

STOREREPRESENT



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979represent is a local magazine for the discerning dirtbag.

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WE'RE ALREADY DATING IN MY HEAD

I can remember the first time I ever saw Machine Meets Land. It was at a show at the short-lived Roasted Bean Café, a coffee shop ran by the parents of former Hangouts and Girlband front lady Niki Pistols. It was in the shopping center at the corner of Southwest Pkwy and Texas Ave in College Station. I believe the spot is now occupied by an Asian restaurant. For several months in 2006-2007 late at night one could see local bands like Foreign Affairs, The Flak Jackets, The Hangouts, Guns of Detroit and, on this night, Machine Meets Land. They were an interesting crew of dudes: the drummer looked like he should've been onstage with Black 47 or Dropkick Murphys, the bass player looked like perhaps he'd been kidnapped from a Magic the Gathering convention earlier in the day, the guitar player...well, we'll get to him later, and then the singer. This guy looked like a human Beeker from the Muppet Show. He had a shock of dyed orange hair smack dab on top of his head, a goofy crooked toothed grin, and a certain zany manic energy. I was introduced to him that night as Jeremy. It was only later that I would come to know him as Thee Chexican.

For the next couple of years I would see Machine Meets Land as much as I could and, eventually, start sharing shows with them as I began to play out live with my various musical projects. I learned that Jeremy was one of those Melvins/Helmet/Mike Patton project dudes. A smart-ass headbanger up for sophisticated metal. His band was something else. It was indie rock for sure but there was something "off" about it. Jeremy sang really dumb lyrics. Sometimes painfully dumb, but most of the time so dumb they were smart. I will taste her meat, I will keep it red. I've got some shocking news for you, we're already dating in my head. So damn catchy. Eventually the drummer would get married, breaking punk rock in the process, and move to Orange, TX to repopulate the world with his brood of children. Other drummers and bass players would come and go. By this time, something had happened to Jeremy. The viper of addiction sank its fangs into Thee Chexican and it never really let go of him.

The next couple of years all of us watched Jeremy turn into something frightening. I recall seeing him at one of Niki Pistols' birthday parties and Jeremy was pupil-pinned and vacant. That manic zaniness was replaced by something meaner, more smarmy and less smart. That night I was inspired to go back and write "Dead Eyes" for The Ex-Optimists, a song all about the prairie-wide stare Jeremy had as a response to everyone at Niki's party that night. By that time Machine Meets Land's guitarist, Wonko the Sane, had founded the Xops with me and Machine Meets Land had passed on. Jeremy never really forgave me for that. But by that time there was no way Jeremy could function well as a human being, let alone as a band leader. Eventually a few years later Jeremy would find rehab.

By the time Jeremy came back out things had changed. It had been nearly a decade since he'd rocked out onstage with a band. But he never stopped recording CD's full of his raging acoustic songs, played at the velocity of punk rock and the conviction of the true believer. For a

hot minute he was trying to get a rap thing going. Then he wanted me to book an instrumental duo he had with his dad called Dads & Dogs. It never went anywhere. Jeremy had lost something before his addiction and no matter how much he tried to get it back, it just didn't come back 100%. He was cynical about it, convinced that all of us scene old timers had it out for him and were too cool now to let ol' Chex play a show with them. It wasn't that any of us were too cool, it was that Jeremy had changed. He wasn't fun to be around. There was too much water under the bridge, too much history to just let bygones be bygones.

The last time I saw Jeremy I spent an evening hanging out in the courtyard at Revolution just talking. Wonko and I hadn't spent this much time with him in ages and Jeremy seemed to be getting closer to being more like his old self. He challenged me again on not letting him play shows. By then I had become Revolution's booking person so I called his bluff. I told him I'd set him up a monthly gig on the Tuesday singer-songwriter nights to get him back into the groove of making shows again and to ease him back in front of local audiences. Most of the people that patronize Revs now weren't living here when Machine Meets Land ruled the roost. Jeremy needed to be reintroduced. He did not agree. A few days later we would renew our discussion about my offer and he would decline. I was disappointed but I figured Jeremy would eventually come back around and maybe we'd make it happen. That did not happen.

I never saw him again. Jeremy passed away in his sleep last month. He was 38. I don't know what happened exactly but I'm ashamed by what my gut tells me went down. Jeremy was an extremely talented person who never wavered in his self-belief of that talent. Jeremy would disappear from contact for months at a time, keeping a low profile, working for his dad's landscaping company, only to resurface with a dozen new CD's or Bandcamp releases wanting everyone to have a listen. I wish I had been able to embrace that enthusiasm and support it more. I question now whether or not I had really reached out to Jeremy, to let him back in after he had gone down the drug rabbit hole. On the several occasions we tried Jeremy let it be known that he thought we'd ostracized him, shut him out. He wasn't wrong, but he wasn't entirely right either. It would be super easy of me to blame the drugs and the change they had wrought on Jeremy's personality and his reliability. Anyone who's loved an addict knows what I'm talking about. He and I could never just ease back into the friendship we had before the drugs.

Those who knew him will want to drop the needle on *Stoner Witch* or *Angel Dust* or *Strap It On* and remember Jeremy when he was young, manic, zany, every pore of his body bursting forth with magic. Or take a trip to <http://sinkholetexas.bandcamp.com> and download Machine Meets Land's only album, *Forgot About the Whistle Industry* and salute the memory of Jeremy Vanacek. Wherever you are I hope you find peace and plenty of folks to share all those blew-million CD-R's you've probably already recorded in the afterlife. Salud.
— KELLY MENACE

ANIMAL COLORATION

Animal colors are underrated. Compare the bright red of a male cardinal, the cream color of Dill's fur (see last December's *979Represent* cover), and the bright, milky green of cat eyes. The animals you see every day display an impressive variety of colors that are often overshadowed by braggadocious flowers at best and fancy technology screens at worst. But there are those of us that think a lot about animal coloration and through a combination of experiments, lab-work, and modeling, answer the questions you never knew you had about color. Questions I like to ask include things like: "How does [insert animal] make [insert color]?" "Why?" and "Why is there so much variation?"

Here are the basic answers. Animals can only make color one of three ways. They either do it using pigments, using micro-structures in their skin (or feathers or shells or hair or beaks or whatever), or using a combination of those two things. Of course, there are different types of pigments, and different ways to use physics and structures to get really creative with colors that make this more than a simple problem, but I still find it fascinating that so many types of colors and patterns can be boiled down to just two basic processes.

As far as *why* animals have colors, there are two overarching explanations (each with their own associated debates within evolutionary biology). Coloration is either adaptive, meaning it serves a function that increases that species ability to live and reproduce, or it is non-adaptive. Generally speaking, species where individuals look very different from each other, like dogs (i.e. compare Dill, Turtle, Zoot, Pizza Pigeon, any other downtown dog) don't need those colors for a specific function. Instead, the colors are a result of passive variation (in dogs it's especially interesting because fur color is tied to domestication, but that's a science tale for another day). But in other species like cardinals, that color has a specific function. The red of a male cardinal is called an "honest signal" because the significant amount of energy required to make and express the red pigment tells female cardinals that that man is gonna be a good, strong, father to her egglets (or that he will at least pass along his hunk genes to her bird-children [bird-ren?]). Other reasons animals might have colors, besides as honest signals for attracting mates or deterring competitors, are for camouflage, to regulate body temperature (polar bears actually have black skin beneath their white fur to warm up while still looking like a giant snowdrift that might eat you), to scare away predators, or to perform some other function totally unrelated to the appearance of the animal. For instance, the reason human buttholes are dark is because melanin has an anti-bacterial property that helps keep you healthy despite being shit-adjacent.

Pretty much the biggest over-arching question in biology today relates to diversity: why is there so much of it, in all the ways (body shape, size, color, life choices, life spans, diets, teeth, level of cute, number of legs, etc.)? When talking about coloration, we ask this question a lot. The last few years have resulted in super cool advances in technology and math that allow us to look back in time to predict what animal ancestors looked like, in order to understand how they got to look like they do today. That is a whole field of research in itself, but is now being used to make predictions about the future. For instance, should we expect animal color to change with climate?

Anyway, all of this is to say that animals are fascinating and colorful and there is a lot more to the story of why and *how* ravens are black than you might expect. So think about function the next time you see a pretty bird, tell your dogs their coats are lovely and unique for no reason, and think twice before you bleach your b-hole. — BETH REINKE

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DRUNK DETECTIVE STARKNESS COMMANDMENTS OF DRUNKENNESS

So, I've been thinking a lot lately about general drunk rules I live by and I realized I've never really codified them all in one place. So, without further ado, as the senior partner of The Law Offices of Drunk Detective Starkness and Blacked Out Me, for ease of reference, I present to you, in no particular order after the first one:

Drunk Detective Starkness' Commandments of Drunkenness

- Thou shalt not be a dick.
- Thou shalt never leave a brother or sister to sit in jail, be it anywhere within your power to bail them out.
- Thou shalt not waste booze, ever, on any occasion, for any reason. Shouldst thou need to sober up and are thinking about flushing thy remaining booze, thou should fucking go find a fellow drunk and give it to them. It's not hard to find. Simply walking outside and yelling "Free Booze" should do the trick.
- No drunk shalt ever clean their own puke. Shalt a drunk pass out in the floor and puke on themselves, the conscious drunks shalt cleaneth the puke while the passed-out drunk recovers. In the event of multiple-pass-out-puking, all parties will respectively clean each other's puke in the morning.
- Should thy run out of booze at a non-selling time of the night, the remaining booze shalt be split equally amongst all still awake. Even if it be a single beer and there be five drunks, it shalt be split one swig at a time until such time as more booze can be purchased or all is consumed.
- Thou shalt not covet thy party guest's liquor. Left over liquor shalt always remain the property of the purchasing drunk, not matter the location at which it is drank.
- Thou shalt covet thy party guest's beer, provided it hath been refrigerated in thine own home. All left over beer shalt become property of the house, unless the drunk guest A.) bringeth their own cooler or B.) declines refrigeration of the beer at all, in which case the left over beer shall go home with the drunk guest.
- Should thou encounter an obviously over inebriated drunk who doth appear lost, thou shalt, to the best of thine ability, attempt to get said drunk home safely.
- Should a drunk run out of cigarettes mid-night at a house or bar in which walking to the store be not an option, all of the remaining cigarettes in the friend group shalt be divided equally in a manner in which everyone shalt maketh it until morning, at which point the offending drunk shalt buy everyone who shared a pack apiece in penance for their poor planning.



- All drunks at a party shalt participate in the morning cleaning equally. However, should a drunk have bought pizza or Chinese or any such other life maintaining group food the night before or buys/makes the house breakfast in the morning, that drunk shalt henceforth be immediately and unequivocally relieved of any and all cleaning duties for the day.
- If a drunk makes an ass of themselves, thou shalt immediately forget it ever happened and never mention it again, unless said ass making be really fucking funny, in which case that drunk shalt be ribbed in a loving manner, in such a way as to let them know nobody cares.
- Should thy be picking up a fellow drunk from a night in the drunk tank, thou art constitutionally obligated to arrive with both breakfast and cigarettes for said drunk. As well as a tall boy for the ride home.
- Thou shalt never allow a fellow drunk to drunk dial a recent ex. If said drunk dial is imminent, thou art responsible for confiscating said drunk's phone until such time as the drunk can be trusted with it again.
- Thou shalt rotate the duties of walking to the store for booze, on a fair, turn based system, unless one drunk be blacked out before the others, in which they shalt be responsible for all walking duties for the rest of the night, as they will not remember or care.
- If thou be dipping or using beer cans or bottles as ash trays, thou shalt CLEARLY identify thine dip cans/ash trays, in such a manner to avoid accidentally drinking them.
- Shouldst thou get so inebriated that thou forget things cost money and leave the bar without paying thine tab, thy must return the next day, head held low in shame, find the same bartender and pay thine tab with a large tip for their troubles.

- Thou shalt not call the cops on other drunks unless you are in grave physical danger.
- Thou shalt not mention an innocent drunken hookup thou may have witnessedeth beginning or happening unless said party(ies) chooseth to bring it up.
- Thou shalt provide a change of clothes to a friend, should said friend soil themselves in any way in thine home.
- If thou art the guest, and one of the first up in the morning, it is your duty to start cleaning things up and even going so far as doing the dishes from the night before. Also those first up are entitled to any leftover beers (not all of them) and all half beer/drinks that be lying willy-nilly.
- Again if guest, take careful measure of hosts state of mind upon waking and deciding whether this is going to be a party that will extend for days or whether they wish a quick departure of said guests. However, remember eventually, you have to go back home.
- If the hosts retire early and the party is still going on, one shall be respectful of the noise levels. You can still party, but the music no longer has to shake the house.
- As a guest - do not piss off/bug/trod on the lawn of neighbors. They might be flaming assholes but it is not up to you to put them in "their place". Remember the hosts have to live with them after you leave.
- If you're going out for a night of wild binge drinking and bar hopping and you know it, leave thine fucking keys at home.
- If ye be blessed to keep the same work as another drunk, and the drink has inspired thy friend into lengthy meditations beyond these worldly burdens, take up his shift, as they would do unto your drunken self, like that last time when you were too drunk or hungover to show up.
- If thou shouldst drink too much of someone's booze, bring them a bottle of the same quality liquor you drank.
- Alcoholics are the chosen people but they shall not disparage the drug addict as they are brothers from another mother.
- Thou shalt not fuck with a passed out drunk.

Now being the drunk that I am, I'm pretty sure I've missed a few. So what are the hard and fast rules of being a drunk that I missed? What rules do you live by? I hereby declare this a living document. Throw your rules at us and we can edit as needed.—*STARKNESS*

HOW TO DEAL

I drove to my parent's house on a Saturday morning in December. My father had called and ask for help moving some things around. His voice sounded strange. It gave me anxiety. The kind of anxiety where you aren't sure if something good or bad is about to happen. Usually I'm a pessimist but on this particular Saturday I was optimistic. I wish I hadn't been.

He met me at the door with a strange look on his face. I couldn't quite tell if he was joking or serious. (Often times as children our parents would pretend to be mad at us and then surprise us with a gift. While a great prank, it has left some lifelong impressions.) He told me to sit down. I smiled because I was uncomfortable. And then he started to talk.

Everything he told me made me numb. My heart stopped. The world stopped. I couldn't feel my hands. I couldn't make sense of anything. P was dead. P had committed suicide. There was so much information coming out of my father's mouth but I couldn't understand any of them. I started to shake. I thought I wanted to cry but I didn't know how. I just wanted to wake up from this bad dream.

I stood up. My mom told me she was sorry. She's such a wonderful lady that in the midst of her grief she felt sorry for me. You see, P is my cousin. P is my favorite cousin. I always thought of P as my older brother. I can't imagine my life without P. We speak every week. P messaged me the day before. How could P be dead?

As I'm writing this it's the end of January 2019. The answers I seek will never be given to me. I've struggled with every stage of grief. I've stayed up late at night trying to connect the dots. I know that P was just looking for a way to end his suffering and it wasn't meant to cause this much pain to others. But the questions keep me up at night. The questions wake me up. The questions whisper me to sleep and I can't get it out of my head no matter how much I try. There was no note, no evidence on his phone, nothing was left. He kept his darkness hidden like we usually do. He hid it so well. I can't stop trying to understand. So much so that I make myself sick. I try to distract myself. At this point my entire day to day has become a giant distraction to my grief. I just don't know how to deal. What do you do when you've orbited with someone for so long and now they aren't there. The difference in gravity is shattering. It's just void. Just darkness. Grief suffocating darkness.

P was one of the most supportive people in my life. He was proud of everything I did. He called me baby girl and he'd send me music and pictures. We'd commiserate about life. He'd tell me it'd get better. I guess it didn't get better for him. Not enough. Now that the pain is gone for P how do I deal with mine?

SORT OF WELCOMED TO JAMROCK

I recently went on a cruise. So, first of all, I can't afford a cruise. Just so you don't have the wrong idea that I got money to burn. I don't. But my Mother-in-Law needed a "Cruise Buddy", and I was more than happy to oblige. She also invited two of the kids.

This cruise took us to Falmouth, Jamaica (among other places) and it was sure interesting. Cruising is fun. There's tons to do on the ship, but I was looking forward to getting off and exploring Jamaica, or at least the town that was connected to the cruise port.

There was a lot of talk on the ship about staying away from the town and booking excursions from the ship, which left on a bus from the cruise port, meaning, you bypassed Falmouth altogether. I brushed off those comments, partly because we needed shampoo and conditioner, and also partly because: whatever! It's just people in a town that gets invaded daily by tourists. How bad can it be? (And was the ill talk about venturing into town actually a ploy by the cruise line to start rumors and ultimately get people to book expensive excursions instead? More on that suspicion later.)

So, if you just get off the ship into the Royal Caribbean Cruise Port area, Jamaica is clean and kind of expensive. I mean, there's a freaking Starbucks. But I wasn't fooled. I was gonna take my two daughters into Jamaica and have an adventure...really experience the food and the culture.

Well, shit, once you get passed the nicely landscaped port and through the gate, the hustling hits like a swarm of bees. We were assaulted by aggressive tour guides and locals wanting us to go into their shops, go on a guided tour, use their person to get cornrows and smoke their weed. It was chaos. My girls immediately got anxious and stayed close. Their pink hair became a flag for hustlers to point out, assuring eye contact, and then they'd creep up and pitch their wares. It was freaking bedlam.

We trekked through the barely paved streets, among shouting taxi drivers, terrible street signage, and sweet smelling reefer, and finally found the restaurant that looked way different on Google Maps. Whatever. We were away from the bustle and sitting down with a Pepsi and WiFi. (They didn't have Coke).

We ate Jerk Chicken and Bammys with Scotch Bonnet hot sauce, ganja in the air and Reggae in our ears. The girls were ready to end the adventure and get back on the ship. They were freaked. I promised a b-line to the ship after the meal, it was just three or four blocks. We were mostly left alone as we made our way back toward the ship. But I wasn't done. This wasn't what I expected, but I felt I hadn't given it enough of a chance. I dropped off the girls and went back out.

Walking past the same hustlers I'd just shrugged off just minutes before, they all cued on the fact that I was sans-girls, and used that as a "call". I turned to one of them and explained that their hustle had freaked them out, making it so that my girls pretty much couldn't enjoy the potential adventure. What happened next was surprising and fantastic. His "hustle" turned off and the veil lifted. He apologized and explained that this was not "Jamaica". This was a city bullied by a Cruise Port run by a massive company that promised money and jobs, but that money never came through. Their economic

woes are a mix of the gated and fenced pier filled with restaurants and International chain shops that seems to be built to actually dissuade tourists from venturing into the town, and, sadly, their own pushy sales tactics. Maybe the locals aren't "tourist-savvy". Maybe no one's gone in there and helped revamp portions of the town to accommodate for tourists. Nearly all the businesses in the town are for locals, except for the area right close to the pier gate.

I realized that these dudes were not the "enemy". Sure, they were trying to get into my wallet, but this was their livelihood. They HAD to hustle, because if they didn't, the dude five feet away would swoop in. This realization became a fascinating series of conversations about economics, marketing, suffering, and almost every time gave way to a defined softening of their attitude...well, at least toward me. I hung out for a couple hours just talking about stuff with several people that once I broke the wall, were really sweet and cool people.

I couldn't help but feel for these people and tell them that I felt for them and their hardships, and that changed the way they spoke to me and dealt with me. I had done some research previously and knew they were "fooled" by the cruise line promises of tourists spending on average \$100 each per person, per visit, but then fenced off the pier and opened a bunch of shops and restaurants that would distract people on the way toward town. It's actually pretty terrible, but economically great for the cruise lines. Not to mention the environmental terribleness the area has been subjected to in the building of this massive pier.

We laughed about shit...even how they needed to excuse themselves from our conversation to go hustle some new tourists coming through the Cruise Port gate, only to come back bummed that they didn't want a tour, but just cornrows or a picture with a Rasta dude with a pet pigeon.

I spoke with so many people. Once they knew I wasn't a sale and I wasn't a regular tourist, we could hang out until they spotted some potential paper. It also helped that I was in town during the hours where the tourists were all out on excursions, which to be honest was amazing. I saw life in this little town. Kids walking home from school in their uniforms buying snacks, Police and vendors playing dominoes, dancers teaching a group of boarding school first graders how to dance, employees restocking shelves at a cramped (tourist free) grocery store, a dude with one of the biggest Mummy Fingers I've ever seen anyone smoking sitting in the town square telling me about the things his dad used to say, like, "Better to wet your mouth than spit". I watched men standing on the corner complaining about the "Bumablot Mashup" that the traffic was at that intersection, hung out with the Selectah DJing on the street and told him that he was dropping sick ass beats like, "Tom Cruise" by Don Andre, and "Welcome to Jamrock" by Damian Marley.

Sure, it wasn't what most tourists go to Jamaica for, but exactly perfect for me, and maybe my style of breaking down walls is just me and wouldn't work for other people. Bummed the girls didn't experience that whole thing with me, but I brought odd Jamaican snacks back to the ship and we had a snack party in the cabin.—
JORGE GOYCO

NO CROWN, NO COKE

WHISKEY REVIEWS FOR THE DISCERNING DIRTBAG

NIKKA COFFEY MALT

Who? MIKE JONES! (Nikka Whisky Distilling Co. Ltd by way of Asahi Breweries)

What? Single *Grain* Whisky. More on that below.

When? 2014(JP)/2016(US)-Present

Where? Twin Liquors, Libations, Rough Draught, The Republic 1836

Why? Because Japanese whisky has been exploding these last few years and this is a bottle you can actually get your hands on.

How much? \$55

In the last few years, the world has literally drank Japan dry of its stores of age-stated whisky. It wasn't too long ago that finding a bottle of Yamazaki 12 or 18 required a sales associate to open a glass case or make a short phone call for a special order and Hibiki 12 was sitting on every major player's shelf. If you want those now, it almost certainly means visiting secondary markets and paying many times that of original MSRP. In their place we find a flood of mediocre new players trying to take advantage of the vacuum left by the things that were actually fucking drinkable.

Nikka is neither mediocre nor new. They have a long history of making incredible products. The Coffey Malt is another entry in that long series.

Despite having a mash bill of 100% malted barley, it does not meet the requirements of a single malt whisky. In order to be considered such it must be, "produced from only water and malted barley at a single distillery by batch distillation in **pot stills**." Nikka Coffey Malt is considered a *single grain whisky* because the distillation processes employs the use of Coffey (often called column or continuous) stills in lieu of pot stills. Pot stills work in batches while Coffey stills can have more mash added to them and, in effect, run continuously. This—much like seagulls, bad sausages, *Braveheart*, and voice-recognition technology—rubs Scots the wrong way.

Nose: Pralines and vanilla with a hint of oak and tropical fruit.

Taste: I don't know if you've ever had real, never-been-plugged-by-Bill-Cosby butterscotch pudding. But if you have, you'll know exactly what I'm talking about when you taste this. Very few whiskies can claim to truly have a truly creamy texture, but this one can. It tastes like butterscotch pudding and creme brulee had a baby with a hint of tropical fruit and spice. There's a lot going on and it's all wonderful.

Finish: Not as much going on, but not in a disappointing way. It's short and, unlike its body, very light. It also turns a little bitter at the last second which, after all the rich sweetness, isn't unwelcome by any means. It's a good contrast.

I've never met a whisky drinker that couldn't appreciate the Nikka Coffey Malt and it will always have a place in my bar. 91/100 — JARED TUCKER

ANARCHY FROM THE GROUNDUP

TIPS FROM A RADICAL HOMESTEADER

Do you long for a life of self-sustainable living? Have you joined a troupe of vagabonds who live wild and rough on the outskirts of civilization? Are you waiting for the eventual collapse of our democratic state due to the hands of a corrupt government? Read on, brothers and sisters, I might have a tip or two for you. Over the next few issues, I will share my knowledge of living on a radical punk rock homestead and how you too can resist the system, even if you wish to stay tucked down within the small comforts of it.

With it being the new spring season, could there be a better way to start with than a Resistance Garden? You've heard of victory gardens, haven't you? Most likely, our grandparents or great grandparents tended a garden faithfully, whether in their front yard or at a community location like a local church. During WWI and WWII, victory gardens were a major part of how citizens in the US, UK and even Australia, sustained during hard economic times due to the stresses of war. If you did not grow your own food, you were not doing your civic duty. Now we have an entirely different set of circumstances that should inspire you to GROW YOUR OWN FOOD! Rampant pesticide/herbicide use and conventional farming practices have led to soil depletion across the world and is a major contribution to our current climate crisis. The price of food plus the cost of living in our current economy has pushed many households into poverty. While the Fat Cats who own the 10 multi-billion dollar companies that control almost every food and beverage brand in the world keep getting richer. FUCK ALL THAT NOISE!! Join the Resistance and learn how to grow your own food. Take your food security back into your own hands! Learn sustainable growing practices like permaculture to reduce the use of harmful chemicals that affect our planet! And if you become a decent gardener, make some dollars at your local market by providing fresh, local food to your community!

The best advice I ever received was "Plant like your life depends on it, because it does!" Shit happens and you probably aren't going to be Instagram famous for your garden but NEVER STOP PLANTING! Find the space in your yard, repurpose that empty flower bed, gather pots and buckets for your patio or find a community space at your local bar or favorite park in town and ask permission to start growing food! You can find/order seeds from almost anywhere nowadays but make sure you are supporting small, heirloom seed banks that support sustainable seed saving practices and local farmers. This puts money back into their farms and helps support another season of growth and production. Do you want to grow food with minimal effort? Grab seedlings from your local feed store or farmers market! Even grocery stores carry established plants for you to plant directly into your garden. Just water them and watch them grow! Can't grow a pepper to save your life? Try growing herbs first. Herbs are incredibly resilient little bastards and have sustained our existence as a source of food and medicine since the beginning of humankind.

Nothing gives a bigger hard-on than a homegrown tomato. When you have a pile of cucumbers that fill your sink, learn how to make pickles. Trade that bouquet of basil you grew with the band you caught playing Friday night and score a sweet t-shirt. In short, do your civic duty. We owe it to our selves and the next generation to take food security back into our own hands. Every meal you eat is by the hand of someone who never stopped putting seeds in the ground. And YOU can do it too! Who knows, it may mean your life or death when the zombie apocalypse arrives. —HALEY RICHARDSON



SALACIOUS VEGAN CRUMBS

Empty water bottles and snack bags litter the car floor. You're not exactly sure what day it is—are you seeing a show in Austin or an overflow show in Houston tonight? And what's that smell?! It can only mean it's time for SXSW, spring break, and regional road trips!

Being vegetarian on the road is super easy—you can grab a grilled cheese sandwich damn near anywhere that has a kids menu, including Whataburger, but you have to be a little more resourceful when you're a traveling vegan. See, vegans are smarter!

Let's cut to the chase, this is Texas, and the obvious best choice to stop for snacks and bathroom breaks is Buc-ee's, vegan or not. But it's especially great for vegans, because in addition to the standard crunchy, carby snack fare, they have real food you can eat! You can grab a fruit cup with some PB, or a veggie cup (and ditch the ranch). There are apples, bananas, and oranges. They have FOUR, yes, FOUR different types of hummus and pretzel/cracker snacks. Anything with protein and fiber is gonna be great for you on the road—it'll help keep you full so you're not hungering for more crap that's gonna cost you beer money, and the fiber will help you from getting that thing where your body forgets how to poop when you're on a road trip.

They also have TONS of mixed nuts, and the little toasty cashews that are always calling to you at 2 A.M. in the warmer tray at the checkout are good to go. There's not a whole lot of stuff from the hot food area or bakery case, BUT they do make fresh cut potato chips that are a dang steal at \$1.35 for big ol' lunch sack hot, crispy, freshly fried potatoe heaven. It's not a road trip in my car without a Topo (Psst they have the lime and grapefruit ones!) in one cup holder and a cup o' Buc-ee's chips in the other. If you're hankering for something sweet, there are loads of vegan friendly bagged candies like the sour ribbons, Maple Nut Goodies, trail mix, lots of old fashioned candies like Chick-O-Sticks, and BEAVER NUGS. YES NUGS ARE VEGAN. Don't let anyone tell you you can't have it all. YOU CAN.

I dunno about you guys, but I have a bathroom at each Buc-ee's I visit. It's the bathroom I always use and it's always magically vacant. If you're cruising to the Austin area this spring break, take the route through Bastrop so you can hit up the Buc-ee's there. And if you're coming back late at night, definitely go that way—it's the best and pretty much only place open for a clean pee and a snack. If you're heading to the Houston area, the giant Buc-ee's on 290 across from Waller BBQ is a haven in the dark (plus it's a good nearly-halfway-there marker). They say that some nights, you can see two full moons—the big pale rock floating in the sky, and a big yellow beacon, emblazoned with a perky beaver's face.

If you're not headed out of town to a big city for music, you may be unfortunate enough to not be able to stop at a Buc-ee's. If you're hungry and run across a 7-11

(they have 666 locations in Texas, muahahaha!), make a stop! They're pretty good about having stuff you can eat—fruit, hummus + pretzel snacks, PB&J sandwiches or hummus wraps (yes, seriously, I have laid my eyes upon them!), you may even be able to find some plantmilk or dark chocolate to munch on. 7-11 has made an effort in recent years to have more plant-based and vegan-friendly options. Even Slurpees are vegan!

If you're stuck at a crappy whatever gas station because that's when your car decided it was thirsty, never fear! There's still plenty of stuff to be snacked upon. You can find those little PB Ritz sandwich crackers, popcorn, regular-ass potato chips (no, but seriously, sometimes on the road you'll find interesting regional flavors you don't get at home), fruit and nut bars (pretend dessert!), or those creepy giant pickles in the plastic bags. Grab one of those little canned bean dips and a bag of Fritos and you got yourself a farty snack sure to make your driver speed to your destination! You can also usually find those Lenny and Larry cookies, which are packed with protein, along with Clif bars at most corner stores where you'd feel comfortable touching your dear rear to the toilet seat. Lots of places are starting to sell those little dried edamame and chickpea snacks, which are great in a sea of crackers and chips. One of my favorite things to get at any old gas station is some white cheddar Skinny Pop (yes, it's vegan!) and a spicy V-8.

Ok, now for the most important road trip tip if you're vegan: LET YOUR TRAVELING COMPANIONS KNOW! And let them know each time you're deciding where to stop to eat! I've been on a mini-tour with a band who didn't pay attention or listen when I told them the only thing I could eat was fries at a place, so I ended up living off of mostly fries and Beaver Nuggets for 4 days. For some reason on road trips, people are hesitant to pull into a grocery store for snacks, but speak up because that's where the good stuff is—you can re-up on fruits that don't need to be refrigerated and find higher quality grab and go snacks than at most gas stations!

If you're lucky enough to have the leisure time to stop and sit down somewhere to eat, HappyCow is a great website and app for finding restaurants with GOOD vegan options (aka not just fries and a limp salad), and Yelp and Google are also really helpful. If you're not the driver, take a few minutes when you're outside of town to look up restaurants on the way to or near your destination. In a pinch, Subway and Taco Bell are EVERYWHERE and everyone can eat there—if no one's into it, tell your driver to stop being a dick and stop for three minutes so you can grab something besides a fried potato (PSA: Sonic's onion rings are accidentally vegan).

Go forth my well-snacked friends, have a wonderful spring break (or whatever it is when you're an adult and you don't get spring break anymore)! — KATIE KILLER



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STILL READING

Before I dive into this month's "Still Reading", I want to mention a recent adventure. On a Sunday afternoon in early February, I drove twenty-minutes south down Texas Highway 6 on the esteemed recommendation of Joey McGee, my Americana musician friend, who has bragged about visiting a "Rock-n-Roll Cafe" in downtown Navasota. He even claimed the cafe contained a use record store in the back! So I wrangled my buddy Leighton to ride along, and we headed south to see what McGee was on about.

On our arrival, we found a used bookstore across the street from the Classic Rock-n-Roll Cafe, a sprawling store-front with giant book painted awnings called Muddy Water Books. I can't resist a used bookstore—likewise, neither can Leighton—and we quickly found ourselves in what appeared, at first glance, an unimpressive situation. That is until I found the closet full of horror novels and struck up a nerdy hoedown with the store owner about dark fiction writers TOO FEW folks seem to have heard of, let alone read. We both thrilled that somebody else actually relished the macabre tales of Jack Ketchum, Bentley Little, and Richard Laymon. And although I had just professed to Leighton that I had no intentions of buying more books until I finished five volumes currently on my shelf, I exited Muddy Water Books with three titles by those authors mentioned above. (I plowed through Ketchum's road-trip from hell novel *Joyride* in a few quick sittings, gleefully gobbling all the grisly hole-in-the-head bits to be expected from a true master of modern extremity. RIP, Jack Ketchum. And thanks for the ride.)

I share this story to illustrate a grand benefit of life in the real world: true serendipitous surprise. Sure, these titles I purchased are available online—probably at better prices than at Muddy Water Books—but the experience of chatting up a fellow genre nerd, of having her husband hand over his cell phone to boast photos of their last horror convention in Dallas, is one that simply cannot be replicated via online convenience. Leighton and I also spent more time than necessary jawing with the manager of the Classic Rock-n-Roll Cafe about his business, as well as the owner of the gift shop two doors down, who sold us white truffle oils for Valentine's Day gifts while profusely declaring the beauty of Chet Baker's vocals steaming from a small stereo behind the register. Books and oils in hand, we left downtown Navasota marveling at the gems found at the end of a twenty minute drive. Life in the real world, it turns out, has its perks.

Now for the purpose of "Still Reading".

I recently completed reading Cal Newport's *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World*. Newport's become something of an analog hero to me, especially after I read his book *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*, which dealt with maximizing mental and creative efficiency on the job in order to live more abundantly apart from it. *Deep Work* questions *how best* to use our digital and automated tools, emphasizing the value of smaller, more focused moments of intense work over frustrated spans of fragmented attention. After reading *Deep Work*, I employed several of Newport's ideas to my job—particularly setting stricter boundaries to Office Hours, email etiquette,

and my online presence at work—which produced more fruitfully compact days that required fewer grading and planning sessions at home. And while I cannot completely avoid heavy midterm and end of semester research paper seasons, I find myself toting less of Blinn College off campus. So points to Newport for that.

Where *Deep Work* explored maximizing attention towards clearly defined job goals, in *Digital Minimalism* Newport looks to ways of cultivating a meaningful life apart from work—free from unnecessarily draining, even addictive, distractions. Newport dedicates the first half of his book to the addictive qualities of digital technologies, unmasking the sinister intentions of their creators to build an "attention economy" designed to steal the most minutes from users as possible. More minutes of attention means more ad revenue, means more money to the creators, means less concern how such a vacuum depletes the psychological, spiritual, relational health of the devoted. We are not addicted to these tools by accident. Nicotine was intentionally added to cigarettes. And, damn, don't it feel cool to smoke our lives away?

It should be noted that, surprisingly, Newport is *not* against digital tools, nor does he ask his readers to be, but he does ask us to consider what we have surrendered to our devices and how much control we prefer to regain through a more critical, intentional use of them. As a quick aside, I'd like to add a personal observation about Cal Newport. We've got this little authorial David seemingly taking on the Goliath of Silicon Valley with the slung-stone of his book, but why should we care what he has to say? Well, for one thing, Newport carries the credentials of teaching computer science at Georgetown, which puts him directly in the lion's den of said tools and marketing. He also manages to write and publish profusely with minimal online presence. But, beyond these credentials, Newport seems concerned about the effects of these tools for the same reasons I do—that probably you do (or should), as well: he appears offended that anyone would purposely undermine our sanctity, especially for something as flimsy as financial gain. In this, Newport is less interested in probing the dangers of digital media than he is in asking what ultimately gives our lives value and how do we most explicitly magnify that value. If digital tools assist us, by all means use them for such magnification. However, since so many of these tools seem to diminish the things we often hold dear—our attention span, our peace of mind, our intimacy with others—then they're worth at least examining skeptically.

Upon mentioning acquisition of Newport's book to a good friend (and fellow Newport fan), he said, "You're already pretty minimalist. So you're ahead of the curve." That is certainly the kindest thing anyone has said to me since a female student claimed in early October, "Mr. Still, you're so *extra*." I took that as a compliment, though I have no clue what it means.

But my friend is right: after years of hosting a hit page on Facebook, I'm now something of a Neo-Luddite.

These days I get feverishly excited about ink pens, spined notebooks, and clearance CDs. I still prefer DVDs over streaming services. My flip-phone does not send or receive emojis. And I thought Voxer was a new STD until my wife showed up with it. Still, besides a list of nearly ten (physical) books Newport referenced that are now on my reading list, even as an un-plugged analog champion I found plenty of take aways from *Digital Minimalism*. For the sake of time and space, I'll only highlight two.

First, Newport makes a plea for fruitful, high-quality solitude, which I have no problem seeking as an introverted Enneagram 4 with a strong "leave me the hell alone" 5-wing. However, Newport's definition of solitude, lifted from a 2017 book by Supreme Court Nominee Raymond Kethledge and former US army officer Michael Erwin (so guys who work with some frothy personalities) titled *Lead Yourself First*, is "a subjective state in which your mind is free from input from other minds." Yeah, that's not how I usually do solitude. Generally, I seek solitude in order to read or listen or watch something. I rarely seek solitude just to *abide*—unless I'm writing, which is not as frequent as my consumption. And though I am a rather *active* consumer, keeping detailed journals and even sharing my engagement with others (often to their dismay), the point is that I generally rely on input during my quiet moments.

Newport offers simple suggestions from successful and seemingly healthy thinkers for increasing meaningful solitude. And these are good notes: such intentional solitude is the only state of mind free enough to encounter totally fresh insights and true creativity. Solitude, it appears, is where more than mere paraphrasing is found.

Second, Newport pushes readers towards a level of "high-quality leisure" that I have traditionally rejected: a leisure based on personal growth and productivity. "Dammit, I thought. "He's one of these guys who can't wait to grab a beer and brag about his projects to other dudes. Well, I for one will not have my nail gun banded about Happy Hour willy-nilly!" But, as it turns out, Newport simply offers a challenge to do challenging things in our leisure. The goal is not to win audiences or to earn money. The goal is to learn new skills and to enjoy the act of craft itself—and, in doing so, to resist passivity and reliance on screens for entertainment/faux-relaxation.

This is a good word. And it is precisely for this reason that I'm writing this recommendation in this print fashion. Typically, I might text a few friends about Newport. Or I may email a link to his book with an advisable blurb. But writing this recommendation, hopefully, achieves two things: A.) to help me process my reading, and B.) to invite potential readers into conversations—even with themselves—about these ideas. Typing a few paragraphs and releasing it in a print format such as this is not complicated, but it proves far more concrete (even awkwardly so) than a social media recommendation tossed into the ether. So score one for Newport. I predict *Digital Minimalism* to rank among my favorite books of 2019, as *Deep Work* topped my 2016 list. — KEVIN STILL

A TRUE UTOPIA

The ground is quiet. The cities that used to hustle have crumbled with gardens overgrown and suburbs rotted. They are mere ruins that are easy to glance over. Covered in wear and tear from thousands of years. The plants grow thick over the old broken buildings and dirt has buried the civilizations. They are the only signs of human presence left on Earth. Finally, the animals can roam freely not disturbed by mankind's unjust rule. They thrive on the Earth living out Mother Nature's plans. The way things were supposed to be before humans took over. The forests are flourishing, and the plant life has taken over. The coral reefs are able to live in peace once again without all of the pollution that the humans caused. The air is clean and breathable. Climate Change happened and destroyed the human race.

In the sky though, we see large cloud-shaped objects. At closer glance we realize that it is a city built in the sky. The city floats among the clouds in the sky. The metropolis thrives with happy faces filling every corner. Civilization is at its evolutionary peak. Adapted to the skies, they have strong respiratory systems that handle the thinner air. Vitamin D is easy to come by, causing everyone to be happy. Everything is solar powered and highly sustainable. They all greet each other as they pass by. They've become open and honest and don't stare at their feet when they walk. Neighbors smile and wave at each other, not burdened by thoughts of war and crime. They share drinks and food as needed. Each according to their ability and each according to their need. The children run through the streets not worrying about cars or shootings. No one even remembers cars or guns. The planet was saved when pigs learned to fly. — STARKNESS

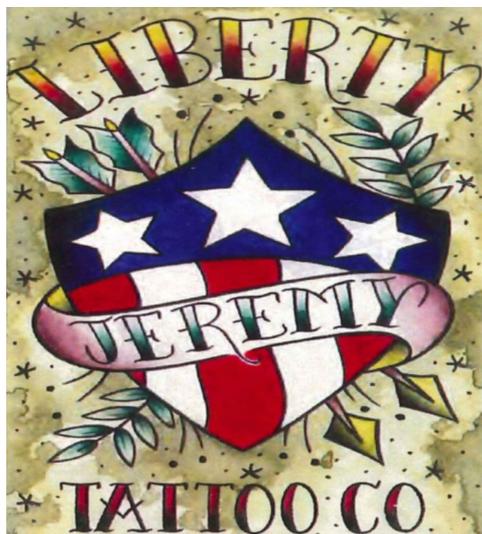
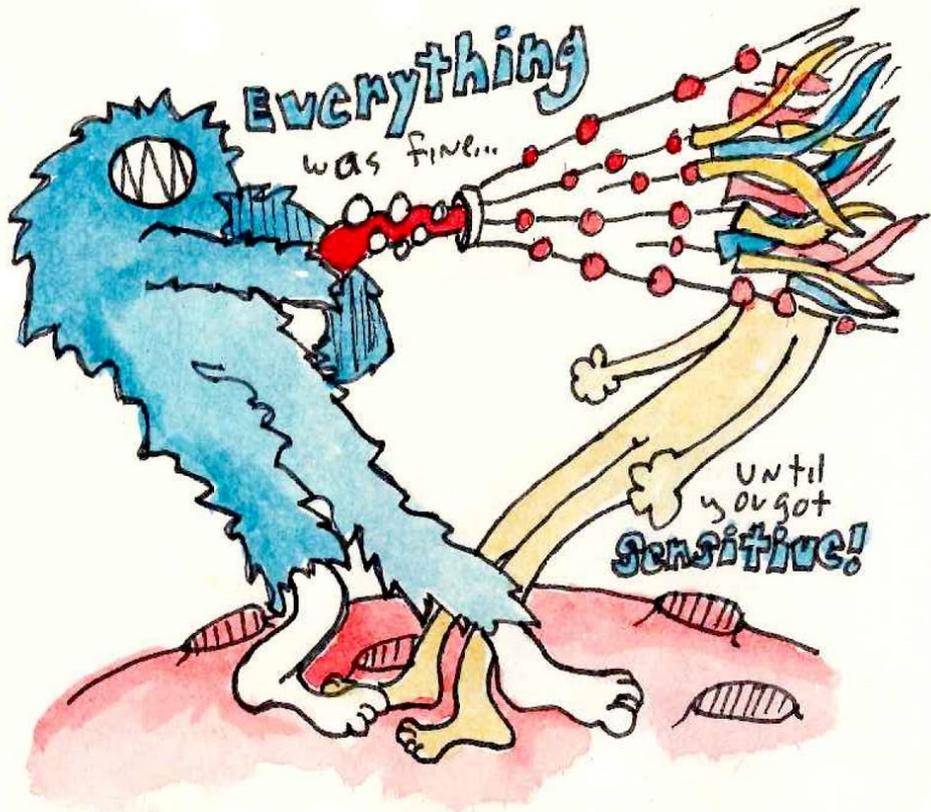


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THE PRESIDENT'S GLASS TEAT

The late great writer Harlan Ellison wrote a series of columns about television from 1968-1970 that came out in his book then called *The Glass Teat*. Whenever I heard just how much "executive time" our president spends watching television, I thought of Ellison's book, especially considering the prez.

"I was looking at the result of hours before the glass teat, passively suckling . . ." (*The Glass Teat*).

We've seen just how much of what the president and his advisors think and act comes from is seen on television . . . and why facts are ignored.

"For TV, . . . Had systematically lulled them into bovine complacency, into tacit acceptance of all the hideous wrongnesses that leprously fester on the soul of our country." (*The Glass Teat*).

And whenever the president speaks, whether at one of his propagandist rallies or at his rare appearances before the press, who do we always hear is to blame?

"What followed was a potpourri of all the hackneyed clichés employed by right-wing doom-criers since Nat Turner took on the white power structure. . . . There were conspiracies everywhere. The Black Militant Conspiracy. The White Liberal Conspiracy. The Communist Conspiracy. The Bureaucratic Conspiracy. The Conspiracy of the Judiciary. All their troubles stem from poor people on welfare rolls and from 'bleeding heart liberals' who steal from them." (*The Glass Teat*).

We've known all along that the president spent a great deal of time nuzzling the glass teat since that was where he learned what his administration was doing. However, we didn't know just how lazy he is. We knew he was an ignorant, lying, bullying, cowardly, racist traitor, but we didn't know just how little he actually worked. What did we expect? He's never had a job in his life. The glass teat is all he knows.

His declaration of a national emergency on the border with Mexico is a lie just like the other nine thousand lies or so he's told since he became president two years ago. Despite the facts that show things are even better than

they were then, it's now an emergency even though he says it's something he doesn't really have to do. He said it on television, so it must be true. The president and his glass teat are inseparable. Also, the truth doesn't matter to a liar.

We know the president especially loves to slurp at the glass teat offerings of his boot-lickers at Fox News. They engage in the same tactics as the so-called leader of the free world in attacking those who don't fall into the same jack-booted lockstep, insisting "anyone who tries to propel us beyond that chauvinism and bigotry is a criminal" (*The Glass Teat*).

The president's base of rabid followers are victims of the glass teat as well since that's where they first heard the president's lies and who now "served the ends of the demons by having been lied to so engagingly by television, that anything outside the simple good-and-bad Disneyism of what they'd been programmed to understand, seemed destructive, seemed radical and deserving of death" (*The Glass Teat*).

When Ellison was writing a half century ago about the seduction of television, how could he know how prescient he would be this year with a proclamation like this: "In a year when we are compelled to pay taxes, so the police can purchase tanks, . . . so the rich can get richer, the poor get poorer, so the new Attorney General can go into wiretapping in a big way, so the oil companies and the nighthawk land developers can more comfortably rape the victim earth" (*The Glass Teat*).

Everyone's wondering where their tax refunds are going this year: into the pockets of the richest one percent, just like Congress intended.

Finally, all should see the Oscar-nominated short film *A Night in the Garden* about a 1939 Nazi rally in Madison Square Garden just before America went to war against the Nazis. It looks terrifyingly like one of the self-aggrandizing rallies the president holds all the time, absent so many Nazi salutes . . . for now.

Put that film on the glass teat along with film from the president's rallies, and see if television can redeem itself. One can only hope for the best, but then, it is just television. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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Alright, I'm a millennial, but I do know how to read. Looking in the way back machine to the 1980s and early '90s Venezuela was one of the richest and most successful democracies in Latin America. So what happened? The answer you hear repeated often, including by our government, has to do with the country's embrace of socialism. It's an ideologically driven bullshit explanation that oversimplifies the situation.

The true origins of Venezuela's crisis go back to 1992, when a military officer named Hugo Chavez led an unsuccessful coup against the government. The last time the military had gotten involved in Venezuela's domestic affairs was the late 1950s, when it stepped in to support the establishment of the country's long-running democracy. This history raises an important point: Democracies flourish as long as the military serves the civilian government, whoever is in charge. Once the military starts taking sides, trouble starts.

Despite the fact that his 1992 coup failed, six years later Venezuela elected Chavez as its president. How? He tapped into average citizens' anger over income inequality and rampant corruption.

To address entrenched inequality, Chavez initiated an aggressive domestic spending program financed by the country's oil revenues. This might seem like a positive thing, but there is an economic problem called "Dutch disease". The phrase was coined after the Dutch economy was hurt, not helped, by its offshore natural gas discoveries. After the discovery, the Netherlands' ability to export this natural resource drove up the value of its currency, making its manufactured goods non-competitive overseas. Ultimately, this caused several domestic industries to shut down. The Dutch economy has never fully recovered. Basically, huge influxes of foreign currency and investment can really fuck up a domestic economy.

Sound familiar? Reliance on oil exports increased the value of Venezuela's currency to the point that its other products could not compete. As a result, domestic industries went out of business to the point that food, clothes, and pretty much everything necessary for life now has to be imported. The redistributionist policies of Chavez's government exacerbated these economic issues. The simple way to view it is 'Why work when you can live quite well on your share of the oil revenues?'

Obviously, it's not quite that simple, but Chavez's economic policy seemed to be working out well for Venezuela—until two pivotal things happened in the early 2000s. First, oil prices dropped, meaning Chavez could no longer prop up his economy with oil revenues. Venezuela's once-impressive agricultural and manufacturing sectors no longer existed, leading to shortages when

the government no longer had the funds to buy necessities from abroad.

Around the same time, a military coup supported by the U.S. attempted to unseat Chavez. After initial successes, officers loyal to Chavez put down the rebellion. As a result, Chavez purged the government of anyone he perceived to be disloyal and systematically destroyed other Venezuelan institutions that supported democracy. To keep the military happy, Chavez allowed it to engage in profitable criminal activity and corruption.

Upon Chavez's death in 2013, Vice President Nicolas Maduro took over, continuing Chavez's policies, because really? What the hell else is he going to do? Oil prices are ridiculously volatile and there is NO INDUSTRY LEFT. Venezuela is still in a state of revolution where workers are fighting the capital class and unable to truly own the product of their own labor. Last year, Maduro was elected to the presidency. His inauguration last month gave rise to protests, which led to the current crisis.

After the protests started, opposition legislator Juan Guaido declared himself president. The U.S. and several of our allies have recognized Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate president, though no election has chosen him for that position. Sound familiar?

It's insane and truly a testament to how stupid the world is at this point where there isn't even a need to come up with a REAL REASON or be convincing in any way to force US imperialism in Latin America. Remember when the Bush era actually had to try before invading Iraq? There's probably 20 dictators around the world that are backed by the US or Russia who are immediately worse in every way than Maduro.

Let's even assume that the 'Maduro is bad argument' isn't just a ridiculous red herring. Seriously, how can you claim Maduro is this totalitarian crazy person when he isn't even detaining a man leading an active coup against the regime? Let's be real for a second – what do you think Trump would have done if Clinton would have just declared the election invalid and got a swath of international powers to back that and no-so-subtly say they'll invade the US if he didn't step down? Do you think the US would have just let Hillary walk free?

The US is about to completely fuck up another country for oil. Again. While we're still in Iraq. While we're still in Afghanistan. While we're still in Syria. While we're still in Yemen. While we're still in Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and Somalia. – *STARKNESS*

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PEDAL PUSHING: MOOG GRANDMOTHER

Last month I took a tour of Moog Music Inc. in downtown Asheville, NC. I spent several hours playing instruments, talking to the sales staff, and touring the assembly line and R&D labs. I walked away from Moog with a Grandmother under my arm.

For the last 17 years my synthesizer rig has revolved around the analog monosynth. I've had a number of them over the years. All measure against my two favorite of the lot: the Moog Source for its sheer largess of sound and the Moog/Realistic MG-1 for its portability and ease of programming. Both had been long-gone from my rig. The Grandmother is the synthesizer that blends what I loved about both these keyboards: it is easy to get around and shares the same aesthetic as the MG-1 but it has that large, sizzling Moog Source sound.

First off, the Grandmother is a dual VCO monophonic analog synthesizer. No digital memory, no digital envelopes, no DSP control or effects. All analog. OK, let me rephrase. It is 99.9% analog, as it does have a 3-preset memory sequencer and an arpeggiator. It has the Moog 24dB 4-pole filter. It even has an onboard spring reverb (more on this later). What makes it somewhat different for Moog is that it is semi-modular. The classic Moogs of yore all had control voltage input/output. In the pre-MIDI days that was the only way synthesizers could communicate with one another. The Grandmother also has MIDI over 5-pin as well as USB (so now I'm down to maybe 99% analog) but also has a multitude of control voltage patch points directly to the different portions of the synthesizer itself. That makes it an excellent first step towards modular synthesis or a team player in an existing modular setup.

Moog designed the synthesizer with ten building blocks:

- an arp/seq section for controlling the sequencer and arpeggiator
 - a modulation section for control of the LFO
 - an oscillator section for control of the VCO's plus oscillator sync and PWM
 - a mixer section for controlling volume of the two oscillators and a noise generator
 - a utility section that features patchable high pass filter, a mult jack, and an attenuator. This is an important part of making the Grandmother a good standalone modular controller as the mult and attenuator allow for routing control voltage to many sources at once
 - the filter section with cutoff and resonance controls
 - the envelope section with full ASDR control (there is only one envelope)
 - amplifier section for controlling master output and triggering options (envelope/key/VCA bypass)
 - controls for the spring reverb
 - mod/pitch wheels, buttons that control sequence/arp playback, glide, and octave selection.
- Each section is color coded, making the synthesizer look

a lot like a more fully formed version of my old beloved MG-1. Everything one needs to make sound is laid out right out in full view. The synthesizer is internally pre-patched like any other non-modular synth but each building block has key patch points that allow for doing some interesting things that couldn't ordinarily be done.

Some of the synth's features are only accessible through the patch points, such as the high pass filter and sample-and-hold. Moog encourages the experimentation by including a dozen patch cables of different length with the synthesizer.

In action the Grandmother is seriously fun to play with. Its layout invites one to sit down with it and just monkey around. Its basic tone is all classic Moog. It is not hard to coax beefy bass lines, cutting leads, atonal noises, and soft pads. The LFO comes well into the audio range and can be patched for keyboard control, becoming a third oscillator. This is an old trick savvy MiniMoog programmers used to full effect, as that keyboard did not have a dedicated LFO (the third oscillator did double duty). Another old MiniMoog trick, plugging the headphone out back into the filter input to override the output, can also be replicated via the patch bay. The single envelope is a little limiting but one could easily patch in envelope control from a separate synthesizer or module if necessary. The spring reverb is *nasty*. It is dark and easy to overdrive but lends an interesting tonality. It has patch points as well so one could use the reverb separate from the synthesizer for running vocals or drums or whatever into it. Filter input is patchable so one could access the filter for external instruments as well and, since the VCA has a bypass mode, the Grandmother can be set to drone so that way filter access does not require holding a key down.

I have yet to find any real drawbacks to the Grandmother, except for maybe wishing it had a second envelope like the MiniMoog. That is a small niggly in comparison to all the synthesizer provides. And I haven't even mentioned the price. It comes in at \$899. There are plenty other analog monosynths right now in that sub-\$1000 price range. Dave Smith, Korg, Roland, Vermona, Novation, Waldorf, and many others have lots of synthesizer modules and a few keyboard synths in the same price range. Some of the Korgs emulate old instruments (like the MS-20 Mini and the Odyssey) and some, like the DSi's, all have memory, sequencers, and digital control for doing all manner of different things. None of them have that large Moog sound. Behringer's Model D MiniMoog clone (reviewed here last year) would be the closest competitor with patch points, the Moog filter and oscillators, and at a third of the price. However, I greatly prefer the Grandmother's layout and I like having an integrated keyboard. It feels like an instrument whereas the Model D and other modules just feel like boxes. I'm hoping the Grandmother stays at the center of my rig for many years to come. — *KELLY MENACE*



RECORD REVIEWS



Ossuarium *Living Tomb*

Those who know me also know how I usually like my death metal: mid-tempo, aggressive, and, as my buddy Kevin Still puts it, "with swampiness and black cauldron spews." However, that is not to say I am not open to variety, as I also like the slower, more rhythmic-driven pace of Bolt Thrower (RIP) and the melodic harmonization of Amon Amarth.

Hailing from Portland, Oregon, Ossuarium has emerged onto the death metal scene with an offering titled *Living Tomb*. Due to my archaeological background, I recognized right away that the band derives its name from the word "ossuary," which is a stone box wherein the bones of the deceased would be placed after the flesh had decayed. This type of burial practice was popular among the ancient Persians and First Century Jews, and the practice is referred in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 23 verse 27 wherein Jesus of Nazareth compares the religious leaders of His day to "white-washed tombs full of dead men's bones and all corruption." To say the least, Ossuarium is a very metal band name.

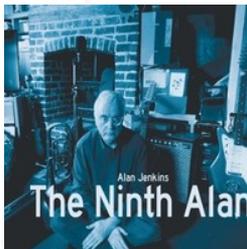
Before even hearing a single song on the record, the artwork caught my eye. Created by none other than the legendary Daniel Seagrave, the image presents a visual of a living tomb. In a way, this cover art image acts as a lens by which the listener is to evaluate this record. The deep blue-green, the ghoulish creatures climbing the steps of stone ruins, the dead trees, and the murky waters below give the impression of a gloomy, dark, and dank atmosphere, and that conclusion is accurate concerning the sound.

Ossuarium's debut is doomy... very doomy. Daniel Kelley's vocals have a sort of echo effect that makes the listeners feel like they are inside a cavernous tomb. It gives *Living Tomb* a sort of hollowness, further adding to the effect. The slow, rhythmic thrum of the

guitars produces a sense of hopelessness. Though the sound maintains a traditional death metal vibe, instances exist where nefarious melodies and rhythms invade the already uncomfortable feeling of this album, increasing the sense of something lurking in the shadows.

The downside is that the doomy, slowness of *Living Tomb* can at times become monotonous if one is not careful. It is sort of the flipside of technical death metal which is often extremely fast-tempo; one has to actively listen and ponder this music. It simply won't do to let it play in the background while doing something else. I found that active listening revealed cleverly created layers I hadn't noticed on the first listen. However, if the listener is the type of person who likes music to be straightforward, this record may be difficult to appreciate.

Overall, I found myself wanting to listen to this album repeatedly, even though it is not my usual cup of death metal tea. To truly appreciate *Living Tomb*, one has to digest the whole package: the art, themes, atmosphere, and sound. In this manner, Ossuarium's first record is a piece of death doom art, and, for that, it gets a 4:5 from me. — CALEB MULLINS



Alan Jenkins *The Ninth Alan*

Alan Jenkins is a British musician who has played on likely 40 -50 albums over his extensive career. He led a number of English art/pop/psychedelic/experimental rock groups from the 80s through the early 2000s such as The Chrysanthemums, the Deep Freeze Mice, Ruth's Refrigerator, and the Thurston Lava Tube.

Jenkins' solo career is equally diverse as evidenced by his latest offering: a two-disc collection of 27 tunes (three last half an hour, a half dozen under two minutes or so). Many songs are reminiscent of the experimental surf music Jenkins did for most of the last

decade, especially the innovative part e.g., the quirky "Duet for Guitar and Toy Animal," the dynamic "Time Will Colour the Air, Monday".

However, he sings lead on a number of songs that lean toward social commentary like "Reality Will Crush You Eventually" and "What Would Hitler Do?" On the former, Jenkins' normally-deadpan voice echoes Keith Moon's solo album vocals and Roger Waters' "stand still, laddy!" vernacular ala "The Wall" on such lines as "groveling before criminals will make you rich." Then, there's "Die Gefreiter Pfeffer Kontaktbörse Band," Jenkins singing the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's" title tune in German. Also, "Bart the Zombie Cat" is a nice guitar instrumental featuring "meowing" and the title chanted by Jenkins' elementary-age daughter.

Probably the best of the vocal cuts is "Everybody Wants to Be Vic" that's a solid pop song with lyrics such as "you're giving away the treasury because it's the sensible thing to do." The top instrumental is either the opening cut — "Electric Hare Net" — with its squalling guitar or the bouncy "Ron Crocodile Space" with its sonic shifts and some great timpani toward the end of its eight minutes.

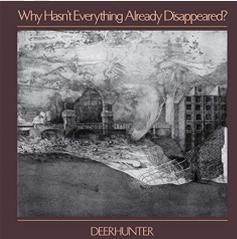
Another interesting vocal is "Awful Women of the Right," a doomy tune featuring spaghetti Western guitar that decries their "depressing faith in trickle-down economics" and "ruthless disregard for human life."

Jenkins delights in playing around with music structures on the dozen instrumentals, whether the atmospheric "Banjo Music" which may have a bit of plucked banjo in there or the Dixieland band verse of "The Hamster Event: Event Three." Some are just amusingly-odd sounds with matching weird titles: "Duet for Group and Toy Animal," "Unpleasant Event at Otley," and "Ron Crocodile Sky."

The album's two longest tracks — "Horse Theory" and "The Ahaz Dial" — are both slow methodical tunes (over 10 minutes each) marked by peculiar lyrics: "Call him the hyena whale," "a 12-foot mousetrap with a piece of cheese the size of a pig," "turned out his psychological pockets." The former does have tasty organ and bluesy guitar, the latter, appealing horns.

Longtime Jenkins fans will like the mix of his older oddball lyric play with his newer instrumental experiments. *The Ninth Alan* could be a good introduction for the diverse-music-

minded out there. Find it on the UK label he heads: Cordelia Records. — MIKE L. DOWNEY



Deerhunter *Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared?*

Deerhunter has been one of the more fascinating indie rock bands to emerge in the late '00s. The band often plays fast and loose with alt rock tropes, a little Sonic Youth here, a little Echo & The Bunnymen there, a little Hot Chip over here, a little Brian Eno over there, oh here's our punk album, oh here's our ambient album, here's a cassette full of us jamming and practice, etc. It is a hard band to pigeon hole, which is what has made them so fascinating to me. They are one of the few bands of the last 15 years to truly be their own thing.

The band's arc has been downward of late. Their zenith *Halcyon Digest* is nearly 10 years behind them now, and the two albums to come after, *Monomania* and *Fading Frontier* have been largely disappointing. So you could forgive me perhaps my reticence at picking up *Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared*, the band's latest album. That was my mistake. This is easily their best album since *Halcyon Digest*, and while it does not reach those heights it certainly has some amazing moments.

The instrumentation this time leans very heavily on keyboard textures, much like *Fading Frontier*. Harpichords bang out the melody on album opener "Death in Midsummer", a paean to the 19th century working class buried all around the band's native Athens, GA in half-forgotten graveyards. "No one's sleeping, great unrest/in the country there's much duress/Violence has taken hold/follow me the golden void" band leader Bradford Cox sings in "No One's Sleeping" before the band breaks down in 1972 Roxy Music mode with haunting saxophones. The centerpiece of the album is "What Happens To People", a song that chilled me to the bone. It might be the best lyrical moment Cox has ever

CONCERT CALENDAR

3/1—Stellar Roots, Bright Knight, Cayla French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/2—Kristy Kruger @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/7—Crew & Gilley @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/8—Pardon Our Mess @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/12—Keep Flying, Bloom, Mutant Love, Charm Bomb @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

3/14—Sludge By Sludgefest feat. Iron Slut, Dirt Hooker, Shoobiedoobies, Benghazi Osbourne @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

3/15—Keith Michael Kallina @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/16—Johnny Falstaff @ The Beer Joint, College Station. 9pm

3/16—The Ex-Optimists, A Sundae Drive, The Prof. Fuzz 63, Jay Satellite @ Blackwater Draw, Bryan. 8pm

3/17—Altercation Hangover feat. Riverside Odds, Despero, Almataha, Dr. Beardface & The Space Man, HEELS, Steadfast, F. Woods, Sykotic Tendencies, From Parts Unknown, Mutant Love @ Revolution, Bryan. 1pm

3/21—Magic Girl, Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/22—Bryan Paddock, Josh Smith @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/22-24—AggieCon @ Hilton Conference Center, College Station.

3/23—Hardwired To Kill 'Em All @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm

3/23—Rudical, Contrabandits @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/28—Ghost Town Remedy @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/29—Ben Morris & The Great American Boxcar Chorus, Spent Shells, Troy Stone @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/30—Antique Gardens @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

4/5—Cosmic Chaos, Mutant Love, Chilbill, Rickshaw Billy's Burger Patrol @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

4/6—Cindys Birthday Show with Dirt Hooker @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

penned. "What happens to people, what happened to you? What happens to people, they fade out of view" Cox laments. Piano and synthesized strings set the mood behind Cox before a double-tracked drum break and a beautiful guitar arpeggio brings the song back in. "What happens to people, they quit holding on/What happens to people, their dreams turn to rust". This song soothes the raw wound left in recent years by the continued passing of my friends and peers downtown. Whatever the rest of the record may be, this song is worth the ride.

That said, it's not as if Deerhunter left the past behind. There are lots of instrumental interludes between the pop songs. "Greenpoint Gothic" sounds like a Gary Numan b-side replete with the Vox Humana patch on the Polymoog; "Tarnung" could be a lost track from the second side of David Bowie's *Low*; "Detournement" has a bizarre, pitch shifted monologue over new age synthesizer washes and harps. So it's certainly a mixed bag.

As I write about listening to it again perhaps it isn't that unlike the previous album, *Fading Frontier*, after all. Both albums have two or three REALLY good songs surrounded by sonic experiments. At least with this album the experiments in-between the good songs are more memorable. Perhaps this will be a continuing trend upwards for Deerhunter. — **KELLY MENACE.**



Mandolin Orange
Tides of a Teardrop

The name of this duo is apt since the mandolin figures greatly in nearly every tune. The folk of Andrew Marlin and Emily

Frantz echoes the broad tradition of American traditional music. In fact, "Suspended in Heaven" sounds like it came from the Carter Family, circa 1930. "Mother is gone, her journey's unending/She'll see the blue of the oceans rising/ The tides of a teardrop, suspended in heaven."

In addition to death, the tunes focus on loss, struggle, and loneliness. The slow waltz of "Time We Made Time" is wrapped in fiddle sounds as a couple labors just to talk. Frantz sings lead on "Like You Used To" in a near-feisty tune about trying to keep a relationship going despite "all the dirt we've piled on our layers of decay."

"Lonely All the Time" and "When She's Feeling Blue" are about what their titles imply, but the former is sprightly enough for a country two-step despite lyrics like "I'm so tired of driving down the same old street."

A number of the more somber tunes — "The Wolves," "Mother Deer," "Late September" — require closer listening to ascertain exactly what the

songwriters want to impart.

The two strongest tunes are about dealing with loss and coming to a finish. "Golden Embers" features more acoustic guitar and fiddle as the singers note: "I miss the old hymns, she used to say" about a death. "Into the Sun" highlights Frantz on lead vocals again in a slow lope about reaching the end.

All of these ten songs are competently and earnestly performed, and they would appeal to those seeking a particular mood. However, *Tides of a Teardrop* is not for casual background listening — it requires full attention to appreciate its merits. — **MIKE L. DOWNEY**

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