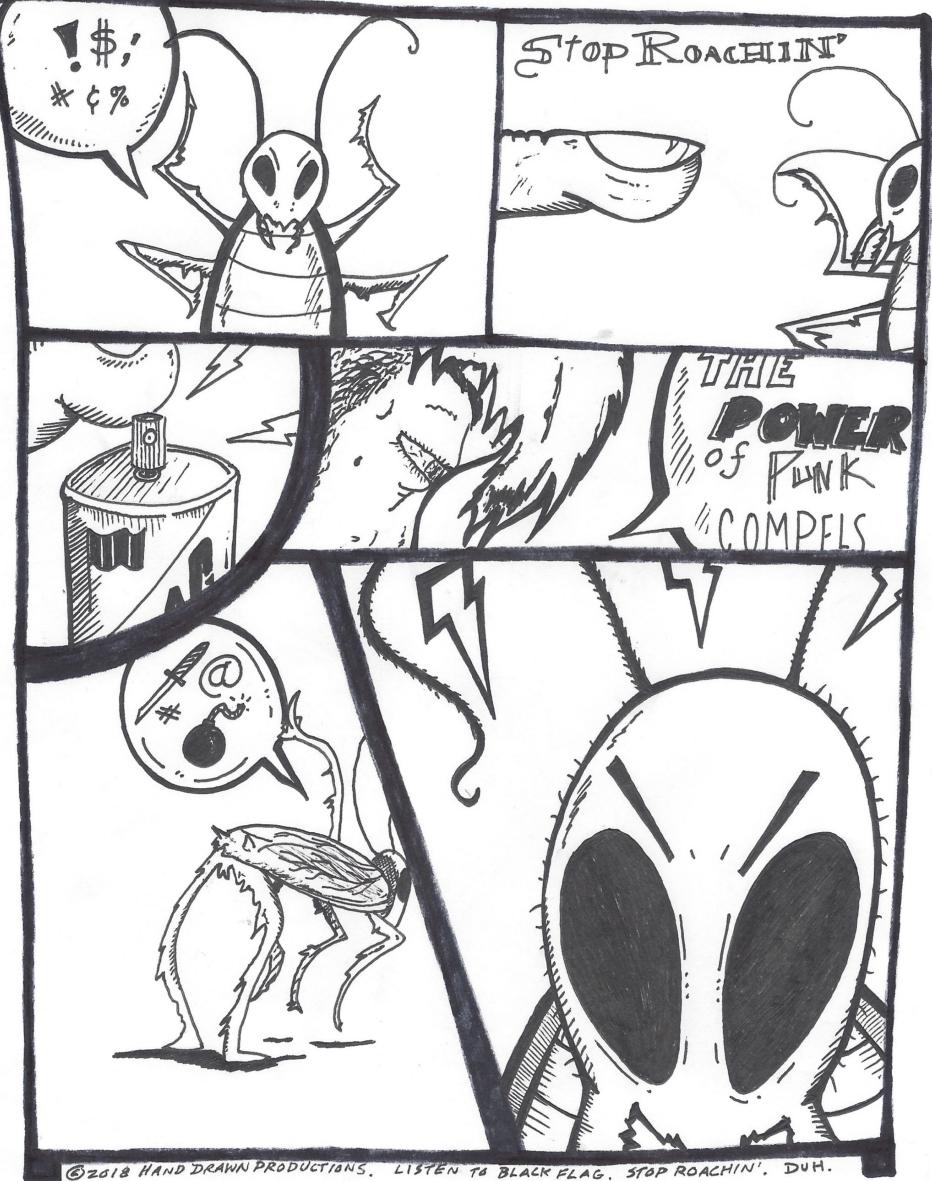
No musical genre has musicians and fans that more completely and vehemently ignore their "due date" than Heavy Metal. Despite having careers that effectively ended over 30 years ago and revolving band membership lineups as large as the army of a Latin American country, the likes of Yngwie Malmsteen and Quiet Riot still slog on. They are rewarded for their perseverance with a small, but devoted, fan base who are every as myopic/devoted to the music as their metal heroes. Though I got in thanks to Proof Rooftop lounge giving away tickets for free, the "VIP" section immediately in front of the stage was reasonably full at both shows. At VIP prices starting at 75 dollars for the privilege, the devotion of these fans isn't in doubt.

Yngwie Malmsteen plays a brand of heavy metal that is heavy on flashy guitar hero solos. Actually, "heavy" is an understatement. All of his songs are one long guitar solo. He had a huge stack of Marshal Amplifiers behind the band. I stopped counting after I reached 16 and I'm guessing that all of the amps had a volume that went well past "11". As I waited for Yngwie to go on (no opening act presumably because no act is awesome enough to open for Yngwie Malmsteen), I wondered what would come out from behind the wall of amps: A winged Pegasus or Dragon? A big wall of fire? Large Viking? Vikings fighting a fire breathing dragon? Alas, it was none of the above; just Yngwie playing one frantic guitar solo after another. Ironically enough, there were technical difficulties with the amps, confirming my suspicion that at least 15 of the 16 amps were empty shells. If you really had 16 working amps and only one went out the show would go on. Snarky remarks aside, Yngwie Malmsteen does what he does very well. He does a very impressive Stevie Ray Vaughn impersonation and played the "Star Spangled Banner" bit Hendrix did at Woodstock note perfect. Yngwie is a fine musical craftsman but after about an hour I got bored with the guitar solos. Perhaps the Viking or Dragon appeared after that. I guess I will never know.



Quiet Riot had their heyday in 1983 with the album *Metal Health*. They became a textbook example of power of the relatively new MTV to promote bands. After selling millions with that album, they slid out of fame relatively quickly, outpaced by the likes of Motley Crue, excessive partying, and shot in the foot by their vocalist Kevin DuBrow who seemingly never passed up an opportunity to trash other metal bands very publicly. The rock and roll lifestyle caught up with Mr. DuBrow, who passed in 2007 due to a cocaine overdose. Live by the sword, die by the sword. Despite diminishing returns, Quiet Riot continued putting out albums and touring with a revolving door of members (for the story of Quiet Riot's rise, fall and revolving door membership, watch the surprisingly good documentary *Well Now we are Here now. There is no way back*). With all that being said, no matter how far down Quiet Riot might have slipped, their hits "Metal Health" and "Cum on Feel the Noize" are classics.

As of 2018 the only remaining original member of Quiet Riot is their drummer, Frankie Banali. Their vocalist, James Durbin is the fourth or fifth vocalist since DuBrow. Durbin could hit all the notes but his cheesy audience interaction verged on unintentional self-parody. He sang his in between song banter. "Say Hell Yeah, if you are having a GoooooooooooooD TIIIIIIIMMMEEEeeee....." Durbin sang/screeched between the third song. I sang back in response, "I'm OK but the drinks are EEEXXXPEENNSIIIVE!!!!!!". This raised the ire of a 50ish year old bourbon whore standing in front of me who was none too pleased with my levity or displeased my attempt at vocals; I'm not sure which. Said individual was getting ready to slap me so I relented. Metal fans aren't known for their sense of humor. The rest of the band played note perfect renditions of the hits with Banali's drumming being particularly strong. As expected, their set relied heavily on songs from "Metal Health" but they did play a few off other albums such as *Condition Critical* and *QR III*. Of course, they played the big hits last. When does musical perseverance become tilting at windmills? Who knows. Quiet Riot, however, was able to please their fans and their fans weren't complaining. — RENTED MULE



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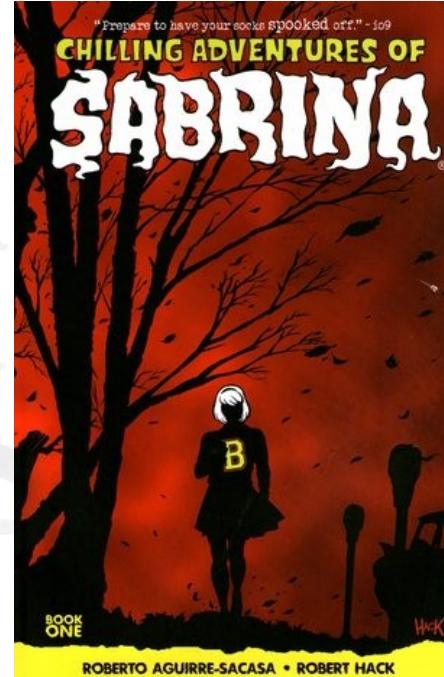
ARCHIE HORROR & THE TERROR OF CHANGE

Shortly after falling in love with *Riverdale* on Netflix, for reasons I still can't quite fathom, I became obsessed with Archie comics. And I literally mean "obsessed". I bought every available Jumbo Digest variation of *Archie* or *World of Archie* or *Betty and Veronica* or *BV and Friends* or *Archie and Me* on our local newsstands, deeply reading each issue with a faux-scholar eye towards which digest offered the best, most compelling storylines and character exploration — only to draw conclusions I'll keep to myself.

The irony here is that, to anyone who has never read Archie Comics, these grocery store Digest anthologies of three to five page Riverdale High School based stories will appear pithy and vacuous. And perhaps they are. My obsession remained rather intense for a few months until I found certain ideas and punchlines being retread through newly glossed narratives with a separate set of characters. Still, even as the intensity of my Archie passion has cooled, I remain amazed that a small three page "story" can feature an entire narrative arc hosted by characters now entering their seventh decade in print. That fact alone speaks both to the enduring love of comic book nerds and to the strength of the Riverdale characters. Archie Andrews still attempts to embody the honest, often unfortunate reality that all American heroes have an imperfect, unpolished side. Betty Cooper remains the loyal, trustworthy girl-next-door. Veronica Lodge sees only the greatest opportunity available to herself in any given moment. And Jughead Jones, the epicurean blue-collar rascal, has spoken a street-smart, hard-won wisdom for generations. The archetypes of these characters speak to something recognizable — even redeemable — concerning the plight of American youth, while also emphasizing the need we never outgrow for earnestly committed friendships. I do not read Archie comics with a nostalgic eye towards my own youth as much as I read for the joy of seeing my own current foibles illustrated on the page, juxtaposed — a mere few panels later — by reminders that true friendship weathers, and even celebrates, such foibles. It's a cheesy muck that draws me back repeatedly, and which I will speak to again later in this piece.

In 2016, long-time comic writer Mark Waid re-introduced the classic Riverdale gang with a new series simply titled *Archie*. Now spanning five graphic novels worth of collected serials, Waid explores the relational intricacies in the Betty-Archie-Veronica love triangle, while also giving back stories to traditional pinch-hit players such as Jughead Jones, Reggie Mantle, and Dilton Doyle. Waid manages to offer a more dynamic nature to characters (and impulses) that have, until now, seemed overly-simplistic and two-dimensional. His approach to the Betty-Archie back-story, as well as Cheryl Blossom's origins, is reason enough to recommend the full five-volume set. But that's not my primary aim here. Still, just trust me. Get thee to Amazon and, yeah, just trust me.

About five years ago, Archie comics took a dark turn. The charge was led by *Glee* creator, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa. A lifelong Archie fanatic, Aguirre-Sacasa had been actively engaging the Archie universe for the better



part of a decade. In true *Glee* fashion, he even wrote an Archie musical that was declined by Archie editors. However, a few years later, Aguirre-Sacasa approached the editorial team again with ideas concerning a horror line of Archie. His idea was to put the Riverdale gang in the midst of a zombie apocalypse, which was very hip circa-2013. Recent *New Look Series* efforts to boost sales of Archie had not flourished. However, copies of *The Walking Dead* were flying off shelves like undead heads in a shovel store. Aguirre-Sacasa's proposal was given the green light, and soon, with the partnership of Italian dark comics artist Francesco Francavilla, *Afterlife with Archie* debuted.

The zombie outbreak backdrop of *Afterlife with Archie* sounds a bit thin and overdone until readers crack the covers. Immediately noticeable is Francavilla's quite uncanny artwork. The gory panels of blood and viscera, washed in various darkened shades of orange and purple, cue readers to realize few things here will end well or with a chuckled zinger. Combine those images with Aguirre-Sacasa's storyline, which features our young Riverdale crew thrust into the kinds of trauma that call for tough choices, including self-sacrifice for the greater good, and readers find themselves plunged into an oddly emotional literary situation, which is not to be expected from either a zombie-apocalypse (with fine exceptions) or Archie comics. That being said, I've read *Afterlife with Archie: Volume One* several times, and it's proved surprisingly rewarding each time.

So did Aguirre-Sacasa's dream of a darkly twisted Riverdale succeed economically for the company? It would appear so. As of today, the Archie Horror line has added three new titles, each dedicated to a different

Riverdale character. (Not to mention, Aguirre-Sacasa went on to create and produce the CW's *Riverdale* series. So I'm predicting Archie Comics may rethink that musical number.)

The first order of business for Archie Horror, obviously, was to resurrect Sabrina the Teenage Witch in a modern, more grown-up fashion. Roberto-Aguirre Sacasa again penned the story, this time with the help of horror-artist Robert Hack. *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina: The Crucible* is far darker and complex than *Afterlife with Archie*. (A friend even said to me, "That new Sabrina comic is too dark to live in my house!") Shortly after the release of Sabrina, Jughead received his own horror title — *Jughead The Hunger* — in which Jughead becomes a werewolf. Penned by Frank Tieri and primarily featuring the artwork of Joe Eisma, *The Hunger* is thus far the weakest offering in the Archie Horror line. This may stem from the fact that Tieri went more for the horror than the larger, more engaging themes horror is capable of exploring, and which are on grand display in earlier *Afterlife* and *Sabrina* titles. (More on such themes later.) However, this past summer Greg and Meg Smallwood released their own tongue-and-cheek Archie Horror title, *Vampironica*, featuring self-obsessed Veronica Lodge as both a vampire and a vampire hunter. I've only seen two issues of *Vampironica*, but the artwork rivals Francavilla's in *Afterlife* and the writing is just sarcastic enough to explore Veronica's new identity with enough winks to make it all quite fun. I'm looking forward future installments.

As in the grocery store Jumbo Digests of juvenile Archie Andrews adventures, Archie Horror has a heart of its own. And in the midst of all the nastiness and trauma brought about by undead risings and coven rituals and Jughead Jones feasting on Ms. Grundy, Archie Horror poses questions that are unique to this particular universe of characters. As mentioned previously, the Riverdale gang has been around for seven decades. Their archetypes are profoundly set. Even novice readers quickly need no introduction or reminder to who these characters are and how they interact. In that manner, the Riverdale gang operate in these panels like our own intimate relations. With that in mind, Archie Horror, as silly as they may appear, does what all good horror should do: it asks difficult questions of its audience. In this case, what do we do when the people we love become something monstrously other than what we expected? This, after all, is the great terror of puberty — both towards our peers and even the adults in our life.

However, as a 40 year old man, I still find this question worth consideration. Even in the adult world, careers change, family dynamics grow or diminish, our roles within our communities shift, and, with that, we ourselves transform. So what happens when the family or friends we've kept for decades suddenly shift or slip away? How do we approach the emotional and relational grisliness of such changes? These are the questions I found myself asking as I've read Archie Horror, as I've seen these characters I've grown to know and love become something rather appalling on the page. And I've wondered, several times, how often I too have become something rather appalling to those reading my pages. Good stories — both solid horror and cheesy muck — take us to those places, reminding us to consider welcomed revisions before the ink of any final conclusions has officially dried. — KEVIN STILL

4 THINGS TO TRY IN AGGIELAND

Here are four suggestions to enrich your experience while you are either a new college student, or you are a local trapped in a rut. And don't try this all in the first week:

1.) Give the restaurant chains a rest. Try the local food places. Now I know it's great to always get that safe meal at Burger Clone or that steak at Cows-R-Us. Heck, my oldest friend was in some 64 countries, but he would have given his right arm for a Taco Bell when working at the embassy in Algeria. However, it's the local places that give a city its character — people don't go to New Orleans or Seattle or Miami to eat at Chili's. Give the area cuisine a chance. Expand your palate.

2.) Get away from the Texas A&M campus. If you are a new student or a senior or a grad student or an employee, don't leave and die by what happens in and close to campus. Northgate is not the end-all be-all of the college experience. And if you're in your thirties and still trying to pick up Aggie coeds, shame on you. If you've been here awhile or not, don't neglect the obvious. I visited a friend who lived decades in San Antonio, and we went the Riverwalk as I'd hoped — she confessed it was her first visit. See the Bush museum, try Washington on the Brazos, do the Queen downtown Bryan. Heck, Taylor has one of the top barbecue places in the nation. Explore.

3.) Take advantage of Texas A&M University. No, this is not contradictory. Any major university is going to offer a wide spectrum of opportunities for its students, and most of them are free to the general public...and don't whine about paying a few bucks for parking. For nothing, I saw Kinky Friedman, experienced an electronic music light show, shook hands with W.P. Kinsella (the "Field of Dreams" author), heard dozens of musical acts, viewed an centuries-old Shakespeare document, and more. And if you want to spend a bit, there are even more events to enjoy (comic Jerry Seinfeld, for example) from art to music to sports and beyond.

4.) Support local live music. Shut off Spotify or whatever spoon-fed streaming goop you have, and get out to hear live music. Whether you like singer-songwriters, country, electronica, punk, classic rock, metal, Americana, rock and roll, jazz or indie, you can find something in Bryan-College Station to go hear. Stretch your music listening; try something off the beaten path. Don't be sheltered; you never know what might tickle your fancy. Get sweaty and stand shoulder to shoulder with someone different. Again, don't just hit the places around Northgate; go to downtown Bryan and elsewhere. Also, buy their music and merchandise — tip the bartenders too. Make an effort to fill your ears with live music. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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WELCOME TO AGGIELAND: A GUIDE TO THE COOL STUFF IN B/CS

OK, so you made it off to college. You've got all your stuff unpacked in your tiny dorm room with the smelly roommate from parts unknown, or maybe you've got all your stuff tight in your first apartment with all your bros and ladies. You've got your books, you know (for the most part) where your classes are, but you don't really *know* Bryan/College Station yet. You've heard vaguely about Northgate and you're pretty sure you can get back to the grocery again next week by yourself but you're pretty convinced that your friends are all right. You *are* pretty fucking dumb for having chosen to go to Texas A&M or Blinn instead of Rice or U of H or UT or somewhere much cooler out of state. Well, stop feeling sorry for yourself. You have something cooking right here in your very own backyard. You see, if all you do is stay on University Dr. or Texas Ave. then you'd never know that Bryan/College Station has some awesome places to patronize that aren't located on the beaten path right in front of you. We've got lots of tiny places full of character *AND* characters.

Every town has pretty much the same chain restaurants and stores. It's the homespun unique places in a town that make you want to stick around. We've got lots of restaurants and shops and they are all practically BEGGING you to spend your parents' hard-earned money with them. This map will help you find the cool places to shop and the cool stuff to do at night without having the inconvenience of stumbling around town. That's how much we love you...we'll do you this solid *gratis*.

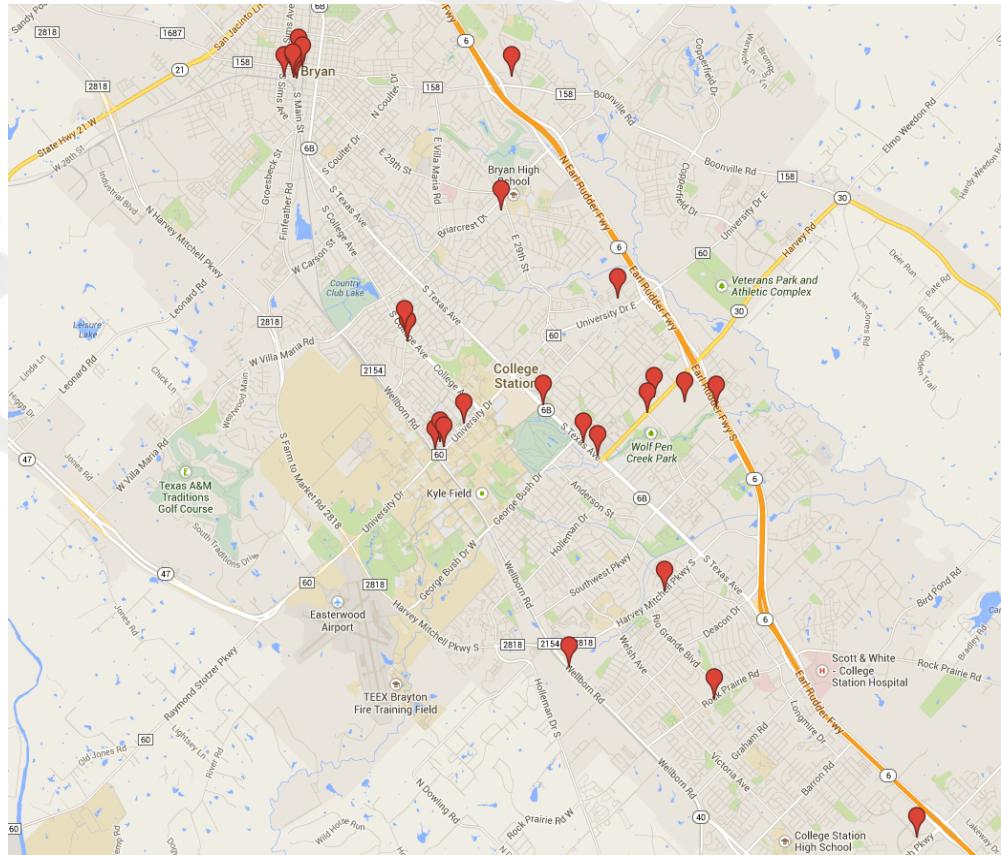
I moved here in the summer of 2006 and it took me easily a year to find out that there was actually cool stuff to do here beyond the usual Aggie and Northgate stuff. And the usual B/CS stuff isn't bad, really. I've lived in many college towns over the years and I've never attended or worked at a university more rich in tradition than Texas A&M. Going to a football game here is as big a deal as going to see the pros play. I'm proud to be an adjunct Aggie. But if sports or redneck culture is not your bag, then please refer often to the map on this page and try out some of the cool and unique stuff Bryan/College Station has to offer. And then *why don't you maybe see about offering something up yourself!* Start a band, even if you've never touched a musical instrument in your life. Paint. See a play or write and produce one. Sculpt. Make art out of trash. Hold a protest. Join the roller derby league. Make friends with someone your mama and daddy would absolutely freak out if they ever saw you with ...and then introduce them to each other at Parents Weekend!

The point here is that college really is what you make of it. It's the magic time in your life when you have adult privileges without full-on adult responsibility. Whatever you do (provided it doesn't kill you or somebody else) will pretty much be excused away as "oh, that was just my crazy college years". Enjoy it, because it will pass you by quick. Bryan/College Station is full of memories waiting to happen. To let them go to waste is worse than failing Chemistry. I guarantee.—*KELLY MINNIS*

Arsenal Tattoo & Design
<http://www.arsenaltattoo.com>

307 W. 26th St. Bryan (979) 485-9892

If you're looking to get inked, this is *the* place in B/CS to



get quality artistry, now at their new location in downtown Bryan.

Blackwater Draw
<http://blackwaterbrew.com>
701 N. Main St. Bryan

Alas, BWD has closed on Northgate but they still operate their brewpub in downtown Bryan, offering their own line of beer direct from the font.

Blake's Steaks Sandwich Shop
700C University Dr. E. College Station (979) 676-7885
<http://blakesteaks.com>

Honest to goodness Philly cheesesteaks as well as some interesting takes on the format plus a host of interesting beers on tap with a crowler press for taking suds to go.

Carneys
3410 S. College Ave. Bryan (979) 823-1294
A bit of a local secret. Great beer selection, none of the Northgate douchiness.

Clockwork Gaming
<http://clockworkgaming.com>
913 Harvey Rd. College Station (979) 703-1838
A gaming shop and refuge owned and operated by

longtime Aggie gamers. Purchase cards, compete in video game tournaments or play pickup games with friends in a comfortable environment.

Curious Collections
<http://curiouscollectionstx.com>
710 N. Rosemary. College Station (979) 704-3059
We got a record store again! Has some new stuff but mostly old stuff and other collectibles. Prices aren't great but hey! we got a record store again!

Cutler 2 Salon
2551 S. Texas Ave. College Station (979) 764-3000
Finding a place to get your hairs cut in a new town can be a dicey proposition. Go see Niki at Cutler 2 and put yourself in good hands.

Eskimo Hut
<http://eskimohut-hub.com>
919 Harvey Rd. College Station (979) 703-6815
Frozen boozy drinks to go, an excellent selection of craft beer in cans and bombers, and the best prices on growler fill-up in town.

G. Hysmith Skatepark

<http://cctx.gov/skatepark>
1600 Rock Prairie Rd. College Station
Over 1600 square feet of bowls, walls, street courses, hips, and ollie boxes. All concrete, all rad. Check out Williamson Skate Park on 411 Williamson Dr. in Bryan too.

Gogh Gogh Coffee Company

4121 Hwy 6. College Station (979) 431-4957
Who knew an excellent craft beer and Texas wine selection would go so well with a coffee shop atmosphere! The Gogh Gogh people did, and offer just that.

Grand Station

<http://grandstationent.com>
2400 Earl Rudder Fwy College Station (979) 696-1100
Lazer tag, cash bar bowling, video games, etc. Like Chuckie Cheese for adults & without shitty pizza. Wait, no, they got shitty pizza too.

Grand Stafford Theater

<http://grandstaffordtheater.com>
106 S. Main St. Bryan
The Brazos Valley's premiere live music venue, serving up rock, country, blues and other musics.

Guitar Center

<http://guitarcenter.com>
1003 Harvey Rd. College Station (979) 694-6982
Gots pretty much whatever you need for music making, however you make it.

J Cody's

<http://www.jcodys.com>
3610 S. College Ave. Bryan (979) 846-2639
The best BBQ experience in town. Other places have great meat but J. Cody has a great meal.

Koppe Bridge Bar & Grill

<http://www.koppebridge.com>
11777 FM 2154. College Station (979) 764-2933
Local polls rate Koppe Bridge's burgers as the best in town. If it's not the best then it's definitely one of the top three.

Liberty Tattoo

2418C Texas Ave. S. College Station (979) 694-6444
Tattoo Jeremy will see you straight, whether he's free-handing on you or tracing something onto you from your own design.

Margie's

320 N. Main St. Bryan (979) 822-8422
Margie's is an old school dive bar that's friendly as hell and they put out one of the best burgers you'll ever have by hand right before your eyes.

Mr. G's Pizzeria

<http://www.gotomrgs.com>
201 W. 26th St. Bryan (979) 822-6747
No college town is complete without a ripping local pizza joint, and Mr. G's is ours. We recommend the calzone.

Nerdvana Vintage Arcade & Toys

Www.VintageNerdVana.com

3206 Longmire Dr. College Station (979) 704-6942

They got a lot of cool, awesome vintage toys and stuff but the neatest part is that they have two rooms full of arcade style MAME cabinets. Squint hard and it's almost like banging quarters into Dragon Quest at Aladdin's Castle!

New Republic Brewing Company

http://newrepublicbrewing.com

11405C N. Dowling Rd. College Station (713) 489-4667

Get their line of beers fresh from the brewing tuns and enjoy live music on their back lawn as well as a host of food trucks.

Proudest Monkey

108 S. Main St. (979) 361-4777

The Paddock Lane folks' Bryan bar that has stellar food as well as a cool older urban bar kind of feel to it. 979Rep staff recommends you try the chorizo burger.

The Queen Theatre

110 S. Main St. Bryan (979) 557-8336

The Queen is finally reopened as a quasi-art movie house, an historic landmark of a movie theater complete with intermissions, curtains that close over the stage, all curated by a manager who LOVES theater. \$5 tickets.

Revolution Café & Bar

211 S. Main St. Bryan (979) 823-4044

The heart and soul of the local ditzbag community. It's like your favorite living room house party with a cash bar! Free wi-fi, good drinks and the best live music around.

Village Café

thevillagedowntown.com

210 W. 26th St. Bryan (979) 703-8514

Great fresh food, cool atmosphere and the occasional singer-songwriter in the corner. Also plays host to the hottest salsa dance night in the twin cities.

Village Foods & Pharmacy

3030 E. 29th St. #100. Bryan (979) 846-9600

Sporting the largest assortment of natural, gluten-free, and organic foods and supplements in town.

World of Beer

http://worldofbeer.com

425 North Point Crossing College Station (979) 985-5927

One of the best selections of beers in both towns with frequent tap takeovers and interesting pub fare. Kinda douchey on the weekend nights but a great weeknight spot.

SAYED MUSINGS

When you try to persuade people to support a candidate who is a little out of the "mainstream," one of the common responses you hear goes something like "Well, of course, I'd love it if Candidate X was elected, but I just don't think they can win." People who make this argument profess that they share your values but say that there are pragmatic reasons for choosing another, more "electable" candidate than the one you support.

I think many of the people who say things like this are sincere. However, that attitude is a tiny bit fucked. This is because the "pragmatic" case is rarely actually pragmatic and misunderstands the nature of politics.

Let's consider the case of Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, who ran for governor in Michigan. He lost his primary. He lost because of voters who had the same misgivings that Congresswoman Debbie Dingell had. Dingell suggested that while she *really likes* Abdul, the fact that he is a Muslim would make a general election very difficult. It's not that *she* is prejudiced, but that Michigan is. And since it's very important for Democrats to win in November, they must select the candidate who has the highest chance of winning.

There are plenty of people, like Dingell, who don't seem to grasp what this line of thinking means. First, it means that while the person claims not to be basing their vote on prejudice, they are still declining to vote for the person because of that person's religious identity or race. They are part of the problem. Even though they claim only to be recognizing the prejudices of others, they are also contributing numerically to the group of people voting BECAUSE of race/ethnicity/religion. Employers who racially discriminate have often used similar defenses: /am not prejudiced, but my *customers* are, and if I am to make a living I must discriminate. Ultimately, it amounts to capitulation. Instead of reacting to the prejudice of others by becoming determined to *defy* it and work to make sure people get over it, one is contributing to worsening its effects. Think of 2016 Democratic primary voters who said "I'm not voting for Hillary because I don't think a woman can win in a general election. Not that I'm sexist, you see, but..."

I also think that people are simply wrong about what is possible. Many people thought the United States was so racist that it would never elect a black president. Then

we got Obama. In politics, the range of possibilities is uncomfortably large. The certitude in what is "possible" led people to conclude that Donald Trump could never be elected president, because he was simply outside the range of plausible presidents. Implausible events occur every day, and it turned out that you could, in fact, say extreme, disgusting, sexual, racist, and otherwise offensive things and be elected POTUS. We got Drumpf.

The reality is that the United States is an extremely diverse country, where nearly all generalizations you could make are true. It has enough grotesque right-wing ideologues that it could easily go Nazi if people on the left gave up. It is also a place, however, where left policies are much more popular than our officials seem to give credit for, which means that the country could go much further to the left than the current makeup of the government suggests. What happens depends on what people choose to do, and depending on that choice, the seemingly impossible could easily become possible—in either direction.

I happen to think that the most serious barrier to accomplishing political goals is the people who insist that they cannot be done. I think one of the worst things Hillary Clinton ever said was "single payer will never, ever happen." By saying it, you place a larger barrier in the way of its success than any of the actually-existing impediments. As a matter of *fact*, single-payer programs are not outlandish. We're talking about making the American healthcare system more like the Canadian or British systems. What, not in 20 years? 100 years? 500 years? Are our ambitions so *low*, our sense of political possibility *so constrained*, that we think you can't even adjust healthcare funding to operate in the same way that our next-door neighbor does it? People with imaginations this fucked are far more of an impediment to change than anything about the world. The conservative opinion is by default the defense, it is by definition, the status quo. Progressives are called that because we try to change shit. Changing shit for the better is also known as progress.

I have been conflating identity with ideology here or talking about "Michigan won't vote for a Muslim" and "Michigan won't vote for a leftist" as indistinguishable phenomena. While Abdul El-Sayed may be both, these

are often separate debates. But they share a common feature, which is "confidence in the limits of what you can do, without actual evidence of what those limits are." The fuckheads out on Wall Street do stand by one correct thing "past performance is not indicative of future results." Even if something didn't work twenty years ago, why can't it today I'm not opposed to thinking of voting pragmatically. In fact, I think that's exactly what you should do. But I think "electability" is often used as a lazy way of picking the candidate that's *easiest* to elect rather than the one that ought to be elected. Instead of saying "Candidate X can't win, I'm not going to vote for them," say "Candidate X ought to win, so I'm going to vote for them, and then I'm going to figure out how to make sure they can win." In England, many people said Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party was doomed: It was too far left. It would never come close in a general election. The party had committed electoral suicide. But then a general election happened, and Corbyn's Labour almost took it home. Why? Because thousands of people had changed the game: They had decided not to accept the idea that they weren't "electable," and went out to change people's minds. Instead of treating the political world as something static and fixed, they treated it as something that could be altered through hard work and activism.

That's what we saw during the Civil Rights movement,

too. White moderates pissed off Martin Luther King more than almost any other group, because white moderates insisted they shared King's goals, but just felt they weren't *pragmatic*. King knew that this attitude was the very thing that was standing in the way of progress. A faith in the impossible and a determination to succeed no matter what the odds is an important part of moving a political movement forward.

Instead of asking "Which goals can we accomplish?", you should ask, "Which goals should we have, and how are we going to accomplish them?" That's because nobody can actually tell the answer to what CAN be done, because nobody is God, so nobody can see every future. Aiming low ensures that one cannot hope to achieve much, and electability concerns are often a self-fulfilling prophecy. Can Candidate X win? Wrong question. The question is: What are you going to do to make sure Candidate X *does* win? — STARKNESS



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Rain crashed against the picture-window at Premiere Radio Network Studios in West Seattle. For three months while working as an engineer for syndicated talk-radio shows, Kelly Minnis watched the sideways-rain hit the big window that overlooked an empty alley. It was a dreary time, but

Minnis knew better things were on the horizon. Later that summer Minnis and his family moved to Bryan-College Station.

Minnis' bleak window view during those last grey Seattle days during the spring of 2006 became the basis of the lead track ("Nights and Days of Rain") of The Ex-Optimists' new record, *Drowned in Moonlight*.

The seven-song *Drowned in Moonlight* will be the Bryan band's fourth LP and stands as its best studio work yet. The record meets Ex-Ops' volume requirements as the dissonant opening chords of "Nights and Days of Rain" are soon swallowed up by indomitable waves of droning reverb, and then it's impossible to not to get ensnared in the pop hooks of subsequent tracks "My New Normal" and "The Joe Jackson Self-Destruct," before closing with the haunting standout, "Swept Away."

The Ex-Optimists will play album release shows in Bryan (Sept. 22: Curious Collections, 2 p.m.; Revolution Cafe & Bar, 10 p.m. with Only Beast and A Sundae Drive) and Austin (Sept. 28: Hole In The Wall, 9 p.m. with The Gary and Magnet School), and a "last hurrah" show with the Cryptographers and A Sundae Drive on Oct. 6 at the Spruce Goose Social Club in Houston.

Then, Minnis will say goodbye to Texas — at least for a few months — and join his wife and two sons who moved to North Carolina earlier this year.

Despite Minnis' physical absence, the Ex-Ops will continue writing songs and play a handful of Texas tours during the year. He will also remain a part of the Downtown Bryan community as the editor of *979Represent* and booking shows at Revolution. The Ex-Ops have always been a very active band. Minnis wasn't sure how his bandmates — guitarist Michael "Wonko" Scarborough, bassist Katie Keller and drummer Colin Witucki — might take to the idea of continuing long distance, but all were on board.

"If I were 25 and moving across the country, I would just let this band go and start another band, but I'm in my mid-40s and I don't have to stop," Minnis said. "Like I said, if I were younger or it were a different group of people, I don't know if it would be this way. I've never done this with anybody but Michael and I don't really want to. Thankfully, I don't really have to."

Growing up, Minnis bounced back and forth between Kentucky and Nashville before graduating from Western Kentucky University, getting married and moving to Seattle in 1997. He said his experiences being a part of bands in those places gave him a much greater appreciation for his musical relationships.

"When you go to a place like [Bryan], if you have trouble with your band, you don't just quit and go play with somebody else because there aren't a lot of other people who play," he said. "It forces you to figure out a way to

play with other people. I've never had to have that sort of moment where I've had to stop and figure out how to play with Michael. I've always wanted to play with Michael."

Minnis is a prolific songwriter. He writes more songs than Ex-Ops can digest. The ones that don't become Ex-Ops songs find homes with one of his various side-projects.



©Kylie Alyssa

jects. Minnis likens his musical partnership and song development process with Scarborough to that of a sports broadcast duo.

"I'm the play-by-play and stats guy. He's the color [commentary] guy," Minnis said. "That relationship works really well musically because I give songs for Michael to find creative parts to. I don't think people realize how much time — my songs don't take much time to write — but Michael will labor over a guitar part sometimes for over a year until he gets it right, and if he doesn't get it right, those songs just drift away. I respect him enough that if he doesn't find something that he feels as good about as I feel about the song, then I'm happy to let those songs go away. That's kind of the thing that he and I — without kind of speaking about it — found our place and developed in the space that the two of us had."

Prior to Ex-Ops, Minnis had never fronted a band. The first band he joined after moving to Seattle was fronted by another drummer-turned-guitarist/singer, who was an

exceptional musician. He had knocked out 10 songs in studio by himself, arranging and playing all of

the parts. The band eventually dissolved on a sour note. It was a good teaching lesson for Minnis.

"What he really needed was like he was Beethoven and he had sheet music out for the orchestra to learn and play," Minnis said. "He wasn't looking for dudes to be in

share the demo] but then, you know, we all get to put our stink all over it, and there's been a lot." "The Joe Jackson Self-Destruct," one of the popper gems on *Drowned in Moonlight*, was a song that the band had played before Witucki had joined, but when Minnis presented it to him, he said he wanted a fresh take. "I just heard a fast beat under it [after hearing the demo], and he was like 'give it a shot.' We did, and [Kelly] loved it." Witucki said. "I've made the band significantly faster. Part of it's just nerves, but you know, it's like sometimes you hear a song that rocks, you're like, I think it could even rock a little harder if we did it a little quicker. And, you know, live, what are they gonna do? It's like, you're stuck with it now, I counted it off!"

The song has nothing to do with Joe Jackson, and the chorus of repeated "come ons" is actually from a song Minnis wrote seven or eight years ago, but the riff reminded him of something off of the first two Joe Jackson records — *Look Sharp!* And *I'm the Man*. The song can be split into thirds — the Joe Jackson riff, an REM-sounding chorus, and then a dollop of Ex-Ops in the middle.

From the opener written two years before Ex-Ops existed to "Drowned in Moonlight's" closer, "Swept Away," there is a thematic arc of water imagery. In the fall of 2017, Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast. Scarborough's grandmother's house in Baton Rouge was decimated by the storm — rendered unsalvageable. Once it was safe to travel, Wonko and his brother, Justin, of Mutant Love fame, traveled there and ripped the soaked home down to its studs. An entire life's worth of memories and items sat on the curb. Trying to imagine what their grandmother was going through, Minnis wrote "Swept away." A week later, he got a much closer look. All four Ex-Ops members traveled to South Houston to help do the same thing to friend Zeek from A Sundae Drive's father's home.

"Hurricane Harvey was fucking traumatic to say the least," Zeek said. "My mom had just passed away a little over a year before and it was tough to watch my dad go through that and then watch him lose the home they built together was devastating. Having the Bryan folks come down to help during that time blew me away and I felt that love at a time when my family and I needed it the most. During those first few days, a lot of people were asking how they could help, but Kelly, Michael, Katie, Colin, Kylie, and just showed up and got dirty. My family and I will never forget that. We have a fraternal and eternal bond and I'll cut a motherfucker for any one of you."

Ex-Ops has always been excellent ambassadors for Bryan, traveling out of town and bringing back new bands to play future shows. A Sundae Drive is one of those. The two bands have been playing shows with each other since 2011 and the two bands have been inspiring each other to new heights ever since. It is fitting that The Ex-Ops' stand of autumn shows would

CONT. ->

PROFILE BY JOSHUA SIEGEL

PHOTO BY KYLIE KINSOLVING

be mostly with A Sundae Drive on the bill. When asked for a comment on this round of shows, A Sundae Drive bassist Jennifer Gray-Garcia replied, "Well, the most obvious answer is 'honored' given how many bands The Ex-Ops know and have at their disposal to choose from. But the more honest answer is 'Of course we're going to play all the farewell shows. Try and stop us.' And this isn't a farewell. It's just a "see ya later" round of shows." That last hurrah show will be at Revolution in downtown Bryan Saturday, November 13. Ex-Ops will play two sets with an intermission while old band mates and friends from other bands sneak in as guests.

Ex-Ops' partnership with the Shifting Sounds label came during a discussion about finishing mixing *Drowned in Moonlight* and a possible distribution deal with Brandon Tucker of Magnet School, one of the label's general managers. Engineer Kevin Butler, who mixed Honneyrude's most recent album, was recommended. Minnis said Butler's work was what pushed *Drowned in Moonlight* to the "top of the mountain."

"This guy, Kevin Butler, who mixed the album, got us there" Minnis said. "So, we spent a lot of money and had him finish it for us. What came back to us was, 'Did we do this? Is this our band?' Because it sounds more professional and polished than anything we'd ever done."

Tucker then upped the stakes. He wanted to put out the new Ex-Ops record as a Shifting Sounds entity and hire a publicist to push the record and make sure it got into the hands of reviewers and interviewers. What made the offer even more appealing was that it had nothing to do with profit.

"In [Tucker's] case, it's not because he wants to sell more records — he doesn't care about losing the money," Minnis said. "In his case, and it's fucking mindblowing, he's like, 'I like your band. I think you're one of the best bands in Texas, and I want more people to hear you. So, I'm willing to pay the extra money and do the extra things to have people hear you because you guys are amazing.'"

So far, the investment is paying dividends. Pitchfork is interested in reviewing *Drowned in Moonlight* and the band is booked for shows throughout SXSW in March.

"If there's ever been an, 'Ex-Ops makes a stab at doing something bigger than we've done before,' a bunch of things kind of came together to make this be the thing," Minnis said.

Find *Drowned In Moonlight* at
<http://shiftongsounds.bandcamp.com> and
The Ex-Optimists on Facebook at
<http://facebook.com/theexoptimists> and online at
<http://sinkholetexas.bandcamp.com>

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DRUNK DETECTIVE STARKNESS

Waking up with my eyes crusted shut and of course my contacts are still in...

Me: Wait, why am I passed out on the floor in the kitchen? Why are there cleaning supplies all around? Drunk Detective Starkness I need you here. Did we create some terrible death mix and poison the house? What happened? Did we puke all over someone/something and stumble out here? Did we kill someone? Where are my clothes? Holy mother fuck, what's going on?!?!

Drunk Detective Starkness: Hey man, honestly, look around, I think Black Out You did a good last night. Everything looks cleaned and put away, floor swept up, no empties anywhere, look even the ash trays are cleaned and washed. You don't seem to have any strange bruises or aches. Looks like your clothes are in the dryer. I think we can probably call this a textbook win.

Me: No. Not like this. Not like this. It's never easy like this. Something happened. It had to have. Drunk Detective Starkness, I trust you to hell and back, but Blacked Out Me has a proven track record of being a giant dick to us.

DDS: I know my dude, I feel for you and where you're coming from, but like look, the booze shelf is dusted, there's a carton of cigarettes over there. You live alone. No random voicemails or texts. Seriously, there's folded clothes in the closet, that nasty black ring around the toilet water is gone. We didn't go out last night. Remember? We were just watching shitty movies and kinda putting around. It's summer, everyone is out of town, bars have been a pretty big drag these days. I really think that Blacked Out You did you a solid.

Me: Blacked Out Me, come here. Did you... I don't even know how to ask this... clean up last night and restock us with beer and whiskey and cigarettes?



Blacked Out Me: You fucking bet I did! Me, I love you. It's been a long road, with a couple jail cells thrown in, but we've finally learned that just walking up to the store is the correct decision, and sometimes you just gotta drunkenly clean up the house.

Me: God Bless you, my son. And, are these Milwaukee's Best Crusher Cans I'm looking at in the fridge? We never buy those for ourselves?

BO Me: I know, semi-soberish-hungover-Starkness, but I saw them at the gas station down the road, they were there, and I thought you deserved them more

than they did.

Me: I don't even... I... Blacked Out Me, will you marry me?

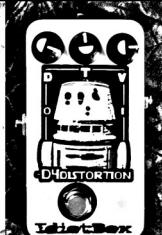
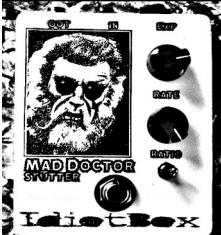
BO Me: Well... um, no. I'm pretty sure there isn't a state in the union that recognizes self to blacked-out self marriage. So, no, we cannot. And why am I the voice of reason in this conversation? You realize I'm the blacked-out version of you, right? Ugh, ok, here's what we can do: You can keep getting really drunk, and I will mostly keep fucking things up and waste your money on frivolous things, but every once in a while, do you a solid and like, ya know, do the dishes or laundry or something, like correctly, you know, the way a reasonable person who is sound of mind and body would?

Me: Yes. Forever, yes. It's all I've ever wanted. Oh my God, I need to call my moms and tell her.

BO Me: Ugh, fine. Why are you crying? Look, I bought you a twelve of tall boys, a carton of smokes, a fifth of whiskey, and cleaned the apartment, it's not like I birthed the Christ here.

Me: They're happy tears, Blacked Out Me, happy tears. — STARKNESS

www.idiotboxeffects.com





BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Totally did not see that one coming. Was I surprised? No. Our relationship had our fair share of issues AND he had spontaneously broken up with me three times prior only to quickly recant and begrudgingly agree to work it out. This time he didn't and that's about all the real backstory I'd like to share for now.

I tried to remain calm, act dignified and respect his wishes as I kept the utmost composure during our first conversation after the incantation had been spoken. 24 hours later would find me sobbing violently in my parked car in a posh part of town listening to hair metal, *unironically*. When I sent messages of my peril to him, I simply received a YouTube link of hair metal greats compiled together for my listening enjoyment.

During that initial conversation I spoke previously of up there, I was composed. I was so composed. I was calm, collected and maybe if just for a single gleaming moment, I was classy. So much so in fact, he took it as me being really okay with this. As I died painfully inside a thousand times over, I smiled graciously and agreed that we SHOULD be best friends and we SHOULD continue to live together, hell, maybe we'll even be roommates after the lease is up somewhere else! Oh the fucking god damned joy.

My heart was being made to lick the curb while being shit stomped and he's telling me how relieved he is and that this is going so much better than he thought it would. I'll let all of you in on a little secret. Lean forward, come here. Closer. IT ALL WENT TO HELL AND A FUCKING HANDBAG AND NOW WE AREN'T EVEN ON SPEAKING TERMS CAUSE WHAT THE GOD DAMN FUCK JUST HAPPENED??!

I was stupid in love with him. That's where it gets fucked. So brain-wise we both knew we'd been done over a fucking year. After Hurricane Harvey I pretty damn well knew that we were over but I was so fucking in love. He did a lot for me, he went through a lot with me. But we also sucked ass as a couple. The last couple years I felt dreaded and resented. It sucked. I myself had gone through 18,000 shades of crazy with the issues of over-medication and injury. He endured some absolute fucking bullshit and the only way to make that right is to learn and be better. He's not off the hook either, just now is not the time and to really think about it, what the hell does it matter anyhow?

Amazingly I've stayed sober. For once, I don't want feelings of pain to be drowned out. I want to feel this heartbreak. I want to feel the nuances of pain, the last flickers of embers that resemble pure love for another dying. Because when my marriage ended, I had never felt pain like that before. I didn't know I could endure

that kind of pain, that kind of heartache. But god damnit I fucking did. I fucking suffered hard and I came out changed and better. So when I met Rented Mule and fell in love, it was amazing, beautiful, wonderful and pure. It was worth the pain I had been through and it made me remember that there will be a tomorrow. That tomorrow won't hurt as much. Won't sting as much. Won't have as many grey clouds as it did before.

Sorry to have gotten all kumbaya on everyone but I'm the type, I absolutely, positively, have to see a brightside. What the fuck is the point of life? Shit sucks but if ya got no hope, no vision for better and greater things, then what good is it? Part of love is painful. It fucks us up, fucks up our heads and our hearts. But yet, it's the most beautiful damn thing. Things run their courses sometimes. I hope this hurts. I hope I value every moment of this. Because one day I will forget just how bad this felt. I hope I learned and evolved more by then. I'm almost excited anticipating what those brighter days will look like. Cause I ain't gonna lie, shit is real fucked and painful and I'm getting whatever karma or weird juju from wronging people I got coming to me whether fair or not. Lots is going wrong and everything hurts. This period in time really fucking sucks. If someone, anyone reads this at all? I seriously don't know. But if there is anyone keeping up with this shit show we call Creepy Horse, If you are going through a breakup and having a real hard time, here's some advice:

Cheesy as it sounds, you gotta fall in love with yourself. Everything sucks and you got to look out for yourself and just be kind.

Be impulsive. You're totally going to regret it, I mean seriously you will, but you still need to just be impulsive in all of your decision making. Your emotions are fried and you need to just hurry up and get all the caustic, venomous feelings out by royally fucking up and feeling even more miserable. It's Cathartic AF.

Don't be stupid. I feel the need to add this under impulsive as I mean these to be two different things. Stupid would be something harmful to yourself or others **without seeking help** vs impulsive being "Should I eat that Toffee Trifle for dessert?" okay. Please, if you're hurting far too bad please seek immediate help.

If at all possible, make peace with the ex, to whatever degree you both can agree to. I only wish Rented Mule the absolute best and I hope we can one day be best friends. Not right now, but maybe one day.

Just have fun. Reconnect with you. Become better. Do the things you always wanted to. Get out there and learn how to fall in love all over again. — *CREEPY HORSE*

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SALACIOUS VEGAN CRUMBS

Aah, back to school — when Godzilla sets fire to campus, King Kong dangles Reveille off the top of the clock tower, and Rodan eggs Kyle Field. Good ol' Aggie traditions! I can practically hear the "Godzilla burnt my homework" excuses now. This is seriously the worst time of year — it's hot as fuck, you've just heard PSL is coming out early, but it's not vegan this year AGAIN, and you keep slipping between a state of summer bliss (No students! No school!) and a terrified panic at the thought of the semester starting and all of the people and traffic it inevitably brings.

Back in my day, we were given diverse dining options such as Secret Sandwich Place that's Supposed to be a Secret but There's Always a Line Out the Door, Rice in my Quesadilla Plz, and The Pasta Basement. Everything was basically unhealthy American food, but we did have...wait for it...Whataburger! Not helpful if you're a vegan or want any semblance of a healthy lifestyle. This was 10-15 years ago when I was a dainty 180lbs at 5'5" and had beaucoup AggieBucks (yes, they were f'real called that) and a giant cookie with every meal. Thanks, meal plans!

But now you guys get all of these healthy things — real fruits and vegetables, soy milk, stuff that's not fried. You can check out dineoncampus.com, and the menus for all of the restaurants on campus will TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT IS VEGAN FRIENDLY. You guys, this is not the A&M I know. The A&M I know would give you shit if you had any hair on your head that wasn't 100% pure unadulterated normal. I had many not normal hairs. I got yelled at a lot. From moving vehicles. I can't imagine how the inexperienced college students in the Oughts would have talked about me had I also been vegan back then. Like, no one had even heard of hummus.

There are tons of options now — you can get a hummus wrap at Azimuth. They also have a rainbow kale salad! Cabo in the MSC has burritos and bowls, and all the usual suspects, including tortillas, beans, and rice, are vegan friendly. Copperhead Jack's (Dude. What is that name? Is this place real?) has TONS of vegan-friendly stuff, and the ETED cafe has soy milk AND pumpkin spice syrup to DIY your own PSL. Sbisa has tofu options, tons of great not-just-steamed-vegetable sides, a vegan quinoa breakfast bowl, and vegan chili for Frito pies. Za'tar has cauliflower steak, hummus, and babaganoush. Back in my day, there was NO place to get hummus or babaganoush in this town. Shiraz wasn't even invented when I started college!

If you live or work on campus, you can run across the street to Freebird's for a quick bite — they have new Beyond Meat crumbles with potatoes as their vegan protein, and it's dang tasty. Chipotle has food poisoning

— I mean tofu sofritas — and all of the rice, beans, tortillas, and non-cheesy or meaty sounding fixins at both burrito places are vegan friendly. Taco Bell is a great speedy cheapo option and you can customize to your heart's content. There's also the brand spankin' new Dat Dog, that serves Field Roast hotdogs at the Domain! Potbelly also has a good Mediterranean hummus-wich. So many plant-based protein options to keep you filled up through the drudgery that is schooling and work at Texas A&M!

If you're a fancy student or an employee who gets paid real monies, Century Square is a great walkable option. Piada has great vegan options, Blaze serves pizza with vegan cheese, and Zoe's has hummus, falafel, and a veritable buffet of other options. Hopdoddy has two vegan burgers, including the juicy, "bleeding" Impossible Burger. And you can catch dessert crepes at Sweet Paris (yes, real live vegan crepes!), or get plant-based ice cream at Sub-Zero.

I was going to write about how you should carry around snacks with you on campus since sometimes you get stuck in a lab or study session for hours and can't get away for food, or the places with balanced vegan-options are closed, but I've been genuinely surprised by the well-balanced options on campus. When I was a student, A&M was dingy, ugly, and most of the major streets were not drivable because they were in such bad repair. The food options were incredibly unhealthy, and the atmosphere in most of the dining areas was dark and depressing.

This seems to mirror the vegan options I had about seven years ago when I first tried (and failed) to stop consuming animal products. There was less than a handful of restaurants around here where you could get a decent accidentally or veganizable meal. Now, there are options, even within food genres! You can run up to HEB and find really great meat and dairy substitutes, and you can find all of the newest, trendiest vegan stuff like Field Roast corn dogs and smoked mozzarella at Village Foods. It's all easily accessible, and most people (under the age of old) are interested in it, or at least neutral towards it. Everyone knows someone here who lives like this, or is trying to. There's so much more support now!

Right now, we're all suffering. It's either the beginning of the school year for you and you're going to your first classes and facing huge bouts of anxiety, or you're pissed off that students are back and you have to drive with bubble wrap on your car and stay out of College Station for the next 15 weeks.

Don't worry, at least we'll all be well fed. — KATIE KILLER



Friday, September 21st @ Revs

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RECORD REVIEWS



Svalvinter Mörkrets Tid

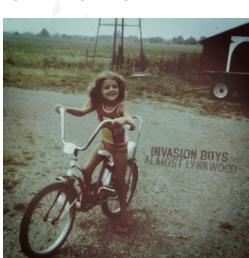
Among metal musicians, there are individuals who have proven to be musical geniuses apart from their respective bands like Dave Mustaine, Bruce Dickinson, Abbath, Mikael Åkerfeldt, Adam Dutkiewicz, and Devin Townsend. One artist who should be among them is the Swedish metal god Christian Ålvestam. If you have never heard of Christian Ålvestam before, you might have heard his music in the Swedish melodic death metal band Scar Symmetry. Although no longer a member of the aforementioned band, currently, Christian has nine active music projects. Let me say that again...NINE ACTIVE MUSIC PROJECTS! To say the least, he doesn't tour much. Having a multi-instrumental talent, Christian has released the debut album of his one-man band Svalvinter (meaning "sulfur winter" in Swedish) titled *Mörkrets tid*.

As the title may suggest, the entire album is in Swedish, but what is awesome is that Christian has taken the time to provide a lyric booklet in the digipak with both the original Swedish lyrics and the English translation. Svalvinter's lyrics are inspired by a series of books by the same name, which are based in a realm of fantasy created by Christian and his friend Erik Granström (the author) who first conceived of it as a role playing game similar to *Dungeons & Dragons*. The cover art, likewise, is a work of fantasy that depicts a horde of revenants emerging from the mire in the middle of a misty mountain valley. However, don't let appearances fool you; if you are expecting to hear power metal, think again.

You could classify this record as melodic death metal, which would not be wrong, but not completely descriptive either. Christian does not keep to a strictly orthodox sound; rather, he experiments with elements of many other genres. One way he creates this hybrid sound is with dual harsh and clean vocals. Christian has a damn

near perfect death growl, and a damn near perfect singing voice. Sometimes, life lets some folks have it all. This album is characterized by both genre-defining and genre-defying moments. Though melodeath is constant presence, tracks, such as "Vanderland," have a distinct black metal feel which is paired with clean vocals. Similar things happen in the opening track, "Döds ände", where the song begins as a killer melodeath track, but then shifts into some poppy, reverb'd clean vocals and a changed tempo, redefining the song's entire mood.

These genre-bending moments make each song in *Mörkrets tid* completely unpredictable. For some purists, this may be uncomfortable, but I consider myself a bit of a purist when it comes to metal, and I find this to be absolutely spectacular! It's like if Joseph Hayden made a metal record; Christian is not only crafting quality metal music here, he is doing it his way and having fun. I'm in love with *Mörkrets tid*, and I give it a 5.5. It's an album where one song won't do, and it draws the listener to every sequential song as if it were a story (which it is). For me, it is tied with Immortal's *Northern Chaos Gods* for album of the year.—CALEB MULLINS



Invasion Boys Almost Lynnwood

The fourth album by the primarily-local Invasion Boys is a darker, more somber, exploration of modern rock that begs closer listening. Like 2014's *Pennbrooke*, the rock band is the prolific Kelly Minnis of The Ex-Optimists (and other bands) and his drummer brother Chris Minnis from Nashville.

While that inaugural album featured mainly-upbeat accessible rock and roll, *Almost Lynnwood* features slower and more melancholy tunes. The Invasion Boys' two other recordings—*Invasion Boys Loves the Escatones* and *At Fairfax and Frederica*—were Kelly Minnis on all instruments, the former a

paeon to an amazing Houston rock trio, the latter poppy fun influenced by Guided By Voices.

On the latest album, "This Western Life" is a taut rocker calling for escape from suffering and pain—"Got to be a safety valve to monitor release." The album opener, "Broken Down Left Behind," is straight-ahead rock and roll that hints at something darker—I think I'm drunk enough to drive." The mysterious "Occupy the Night" is a slow fuse that proclaims "Stand up, take cover, occupy the night." The methodical "Precious" features some solid guitar. "Drunk Walker" is a sketch of one of those nights where the singer is an "easy target for conversation" that quickly is "wearing thin." "So Unkind" is listed, but doesn't appear on the disc. "Lonely is the Word," a languorous cryptic tune, is a decades-old remake that closes out the album.

All in all, *Almost Lynnwood* features solid musicianship and thoughtful recording that should bear fruit with repeated listenings. First-timers may want to check out the earlier recordings first. — MIKE L. DOWNEY



Visigoth Conqueror's Oath

Sometimes a miner misses a gem when he's busy digging, and metal connoisseurs are no different when busily anticipating and reviewing upcoming albums. Fortunately, I happened to come across this band at the suggestion of native Texan traditional metallers, Eternal Champion. I am a huge fan of Eternal Champion, and knew that if they had a band suggestion, it was sure to be good.

The band I am talking about is Visigoth. Hailing from Salt Lake City, the band has pushed themselves to the forefront of the New Wave of Traditional Heavy Metal, drawing on themes of sword and sorcery, ages long past, and tales of blood, revenge, and steel. To some, it's cheesy, but for guys like me who were reared on a steady diet of power metal and

fantasy literature as teenagers, this is right up our alley! Visigoth's first album, *The Conqueror King*, showcased a sound that could have jumped straight out of the 70's and early 80's, but it was not the easiest record to digest. *The Conqueror's Oath*, on the other hand, has surpassed the flaws of the previous release and has possibly made itself into the band's defining record.

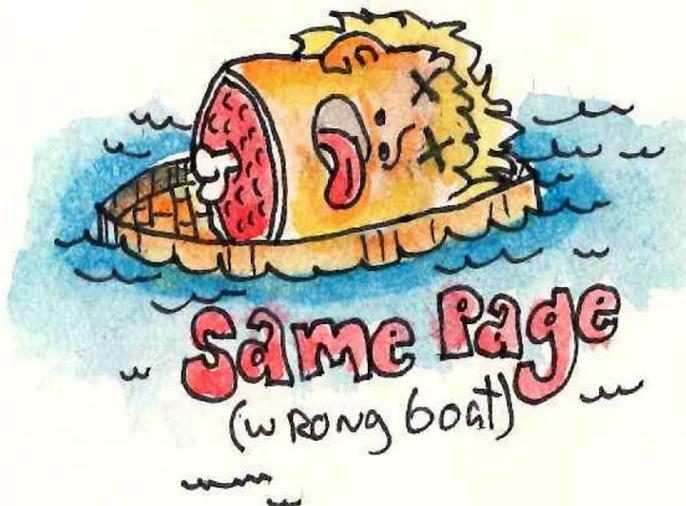
The Conqueror's Oath creates a type of traditional heavy metal that would not fit other bands from the genre. The music possesses a vibe that transports the listeners into an epic saga. Firstly, Jake Roger's vocals are incredible! He can hit some fairly high notes, but he is not the tenor-type you would hear from the likes of Rob Halford. Jake's vocals are strong, fluid, controlled, and completely clean without the slightest trace of grit. In songs like *Steel* and *Silver*, Jake changes his tone according to what he wants the listener to feel. The guitars are toned perfectly for this genre, but what is of note is that there isn't much atmosphere to them, such as one might hear in power metal. Rather than create a fusion of instruments, Visigoth's instruments are in sync, but at the same time, distinct. Songs like "Warrior Queen", and "Outlive Them All" will get the listener pumped, but the closing titular track truly saves the best for last; it literally gives me chills every time I listen to it.

However, despite all the epicness, *The Conqueror's Oath* does have some drawbacks. "Traitor's Gate" is nearly seven minutes long, and though it is initially a good song, the length feels forced rather than natural. Another problem is the song "Salt City", a tribute to the band's hometown with lyrics about partying. Again, initially a good song, but it feels totally wrong for this record's title and artwork. It really disrupts the sword and sorcery theme that it had going for it.

All in all, *The Conqueror's Oath* is a strong record. Visigoth understands the genre they play well and doesn't try to reinvent the wheel; the band proudly stands on the shoulders of giants. Despite having some minor drawbacks, I greatly enjoyed *The Conqueror's Oath*, and it easily found a place in my top ten releases for 2018. Therefore, I give it a 4.6.5. — CALEB MULLINS

CONCERT CALENDAR

- 9/1—Under Subsidence, Familiar With Failure, Awake At The End, Mangekyo @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**
- 9/1—Jody Seabody & The Whirls, Mockingbird Brother, Tongue Punch @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/6—Little Image, Honest Men, John Mark @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**
- 9/6—The Canvas People, Joshua Ray Summey Trio @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/7—Alone Stars, Sweet Baby Nic @ Blackwater Draw, Bryan. 7pm**
- 9/7—Charm Bomb, Hammer Party, Only Beast @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/8—Rickshaw Billie's Burger Patrol, Iron Slut, Benghaxi Osbourne @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/13—Oliver Penn @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/14—Desdimona, J. Goodin @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/15—Punk Rock Flea Market @ Revolution, Bryan. 2pm**
- 9/15—Millions of Dead Cops, Mutant Love, NOOGY, Sykotic Tendencies @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**
- 9/20—Shoobiedoobies, Electric Astronaut @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/21—Shoobiedoobies, Khan, Hardwired To Kill 'em All, Benghazi Osbourne @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm**
- 9/22—The Ex-Optimists @ Curious Collections, College Station. 2pm**
- 9/22—The Ex-Optimists (LP release), A Sundae Drive, Only Beast @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/27—Calmer Seas, LUCA, Corusco @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/28—Wynona Judd @ Texas Reds Festival, downtown Bryan. 9:30pm**
- 9/28—The Reploids, Daikaiju, Black Catholics @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 9/29—JC Juice, Dominik Valdez, Chris the Pizza Guy @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 10/4—Crew & Gilley @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**
- 10/5—Omotai, Woorms, Black Catholics @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm**



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