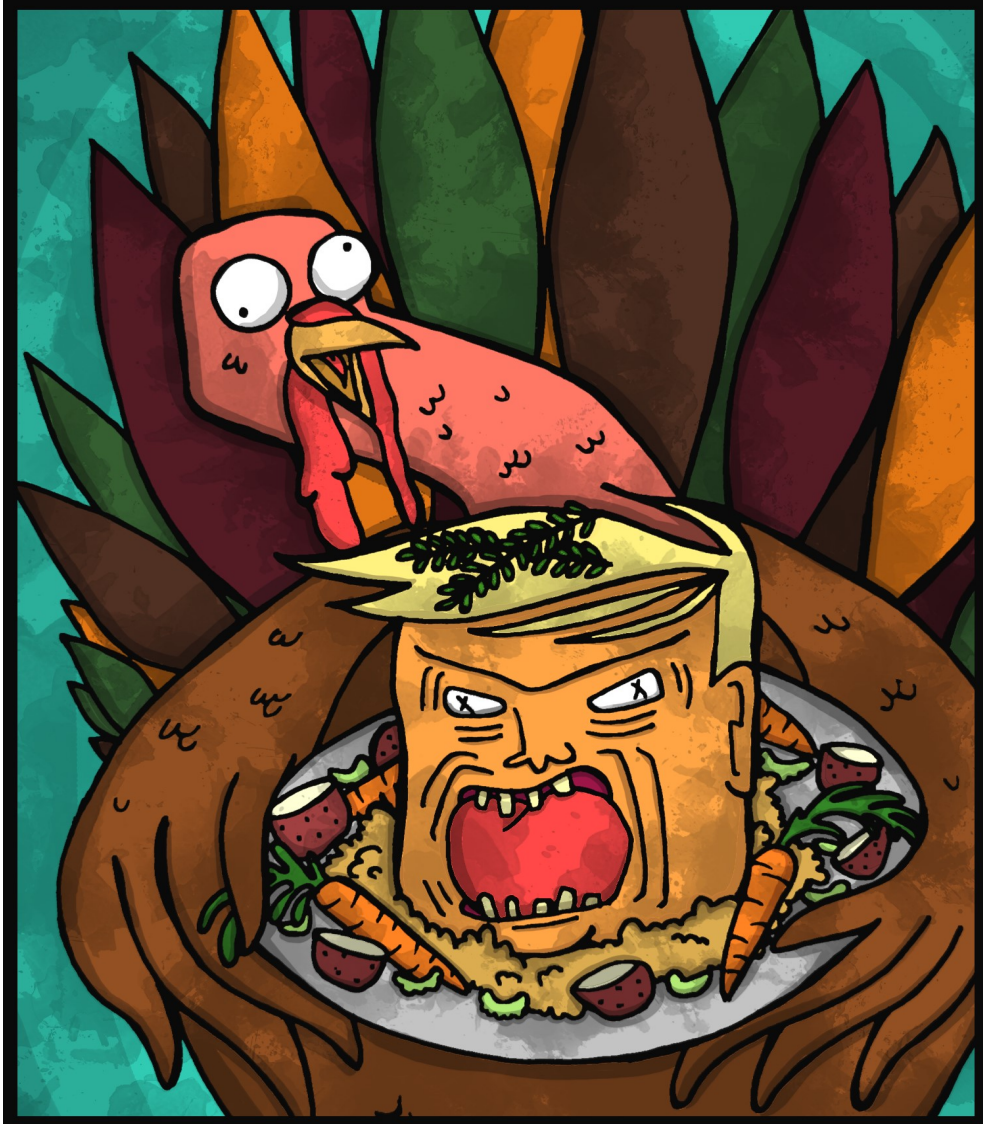


STOREPRESENT



november 2019
vol. 11 issue 11



*inside: anarchy from the ground up - the conundrum of tipping -
xops road diary - thirteenth times five - still nerding - drunk detective
starkness - thirteenth times five - oh austin you are so weird - pedal
pushing - salacious vegan crumbs - good things still happen .. really
- record reviews - concert calendar*



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

editorial bored

kelly menace - kevin still

art splendiddness

katie killer - wonko zuckerberg

print jockey

craig wheel werker

folks that did the other shit for us

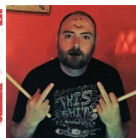
mike l. downey - jorge goyco - erin hill - caleb mullins
- haley richardson - starkness

on the interwebz

<http://www.979represent.com>
redchapterjubilee@yahoo.com

materials for review & bribery can be sent to:

979represent
3602 old oaks dr.
bryan, tx 77802

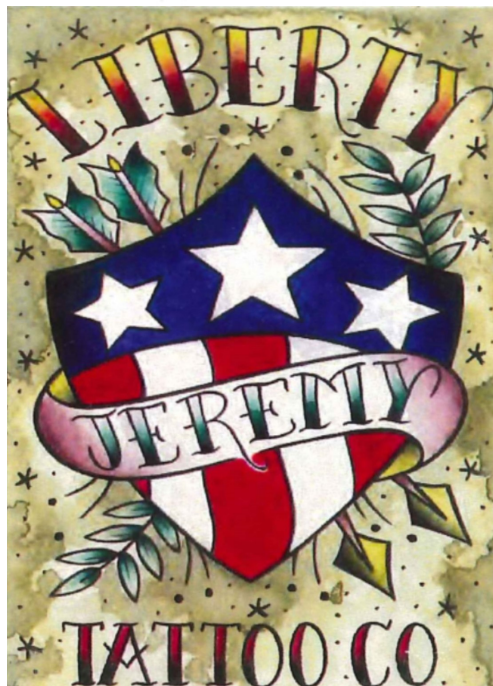


A YEAR GONE BY

One year ago this week I packed my van and a U-Haul trailer and rolled out of Bryan. I had moved my family to North Carolina at the beginning of July but I turned around and came back to Bryan to "get the semester started" at work. Allegedly. While that was certainly true, in my mind the reason I turned around and came right back for my period of "Texile" was that I had to support a then-new Ex-Optimists album and say my very long goodbye to a place that I loved dearly. And I have lived in places far "cooler" than Bryan/College Station. I spent 18 months in Ashland, Oregon, one of the most beautiful places on Earth. I spent nearly seven years in Seattle, a city that constantly vies for COOLEST CITY IN AMERICA and sometimes on rare occasions actually owns up to that sobriquet. I lived in and around Nashville for four years, back when Nashville wasn't the Bachelorette Party capitol of the world, when it was seedy and dirty and you could get propositioned by hookers walking out of your downtown high school if you were there after dark. So why would I miss Bryan/College Station more than those other cooler places?

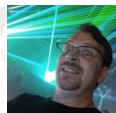
The people. Not just the people, but the person I was when I lived in B/CS. I lived a tale of two lives over my dozen years in town. By day I was a soccer dad (literally), the main parent to two young boys (their mom spent most of her time in B/CS either traveling for work, working on her PhD at TAMU, or dreaming that one day she could be anywhere but B/CS), a worker bee at Texas A&M, and probably mowing the lawn, fixing a fence, or doing some other suburban dad bullshit. By night I spent pretty much every weekend on a stage somewhere with a band or in a bar somewhere seeing some other band play. I lived, breathed, drank, bled, came music. I found friends that did the same. I had long dreamt of having my own band. Rather than continue to dream it, thanks to B/CS, I lived it. I became the guy that I always wanted to be when I was younger. I eased up. I had friends. Lots of them. I became a runner. Then when I hurt myself beyond repair I became a cyclist. I started a record label with friends. I started this here paper you are reading with friends (and this month's issue starts our [gulp] TWELFTH YEAR IN PUBLICATION). Rather than reading about people doing things I did things. B/CS is one of the most supportive places on the planet to do things you've always wanted to do but couldn't. There are no gatekeepers. People encourage you to do your thing and will fight someone who tries to knock you down. It is not something that exists in many other places. It is what makes this little place somewhat sacred.

It is so sacred that I travel back as often as I can. This year I made it back four times. Next year I hope will be nearly the same. In North Carolina I am only a suburban dad. Asheville is about as cool a place as one could want for anywhere...mountains and trees, a fuck-ton of craft breweries, and good bands play here, heck, I'm already playing drums here but it has many gatekeepers and not just anyone can do cool things. You gotta know someone who has the power to allow you to do a thing. It's a bit of a blow to go from the openness and encouragement of B/CS to what amounts to Austin in the mountains. But as long as that Greenville-Houston flight stays at \$225 it'll continue to be like I never left B/CS. See you in January. — KELLY MENACE



1933 TEXAS AVE. COLLEGE STATION 979-694-6444

THE CONUNDRUM OF TIPPING



So, let's get some stuff out right off the bat. I know that the wait staff are working on a lower base wage than everyone else. So, first off, that should change. I think that's one of the stupidest things in the world. I've bought nice bread and quality meat and good frozen french fries at a grocery store for less than \$10...meaning: restaurants can afford to pay their wait staff at least minimum wage. A burger and fries is rarely worth \$10+.

Second thing here, because I know you are gonna bring it up, is that no, I have never worked at a restaurant, but I have known many people who do, and although I don't know the ins and out, I know enough. So, please put that argument aside for the time being, because it doesn't really matter.

Really, my beef is with restaurants paying waitstaff less than minimum wage. I mean, on any given weekday (depending on the restaurant of course), I go in a pay an average of \$25 for two meals, spending approximately 30-45 minutes at the table. If it's a busy restaurant, that is going on 20-30 times every hour, and that's just during lunchtime. I understand that property rental needs to get paid, as does electricity and water and gas and waste, not to mention food cost, cool, but my \$25 pays at least two people's minimum wage, plus the cost of my marked up food.

But here's the real point of my article: I don't agree that tips should be based on a percentage. I think that's ridiculous. I go to a place where we get two meals and an appetizer and it's \$30, but go to another place where the same (ish) meals costs \$75. I say the same (ish) because we've all paid \$10 for a burger that wasn't as good as a \$5 burger, right? The bread was better, the meat was juicier, and it's a consistent "better" every time you go there. So, why should my tip be more at a place where the wait staff did the same amount of work? And in the case of a latest experience, not great service at a very expensive place. Just because a restaurant charges more for food doesn't mean the wait staff is actually performing better.

Say for example my table orders some craft beers instead of Ultras or Lone Stars. Doesn't take more effort to serve us the craft beers, but the cost difference of the craft beers raises the total cost of the meal, which raises the percentage of the tip. This is illogical and feels like throwing money away, and none of us can afford to throw away money.

I find myself tipping around \$6-\$8 for meals with two of us at the table, no matter what the total bill is. If it's a large group (and gratuity is not automatically added), then I'll tip about \$4 for my own meals, knowing everyone else is gonna do that as well. I don't think this is terrible. Amazing service makes it easier for me to add dollars to a tip. I love cool waiters. But I HATE that their survival is based on how much I can afford OVER the cost of the food I just ate. That should be the restaurant's responsibility. If you pay your wait staff well, they fucking kick ass. If they fucking kick ass, they get a good tip for people who want to say "thanks for the good

service". If they don't kick ass, they are not worth you keeping them employed.

Tipping is not dumb. I get it, but it should be a "thank you for the awesome service" gesture, not a, "Oh shit, you won't be able to afford even buying Great Value if I don't tip you."

Here's where I am gonna sound like a shithead, but the fact is: it's their job. They got hired to do a job, and that is to serve our food, and many times to prep the food before it comes out, maybe give their opinion about their favorite dish, but often to upsell alcohol and desserts. That's their job. I shouldn't be tipping on them doing their job. I should be tipping because they made my evening fun and interesting. I don't tip my car mechanic or trash dude for doing his job correctly. I don't get tipped above my agreed upon cost for graphic design services.

And if you are wait staff: this lower wage thing is idiotic. You deserve minimum wage or higher. Maybe that will make food more expensive, and maybe you will get smaller tips (or none), but What The Fuck! Your work is as important as the making of the food. You should get with all your fellow wait staff and have a conversation with your boss.

Also, I am kinda exposing your secret here. You know what's up. You know upselling will probably bring in a better tip for not any more amount of work. I see what you are doing, but the truth is, you shouldn't have to do that. You should be upselling because you want your restaurant to stay in business and get more popular so you can keep your job and get raises and get that "employee of the month" bonus because you actually care...and it shows...not because you are desperate because your baby needs diapers and your cupboard is bare.

Restaurant owners? You want better workers and less turnaround? Give your wait staff better pay. Be different than everyone else. Your restaurant will still make money on your 200% marked up alcohol and profit margin above the actual cost of your food. It's YOU that can make this world a better place for everyone. Take a look at yourself and make that change. There is NO REASON for you to stick with what's "normal" and "industry standard". Fuck all that. Just raise your prices. If your food is that good, we will keep coming.

If your argument is that higher end restaurants train their staff to be better, I still say that the restaurants should pay them better, not expect customers to help pay their staff. That's ridiculous to me, and I also assume many people don't tip, or tip the most they can (which is very little), because they can't afford to do any better. They've already spent their hard saved money on a luxury meal that would cost them a fourth of what it cost them if they just went to the grocery store and paid for all the items separately and cooked it at home...and then they'd also have leftovers for a few days. — JORGE GOYCO

FIND 979REPRESENT ON FACEBOOK AND 979REPRESENT.COM



THIRTEENTH TIMES FIVE

I watched the documentary *13th* five times this month. I actually watched it five times in one week for a rhetorical analysis project that included the needs-to-be-canonized "Letter from Birmingham Jail" by Dr. King and the 1988 "Invisible Knapsack" essay exploring white privilege.

I left plenty of room for divergent opinions. I admitted that some of these ideas might make people feel defensive, and that's okay. I was careful to keep my opinion off to the side and to encourage students to observe and converse with each other. They put their heads together to discuss, then put their pens to paper to reflect.

And I thought we had done something important and substantial. I still think so, mostly. But one of those pen to paper moments left me shaken.

It was after Atatiana Jefferson was shot to death in Fort Worth just a couple of weeks ago, killed by a police officer who did not identify himself as such and who gave her only a second to respond to his shouted command while she was standing inside her own home, holding a handgun because a stranger was rustling around her yard in the middle of the night.

The shooting happened over a weekend. Back at school, multiple students brought up the news story, told me that they couldn't help but weave this heartbreaking story into the larger context of the documentary we had spent so much digesting. Inspired by their engagement, I told everyone to get out a piece of paper and answer this question: "What should be done now?"

- Not everybody had the same answer. I skimmed through the brief responses the next day and saw variations:
- "Something should be done, that much I know. I don't want to be shot in my own house!"
- "He should be tried for murder."
- "The officer should be fired. He doesn't deserve a badge."

- "Police officers need more training to avoid this kind of thing."
- "I think the police should arrest this officer."
- "This kind of officer makes it harder for the good cops to do their jobs."
- "Why did he get bail? That isn't right."
- "I don't know enough about what happened to say, but we need to examine this case very closely."

And then I read the response at the bottom of the pile: "I think this killing was justifiable because he was drawn on her and she drew on him instantly. She could of killed him. If a man holding a gun and is in a police uniform 9 times out of 10 He is a cop. And pulling a gun on him is Probably not the best idea. I hope he gets away scott free because this is not his fault, it's all subjective. We are the LAND OF THE FREE. White privilege is a myth invented by blacks as an excuse for why they are lazy with their lives."

I'm still shaken, days later.

The distance between the two of us in the classroom is only about four desk lengths. But the distance between this view and my own, between his view and the critical thinking I'd been trying to nurture for many days and weeks is great. It's a chasm, a terrifying gulf.

Terrifying partly because I never would have guessed it. I know that such attitudes exist, but I did not think I would find them in my classroom, and I arrogantly thought that such attitudes would wither in the warm environs of higher education.

Terrifying also because I don't know how to bridge it. Is the gulf unfathomable? Impassable? I don't know, but I need to find out. Because what is the good of being a teacher if I can't figure out how to reach someone who thinks like this? — ERIN HILL



Check us out!

HWY 1280 CROCKETT, TX

 GRANNYMOONFARM

 GRANNYMOONFARM

1● SUPPORT US @ PATREON.COM/GRANNYMOONFARM

DRUNK DETECTIVE STARKNESS



Me: *(Violently refusing to open my eyes, the pain of being alive is that bad.)* Ugh, Drunk Detective Starkness, why does it all hurt? My everything, DDS, my everything. Every last possible thing that I can feel hurts. What on earth did we do last night?

Drunk Detective Starkness: How many times do I have to tell you, pockets, brother. Show me your pockets and maybe we can get started on this.

Me: Bleh, ok. *reluctantly picks my head up off the pillow* OH, WOW, HOLY SHIT! There is a lot of blood on this pillow. Am I bleeding? Out of my face? *rushes to bathroom and sure enough, there is a huge scab wound on the right side of my face* Holy fuck DDS, we're fucking bleeding, like, kinda a lot! Like, more than is normal. What the fuck hell?

DDS: Hmmmm, let's see here. It appears to be on the upper part of your face, right above your right eye. I'm kinda thinking you fell. But lemme see your hands.

Me: *shows him my hands*

DDS: Huh. Well I'll be fucked, not a scratch on them. I have to believe even Blacked Out You would've at least gotten his hands half way up if this was from a fall. Or at least scratched them on the asphalt picking ourselves up. Hmmmmmm. Nope. The more I think about it, there is no way this is drunken fall related. Let me see your pockets again?

Me: K. Well, we got about the same amount of money we started out with. That's odd. Half a pack of smokes and a matchbook from some bar. That's a clue, right?!

DDS: Yes, yes it is a clue, you drunk fucking idiot. I see I've taught you well. But hmmm *scratches his head as he takes a long sip from his customary Jameson and coffee* So you were obviously at a bar last night. You walked home. Nice by the way. Good on you for not driving. But you didn't fall and now your face is bleeding? Wait! Let me see your pool stick for a minute. You still have that, I hope?

Me: Yup. Looks like it's right here in the floor next to me. Here ya go.

DDS: *holds the handle up to my facial wound and considers* umhm. Yup. It lines up to your scab. Somebody hit you with a fucking pool cue last night. I guess you tried to hustle in the wrong bar or hit on somebody else's girl or did something wrong up and were somehow or another Out Of Bounds, but it appears you got hit in the face with a fucking pool cue, proly one with a graphite handle, so at least it wasn't a bar stick. You can rest assured that while you're bleeding now, somebody else is replacing their stick. So I guess you got

that going for you. By getting smacked, you at least cost somebody a couple hundred.

Me: Oh holy fucking shit. Well thanks for the info, DDS, but isn't today the day I go meet with my English prof, for the final review of my shit? Wasn't that supposed to happen like *looks at clock* nowish?

DDS: Oh shit it is! KK, just go jump in the shower, slam a beer while you're in there and then we'll, um, we'll put some sunglasses on. Aviators. I know we're not a Corps boy, but that should do the trick. It will halfway hide your wounds.

It did not. But I listened to him anyway. So I wind up in my poetry advisor's office, refusing to take off my shitty sunglasses, even though we're inside and it was kinda rainy. And it was December. In Texas. And I'm still kinda bleeding. And to his great credit, my professor never brought it up. But I was kinda obviously lit. So we got to talking about my paper (which, by the way, was mostly dreck):

Him: Son, are you sure you want to do this? Are you ok?

Me: Ya, sure, I'm fine. *still bleeding, profusely, but I got my shades on so it's cool in my mind*

Him: Ok, well your paper is ok, maybe you could even do something with it, but you never show up on time, and when you do, you always seem a bit...off. I'm afraid I'm going to have to fail you.

Me: Oh, ok. Well, thanks for your input. I appreciate it. *shakes his hand*

So I walked out.

Me, as I walk out the door: Man DDS, you fucking nailed it. Guess we just weren't cut out for this world. We should proly stop changing majors all the fucking time and just get the hell out of school. One of these days they're actually gonna kick us out.

DDS: I whole heartedly agree. We need to get you out of this whole 'college' thing and into the working world where you don't have to do all these bullshit assignments that mean nothing and can be drunk all the time. Let's get you through this thing.

And that my friends was the day that I decided to sit the fuck down and actually get through my last few semesters and stop fucking up as royally as I had been. And goddammit, it worked. I ended up graduating from A&M, and started working for a living. If Blacked Out Me and Drunk Detective Starkness could make it through, you can too. Stay thirsty friends. — STARKNESS

FIND 979REPRESENT ON FACEBOOK AND 979REPRESENT.COM



ANARCHY FROM THE GROUND UP

Have I ever told you the story of Granny Moon Farm? I started this column in April on a prompt from Katie Killer and it indeed has been enjoyable. During this time I told stories of our horny-ass pigs bucking under your rain spout. But have I ever started from the beginning though? Remembering the first spark of what eventually would become a revolution of a 42-acre lot? I don't recollect but that is what I am going to do now. If you already know this story, please pass along if it bores you. If you want to read along, enjoy the ride.

I don't know if you have ever been to a Shea family garage gathering but it is pretty much the most magical space provided for misfits and dirtbags. On one such evening, in a time and space that has been misremembered, I sat with a motley crew of derby girls, band members and beer. Lots of laughing, farting, dancing and basic shenanigans were going on and I distinctly remember a light shining down from the heavens and declaring unto me a divine revelation that I spoke out at once.

"Y'all. Some day I am going to have a Punk Rock Commune."

I don't remember any or all of the things that happened after that. The night continued, I'm sure, and we all had a very good time because it is impossible not to when Niki Pistols is there. And that was that. I declared my desire to the Universe. I manifested a spark of a new beginning. And then I let it go. I'm sure I had a killer hangover the next morning.

I first started stoking the embers of a homestead when my fourth child was born. (And if you don't know, I have FIVE children. I am an exemplary model of a breeder and also, in general, a bad ass for keeping us all alive for what is now 5,139 days.) We had made the decision to leave B/CS to chase the all mighty dolla' dolla' bill, y'all. Raising a large family required a large income and we were fortunate enough to have one opportunity after another provide a stable home for us in the Big City. I busied my days with my children. I told them stories of my childhood growing up on a brokedown, used up and abandoned farm and I spun new stories of how one day we would grow our own farm and break it down ourselves, use it all up but definitely never abandon.

Some years later, I moved back to 979, hand in hand with my kids and we began again. Life stumbled. We got back up. Pain happened. We healed. But the entire time, I kept a flame smoldering of building off grid someday. So many other humans had started pursuing that same path. YouTube was filled with homestead channels and I absorbed other people's experience obsessively. How to Build a Fence. (Me: I can do that.) How to Recycle Water. (I can do that, too.) How to Install a Hydraulic Water Pump from Upcycled Materials and Sync it to Charge Your Solar Power Battery Pack. (I can definitely NOT do that. Hire a professional. I made notes.)



Eventually I started gardening full time, canning our own food, making our own medicine. The desire to homestead lit on fire. I remembered Saturday mornings at the Brazos Valley Farmers Market, meeting each vendor, hearing their story, telling them, "You are doing such an important job. I'm going to be like you some day!" I wanted to start a community garden. I drove by potential properties all the time. I bugged the hell out of people talking constantly about how some day soon, once the Apocalypse had its fun and left society ruthless and destroyed, I would have a self sustainable homestead for every last dirtbag to flee to.

Love came and went. I still pursued my dream. Children grew. I still pursued my dream. Work kept me busy and I still pursued my dream. The economy tanked, Donald Dump was a legitimate nominee for the Presidential race and I screamed with rage into the void for my dream to become reality NOW. And it did. We left B/CS in the middle of a hot June night, trailer packed high, kids buckled in tight and a '77 Dodge spitting gravel on the way out. I didn't even shed a tear. We were homebound, crisp wind upon our shining faces and nothing could stop us. Nothing could ever, never, not even just a little bit, tear us away from the reality of stepping out of a dream to create your truth.

Three years have passed now. From the first moment

the gate opened, we have always been home, even though home was temporarily a teepee. I will never not be honest about this experience. It fucking sucked. We had a used 30' trailer, a teepee, two 500 gallon water tanks, one water hose, three cats, five kids, and a whole lotta fucking cuss words! I told my oldest girls that they could continue homeschooling but that meant clearing brush from here until forever so at 6:00am on the first day of school they were at the bus stop. My youngest son has spent his first four years hunting toads and building worm farms and planting corn and harvesting grapes. He has never known anything different than hard work.

I have built fences. I have recycled water. I even built a barn, by myself, and I only fell off the rafters three times (but that's a charm). We have raised animals, food, medicine. We have met our community. We have had our own booth at farmers markets and told our story over and over again. We are here. We want to raise healthy food for you and you. Support local farms! We are doing it! We are doing it, y'all. But even when you are doing IT, living your dream, working hard for every ounce of joy you receive, sacrificing everything to build something new, sometimes IT isn't enough.

At the turn of 2019, we suffered a huge financial loss. We lost an opportunity to reinvest into the infrastructure of the farm and we have been treading water ever since. We did not reach our three year goal of building a home for our family. My teenage girls are restless and vile about their lack of space. And I am so very, very tired of watching everything die around me. At what point do you stop gasping for breath and give up? You don't. You adapt. Or you die. You keep going. You try new things. You step out of comfort again and again and again. You grow. And just like the seeds we have planted in every corner of our 42 acres, just like 100+ plant propagations that I have put into the ground, just like our tiny, little hearts, Granny Moon Farm will continue to grow. I won't ever put this dream aside for any amount of bullshit that some people would label failure. I will build sustainably. I will grow food. I will support my community with education. I will build a future worth building and I will hand it over to my children someday and say, "Look. This is what I made for you."

If our story tells you anything, let it be a story of sheer grit and devotion. If I can breastfeed a baby while I pluck a chicken clean of feathers, live without running water for two years and empty the outhouse bucket before the end of every day, you can bet I can survive this next round of Life. We are temporarily relocating back to B/CS to rest, reset and begin. Again. The Farm will stay established but working at a slower pace. If you want to support Granny Moon Farm, follow us on IG and check out our Patreon page. We hope to finally open our own booth at the Brazos Valley Farmers Market in 2020. And yes, I have heard your cries, a drunk farming YouTube channel is in the works. Tell your friends hilarious stories about our horny ass pigs. And remember how radical farmers are. Support them!! — **HALEY RICHARDSON**

GOOD THINGS STILL HAPPEN...REALLY



Optimism in the time of "The Don" Trump is hard, but here are two events going on that are positive in opposition to the onslaught of ugliness emanating from the White House.

Diversity is American — In September, I attended this talk at Texas A&M by science fiction/fantasy author Rebecca Roanhorse. If you haven't heard of her, that's okay — she's pretty new in the field, but what a great success story. After a decade or so as a Navajo tribal law attorney (how's that for a select field?), she started writing this book to entertain herself after putting her daughter to bed. Then, she found a publisher for it, something every first-time novelist dreams of. While she was waiting for *Trail of Lightning* to hit the shelves (or whatever the phrase is now) last year, Roanhorse decided to write a short story and try to get it published quickly in order to increase interest in her novel, the first of a series. Well, that short story — "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience TM" — won Nebula and Hugo awards (science fiction/fantasy top honors) in addition to a "best new writer" kudo as well as getting buzz as a potential TV series. Her novel *Trail of Lightning* did okay: nominated for the top Hugo award this year as best science fiction/fantasy novel.

Also, she was asked earlier this year by those folks at Disney to write a Star Wars novel, a prequel to that little upcoming movie — "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker." She was able to do it in four months; it'll be out this November. She's started a second series and put out the second book in her first series as well as numerous short stories. And she's friends with author George R. R. Martin, most famous now for that *Game of Thrones* thing.

Literacy is Not Dead — Bryan/College Station writer Becki Willis had produced 19 books over the past few years in a variety of fiction areas including a long-running series, but she finds her most recent success with e-Books and on a platform that dominates many other aspects of Americans' lives: Amazon. Willis told the monthly meeting of Brazos Writers that Amazon has some 5 million books available to readers. While that number is daunting for budding writers, it is encouraging to contemplate that many books for consumption under the "leadership" of a president who can't read anything longer than the first line of a fast-food menu. Someone is still reading. Someone is still buying books. For all the talk of the dumbing down of the populace, there are still readers out there looking for fiction to salve their souls.

While I am not presently a fan of eBooks, I do know that they offer an astounding wealth of books in any genre that one is interested in, and the digital world makes it so easy to find exactly what a reader wants. Personally, I prefer reading hard copies, so I tend to peruse bookstores and libraries. According to my last visit to the local library, I saved about \$11,000 using the library. I'm sure that's not good news to authors trying to sell their wares, but I console myself that they made at least one sale to the library.

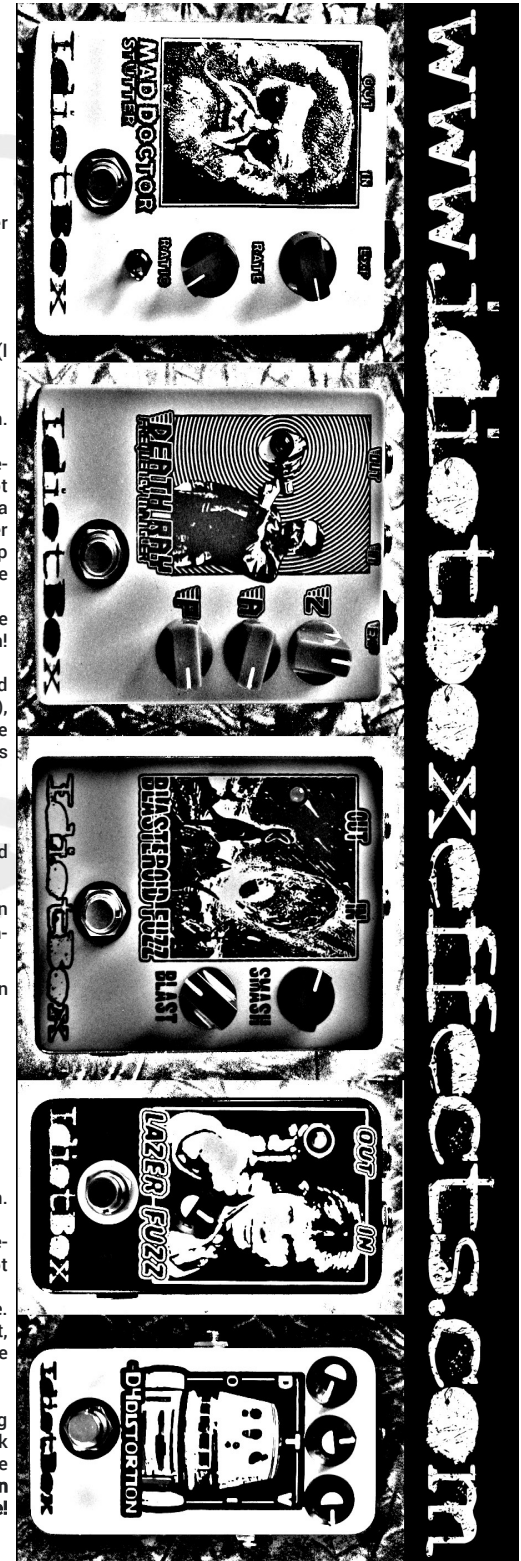
Therefore, counter all that stupidity rampant in Washington with the consoling news that good things are taking place in the United States. You can find your own positive highlights, and then you just have to focus on them while ignoring the dumpster fire for one more year. — **MIKE L. DOWNEY**



One of my other favorite super quick things to make is a

- 1 cup cashews, soaked (if you have a high speed blender, skip soaking)
- 1 1/4 c veggie broth or 1 1/4 c water + 1 vegan chicken bouillon
- cube, or you favorite veg broth cube or concentrate

- Alright, I gotta get back to all my cookies and pie testing and stuff, but I hope these give you some easy and quick options so you don't have to live off of Amy's microwave meals on busy nights! **If you're looking for some vegan Thanksgiving tips, check out last year's November issue!**
— **KATIE KILLER**



DAY ONE, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17. I drove an hour to the Greenville/Spartanburg airport to catch an early morning flight to Houston. This feels bourgeois as fuck. "Oh I just flew in for the show." Fucking white people. But really, when I boil it all down to actual costs, I probably spent more than this in TX over the course of four months between driving to a bunch of shows, drinking at a bunch of shows, etc. It is certainly no more expensive than driving to BCS from here. Round trip gas is about \$40 cheaper and 25 hours longer than driving. Fuck that, I'm a fly when I can. One thing that sucks about flying somewhere to play music: you gotta borrow gear. I can't even fly with a pedalboard anymore unless I wanna pay \$60 extra for it. Jeez. So back in August I sent erstwhile Xops drummer Colin back to Texas from North Carolina with a pedalboard full of pedals and cables so now I have gear that lives in Texas just for my use. Again, shit feels bourgeois but whatever. Guitars and amps are borrowed from the Wonko J. Zuckerberg & Katie Q. Killer Gear Loan Library. Ain't a single BCS rocker that hasn't got a Killerberg Library card in good stead, since we've all borrowed gear from them at one time or another.

By mid-afternoon the Xops three string pickers were loaded up and headed out through Houston traffic to beachy Galveston, the site of the first gig on our three night run. I have vacationed in Galveston a few times but never gigged down there. That's weird, since we have friends that have lived on the island. We just never got down there before. We had an offer to play **Devil & The Deep Brewery** from our friend Daniel, who helped out with the good folks in **The Grizzly Band**, a band that embodies all that is great about Texas music. Daniel is creative director at the brewery and offered to let us try out their corner stage. But first we had to stop off at our digs for the evening. Katie dug up this amazing house through Air BNB on the Historic Galveston Homes tour route for stupid cheap.



Was it haunted? What kind of family just has a house like this that it just lets strangers stay in? We didn't know. The house was beautiful, there were tons of books everywhere, art projects, and a CD collection that looked like it had been stolen from any one

of our houses. This was a swell score.

Eventually we were joined by Josh and Kendal, our videographers for this tour. Videographer, you say? Why yes, we were filming a lot of this three day jaunt in order to make a video for "I Drowned in Moonlight", the title track to the album of the same name that we released last fall. Our record label guy "Mr. Big" asked that we

XOPS ROAD DIARY

make another video to help promote the album overseas, since we can't afford to tour over there. The problem with making a video these days is also the problem with the Xops in general. Colin, Katie, and Michael are in Texas and I'm in North Carolina. So when the four of us do get together then we have to make the most of the

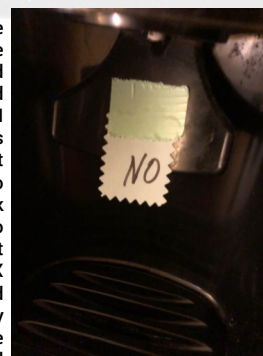


time together. Thankfully Josh was amenable to making a thing for us, though that would prove to be somewhat of a challenge.

After a quick Mexican meal we made it downtown to the bar. Devil & The Deep is located a couple of blocks off the main drag of bars downtown. It's pretty spacious with lots of board games and video games for folks to occupy themselves while drinking from their modest tap selection. They also had a very large TV tuned to the ALCS game between New York and Houston. I enjoyed a fantastic schooner of the brewery's boozy quad, watched baseball, and enjoyed hanging out with the fellows from **The Escatones**, who shared the bill with us. These guys have been good friends for many years and are one of the most unique bands in Texas. The band sounds like college radio in 1990. Wait, so does the Xops, right? True, but college radio was many different things in 1990. It could be Wax Trax/Nine Inch Nails/Mute Records/industrial, it could be jangly REM/Guadacanal Diary/Love Tractor/heartland indie, it could be Fishbone/Red Hot Chili Peppers/24-7 Spyz/Fetchin' Bones indie funk, it could be post-Huskies punk like Moving Targets/Bad Religion/Naked Raygun, it could be the nascent grunge of Mudhoney/Nirvana/Soundgarden, and it could also be the smartass college kid indie of Dead Milkmen, Camper van Beethoven, and They Might Be Giants. The Escatones fit in that last camp, making music that is very American in approach that has elements of country music, CCR choogle, Byrds-ian folk rock, and Butthole Surfers Texas skronk. One could say The Escatones are like the loud parts of Uncle Tupelo but with a sense of humor. However one describes them, they are a lot of fun and a great band.

The Ex-Optimists set was best forgotten. We are of course a very LOUD band. When all the parts work as they are supposed to that approach can be devastating. In this context, it was distracting. The sound system

was certainly adequate but the room is wide rather than long and narrow and the sound just got away from us. I couldn't hear the drums and I was standing right in front of them. I also felt rather keenly my lack of practice leading up to the show. Plus that pedalboard I sent to TX was giving me fits and not really working. By the second half of the set we started to congeal but this one was certainly a live onstage practice.

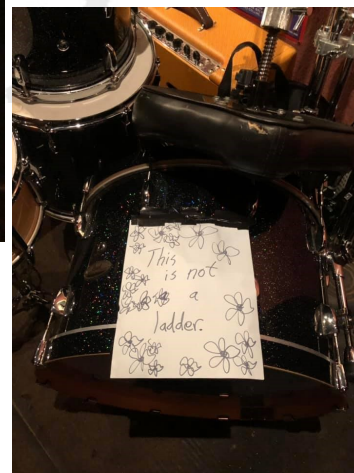


The Devil & The Deep closed at midnight so we packed our stuff up and wandered down the street for a night cap. The good beer bar was unfortunately for Colin only a beer bar so he and I went next door and had a couple of Jameson rocks and caught up. Out of the three other Xops Colin is the one I talk to the least between trips. Not because I don't want to, but because Colin is busier during his workdays than the other three of us are. Michael, Katie and I talk daily on our band Facebook chat. Colin turns it off, grumbling about the distraction. We watched a little pro wrestling on the bar TV, dodged some sketchy fried pickles, and chuckled over the bartender's dismay at having found a pile of shit on the floor next to the men's restroom toilet. You know, rather than in the toilet. Bar restrooms. Need I say more?

After closing we made it back to the haunted house, drank some more, made too much noise on the front porch, walked drunkenly up and down the street for the benefit of Josh's camera, witnessed a serious Galveston Police shakedown of a Latinx drunk driver, then Josh, Kendal, and myself departed to the beach for more filmage. Much of the evening's mirth was fueled by the signs left by the house owner to keep us away from certain things. Rather than post a note on the fridge that says "Please don't use the icemaker" the owner merely placed a note that said "NO!" in large, friendly letters. Other items around were graced with such a sign. In the dining area was an artfully arranged ladder, painted in weird colors and draped with sheer fabric. On this ladder was placed a sign that stated "THIS IS NOT A LADDER". Well, but yes, yes it was a ladder. Of course we stole the sign and it became the de facto benediction or catchphrase for the entire tour. I wouldn't be surprised if the forthcoming Xops 7" EP we are working on for release at LOUDFEST next year is called "This Is Not a Ladder". By 5AM none of us could stand anymore so we passed out. Day one of the tour was a success, if not musically certainly it was a good time.

DAY TWO, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18. We had to be out of the sweet Air BNB by noon. So we got up, cleaned up our empties and cigarette butts, drank some weak-ass coffee, and got ourselves pointed towards the Hurricane Café for brunch. Sadly, Galveston Island is not a vegan

paradise and this was the one place we could kinda find something Katie could eat. We ate overpriced barely adequate food and decamped to the beach. It was our idea to film us building sandcastles and destroying them. But we didn't buy the tools to make sandcastles with and discovered we couldn't really do such a thing with our bare hands. So we rolled up our jeans Okie style and capered around the beach for the camera. After as much beach fun as our admittedly non-beachy crew could stand we walked across the street to find fruity beach drinks. Since we are the only dummies that



travel to the beach out of season it took a while to find something suitably blue to drink but we found it and hung out watching people ride beach bikes down the sidewalk and made up Guided By Voices songs based on the work vehicles driving by. "Oh Tropical Plumbing!"

and so on. Chelsea and Colin found a place that had go-karts and axe throwing and we figured that would be good for some videoage so we headed to the other end of the island. The go-karts turned out to be a bust and we decided to split up and meet back up at the show.

Katie, Michael, and I made our way into Houston proper for a pint or two at **St. Arnold's**. I was ashamed to say that I had enjoyed suds from St. Arnold's but I had never actually visited the place. We sat outside in their new beer garden enjoying pours of **Bourbon Barrel Pumpkinator** while watching Game 5 of the ALCS on their gigantic monster screen (with surprise guest **Jealous Creatures Ian**). There was no vegan action at the brewery so we left after the first inning and headed towards Montrose to have an amazing dinner at **Aladdin**. Damn, that stretch of road is something else for Greek and Mediterranean food. Then we rolled over to **Rudyard's** and made our way up those god damned stairs with all our stuff. I did not miss them stairs. Then back downstairs to belly up to the bar and drink schooners of **Brash Abide** and catch up with a slew of friends who just happened to be in town for the night, the big surprise going to **Golden Sombrero Grant** who was down from Boston, the folks from **football, etc., Alkari Jason** and the lovely front fellows for **The Wheel Workers**. Then upstairs to set out merch and get into show mode. This night's bill was with our band besties **A Sundae Drive** and **Only Beast**. Both bands have played at Revolution with us many times over the years. Zeek, Jen, Sergio, and Big Mike are family to us and we have been close as musicians and friends ever since we played the **Yes Indeed** festival at Deans and Notsuoh in Houston 2011. We have inspired and challenged each other musically, toured together, cried on each other's shoulders, even shared drummers over the years.

CONT.->

We remain very close and I was eager to be in the same room as them fools, as well as Danielle and John Only Beast, who have been nearly as close.

The show got cooking after the baseball game. A Sundae Drive opened it with their languid, dynamic indie rock. Their songs are epic in grandeur, building from nothing to a mighty roar of echo, feedback, and cymbal crashes. I have always felt like I could hear tinges of the louder moments of Yo La Tengo combined with the later '90s wildflower soul of Sonic Youth and those influences were in full effect this night. Only Beast continue to be the hardest band I've ever had to write about. They are very much their own thing. John plays prog rock drums, Pete plays pinched harmonic metal while stomping out bass lines more felt than heard on his bass pedals, and Danielle thrashes around the stage singing, cooing, yelling, and really holding it all together. They can be dark, brash, anthemic, and plaintive all in the space of one song. Maybe one could make a comparison to early Yeah Yeah Yeahs but truly Only Beast are their own thing. Then we were up afterward. We were the right amount of drunk and psyched to be in our Houston home with all our friends. Except one. This is the first time we had played in Rudyard's since the passing last November of "**Punk Rock**" **Stacy Hartoon**, the former booking agent and manager of Rudyard's. Stacy was one of the strongest champions of local and loud Houston music in the Space City and we benefitted from her favor many times over the years. I wanted to play good for her spirit, wherever it may be. And I felt like we put on a show she would've enjoyed. I figured out my gear issues largely and at least had no show stopping difficulties. We dedicated "I Drowned In Moonlight" to Stacy and then I proceeded to fuck up the words. It made me laugh outloud and feel perhaps a little bit of Stacy poking back at me. Don't be so serious, play a fucking rock song.

At the end of the night we piled it all back in the cars and headed back to Echo Base, rejuvenated and thrilled.

DAY THREE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19. By day three we were all driving on fumes but we still had to get it together enough to put on perhaps the most difficult show of the three: what amounts to a mini-LOUDFEST at Revolution to raise money for the BCS Sexual Assault Resource Center. We laid low that afternoon, watching the new season of *Letterkenny* (crack an ag, bet you can't) and resting. By 6p we were downtown setting up two stages and readying for the night to come. Mini LOUDFEST means two stages, two PA's, two people running sound, and two people being complete dicks about keeping bands on the fucking clock. By 8:30p **The Shoobiedoobies** were onstage kicking off the night's festivities. The show was meant to be both a SARC benefit and a record label showcase for Austin's **1407 Records** and our humble **Sinkhole Texas Inc.** and the stages were set up (with one exception) with the 1407 bands outside and the SHTI bands inside. Three of the 1407 bands shared members and were somewhat similar in sound. **Other Horrible Animals** were heavy on the Jesus Lizard tip, **Bum Out** on the late '80s post-Husker Du punk vibe, **City Life** on Austin style contemporary punk rock, **The Damn Times** mixed in some Rose Tattoo with their Scratch Acid, and **Boy Wonder** added in a more metallic, heavier Melvins/KARP edge to their heavy indie. Inside the bands were more varied, be-

tween the bubblegum hard rockin' punk of the Shoobs, the emo-indie of **Antique Gardens**, the synthwave punk of **Cornish Game Hen** (one of my favoritest Texas bands ever), and then the Xops closing it out. Each show of the tour kept getting better and by the third night the music just fell out of us. These days I don't take Xops shows for granted. When I was a proper Texan I would sometimes be sitting in my dad chair at home at 7pm on gig nights and occasionally wish I didn't have to drag my butt downtown. When I play the opening chords to "No High Fives" these days I laugh. Absence does indeed make the heart grow fonder. It also helps that the band is better than it has ever been. Katie Killer is indeed a killer on the bass guitar; Colin is the best drummer in three counties; and Michael is my other half.

Three days of filming, drinking, playing, hauling gear, and definitely NOT sleeping finally came to a close...but not before killing some pretzels while putting away this year's **Black Butte Reserve** at Echo Base.

DAY FOUR, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20. We had planned on having a quiet, craft beer-y afternoon in Conroe on my way back to the



airport but instead we did a thing we have been talking about doing for a couple of years now. Last year on my way out of town I had the TV image from my Kellyfest show tattooed on my arm by the inimitable **Cliff Collard** at **Arsenal**. The talk of getting band tattoos grew and finally we decided to commit to it. **Jeremy Rasmussen** at **Liberty** was gracious to come in on his day off and share whiskey and ink with us. All four Xops plus **Justin Honeykut** had the zany TV head guy from the cover of our CD boxed set tattooed on our arms (Justin's on his leg). More **Pumpkinator** and **Prairie Basic Becky** and Jim Beam were stowed away to gear me up for the road and away I went, Mario Karting like a bat outta hell down Highway 6 to make it to the airport in time to fly back home.

The drive back is always bittersweet. B/CS is like home to me and it's where my spirit belongs, but my family is in the Blue Ridge Mountains and it's very beautiful with cool people and lots of boozes still left to drink. I miss playing music with my band something awful but really I miss my best friends. The things I love to do aren't nearly as lovely to do if I'm not doing them sitting beside Michael, Katie, Colin, Josh, Justin, Matt, Niki, Frank, Little Big Beard Kevin, Big Jess, Jess, etc. It's the people I miss the most. I returned home with my batteries fully recharged. I can't wait to come back in January for another mad weekend of BCS'ing and Xops'ing. — **KELLY MENACE**

PEDAL PUSHING

Ever since the home recording revolution began in earnest in the 1980's musicians have struggled with how to record stage volume tone at bedroom volume levels. It led to technological advances for guitar tone by Rockman, SansAmp, Zoom, Line 6, Fractal, and many others. From analog circuitry that imitated guitar amplifier front end and speaker cabinet EQ to sophisticated digital signal processing, guitarists have had "plug and play" solutions that have had varying degree of effectiveness. For the past ten years computer processing has become efficient enough to handle "impulse responses". The process involves sampling the essence of an audio signal and replicating its sonic fingerprint digitally from a brief recording of the source. This process was first used in reverb to digitally sample a room's contours, equalization, and reflection tails so that the natural qualities of the room can be replicated in any system that has the processing power to decode it continuously in real time. In the early part of our decade this was the bleeding edge of audio technology.

As DSP power and memory storage have increased and become more affordable impulse reaction (IR, for short) access has become more available. These days many outboard units have started to include the technology in guitar amp emulators and attenuators. Chinese pedal maker **Moer** has developed their own IR tech into a tiny guitar pedal sized box called the **Radar**. There are other companies such as Torpedo, Nuxx, Palmer, Atomic, and Suhr that also offer IR pedals but none are as compact and inexpensive as the Radar (\$149). It is a mini-pedal sized enclosure that can hold 32 IR presets, allow for some onboard control of the IR's, and can be managed by computer through USB for storing presets and loading in third party IR's. The Radar's main purpose is to emulate tube power amps and load speaker cabinet IR's. One would plug an amplifier or amp emulator into the Radar for silent recording or direct-to-PA application onstage. Speaker cab IR's are created by sampling the audio frequency spectrum output by a certain speaker cabinet recorded by a certain microphone. Audio is sent to, say, a 4x12 loaded with 55Hz Greenbacks and an impulse is recorded with, say, a Shure SM57 or Sennheiser 421 on the center of the cone. Now one could run the line output of an amplifier or attenuator into that IR and it would sound like you were running into that exact scenario. Then one could vary that signal by using a different mic, mic'ing the speaker towards the edge of the speaker, or backing the mic off of the speaker for a little less proximity effect. IR's emulate all of those variances. Then add in another two dozen or more iconic speaker cabinet types and tube power amp emulation and you might see how having a box like the Radar would be attractive.

For me, I need to be able to record loud, healthy tube guitar amp tones at levels that keep me from being kicked out of my house. I use a Weber Mass attenuator to knock some dB's off my tube amps. It has a line out with its own tone stack that allows one to run an amp silently for direct recording or stage use, or in my case, into the Radar to have it act as a mic'ed up speaker cabinet injected direct

into my recording interface. To test this system out I ran one of my trusty Jazzmasters into a 5E3 tweed Deluxe style amp, out of the speaker jack into the Mass turned to maximum attenuation, out of the line out from the Mass into the Radar, then out of the Radar into my recording interface. The Radar comes with built-in presets for the major speaker cabinet styles (Fender, Marshall, Vox, Ampeg, etc.) and I chose the 1x12 Deluxe preset. But it's all buzzy and overloaded! Turns out that the inputs on the Radar are *instrument level* and the Mass sends a line level. The level from the Mass is almost too hot for the Radar to handle. I was eventually able to make it work for review purposes but to truly use this rig as it is intended to work will require me to purchase a reamp box that knocks line level down to instrument level (I have one on the way). Once I could get the levels somewhat right I could tell right away that I had a near spot-on emulation of the mic'ed speaker tone I was accustomed to with the 5E3. Changing the mics, positions, EQ and such helped to better shape the frequency response. I was stupid surprised. Switching to a Celestion Blue loaded Vox 2x12 had that same "blizzard of nails" treble crunch that speaker is known for. The Greenbacks blur and overload like real Greenbacks do. I was stunned.

Using the onboard power amp simulators one can then use amp in a box style pedals that emulate the front end of iconic amps into the Radar. My experiment with a Zvex Box of Rock (a JTM45 in a box) was not nearly as successful as running an attenuated amp and bypassing the power amp emulation. Other amp in a box pedals may garner better success. I have also read of acoustic instrument players using IR's of well-mic'ed violins, acoustic guitars, mandolins, upright bass, and such loaded into the Radar and then running the onboard piezos of their instruments into those IR's for direct use. Everyone who's ever plugged an acoustic guitar into a PA knows it sounds thin and clacky in comparison to mic'ing one. Running into a good IR corrects the sonic inadequacies of the piezo consistently. One can even run their electric guitar into an acoustic guitar IR and get a passable acoustic guitar tone onstage. The technology is stunning and Moer allows for taking that tech out of the computer and onto a pedal board.

The Radar does have some idiosyncracies. The management software requires certain steps that have to be followed to the tee for a computer to recognize the pedal. Its DSP can only take smaller sized IR's and cannot load IR's longer than 23.2 ms (most high end reverb IR's are more than 100x that long). Some aftermarket IR's just won't load. 36 presets isn't a lot when there are probably a dozen different ways to mic a single 4x12. Some of the more expensive units from Nuxx and Torpedo allow for IR creation. The Moer cannot do this. In many ways it is like a low budget gateway drug into the world of impulse responses, an inexpensive way to test it out and see if it's something that would be able to work in a budget-minded musician's recording and performance rigs. I have to say it has certainly impressed the heck out of me and I can't wait to try it to tape. — KELLY MENACE





STILL NERDING'S LOW STAKES JOURNAL

I got the idea from Anne Lamott's *Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Other iterations of this exercise can be found elsewhere. A good friend of mine follows Julia Cameron's challenge from *The Artist's Way* to keep "morning pages". Whatever you call it, wherever you find the notion, the goal remains the same: fill a designated unit — be that a certain amount of space (a page) or a certain span of time (maybe 20 uninterrupted minutes) with words. Like I said, nothing new here.

The bit that makes Anne Lamott's exercise unique is that she encourages her students, and her readers, to go full gonzo with it. In the *Bird By Bird* chapter titled "Shitty First Drafts", she says to give yourself permission to be as "shitty" as you need to be. Great gold can emerge from a shitty first draft sprawled out over a page or so. Nothing, however, can emerge from nothing on a page. Lamott reminds her students/readers that there is no such thing as a "good writer". Nobody writes well. Every writer knows they need to get the first draft down — noxious waste and all — and then, once curiosity piques towards a certain set of words, the writer can spit and polish and shine those suckers into something presentable. Lamott's voice is liberating. And it's for this reason that I gave her to my students last semester.

The experiment went even better than planned. Here's what we did. I assigned my Composition students to draft a "Low Stakes Journal" in which they type an entire page without pausing. The requirements were simple: open a Word document, set font to Times New Roman and 12 point size, and kick the text down to single space. After prepping the page, include your name on the first line, hit the Enter key, and then — starting from the second line — fill the entire page. No new paragraph breaks. No need for documentation or citation. And my guarantee was equally just as simple: I would not assess for spelling, grammar, or any other formalized convention. Rather, I would assess for completion and comment on style or content. There's a good chance my students did not believe me. I'm sure many of them felt, surely, this was a trick, but they accepted my challenge. What I received were pages of fumbled, messy, grossly splattered imitations of the English language — the corpse of Samuel Johnson's best intentions wantonly scattered like a Cannibal Corpse deep cut. But what I also received was raw and honest and pure, sometimes even really fun — the spirits of Kerouac and Ginsberg without all the raisins and anal sex. A few students commented early on, then more later, that the exercise proved "relaxing", "stress relieving", and "a great way to unwind". More than one young Lamott-ian reported looking forward to the journals. The experiment proved so successful I adopted the activity again this semester with similar results. Some hate the exercise, but enough dig it to keep it going.

So I'm extending the challenge to you, Dirtbag Reader. The benefits of banging out a stream-of-consciousness linguistic free-for-all — spending that "shitty first draft" directly onto the page — are numerous. Most notably, a visceral spike in creative and critical thinking, as well as

a remarkable decrease in stress, anxiety, and depressive tendencies. A beautiful freedom exists in admitting you are not great at something, and you very well may never be, but then doing it anyway. For some odd reason, writing is the one creative act seldom given permission to exist for its own sake. Writing, we are told, must lead to publishing, must cash a check, must be "serious". And that, Dirtbagger, is a blazing, devil-grinning lie. Words have power. And sometimes their greatest power is simply in taking us from Moment A to Moment B, delivering us to that new destination — ie. the end of a sentence or page — slightly different, perhaps lighter, than when we embarked initially.

Below, in keeping Anne Lamott's advice, I've created my own "shitty first draft/Low Stakes Journal". Rather than typing my name on the first line, I typed the name of the band I set on my turntable to begin this exercise. I then hit Enter and began typing. I hope to offer such a stream-of-consciousness each month as an encouragement and challenge to put your own thoughts somewhere today. Do as much as you can. Maybe tomorrow or next week you can do more. But write something today. Go ahead. Brew the coffee. Put on a good record. Roll up your sleeves. And refuse to apologize. Also, if it helps send to me whatever you accomplish — hamsterglory@gmail.com . I'd be happy to read if you need someone on the other end. Cheers.

Red Fang: A Shallow Stream of Bent Conscious. Coffee so strong / black / gnarly my teeth stretch. My face feels like the face of *Teen Wolf* in the bathroom mirror or *An American Werewolf in London* on all fours or that bloke who tried to pick up Fleabag on a bus in the first episode of, well, *Fleabag*. Only Fleabag isn't a canine, even though her name suggests it. Plus she owns a guinea pig named Henry! What werewolf could get away with owning a guinea pig?! Guinea pigs are candy corn for werewolves, little gummi poppers. What would werewolves drink to make their teeth feel stretchy? Or do they always feel some kind of blood and sinew stretchy? So stretchy they just gotta chew somebody. Gotta eviscerate somebody. (Had to Google "eviscerate".) I'm not a werewolf. Choosing between werewolf, vampire, or radioactive superhero — you know, something you get turned into — I'm going werewolf. Maybe that's the bald spot talking. And the teeth stretchy. Refill! It's only 2:07 PM. Sunday. The Lord's day. Keep the refills coming. I got time to get super jacked on caffeine and still sleep like baby Jesus in a vacant manger. Big Swig (unflavored!) Sparkling Water next to a black coffee ain't a bad thing either. The bubbles coaxing down all that dirty diner dreg makes me feel like I'm doing something right with my life after all. Alright, record needs flipping. Switched it altogether. From Red Fang's *Murder the Mountains* to Power Trip's *Manifest Decimation*. Stretchy teeth music. (Gonna have to italicize these titles after I type. It's driving me bananas. I can see titles un-italicized in my peripheral, and it's making something in my brain feel — not stretchy but — itchy. Can't scratch now.) Barnes-n-

Noble Cafe has tins of Altoids for a buck a pop if you buy a coffee. Is that a hint, Barnes-n-Noble? This past week I scored five tins of Altoids for five Barnes bucks. My desk drawer appears obsessive. I knew a girl in college who claimed she was addicted to Altoids. She carried a tin at all times. She showed the tin to everybody. It was her lead. And, not surprisingly, nobody cared. Maybe people would have cared more if she had led with offering an Altoid, but she would just walk up to strangers and say, "Hey, my name is _____, and I'm, like, so addicted to Altoids. See?" And then she would shake her tin like a confectionary maraca. (Had to Google "maraca".) I think Altoid girl works for the government now, which, oddly, makes sense. I don't think anyone is accusing those folks of social graces. "I ain't big on social graces" — Garth Brooks might actually make it in politics. He's already got a promising slogan. OOF! Good song here. What's the name o this song? Listen, I ain't walking all the way over there to peep the vinyl sleeve! It's that one song that sounds kinda like the other one but a bit thrasher than the one before that one. Speaking of Garth Brooks running for President, I've seen Power Trip twice in two very different places. The first time was at White Oak in Houston. That downstairs stage is large. Riley Gale (had to Google Gale vs. Gail), vocals, jumped and kicked with his mic stand only once at the beginning of the White Oak set. He may have jumped off the drum riser once, as well. But when I saw them at Come And Take It Live in Austin, where the stage is the size of grandma's bunco party card table, Riley jumped off of everything and tried to run the stage like a coked up hamster. His teeth must have felt really itchy that night. Also, at White Oak, they've got the stage separated from the crowd by a security walkway. But at Come And Take It Live the crowd is ON THE STAGE. Elbows and fists and spat beer. God bless a whipped out cell phone. That's one Snapchat that only went snap. But all that compacted sound and all those people right at your shoelaces has gotta make the guys on the stage feel — in the words of Charlie from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* — "infinite". More infinite than when everybody is spread out and there's a grumpy bald guy standing sentry between you and a half-hearted circle pit. You do what you can. Refill! So does all the caffeine dissipate in your body, processed and parsed by your wolfed out kidneys, or does some of it, you know, remain? Science was never my stroke suit. The wife comes home today from her retreat. She's been away since Friday morning. I've done the laundry. Cleaned the kitchen. Took out the trash. Swept floors. Dusted half the surfaces. Kicked on the oil diffuser so the air is less pug doggy and me humany. I even put the flowers in the vase. Now I've just got to hide the records and books I bought cause none of this was in the budget. But come on. Sometimes the teeth in your wallet get stretchy. Stretchier than your wallet. And God knows I needed another Jeff Tweedy solo record when I don't even like Wilco. Oh well. Wilco's like Lizzo: they all love themselves so much they don't need me to agree. Flip this here Power Trip for a Tweedy. Has Tweedy ever jumped and kicked off a drum riser? Speaking of Garth Brooks running for President, Tweedy seems to have the kinetic energy of an un-manned Muppet. No offense to Muppets. — KEVIN STILL



OH AUSTIN YOU ARE SO WEIRD

Yeah, yeah, we've all been to 6th Street. We all have stories. But this is my story.

My story starts with renting an electric scooter. I took it about a mile from where I was and ended up at one end of 6th Street, then just parked it and locked it. \$2.30. Super fun. Although, it was around 8pm, and dark, and there are some bumps in the road that were very scary.

So, I started down 6th. Not much for a few blocks, except for a few homeless dudes asking for money. In fact, one of them, after I convinced him I didn't have money (read wasn't going to give him any), asked me if I wanted any recommendations from a "local". I told him no thanks, but to be honest, I should have just given him a buck and let him tell me what he wanted to tell me. Was he gonna tell me that I was taking too many pictures of the odd building corner or street art? Was he gonna tell me where to find weed? Was he gonna tell me how to stay away from a life of misery and homelessness? This is my one regret of the night, and it plagued me the whole evening. I told him I hoped he made a bunch of money tonight, and he seemed to appreciate that sentiment.

Also, I had to pee, and I knew it was going to be difficult to find a place that I could just stroll into without at least acting that I was gonna buy something, and homeless people tend to yak for a while.

The second homeless dude reminded me of my dad. At that point, I was feeling weird and heartsey and I told him that I hoped he was still able to enjoy things. I'm sure what he really wanted was a buck, but whatever.

Then I happened upon Friends Bar. This bar was kinda big, with the stage up front. The band was doing bluesy/classic rock covers. They were really good. Not like stay for more than four songs good, but good. One thing I thought was interesting (knowing some of the behind the scenes of bars and business and stuff), the singer dude held up his drink and asked everyone to hold up theirs. He thanked them for coming, ridiculed some for not having a drink, ridiculed others for still having the same drink they had a couple songs ago, and encouraged everyone to drink. This was interesting because it was a no cover show, and that means they get paid off bar sales. So, good for him. They were actually good though.

Some large lady tried to convince me to dance. No way. I mean, good for her getting out there, but no way was I gonna dance. So I left.

Right next door is Voodoo Donuts. I love the branding of this place. The donuts are excellent, but I wasn't feeling like a donut. I wanted a sticker or a shirt. I must have gotten there right as a shift change was happening, or maybe Austin sucks, but I was standing at the counter

with no one helping me for several minutes, and there was a line forming behind me. Some of the workers made eye contact, but no one came to get my order. Finally a dude came up. He asked me if I'd been helped yet, which was odd, but whatever. They didn't have the sticker design I wanted, so I left not buying anything. Next bar and band was lame. Some rockabilly stuff that I didn't like within seconds. Move on.

Looking at a map while writing this, there's a bar that says it has old school arcades. Dang wish I'd've known that. Oh well.

Lucky lizards is a fantastic shop, unless you are getting pitched to go on the Museum of the Weird tour, but the shop is fantastic. Such cool art and shirts and stuffs. Honestly, I'd go on the MotW tour if it was maybe \$5, not \$12.

Aaron's Rock and Roll is always a favorite place to look-ey-loo, but I wasn't buying anything, and my patch vest is kinda full at the moment. Odd thing that happened in here was that the two employees were talking about dicks a whole lot. I know there were punchlines and it seemed like they meant for me to hear and maybe get involved, but it was just weird. I mean, I have a dick, and I talk about it, but that wasn't my brain state at the moment. Maybe because I kept feeling like people were following me and kept barking at me to come into their bar and kept asking for handouts. It was a bit overwhelming, so the dick talk in a normally chill store felt weird. One of the people that I was convinced was following me walked in the door, and that kinda freaked me out, so I left.

I tried to get in to Dirty Dog Bar, but it was a \$10 cover. Psh. No thanks.

Really close to that is a store that was so pink, and so unicorny and so bubblegummy, that I had to go in. It was so frilly and cute and bubbly. OK, so the cashier was a bit complainey about being tired, but wow, was that shop an eyeball filler. I guess they sold cakes or something, and they did that rolled up Ice Cream stuff. Oh shit, I just remembered I took a picture. Checking my phone. OK. It's called "Unicorn — Magical Dessert Bar". I think I felt an estrogen swell while I was in there. Again, not in the market for a magical unicorn cake, but it was definitely amazing.

Last stop was gonna be Plush. It's an electronic music venue. Pretty small, pretty good sound if they turn it up. Opens at 10, it wasn't 10 yet. I needed to pee again. I decided to walk through homeless row to get to a convenient store and make a purchase of some Skittles so I could them legitimize my asking to use their bathroom. Well, the dude barely spoke English, and if he understood that I needed a bathroom or not, he said no. Dang.

Something interesting that happened in the convenient store: A dude (Mexican, 20s) was in line, and another dude (black, bright orange hair, 20s) gets behind him in line as I was walking up. Bright Haired Dude mistakes Mexican Dude for someone he knew and hadn't seen for a while and tells him some of the cool stuff he had done. They seem to hit it off. Fun. Well, Mexican Dude was just buying a lighter, and couldn't because all he had was a credit card, and there was a \$5 minimum with credit card purchase, so he was just gonna leave without buying it, but Bright Orange Haired Dude offered to pay for it. Wow. Right as they were leaving, I told them that what just happened was really cool, and they agreed. They didn't think I was being a weirdo or anything. That's nice.

So, I get back to Plush, and it's like two minutes from opening, so I pulled on the door and it was open, so I start to walk in. The door dude sees me and is motioning that they aren't open yet and when he gets to me, he says, "We're not open yet, they are doing sound check." I was like, "I like sound check." But he wouldn't let me in. Mind you, I've DJ'ed in many places, I'm a musician, I've even DJ'ed in this exact place a few months ago, but none of that matters, or is apparent. Am just some dude that is there early. So, two minutes go by and he opens the door. He doesn't look at me. He puts the stools out, still not making eye contact. He put the velvet rope out, still no acknowledgement. Finally he fingers at me that I can come in, but stops me at the door, "You got ID?" I mean, I do, and I show him, but I felt like he was annoyed at me. Fuck him. Doesn't he want me there? I am potential bar money. (even though I don't drink and didn't, but I did pee). Basically, I was there for like 45 minutes, and no one else was there the whole time except for the DJ's. The music was meh, the AC was wonderful, and Colin and I got texting about some weird thing that happened, and he's fun.

I made my way back to 6th Street in the search for a ride back (electric scooter), and the front door guy at Dirty Dog Bar was not at the door, so I snuck in. I don't know what the band was, but technically, they were really good, musically, it was weird. It was kinda like Metal Jazz. Like Steve Vai, Joe Satriani and Meshuggah had a baby. Meh. But I Put a Shoobiedoobies sticker on the wall in the bathroom!

My ride back was \$2.50. I drive straight through where all the homeless people have all their tarps and tents up, which seemed more than normal, but I didn't care. The night air flowing past my awkward stage on the way to long hair attempt hair, the sounds of the city, the buildings flying past, the other scooter riders laughing and frolicking.

Oh, Austin, you are so weird. — JORGE GOYCO



**CHEESESTEAKS • FRIES
SNACKS • HOAGIES
DONER KEBAB • WINGS
DESSERTS • BEER • WINE**

**M-T: 11AM-10PM / FRI & SAT 11AM-12AM
SUNDAY BRUNCH 9AM-2PM**

**700 UNIVERSITY DR E • COLLEGE STATION, TX
BLAKESTEAKS.COM • @BLAKESTEAKS • 979-676-7885**

**Embroidered:
Patches | Hats | Shirts
Full Color Printed:
Shirts | Patches | Stickers
Badges | Magnets**



**936-588-9603
Poke;nprints@gmail.com
facebook.com/poke;nprints**

FIND 979REPRESENT ON FACEBOOK AND 979REPRESENT.COM

RECORD REVIEWS



Insomnium *Heart Like a Grave*

Just in time for autumn, the melancholic melodies of Insomnium are on the breeze. Hailing from Finland, these gentlemen have proven themselves to be one of the foremost masters of melodic death metal. With their previous 2016 release, titled *Winter's Gate*, Insomnium put out a single song which was over 40 minutes long. For me, a person who has been a long-time fan of the band, I found this move to be incredibly boring. It's not that I don't recognize the talent that goes into creating such a long song, but, as I have indicated in past reviews, long, drawn-out songs tend to not impress me, especially if they compose the entire album. I mean, how am I supposed to listen to such a thing when I only have a fifteen minute drive to work? How am I supposed to pick a favorite song when there is only one? Short answer: I can't.

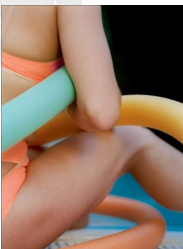
I'll admit, that *Winter's Gate* left a bad taste in my mouth for Insomnium, so much so that I feared for the next release and nearly didn't preorder it. However, once I heard the first single, "Valediction", I couldn't pre-order fast enough. Insomnium has returned with what is perhaps the most creative and most incredible album they have produced yet titled, *Heart Like a Grave*.

Let's start with that single. For an Insomnium song, this one was aggressive, showcasing a speed I had never heard from the band before, balancing their signature melodies along the way. Two other tracks such as "Neverlast" and "The Offering" also follow this pattern; what I love about the presence of these songs in particular is that they give the listener a reprieve from the slow melancholy which permeates the record. On the other hand, the slow, depressive songs are just as incredible; notably, the riffs and lyrics of "Pale Morning Star" were so utterly flawless, and so moving, that I actually shed a tear the first time I heard it. "Mute is My Sorrow" is a little bit more mid-paced and is

reminiscent of songs from *Above the Weeping World*, adding a little nostalgia for veteran fans.

That is not to say that *Heart Like a Grave* is flawless. Its primary weakness lies in the song "And Bells They Toll". It's not that the song is altogether bad, but, unlike the other tracks, this one feels half-hearted. The sound is predictable, the chorus is mediocre, and the song is overall forgettable. However, even with these flaws, the song doesn't feel out of place and fits with the flow of the album.

To say the least, I was pleasantly surprised by *Heart Like a Grave*. It has renewed my love for Insomnium and reminded me as to why I love them so much. Though there are flaws in this new offering, they are minor and overshadowed by the abundance of good musicianship. No doubt about it, *Heart Like a Grave* is a well-balanced and masterfully constructed record; it gets a 5.5 for me. Insomnium are truly death metal poets! — CALEB MULLINS



Kim Gordon *No Home Record*

Kim Gordon's *No Home Record*, also known as "Kim Gordon discovers Death Grips". The end. World's shortest record review. This is good for a chuckle from those who have also heard this, the very first solo album from long-time Sonic Youth member Kim Gordon. It is true, but it is not the whole truth.

I have been a long-time Sonic Youth fan. I was bummed when the band called it a day ten years ago after Gordon and husband/bandmate Thurston Moore ended their marriage. Thurston, Steve, and Lee have continued to release albums that play to their perceived strengths in the band. Lee's music has been tied and free, Thurston's has alternated between free jazz skronk and the space Sonic Youth occupied towards the end of their career. Kim went in the skronk direction with *Body/Head* and now with *No Home Record*. People who are looking to find a little more

dirt on Kim's personal life will find none. They will find what amounts to spoken word observations that come across like out of context advertising slogans delivered over dark, heavy, noisy modern production provided by Justin Raisen who has worked with Charli XCX. Raisen's touch makes Gordon's solo album perhaps the most contemporary sounding recording any of the Sonic Youth members have participated in since the early '90s when popular music bent its way towards the band after the Nirvana explosion. "Sketch Artist" starts out the album subdued with swelling strings before the big, angry distorted dubstep bass and blown out Nine Inch Nails style drum programming comes in. It's sinister. "Paprika Pony" is spare kalimba over trap drums. "Murdered Out" (released as a single two years ago) has a hard edged, funk rock groove. "Don't Play It" feels like dub with Gordon's words echoed over a rolling heavy, abstract beat. "Feel it in my heart/give me your hand you can feel it too". The album veers between this more abstract modern feel and a couple of songs that would fit more in the usual Sonic Youth fare: the early '90s chug of "Air BNB" and "Hungry Baby", a near straight-up jack-move of The Stooges' "1970".

No Home Record is both quirky and unsettling. At 66 years of age Kim Gordon continues to break new sonic ground. — KELLY MENACE



Lucero *Among the Ghosts*

After seeing them briefly at RiotFest and now going again at White Oak Music Hall, figured I should write something about them Lucero boys. Their new one *Among the Ghosts* is a really good record. You lose the horns (sadly), but it's ballsy and emotional. Opening with the slow build title track 'Ghosts' explodes into life for the chorus with Nichols' gravelly drawl escalating to a full on snarl! "First word she said to me was goodbye" while drums pound and guitars rage. The

assumption is that Nichols needs to balance family life with the demands of the road. It's a statement of intent that emphasizes Lucero's punky alt rock roots before Nichols tones things down a little for "Bottom Of The Sea" his vocal now, oddly but effectively, more reminiscent of Billy Idol. Guitarist Brian Venable takes center stage here with his ringing, echo drenched playing anchoring the song. By "Everything Has Changed" the band are really hitting their stride as Venable slips in a perfectly placed solo but the song would be far less successful without the organ contributions of Rick Steff. The ivory tickler switches to piano to supply the bedrock on which "Always Been You" a dark mournful lament to a failed relationship is built. The first half of the album concludes with Venable again to the fore on "Cover Me". To My Dearest Wife" is up next and this superb song incorporates letters written by soldiers to their loved ones during the American Civil War, stories that remain relevant and poignant today. Interestingly Nichols adds a snippet from history via The Battle Hymn of the Republic "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the lord" to give the song a time and place and effectively bind the North and South together as real people with families engaged in a terrible conflict. "Long Way Back Home" tells the tale of brothers trying to make it home after a robbery goes bad. The keyboard smudges are a nice counterpoint to some darkly twangy guitar lines. "Loving" was originally written for the Oscar-nominated film of the same name by Ben's younger brother Jeff Nichols, (other credits include Mud starring Matthew McConaughey and Midnight Special). In the context of the film, which deals with a couple arrested for their interracial marriage in 1960's Virginia, the lyrics are self-explanatory, but it works equally well here as a simple love song "I just want to be good enough for you" Nichols sings, his voice at its most tender. One of the most striking tracks on the album is "Back To The Night" which features a quite unexpected spoken word interlude by actor Michael Shannon (a regular in Jeff Nichols' films) which is as dark and as menacing as any of the characters he's played on screen. Nichols' vocal is guttural, John C. Stubblefield's bass throbs while Brian Venable finds plenty of room for an extended guitar break. "Back To The Night" is as epic a 4:13 as you'll hear anywhere this year. The album concludes with a straight up roots rocker "For The Lonely Ones" that finds those horns

CONCERT CALENDAR

11/1—Wicked River Band, Shadow Canyon @
Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

11/1—Pat Green, Grant Gilbert @ Hurricane Har-
rys, College Station. 9pm

11/1—The Killer Hearts, Hot Crimes, Virgin Sluts ,
SSSpine @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/2—Zero Detail, Mad Rant, Pardon Our Mess @
Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/7—El Oso & The Honeybears, Wisdom Cat @
Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/8—The Schisms, Mutant Love @ Revolution,
Bryan. 10pm

11/9—Libby Koch, Joey McGee, Rachel Bloem @
Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

11/9—Tyler Jordan & The Negative Spaces,
Desdimona, Skunk Money, Colton French @ Rev-
olution, Bryan. 9:30pm

11/10—Punk Rock Matinee feat. Mutant Love,
Wisdom Cat @ Revolution, Bryan. 4:30pm

11/14—Prettyklawz @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/15—Sykotic Tendencies, Shooobiedoobies,
Unicorndog @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/16—Antique Gardens (cd release), The Swift
Drag, Skunk Money @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/18—B.C. Binge, Sykotic Tendencies @ Revolu-
tion, Bryan. 10pm

11/21—Keith Michael Kallina, Kerosene
Pipedreams @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/22—Wellborn Road, Crowmonger, Tongue
Punch @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/23—Sykotic Tendencies, All Gonna Die, The
Velostacks @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

11/29—Black Taffy, Rudical @ Revolution, Bryan.
10pm

11/30—Chris Edward & Johnny Ray Hubbard @
Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/3—Kerosene Pipedreams @ Revolution, Bryan.
10pm

12/5—Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/6—Desdimona @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

12/7—Punk Rock Flea Market @ Revolution, Bry-
an. 2pm

creeping back in which is cool to hear. Basically the end is just telling everyone 'Fuck you, we are still loud.'

Among The Ghosts is a mighty fine record from a songwriter and a band that have no desire to play it safe. Give it a whirl. — **STARKNESS**

The EP is somewhat of a thematic look at the human tendency to believe what's in the upcoming years will be different or better. Jay Satellite fairly eschews that optimistic notion here, observing not much changes with time.

"What Happened to the Future" is the strongest tune with quality guitar by Clark and fellow guitarist Camaron Taylor. Clark laments the absence of flying cars, nothing is as expected, and declares our best hope is to "stay in place" as there is "nowhere safe" even as he wonders "why are we back in the past." The catchy-despite-the-lyrics "Bring me Down" features background vocals by bassist Marigold Clark and the steady drumming of Andrea Lagrone. The source of Clark's dejection is that "you people got no soul/got no soul/no rock and roll/I want more rock and roll/more rock and roll/in my soul." Ultimately, "the future brings me down."

That bleak outlook is apparent from the deliberate opening title cut, layered with guitars and synthesizers, as Clark declaims that "the future's not waiting for us." "The Future Part 2" also is measured with a persistent

guitar and lines like how we "don't want to lose our place in line." The brief balladic "Wanting" merges the individual and the universal with "this has been haunting me a thousand years" because "you don't see me/let me be me."

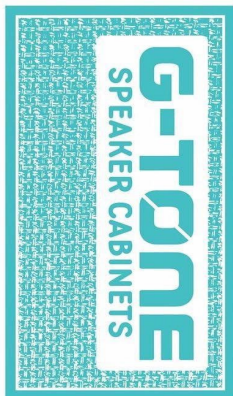
The EP closes with the steadfast "No Future" asserting somewhat grimly that "I'd like to say we'll be okay/But I think there's no way."

Thought-provoking as it is, *The Future* lyrically offers no easy answers even as the melodies easily hook into the brain. Having plenty to ponder is never a bad thing. Check Jay Satellite out on Bandcamp. — **MIKE L. DOWNEY**



Jay Satellite
The Future

This is the latest recording (this month) from the prolific Hutto musician — Jason Clark — who has played BCS numerous times over the years with this band or solo. The six-songed *The Future* is a somber look ahead lyrically and musically.



FREDTECH
GUITAR REPAIR
MAINTENANCE
SET-UPS

979-450-3719
FredTechBCS@gmail.com

ARSENAL

TATTOO & DESIGN



**HISTORIC
DOWNTOWN BRYAN, TEXAS**

arsenaltattoo.com