

STOREPRESENT



august 2020
vol. 12 issue 7



KING CATSUP

inside: salacious crumbs - shadow forms - the unlearning of it all - heroes wear masks - side effects - fascism - 20/20 - still poetry - respect for george floyd - a matter of identity - ask creepy horse - fire at swill - record reviews



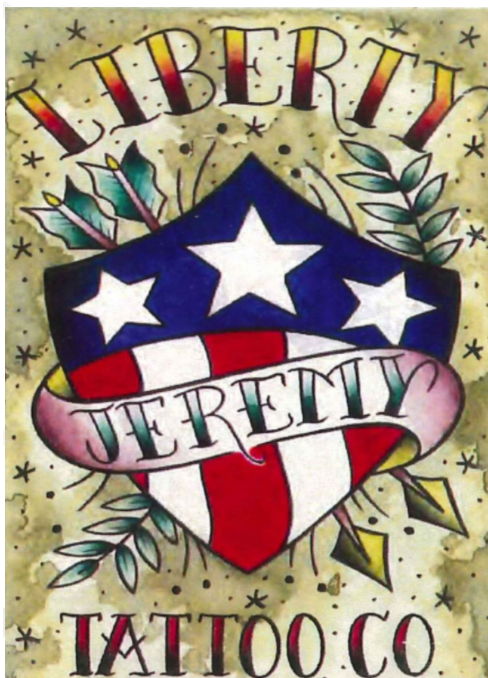
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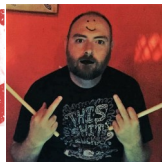
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EXPLAINING REPARATIONS TO MY 80-SOMETHING YEAR-OLD FATHER-IN-LAW ON THE TELEPHONE

Last month I had a bizarre two-hour phone conversation with my father-in-law. He is 82 years old. He has no pets. His only constant companion is a state-of-the-art 1996 tube television set that is constantly tuned to Fox News. He had just heard on TV that the city council in Asheville, NC had just voted to pay reparations to its black citizens. He had to find out more about this because he knew that's where we live. My wife and I take turns talking to him because he is very long-winded (to this date he is the only person to have ever left me a voice mail running longer than five minutes) and it was my turn so it was left to me to try to unFoxsplain the concept of reparations to my father-in-law, cold without any real chance to prepare for it.

"So what does this mean exactly?" The City of Asheville passed a recommendation that the city contract with an outside agency to begin exploring the idea of making "reparations" to its African-American community. **"How is it going to work, are they going to just write people checks?"** The city would like to invest in infrastructure that would help its African-American community level up on education, private business ownership, home ownership, self-policing, and other community-based initiatives. In faux-church Fox parlance, they are in essence trying to make sure African-Americans have the same access to success as white Americans do. "Huh?" Teach them how to fish so they can eat indefinitely instead of giving them a handful of fish that one time. **"Oh. Well, how will they pay for it? By charging you more taxes?"** I don't actually live *in* Asheville. I live in Arden, which is about a dozen miles away from Asheville. I don't pay Asheville city property taxes. I work, shop, and play in Asheville so I contribute via sales tax. Mostly the city wants to divert HOT money to it, and I can personally think of no better way to fund such a venture than to devote a portion of upper middle to lower upper class white people tourist dollars paid to overpriced hotels, overpriced restaurants, and overpriced bars than to devote it to the local African-American community who has had a decades-long complicated relationship with its city government. **"What do you mean?"** Asheville, like many cities in the South, had a thriving African-American community tucked away within the overall city. Black doctors, dentists, schools, groceries, shop owners, contractors, builders, etc.: a self-contained unit that ensured that African-American citizens could do their own thing for their own people. During the Jim Crow era that self-contained unit was completely dismantled. And what was left of the community was bisected when the city government voted in the '70s to run Interstate 240 right through that Black community, running a line right down the middle of it. And it's not like when they ran I-5 down the middle of Seattle and cutoff Capitol Hill from Belltown. At least where that happened there are over and underpasses where traffic can flow between the two areas. There are no intersections that were allowed to be continuous under or over that portion of the interstate. The community was completely cut in two. Nowadays, one side of it has become shabby hipster rental chic for white people; the other side of the interstate has a few dozen of the period homes that have fallen into utter neglect, and those were the ones that weren't torn

down in the 70s to build bleak looking apartment projects that haven't been renovated since they were built. The African-American community is isolated but not of its freewill by pride of business and ownership, but by the result of *progress*. One can even take a tour (led by white people) of the funky bohemian formerly African-American part of town and see some of the architecture that still exists, built by Black hands for Black families, no longer serving that community. **"Yah well but I just don't understand why you or me would have to pay for any of this. I mean, none of us alive were ever slave owner or slave so why should any of us pay anyone anything?"** Gonna need its own paragraph here.

I first heard of the idea of reparations in the early 1990s. I didn't like it. I didn't understand it at all. I grew up stupid poor in the South, trailer trash with indifferent grifter parents who barely worked for what little they had. What little I had was gifted to me by church charity, donation bins, and extended family. I had it bad growing up. I lived with an assortment of Black folks off-and-on throughout high school. My mom fucked lots of married Black men for money and often times they stayed for days and weeks at a time. I had black girlfriends. Slavery was heinous but I didn't participate in it. If I, as poor and raised as awfully as I was, could somehow manage to stumble out of the projects and trailer parks into college with grants and student loans and advance my position in life, becoming my family's first college graduate, then everything anyone in this country needs can be attained. I mean, if I can do it, anyone can do it. That's the American dream!

Yeah, I was full of that hubris. It took me a long time to understand that no matter what low beginnings I may have come from that at least I wasn't Black. And that's at the very heart of why I came around to understand the argument for reparations. That sounds like I could use that statement as some sort of justification for my lot in life. I say this because I didn't understand how much of an advantage just being born white was to my ability to do anything in life. True, I may have had to climb up from the pit of my humble beginnings, but that pit would've been that much deeper for me if everything else about my origins had been true *plus* that I was also Black. I like to use the signal to noise ratio as my go-to metaphor in this situation. The goal of sending audio, visual, or information broadcasts is to send as pure a signal from point A to point B without interference. The ratio of pure signal to interference is called signal to noise. The more noise you have, the less signal gets through. White people start with a naturally higher signal to noise ratio because our social, economic, educational, and governmental systems were designed for the ultimate benefit of its white citizens. Just by being Black in America increases the noise to signal ratio. Just by being Black a person's likelihood of being detained by police, convicted of crime, or to be murdered by a stranger is higher; one's likelihood to get a fair loan, be employable at an equitable salary, or admitted into college is lower; the likelihood that people will assume the worst outlandish stereotypes about your race are try is higher. Our systems are designed in such a way that

even if it fucks over white people it *really* fucks over Black people. So in order to change things for the better, we need to start undoing the systems that unfairly pile up noise to the average African-American's signal that doesn't apply to white people. Whether or not I was even alive when the systems were set up I still benefitted from them and they should be set up to work for all persons or dismantled entirely.

"So I bet you're a Black Lives Matter person then." Yes I am. Obviously all lives matter but when you consider the size of the African-American populace in this country and then look at the statistics for the percentage of that populace that gets arrested, jailed, fined, and killed then you can't help but support the idea that Black Lives in particular have been burdened by our police state. **"Well alright, I suppose, but why do Confederate statues have to come down? That's history!"** It is history, but those statues are representative of a history that was not particularly fond for descendants of slaves. Those statues were placed in the Jim Crow era and were often paid for by the Daughters of the Confederacy. So let's replace them with something less offensive to a portion of our populace. **"Where does it end then? What if vegans offend me? Can I get their statues pulled down?"** When vegans systematically usurp a people and earn billions of dollars off the backs of their subjugation then get back at me and we can talk. **"I don't see how getting rid of the police is going to help this."** I really don't like the term "Defund the Police" because I think defunding the police is only a part of the overall solution. Police officers are not properly trained to do what they are paid to do everyday. The police are called in to deal with situations that would be better dealt with by social workers, medical professionals, insurance adjusters, and neighborhood watch. The folks who cut your hair every six weeks have to train longer than police officers do. What's so wrong with asking that cops have better training and be sent to deal with situations where they are actually best suited? **"But these protestors are costing us all money! Shouldn't they all be jailed?"** The ones that are truly vandalizing public property, yes. But police aren't separating the peaceful protestor from the vandals and just messing it up for everyone. And don't get me started on the president stuffing federal officers from the Coast Guard and the Department of Treasury up in unmarked camouflage riot gear cosplay and sending them out in the streets to detain protestors. That's a private army answerable only to the president! That is tyranny. Isn't that why you have an NRA membership? For when the jackbooted feds come for you? They are coming for unarmed citizens and that's as anti-American as it gets.

"I don't mean to argue with you but I really don't understand." And it's awesome that we are talking about this! Too many people in this country are lobbing shots at one another through social media and at protests and counterprotests instead of sitting down face-to-face to talk through these issues. I'm glad that you and I respect one another enough to wade through it and not have you yell at me or me to talk down to you. I love you and I know you love me. Let's try to understand each other's points of view better and see if we can't do better by each other. That's what it's all about. — KELLY MENACE



SALACIOUS CRUMBS

I'm guessing a lot of you have been cooking superstars lately—there aren't a ton of social events (read: Rev isn't open), maybe you're working from home, or can't work right now, so you have more time to putter around at home. Kind of like early retirement (better take it, it's all we're gonna get). But I've been sort of weighed down by all of the heavy stuff going on lately, and haven't been able to channel that Martha Stewart energy past what I put into developing new recipes for Salacious Crumbs. One glance at the news, and I'm thoroughly zapped of energy from the shitty state of our country, and can't even experience the joy of cooking. I'm like that crab in the sky, tough on the outside, but a squishy mess on the inside. Also I live in space! We all live in space!

I've found some gems lately at restaurants, and I thought you—YOU—dear hungry reader, should know about them in case you get a case of the no energies, and the sad at the worlds, and the frustrated that you can't leave this town blues and just want something delicious to shovel into your pie hole.

Normally, at Loud!Fest time, I put on the Loud!Feast brunch series, a big 3 day long brunch bender that follows the shows. This year, we all Loud!Fested in place, so instead of a big feast, I invited one person over and we had a teeny brunch in the atrium, catered by **Mess Waffles**. Mess has had vegan waffles pretty much from the beginning, since they were a food truck. We got VEGAN CHICK'N AND WAFFLES with a side of potatoes and mac and cheese. YES. VEGAN CHICK'N AND WAFFLES in our crappy little burg. And mac and cheese (spoiler alert, it wasn't the best mac, but it sounded like they were still refining the recipe!) And these potatoes. Ugh, these potatoes. They're the best potatoes. They're like mashed potatoes and hashbrowns all in one little cube, with a super duper crispy outside. Always order more potatoes than you think you need. And then order some more.

Their waffles are the best waffles I've had at a restaurant—ACTUALLY crispy and crunchy on the outside, light and airy on the inside. No sog in sight. The chick'n is battered and deep fried seitan. It's well-seasoned, and not that super dense rubbery seitan like you get at the store. It's perfectly textured, juicy. And they have a vegan maple aioli! It's incredibly delicious—salty, fatty, a little sweet—there were flavors in there I hadn't tasted

in years. Dip everything in this, even your mimosa. I also got mine with a side of cookie butter, and it went equally well with the chick'n and the waffle. It was a complete, full-fledged brunch feast, no compromises. If you want to make your vegan visitor a very happy, full brunch buddy, get them some Mess. In the past few months, I've been ordering a lot more HEB curbside, as you do when the world is full of sick. I get it from the Tower Point location because it's easier to hop on the highway from my house, and they have a better selection of the things I need (aka they have more options for vegan butter sticks and Guittard chocolate). Recently, remembering that I'm supposed to write an article about vegan food junk and I only had a couple of days to do it, I decided to order from **Nam Cafe** and grab it on the way home from picking up my curbside order. We got tofu spring rolls (I LOVE SPRING ROLLS GIVE ME ALL THE SPRING ROLLS), the 5-spice tofu rice plate with fried rice, and tofu-avocado bao. I stole a hunk of tofu on its own and it was *chef's kiss*. Probably the best tofu I've had in town—flavor through and through, every so lightly crispy on the outside, and juicy on the inside. I wasn't the one who ordered the 5-spice tofu rice plate, and I definitely got out Whataburgered. The fried rice is awesome, and not super duper heavy or salty—it's actually flavorful, besides just being doused in a gallon of soy sauce—and it's vegan as is! No egg mixed in! I made the mistake of forgetting fried rice comes with egg at Naked Fish the other day, took a bite, and was really confused with why the tofu (which was really egg) tasted like a farty fish. Anyway, the spring rolls were good and refreshing, but it would be awesome if they had marinated carrot and some mint and cilantro. And the bao! So cute, so perfect, the steamed bun is BEAUTIFUL and tender and sweet, and it had that same amazing tofu inside, with a soft, ripe, fatty avocado. Two spring rolls and a bao was a perfect hot summer day dinner. And the fried rice eater reported no shitty heavy disgusting post-fried rice feeling, as is apparently normal. They also have tofu ban mi (no butter or pate, please!) and another tofu dish, and I'm chowing down my groceries like crazy so I have another chance to swing by next week!

Speaking of getting out Whataburgered—do you guys remember **Whataburger**? I 'member. I used to get a grilled cheese on Texas toast with mustard, grilled onions, and jalapenos. I send them messages all the time to request they add a plant-based option (and you

should, too, please). But alas, years later and still nothing. A friend who runs the @Aggieland_VeganEats IG posted about a vegan burger at **Mooyah** (also, follow her! IG is a much faster way to hear about cool new vegan options than my dinosaur media articles!). I was like, cool! But also like whatever, it probably sucks, because, you know, that usually how things are. But hot dang! They knocked it out of the park filled with cardboard audience members! It's a fat black bean patty on a potato bun—YES, A VEGAN POTATO BUN (these are the things we get excited about. I haven't had potato bread in years)—loaded with a well thought out combo of toppings. Sautéed mushrooms (that aren't overtly mushy, just salty and flavorful), grilled onions, BBQ sauce, and avocado round out this beanie burger (add mustard!). It looks very nice and proper and healthy in the photo on their website, but this beast is a greasy, salty hangover-soaker-upper. Whataburger was my favorite Sunday lunch to soak up whatever I had guzzled down the night before, and I've been looking for a replacement for years, and THIS. IS. IT (ironically, WB is right next door to Mooyah. Sorry murderburgers). Pair it with those big hand-cut, skin-on (creepy) fries, and you're well on your way to a mid-afternoon food coma.

And now, my friends, for a less fun experience. If you're on Facebook in BCS, you've probably been invited to the BCS Meals and Deals group, where lots of well meaning but mostly oblivious people tell you where to eat. They have good intentions, but they don't know how to read the whole question, and they all think that vegan pizza means it's a pizza on cauliflower crust. They did well enough recommending vegan fajita options, so we gave **On the Border** a try—a delivered veggie fajita feast, tip and all, for under \$30. When it arrived, there was a paltry amount of rice and beans (stick with the black beans). The condiments were enough for one taco, and I paid \$1.19 for 2 Tbsp of extra guac. WHAT?! The portobellos in the fajita veggies were dry, and the onions, peppers, and squash were floppy, had no flavor, and didn't have a bit of char on them. You're a fajita! I want to hear you sing the song of sizzle! Overall, much disappointing. Maybe it's better when you're actually in the restaurant, but maybe skip this until it's safe to eat there. Blorgh.

Here's your homework for next month, Crumbs: Email Whataburger asking for a plant-based option, and email Chuy's asking for them to add veggie fajitas to the menu! — **KATIE KILLER**

SHADOW FORMS

I have no answers as to what these manifestation/beings/energies may be, but I have had one encounter in my lifetime that I will share.

In Jan. of 2015, about a week before my 22nd birthday, my apartment building caught fire due to a heating unit on the roof malfunctioning. My apartment on the bottom floor was untouched by the fire, but received heavy water damage. The structural damage to the building was bad enough that no one was allowed in for nearly 6 months. By that time, there was mold growing on and in everything. I lost almost all of my physical possessions, including highly sentimental things from childhood. (hand made quilts from my grandmother and many photos of my father who passed before I was age 3).

In the year prior to this, I had gotten out of a highly toxic relationship of two years, delved deeply into esoteric studies of many kinds, began real work on my self, and in December I began a relationship with the love of my life.

On the night of the fire I had been alone in my apartment, studying the Keys of Solomon in my bedroom. I went to the kitchen (the kitchen and living room were only separated by a bar height counter) and was stopped in my tracks by a high amount of energy/pressure, for lack of a better description. In the opposite corner of the living room was a humanoid shadow form that I could not look at directly. No amount of force-of-will allowed me to look with more than my peripheral. My hair was already standing and now my heart was racing. "No reason to fear, use reason," was my resounding thought. Not long had passed, possibly 15-30 seconds, before the form "floated" straight up through the roof and I could freely and directly look at where it had been.

My mind was racing! I've always been highly skeptical, and still am in many ways, so this experience raised a million questions and reconsiderations in my thoughts. I decided to take a drive to a gas station for some smokes and snacks, and to try to psychologically digest what had just happened. I also didn't want to stay there alone any longer.

By the time I returned, perhaps 15 to 20 minutes later, there were firetrucks and police everywhere. I jumped out of my vehicle and ran to my door. An officer stopped me and said it wasn't safe to go in, but let me grab what I could anyway once I told him my wallet was inside. (Had only taken cash to the gas station. I never get ID'd) My vinyl crate, a jacket, and my wallet was all I could get.

Myself and the other tenants were escorted across the street to a restaurant parking lot where we were checked by EMTs, and watched the building blaze.

After years of reflection on this, I don't view it as a negative event in my life. Nor do I consider the energy I encountered as evil or malicious in intention. I can't say for certain, obviously, and it very well may have been. Though I feel now that it may have been warning me.—
F. SOLOMON

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THE UNLEARNING OF IT ALL

In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.

Rep. John Lewis
(written days before his death on July 17, 2020)

Here's how my articles for 979Represent usually go down:

- After an issue is published, Kelly will send out a call for articles for the next month's issue with the due date.
- I'll respond that I'll do an article on [insert whatever I feel especially opinionated about that day]. This past time I said COVID.
- Then by the time I get to writing the article (usually within a few days of the deadline, often the night before) things have changed so much or more important issues have arisen and whatever I told Kelly my article was gonna be about...that isn't what it will be about any more.

As you might have already guessed, this month is no different. Since I responded to Kelly, all holy hell has broken loose to the point that I could have written on any number of topics and still been relevant: our country has descended even further on the slippery slope towards fascism, Trump is touting the views of a doctor in Houston who, among other things, says sexual visitations by demons and alien DNA are at the root of Americans' common health concerns, Federal troops are in Portland beating the shit out of, tear gassing, and shooting with everything but actual bullets, citizens of the United States, AG Bar appears to be running the country, RBG has cancer...again, and Rep. John Lewis has died. There's been a lot of other crap too...I tried to stick to the major crap.

Out of that miasma, I've decided that I need to write about the one thing I know I can do something about, right here, right now, where I stand (which for those who don't know me is Loveland, CO...though it used to be BCS). This coming Saturday, I will be attending my first BLM protest wearing my Black Lives Matter t-shirt, carrying a sign that reads "I'm not black, but I see you. I'm not black, but I hear you. I'm not black, but I'll stand with you."

I'm not sharing that because I'm virtue signaling...I share it because I'm ashamed that it took me until now to feel compelled to align myself in such a way with the cause. I cared. I supported and believed in BLM. I've never considered myself racist (though I know that I benefit

from the inherent racism in our systems simply because I happened to have been born white). But I never considered BLM my cause.

A few years ago, Emmitt Till began to change all that. Till was a 14-year-old black boy, visiting Mississippi from his home in Chicago, who, in 1955, was brutally beaten and then lynched for purportedly flirting with the white wife of a grocery store owner in the town of Money. His killers were acquitted. I won't go into the exact physical details of his death because they are gruesome and heinous and evil...they turn my stomach and break my heart every time I revisit the details.

When I first encountered the story, I looked it up in several different sources because I had trouble believing that it could be true. And though part of that may be attributed to the fact that I'm very white and sometimes innocently naive, my disbelief stemmed more from the fact that I was sure that if such a thing had happened, I would have learned about it somewhere. I mean, there I was in my 50s, with two college degrees, multiple *almost* degrees, a lifetime of reading, and a slew of woke friends. How could I not have known about this? How was this allowed to happen in America where all are created equal? Why hadn't this been in any of the books or lectures of ANY American history class I ever had? And that's when a very white, somewhat naive, Pam began to learn about the whitewashing of America...of our history, our government, our corporations, our organizations, our society.

Looking at photos of Emmitt Till's mother, I realized that I never once had to worry about whether or not my sons would be lynched, or stopped by a cop for walking down the street, or not be allowed to wear their hair the way it naturally grew out of their heads. You can't know what you don't know, and prior to learning about Till, I didn't even know that I wasn't worried about such things.

As a mom, I can't let the heinous death of that little boy be for nothing. His all-too-short life mattered. The lives of James Byrd, Jr., Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Sharona Coleman, Ethel Lance, Philando Castille, Botham Jean, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others mattered. BLACK LIVES MATTER!

I don't claim to have all the answers. But I know that my black siblings have questions that deserve a response. And I will stand with them until suitable answers are given, reparations made, and a true and sincere atoning for America's original sin of racism has been achieved. — PAMALYN ROSE-BEELER

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FASCISM

STILL POETRY: FROM THE VAULT

I think it's really important to focus on this idea, that fascism isn't something that's imposed on an entirely unwilling populace. It's not just Trump saying certain things, it's the way we all react to it. It's something that people either allow to happen, or want to happen for some reason, often a lack of stability or loss of position/prestige/power/etc.

There's always some people who suffer immediately under fascism, and even everyone might end up worse off in the long term, but there's some people who feel like they're winning or they're making up for past wrongs. There are always people who feel like that's the way things should be, they won't be calling themselves fascist, but they'll support the people and the ideas.

Unfortunately it's really hard to have a classic definition of fascism, to clearly distinguish it from a democracy or monarchy or (other kinds of) dictatorships. There's not a single political structure or action that clearly marks a country or person as fascist. But I do think that we can define the underlying belief in the population that creates fascism and allows it to grow. It's the belief that power comes from the position.

It's very easy and satisfying and it makes a complex world easier to understand while also erasing a lot of feelings of personal responsibility. It's the belief that when someone becomes president/chancellor/etc. that they automatically have the right to exercise that power in any ways they want. Which can lead to all kinds of obvious problems like dismantling checks and balances, rigging or just calling off elections, going after political enemies or just absolving themselves of any crimes. When people view leaders as having inherent power, disconnected from the support or representation of the people, then the only limits on abuse are their own ethical constraints. And eventually someone without ethical constraints is going to take (or be given) power, and in fact it's more likely that someone like that would seek out unchecked and unfettered power.

Fascism isn't something that happens to us, it's not an invading army or a natural disaster. It's born out of ourselves, our own desire to have a simpler world, with easy rules, where we know who's in charge and who's to blame for our problems. The world isn't easy though, and wishing it was doesn't make things better, it just creates an opportunity for charlatans and psychopaths to seize and abuse power.

The cure to fascism is personal responsibility, government isn't some boogeyman or some panacea. Government is just us working together, and that means it takes effort and compromise and we're not always going to get what we want right away, or we're going to have to admit we were wrong about something. Things won't go to hell right away when we stop trying, or stop holding ourselves accountable, but they will eventually. And this is what it looks like when it does. — STARKNESS

THE INTRUSION

when you came into my life
i was not prepared for you.
nor was i prepared for what your eyes said
when you, so godlike,
came hovering and beholding
my unseen form --
recognizing me vulnerable,
realizing me incomplete,
sacrificing yourself,
your need, your desperation
to attain your goal.
you threw your hands up at me.
you said you were sorry
and i believed you.

i want you to know that i still believe you.

and you need to know that it is okay.

i forgive you,

sometimes they just don't

put stall doors

in gas station bathrooms.

—KEVIN STILL, August 25, 2007

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STRIKE IT ON A ZIPPER & BURN DOWN THE PIGGILY-WIGGILY

i got myself a bunch of poems over here y'all need to read cause they're meaner and more ornery than johnny cash on speed.

i ain't playin' with y'all. you really need to read this stuff. i swear, once you read 'em once, you'll know twice ain't even enough.

but you see, not everybody gets this, not everyone is so smart. not every slice of cheese make the intolerant blow a fart.

heck, i was hollerin' some verses on the street the other day and this lady hollers back, "sounds like what damn hippies say!"

i said, "lady, you wouldn't know it if it jumped up and slapped you!" she said, "go eat the gorilla turd that smacks you at the zoo!"

that, my friend, is what we refer to in the business as literary criticism, as a response, i gave her a one-finger lesson in ornithology.

lyrics in songs go on even when no one's there to hear and a schlitiz is still a schlitiz in a chuch that don't believe in beer.

poems remind the poeted how much they do love the words, words like ornery and orinthology and even "gorilla turds".

let us merge our verses, friend, in the delta of unread inks for bad poems are still poems no matter what who thinks.

—KEVIN STILL, August 25, 2007



HEROES WEAR MASKS

Just three words—it doesn't get any easier than that, America. You want to combat Covid-19? Wear a mask, save lives. It's that simple. Covid-19 doesn't recognize the Constitution. It cares nothing about political parties. It's killed billionaires, paupers, and songwriters, and it could kill you and those you love, no matter what age. Be a hero—wear a mask.

Now, we have plenty of fictional heroes who wear cool masks: the Lone Ranger, Zorro, The Incredibles. In the real world, we are not so lucky in our masks, but we can still be heroes.

Let's face it. We have been struggling to figure out how to come together as a nation since we literally can't get together because of this pandemic. Yet, we can be together if we all wear a mask. All know Covid-19 has killed nearly 150,000 Americans while sickening over 4 million, and we know this virus is not going to go away this year. America leads the world in Covid-19 cases. The brutal truths of this virus are being played out hourly in hospitals across the United States.

Heroes step up to do the right thing, usually the hard things, to protect others. Of course, masks are uncomfortable. They get hot and sweaty, fog up your glasses, make it hard to understand others, make it challenging to be understood. And we all miss smiles.

Why masks? Many of us have been in surgery, or we've seen the medical shows and movies, all those doctors and nurses wearing masks. Masks protect patients; they have for more than 100 years. Now we all are patients needing protection.

Sure, masks are not attractive. All the colors and designs and emblems just can't cut it. There's no denying it—the country's going to look like everyone is entered in the cheapest Halloween contest ever. But think of the tens of thousands of lives we can save—you, me, every hero who wears a mask.

It's baffling why some don't wear masks to protect

others against this viral disaster, but that's okay since I'm wearing my mask for you anyway. Covid-19 restrictions have been and will be frustrating. It's not like when a hurricane hits, and we can work together to rescue people, raise money. It's not like 9/11 when we could unite in something as simple as spontaneously singing "God Bless America" at baseball games.

It's not easy being a hero in Covid-19 times. However, we'd all like to be heroes to save our parents, our children, our grandparents, our friends. Think of them each time you go out in public. Wear a mask for them.

Since the executive branch is ignoring Covid-19 (except for promoting a malaria drug as a "cure"), the legislative branch of our government must lead in this instance and set aside its squabbling. There are 535 members of Congress representing districts and states across the nation. All have a rare chance to be heroes (who would have thought it?) to their constituents by modeling masks—as well as physical distancing—at every opportunity.

The fourth estate, our free press, can rise to the occasion as well. Give us more pictures and stories of our masked heroes doing the right thing and limit showing those not recognizing the dangers of the pandemic.

Americans, we are in this for the long haul. Until medical science creates the vaccine and it's distributed to all, masked is how we move forward together through next year. Our new routine to check before heading outside should be the following: keys, billfold, phone, mask.

Science will find us a way out of this. The cars we drive, the freedom from other diseases, the air conditioning we enjoy, the phones and computers we are on constantly—all come from science. And that science says wearing masks is our best chance for more Americans to survive Covid-19.

Avoid cynicism. Be a part of something bigger and better than yourself. Heroes, wear masks. — *MIKE L. DOWNEY*

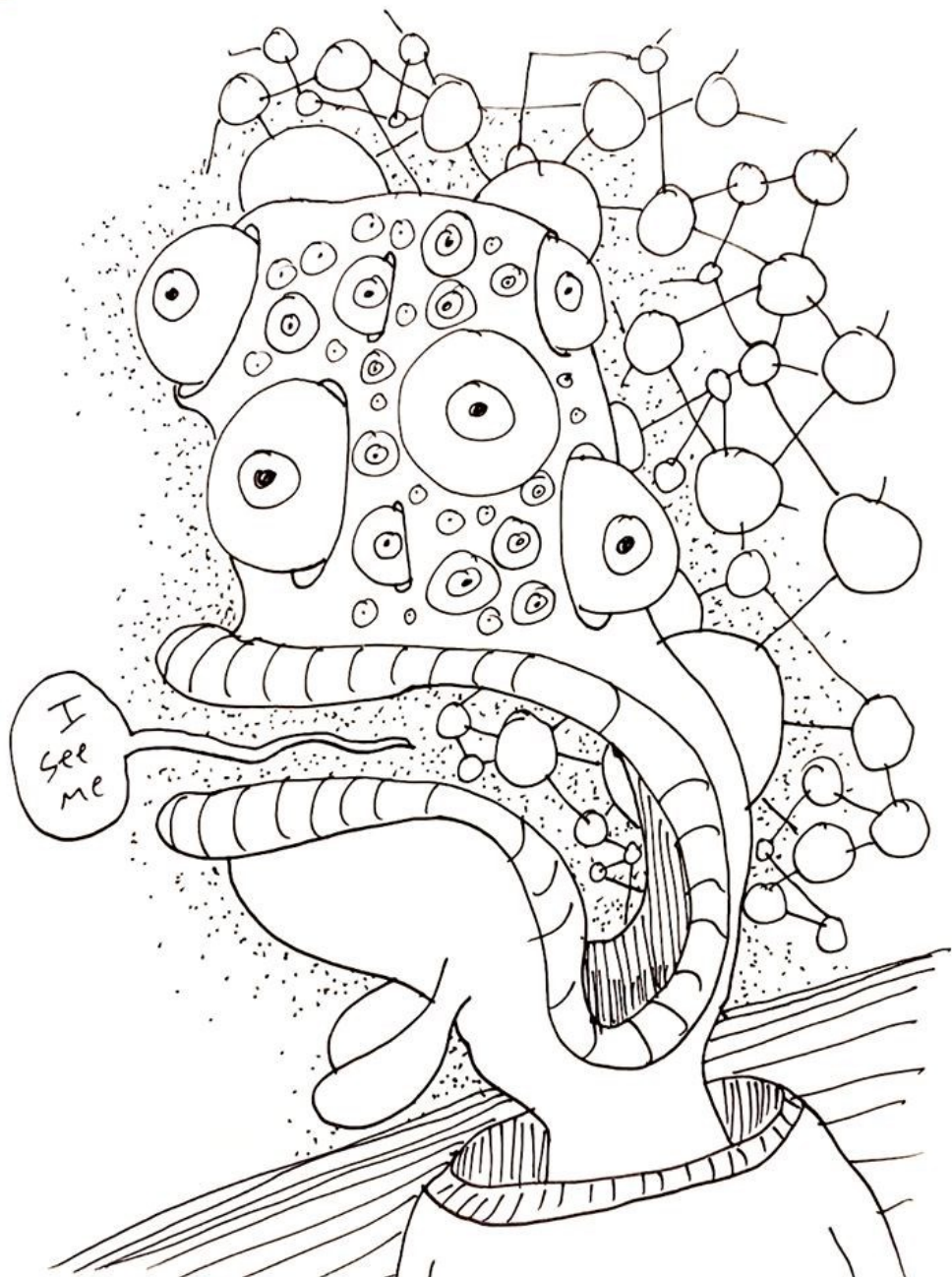


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SIDE EFFECTS

Doc said the drugs would pack a punch, and he's right. So far I've experienced the whole encyclopedia of side effects. Dry mouth. Runny nose. Heartburn. Irritability. Excessive gas. Runny bowels. Constipation. Excessive sweating. Fatigue. Shortness of breath. Hair loss. Memory loss. Identity loss. Apathy. Neo-Impressionist vision. Back acne. Near death enlightenment.

One side effect I have not experienced, that Dr. ____ never mentioned, is healing. My gut remains a mess, hollowed of sources once sustaining. As the gut goes the body follows. Pathological disciples digest Christ as model. *"This is my body,"* he said. *"Take and eat."* Sweet Jesus, if only I could.

Physical reactions aside, malnourishment tweaks first the mind. Long buried sensations rise to the surface, but distorted. Nothing awakens fully formed except old impulses once battered into submission. Some at least. Hell, I barely possess the neural pageantry to conjure a shameful impulse these days. A pair of legs sweet as buttered baguettes brisked by the window this morning, and all I could fantasize was another nap.

Side effect #25a: total imaginative dysfunction.

Side effect #25b: too tired to care about #25a.

Carrie walks in without saying hello. I don't tell her about the buttered baguettes or my disinterest. I don't know which is more scandalous. She hands me a gyro, plastic utensils, but no drink. I ask her if I'm supposed to drink my own spit. She purses her lips like she's about to give me a free refill.

"My sister's getting a dog," she says, plopping next to me on the couch.

"I thought she's getting a divorce," I say.

"Not anymore. Now she's getting a legit quadruped. Puppy even."

"Lemme guess: four-legs to top her husband's two-door midlife crisis."

"Babe, you don't know anything about anything."

We eat our food. Carrie's however many weeks along. Girls count weeks. Guys count emotional breakdowns. She might be 23 weeks along, but she's 64 conception fits into her first pregnancy. By the time Baby Jules gets here, Carrie could comprise a full season of Dr. Phil all by herself. Thank Christ we don't live in California or Illinois

or Pennsylvania, whichever state Dr. Phil's surgeon general of these days.

"You pay the electric bill," she asks.

"Couldn't," I say. "Video store charged a late fee for my games. Doc says I need at least another five days off work, so I had to get more games. Picked up *Red Dead Buffet*, new zombie situation. Shit's for real."

"Babe, if you don't pay the electric bill you can't play your games. TV's off. Game's off. You'll be back to pretending you can read."

"I can read," I protest. "How you think I know all my side effects? You can Google everything I'm feeling. It's all there."

The cat curls by our feet. I can hear her purring under the table. Her tail wraps around Carrie's ankle, causing Carrie to giggle. I've always liked Carrie's feet. Like the heat of them when she pulls them out of her shoes. Like the baby carrot shape and size of her toes. The crouton harsh edges of her callouses. I especially like when she wears certain socks. I've been known, if the socks were right, to pull her feet from her shoes and press them to my nose and mouth, chewing her arches with my lips. She never seems to mind. "As long as you don't bite," she says. So I never bite.

"Why'd you wear them striped socks today?" I ask. "I like the dotted ones with those pants, the purple and green ones."

"Cheese and crackers, babe!" She tosses her plate on the coffee table in front of us and runs her fingers through her hair. "You care more about my socks than anything else I wear. I could stroll in here dressed like a Nashville hooker, and you'd only see the socks. I worry about you, babe. Really worry about you."

She's having a conniption. It's best I stay calm, for Baby Jules. "Hey now. There's nothing to worry about, sweets. I just like your feet. That's all." I say this, remembering she got weird after I confessed to carrying her dirty socks in my pocket so I could chew them during the day. She said having phone pics of her feet was one thing, but carrying her socks was another. I thought she'd be flattered.

She bounces her heels beneath the table, staring at the floor.

"Listen," she says, "there's something I should tell you."

Her tone slides from teenage angst to full-grown serious. Not break-up serious or I'm-doing-someone-else-serious, but it's only one step from either.

"My brother was talking about you today at mama's." She pauses. Her feet are now on the edge of the coffee table. Her fingers locked on the back of her neck. I wonder if her brother knows something. Like maybe he hacked my browser History.

"What did he say? Does he think he knows something about me?"

I shouldn't have said that last part. It sounds like I have something to hide. But I don't. I haven't needed to clear my hard drive in months.

She pauses, choosing her words carefully. "He said something's seriously wrong with you, babe. Something dangerous."

"Like since I've been on medication?"

"He doesn't even know you're on meds. He said something happened on your last Dude's Weekend that kinda freaked him out. That freaked the other guys out, as well."

I straighten up, bumping harder than intended into the cushion behind me. A couch leg scratches the floor and scares the cat into the other room. She leaps with a squawk.

"What did he say?" I ask. "Was it my Dave Matthews shirt? I know those guys are serious metal-heads . . ."

"Babe, my brother said you got really drunk by the campfire, like really drunk, the first night, and that you started waging bets about . . . shit," she nibbles her bottom lip a second, "about eating people. Like actually eating them. He said you became obsessed with somebody daring you to do it. He said you kept yelling, 'just tell me who and I'll start at their toes!' He said it seemed funny at first, but then you said something about having eaten part of a high school friend's ear after you were in a car wreck together. He said you admitted it very seriously, and then you just kinda passed out. He said that's why they cut the camping trip early. Everybody was so freaked out."

"Wait, I thought we cut the trip because your brother's friend got pink eye overnight."

"No, babe. That's just what they told you. They were all legitimately freaked out. Also," she clears her throat and

props her elbows on her knees, "he says I should leave you. He said I should get out before Baby Jules comes."

She says this last part like she's exhaling smoke. Her eyes locked on some carpet stain only she can see.

"Huh. He said that?"

She nodded, not looking my way.

"Well, what do you think?" I ask.

"About what?"

"About leaving me because of this story. Because your brother said I got drunk and said some drunk-shit by a campfire."

Carrie shuffles to bury her feet beneath her and nods a few times. "Well, it made me think about you joking about, after Baby Jules comes, making placenta popsicles and you wondering if umbilical cords had the same consistency as Twizzlers. It just seemed like something you would say cause you've been saying a lot of things like that recently."

"Ah" is all I can muster. I look out the window thinking of that runner girl's buttered baguette legs, shimmering with the salt of her sweat. Then I imagine penning a new line into Dr. ____'s notes – Side effect #26: Unintended unburdening. Maybe it was the bourbon dancing with the pills by the fire that untied me. Or maybe something down deep is climbing to the surface like tiny clipped vines reaching for light. The meds, it appears, have dulled my vine clippers.

My gyro's oozing tzatziki onto the plate, a cole slaw colored puddle of yogurt and cucumber. I look at Carrie. Her freckles as numerous as the kisses I've planted on her body, more divine than perfect health. I am always careful anytime I kiss Carrie, anywhere I kiss Carrie. I always try to pull my teeth back, willing muscles in my jaw not to open and reach. Suddenly, my throat burns. My hands involuntarily stroke my thighs. A line of tzatziki smears my jeans like a vein of marbled white gristle.

"Carrie, you're brother's wrong," I say, reaching to turn her face towards me.

"I know, babe. My brother's weird sometimes. I just don't want him to . . ."

I press three fingers to her lips, allowing an old itch to stretch itself fully into my jaw. "It was her thigh, Carrie. The girl in the car wreck. I ate her thigh." — KEVIN STILL

Table 1. Average planting dates for fall vegetables in various growing regions of Texas.

Vegetables	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V
Beans, snap bush	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Sep 10	Oct 1
Beans, Lima bush	Jul 15	Jul 25	Aug 20	Sep 1	Sep 15
Beets	Aug 15	Sep 1	Oct 15	Nov 1	Dec 15
Broccoli	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Brussels sprouts	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Cabbage	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Carrots	Jul 15	Aug 15	Nov 10	Nov20	Dec 15
Cauliflower	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Chard, Swiss	Aug 1	Aug 15	Oct 1	Oct 20	Dec 15
Collards	Aug 1	Aug 15	Oct 10	Oct 20	Dec 15
Corn, sweet	Jul 1	Aug 10	Aug 20	Sep 10	Sep 20
Cucumber	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Sep 10	Oct 1
Eggplant	Jul 1	Jun 15	Jul 1	Jul 10	Aug 1
Garlic (cloves)	Jul	Aug	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kohlrabi	Aug 15	Sep 1	Sep 10	Oct 1	Nov 1
Lettuce, leaf	Sep 1	Sep 15	Oct 10	Nov 1	Dec 1
Mustard	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1	Dec 1	Dec 15
Onion (seed)	Not recommended	Not recommended	Nov 1	Dec 1	Dec 15
Parsley	Sep 15	Oct 1	Oct 10	Nov 1	Dec 1
Peas, southern	Jun 15	Jul 1	Aug 1	Aug 15	Sep 1
Pepper	Jun 1	Jun 15	Jul 1	Jul 15	Aug 1
Potato	Not recommended	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Not recommended
Pumpkin	Jun 1	Jul 1	Aug 1	Aug 10	Sep 1
Radish	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 25	Dec 1	Dec 15
Spinach	Aug 15	Sep 1	Nov 15	Dec 1	Dec 15
Squash, summer	Aug 1	Aug 15	Sep 10	Oct 1	Oct 10
Squash, winter	Jun 15	Jul 1	Aug 10	Sep 1	Sep 10
Tomato	Jun 1	Jun 15	Jul 1	Jul 10	Aug 1
Turnip	Sep 1	Oct 15	Nov 1	Dec 1	Dec 15





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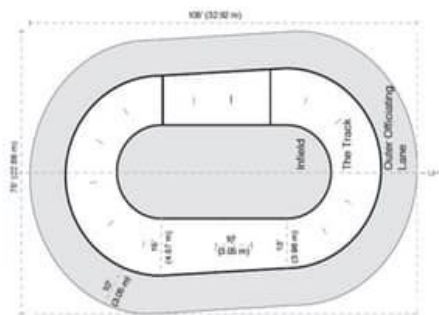
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- Approximately 10,000 sq. ft. facility
- Smooth Skatable Flooring (ie. polished concrete, hardwood, linoleum, or sport floor)
- Bathroom in or near the facility
- Partner in FUN!

WHAT WE CAN PROVIDE:

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- OR**
- GREAT SCENERY as you enjoy the annual tax benefit of donating to a 501c3 nonprofit organization
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20/20

I have a side project I've used to release stuff for a while called Me, Extinct. It's one of many. This one is where I process all my big emotional shit.

So maybe it's COVID-19, maybe it's the long days of working from home, maybe it's (my opinion on) Trump's way of messing things up, maybe it's sifting through my brain and finding racism and prejudices, maybe it's that I'm bored. Whatever it is, I started a new music project. I played and recorded all the instruments myself. When I started writing this, I hadn't done the vocals yet. That's the hardest part because I don't sing very well and I've totally messed up projects because of it. But I've done them now and finished, mastered and posted the project so it can be ready for when this issue releases.

The point of this article is to encourage you to do something different. I fear we're gonna go batty if we don't do different stuff. Maybe it's learn something, maybe it's moving furniture, maybe it's making weird animations, maybe it's creating art or music or baked goods or gardening. Whatever it is, do it. Considering how things are going, I'm interested to see what local bands are gonna survive and what new ones are gonna be birthed out of frustration and boredom. Also, this article is a bit rambling about why I started a music project and what all is going on in my head right now.

This music I recorded is very influenced by Portishead, Beak, Air, and Slowdive and possibly *Red Dead Redemption 2* and *Farcry 3*. Who knows anymore. My influences are all over the place...and I consider that a good thing. My kids musical tastes are all over the place too, which I consider a type of trophy. I love that they like all kinds of music, and in fact, have turned me on to a bunch of really cool stuff. Will they like this stuff? Sofie probably will. Emma might. I think most people will not like it. But I like it, so <sticks tongue out>. The kids listen to too much rap in my opinion, but that's just my opinion. I can listen to some of that, but it wears on me after a few songs. Livie is really into Lil Darkie and The Garden, and that stuff wears on me REALLY quickly.

So, the music I'm making is a bit dark (of course it is), but also not dark. It's a bit emotive, and a bit broken. What I mean is that I am purposefully not polishing it. I'm NOT going over it a bunch of times to get the perfect take. I'm copying and pasting parts. I'm leaving glitches and extraneous sounds and shit. I think my phone made the mic glitch with a clicky-buzz at one point and I left it. Pretty sure sounds from the kids playing *Modern Warfare* and *Borderlands 2* are in there too (the PS4 is in the same room as the musical equipment). I'm leaving it. I feel like that's where I'm at right now. I'm more about the experience and the process than about the finished product. Maybe that makes it unlistenable, but I will present early Ween as evidence that we listen to stuff that should be considered shitty, that becomes "perfect" and "classic" with enough listens. I don't really care about making perfect music. I care about making music that didn't used to exist. Now it exists...nasty side-of-the-toe warts and all. Maybe it will be listened to once by someone and tossed away as an immature venture into home recording, but I assure you, it's on purpose. Also, I'm lazy and have a fairly short attention span (and am also immature). Let's not mince intentions here.

The lyrical content is fairly broken too. Possibly hopeful

for some...I hope. I always like to write lyrics people might be able to relate to, but in this case, I'm not sure. Maybe. I also write in riddles. Similar style to the Shooobiedoobies, where a phrase is repeated. I like it that way. Makes it so the listener has to interpret and maybe become uncomfortable...or encouraged.

Where is all this coming from? I'm dealing with four teenage kids in the house, a wife going through the beginnings of menopause, and my own 50 year old life changes. Some of my preferences are changing, I've dipped my toe into understanding the world through a pulled back veil of lies, and my brain/self, started giving a shit more about stuff and less about stuff at the same time, and I am reeling from separating myself from a belief system that I held (well, it held me) for many years and feeling like I wasted all those years of my life with not much to show from it. Add onto that the way COVID-19 and Trump have put a magnifying glass on the beliefs and sanity of people in my life and in the world, and well, it's all pretty confusing. Pile on the fact that I in fact DO have prejudices that need to be examined and our government and whole system is racist and there's not really a way to fix it other than a civilization collapse and rebuilding (in my opinion).

One thing that's helping is that I have a super cool family who is supportive and communicative, and a dog who LOVES to go on walks. No joke, I owe a lot to my dog and the 30 minute sections of time where my phone is off, I'm outside, and I get to watch him shit outside. It's one of my favorite things. I also love when one of the fam joins us. Seriously, if you don't have something like this in your life, you gotta consider it. I know Kelly rides his bike, Katie and Haley deliver yumminess, and some others have started gardens and shit. All good! I'm not saying we're all going crazy, but in the beginning of this pandemic, I thought shit was weird and messed up. Now, 4 months later? It's not "better" yet. We need ways to deal, and I hope maybe this music helps you deal, even if it's just distracting you for about 30 minutes.

Samples of lyrics are:

- "I'm in trouble again/With you/But you're still here"
- "You look like shit today/But I'm into shit today"
- "You were my everything/I've messed it all up/Can't let go"
- "I lost myself/In you"

Will it speak to you deeply? Who knows. Will it be therapy for me? Yup. Will you enjoy it? Who knows.

I'm calling it "(20/20)". Like the year 2020 being the way that it is, but also 20/20 vision. That seems pretentious. I don't care. <https://shoobiedoobies.bandcamp.com/album/20-20> This is not a Shooobiedoobies project, it's just on the same BandCamp.

Ultimately, I hope you have a project or something that takes your mind off shit, but also, don't push the shit all away, you gotta deal with it. It's important that we are always growing. Do you need to start a project? Do you need to get outside? Do you need to reconnect with someone? Do you need to change your way of thinking? I need to do all that stuff. But remember, we will all be better if we keep looking at how to be better. Oh, and also doing something about it. — JORGE GOYCO

FIRE AT SWILL: OSKAR BLUES MUSTARD BEER

What kind of fuckery is this?! Oskar Blues, a very reputable craft brewery with sites in Colorado and North Carolina, has teamed up with French's to create this unholy concoction: a mustard beer. While on the surface this sound s like a very novel idea, it is not the first time such a pairing has been forged. Many a person has



enjoyed pretzels or bratwursts smeared or dipped in beer-based mustard. Why not have the pairing cross backwards to a mustard-based beer? Hence, Oskar Blues/ French's Mustard Beer.

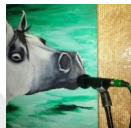
This limited edition brew is based upon a tart wheat beer base with prominent citrus bitterness at the nose, an almost Berliner Weisse styled saltiness, and the smooth

mouthfeel and familiar mustard tang of the nuclear yellow French's condiment. It pours with a beautiful lacy head and the pale color of white wheat. While I quite enjoyed the beer's refreshing sour nose I could not quite get over the French's in the finish. For starters, I do not quite care for yellow mustard. In fact, I downright hate it. On the contrary, I rather enjoy honey mustard or spicy brown mustards. But there's something about plain yellow mustard that is completely unappetizing. After the first couple of quaffs I began to imagine that I could taste not quite a full dollop of yellow mustard but that watery liquid that results from the separation of ingredients in the bottle before one shakes it off to reblend things. No one likes mustard water any more than they like ketchup water or sour cream or any other schmeer that comes apart in such a fashion. I dutifully finished the can and marked it as an experience. Good experience? Eh well, perhaps not, but an experience nonetheless. After all, we have many a gosse based on pickle juice these days, why not a weisbeer based on common mustard?

Where I believe some will choose a truer purpose for this beer is on the culinary side of things. It seems that Mustard Beer was *made* with boiling brats in mind, or to be used in batter for onion rings, corn dogs, cod for fish and chips, and the like. I am unsure such a tart and lemony beer would be good for such endeavors. I tend to prefer something with more malt character for batters and cheap-ass American lager is hard to beat for bratwurst. But it is certainly worth the experimentation.

French's has certainly helped Oskar Blues with a big advertising budget, as my sixer of Mustard Beer was accompanied with a reusable canvas shopping bag, coasters, stickers, coozies, and a bag of airplane mini-pretzels. Overall, I'm glad I popped the top on one but I can't say I'll ever need to give this one a go. But I could certainly see how another brewery may find inspiration to drop mustard seed into a spicy brew. — KELLY MEN-ACE

ASK CREEPY HORSE



You know if you'd of ever told me I'd be driving through a potential hurricane during a pandemic to fix someone's hair while wearing a mask, I'd of asked to have whatever you were on. Shit is fucking weird. It's so weird that it's just another day when a rapper spontaneously decides to run for President or we totally forget the year started with practically an entire continent on fire, an almost world war 3 and murder hornets.

For once, the fuckery has invaded all of our lives. Everyone on the planet is involved in the repeat battery of 2020. Somethings for the most part have been really fucking bad and we are seeing the worst in people. i. e. The rise of the Karen. Middle to upper class white people are having fucking meltdowns and attacking people because they have to wear a mask.

On the other hand, at the heaviest of prices, systemic racism is seen. Black lives matter actually matters right now. All over America people are finally beginning to open their eyes and see shit is very fucked for anyone but "whites". 5-6 years ago I caught a lot of flack on dear old Facebook for posting the statement that America has and continues to be inherently racist. Lots of white people felt the need to correct me and be more woke than I. The only person that outwardly agreed with me? An African-American.

In a strange way, all this has made me feel better about myself. Or maybe it was the gratuitous amounts of psychedelics I did while in quarantine. I see these insane meltdowns in the news and on tv and whew. That ain't me. If anything, I feel calmer and more collected than ever before. Shit is just too surreal and bizarre to get a grasp, so whatever happens is going to happen.

I've found a peace in that. There is obviously no control over what's happening and no one can seem to get control from our highest authorities, the richest, the poorest, the Karen's and Ken's of the world definitely don't have a handle on things, so why get all stressed and weirded out when this is just the way it is?

For once, all the energy I would have devoted to someone cutting me off in traffic or dealing with rednecks at the grocery store now goes directly to me. I take care of myself. I worry about myself like I used to others. Am I eating well? Am I sleeping well? What's best for me? My attention is solely focused on myself and my needs. I've become confident and far more driven than I've ever been before. I have a new car, a new apartment and a new job. I walk with a spring in my step and I feel the best I've ever felt. I'm kind to myself and forgive myself. I think about what's important to myself and who I want to be. I'm exhausted with negative and morose commentary. It's tired and old to me. I let things roll off my back. I don't give it energy. I can't afford to in these times. If something isn't positive or bring delight to my life, it simply doesn't exist. Life as I always say, is far too short and vulnerable. I don't want anymore days wasted to be in pain or suffering.

I want to be thrilled. Ecstatic. Happy. I wanna be adored. I want grand dinners with friends. I want ice cold Veuve Clicquot by the bottle. I want to awake to messages from my young nieces. I want to laugh. Smile. Dance terribly to cheesy music. I have so much to fill all the emptiness I kept for so long.

It's weird as fuck right now and you do you. Just remember as Bill Hicks put it, it's all just a ride. — CREEPY HORSE



RESPECT TO GEORGE FLOYD

On top of a boarded up two-story brick shop near the corner of 38th Street and Chicago in Minneapolis, next to a shuttered Speedway gas station and across from the small Cup Foods corner grocery, there is an unadorned billboard. Its background is a plain charcoal and there are three

And literally, the list goes on at this block of Chicago Avenue. Under that billboard with its prophetic rendering of George Floyd's last words, a local artist has painted row after row of names of victims of police brutality.

Also across from the billboard building is a canopy tent

covering the place where officer Derek Chauvin mercilessly knelt on Floyd's neck. Another artist, or perhaps just a visitor, has painted in the police chalk lines with blue. The painted figure, faceless, seems to have an angel's wing. This vision of George Floyd is also marked with candles. Glass containers of various sizes have been placed around the chalked legs, arms, torso, and head to further mark the shape and the place.

This section of Minneapolis has become a memorial to George Floyd. During our recent family trip to Minnesota, I attended with my kids, husband, and niece.

I was expecting to see the large blue mural with his face and name which was painted on the south side of Cup Foods that has been widely circulated on social media. I wasn't expecting an entire neighborhood development zone, called CANDO, which has been blocked off to traffic with concrete barriers and traffic signs and design-

A MATTER OF IDENTITY



Victoria has always been a town with no identity.

For decades they have tried to have one, but have always fallen short. Over 10 years ago, the Victoria convention and tourism bureau hired marketers to come up with a concept to market our town. A town with no real identity or personality basically paid money to have someone tell us what our town should be. They came up with "bring your boots" and a few years later...Bootfest. Because you know, we're world famous for um... boots?

Before that, VISD shut down Victoria High School and opened...Memorial High School. Only problem is a town that has no personality is a follower and never a leader with no one to memorialize...the school was memorial in name only, it didn't actually memorialize anyone, a neutral placeholder to appease rezoning controversy at the time.

When I was younger I tried to make this town a place to call home. I played music. I wrote. I threw shows. I had little success, but after years of grind and fickle people I could see the writing on the wall. While we could be a city for art and amazing things. It wouldn't happen here.

If you asked someone who lived here what the town is famous for...you would be hard pressed for a good answer. Stone Cold Steve Austin (he's from Edna), a cop tazing an old man a few years ago, people waiting in line for hours when a new food place opens up. It's about as good as you can hope for.

Now, there is controversy over our local statue downtown. A statue which again...doesn't actually memorialize anyone. A reminder that this city was a part of the losing side of morality and history. All I hear from people is that it's part of our history. And what about that history we hear so much about but don't know? It's not like the Wright Brothers flew a plane here...the Confederacy lasted about five years, that's a little longer than most people's college education. Just like a college education, no one is asking you to get rid of your degree, but if your room is still decorated the same, well...time to change it up.

And here's the kicker...for once this town could have an identity. For once this town could stand up for something. Instead of keeping something because it's always been there, the city could be the town that said, "y'know sometimes the town changes with the times. Sometimes we realize something doesn't serve us anymore." Then we would have a rep. An identity. Something to be proud of.

But we won't. We won't do anything like that. We will stay put. We will argue among ourselves online. It will be a political debate, not a moral one. We will stay on the wrong side of history until forced to move. And the curse continues. — TIM DANGER



sentences printed out in white letters. The first sentence is smaller, the second is larger, the third is the largest of all. It reads:

"Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out of me." (Luke 8:46)

"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46)

"I CAN'T BREATHE... MAMA" (George 8:46)

The street in front of Cup Foods is the place where George Floyd, a Houston native who had moved to Minneapolis to work and to start over, was murdered by a police officer on Memorial Day. The story of Floyd's death and the storm it touched off is now well known to us. In the days immediately after his death, this neighborhood in north central Minneapolis, saw riots, protests, looting, outsiders and white supremacists inciting violence. A police precinct burned.

Those actions spread to other cities and states and countries and finally, or least finally to many of us who have read story after story of police brutality against black citizens (and of unpunished white violence against people of color), sparked widespread and demonstrated outrage on behalf of George Floyd and many others.

Tamir Rice. Philando Castile. Eric Garner. Sandra Bland. Jordan Edwards. Stephon Clark. Atatiana Jefferson. Breonna Taylor. The list goes on.



nated on signs at the entrance as a sacred site akin to battlefields, death camps, and lynching sites. This is a place of black pain, those signs say. Tread lightly. We went there to pay our respects at this tragic and important place. A parking lot, plus blocked off streets and a roundabout, were quiet but also busy, with visitors like us, neighbors, and even what appeared to be news cameras. Some people spoke, but most did not. Everything is as it was on May 26, 2020 and the subsequent days. The shuttered businesses are still closed. The many teddy bears and candles and homemade cardboard signs are all still there, some worse for wear. Flyers taped on a bus stop direct visitors to leave everything in place for further documentation and preservation.

The memorial site looks a bit like a war zone after the peace treaty has been signed but before clean-up begins. I was glad that the city of Minneapolis has allowed this place to be what it needs to be.

All of the signs, spray paint, art, offerings, plants, windows covered with plywood, and destruction tell a sad and difficult story. So much has happened since and because of George Floyd's murder exactly there. Our nation is reeling and roiling. But witnessing the organic curation of this deeply moving place was a tonic and an urgent reminder of what needs to be done. — ERIN HILL

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RECORD REVIEWS

BLUE RODEO



Blue Rodeo
1000 Arms

The latest album by the best band in North America (okay, they're Canadian) is the group's 14th studio effort in a career dating back more than three decades. The two principal songwriter/vocalists of Blue Rodeo – Jim Cuddy and Greg Keeler – are sort of the Lennon/McCartney of the Great White North in collecting, along with the band, just about every accolade the second largest country on the planet can bestow.

1000 Arms is a pre-pandemic release which finds the group pondering more darkness than it might do in today's climate, but plenty of light still shines through via the music and some of the lyrics. The title cut is the most hopeful in view of what the world is going through now. A trademark Blue Rodeo mid-tempo tune with an evocative steel guitar paints a picture of community and friendship for a woman trying to live life through rough patches. "That when she feels she's sinking down/There's a thousand arms to bring her back around."

Other tunes deal with the struggle of relationships over years such as the easy pace of "Long Hard Life" and the slow ballad "Hard to See" about the effort to "Hard to See" about the effort to hold onto love after so much time together. "Mascara Tears" has a title that tells the story in a ballad with tempered keyboard touches. There's the typical breakup song with marvelous harmonies and a stellar mandolin in "I Can't Hide This Anymore." One of the catchiest songs ("Rabbit's Foot") has some tasty guitar with a whisper steel in its plea to be taken back by a lover. "Dust to Gold" is almost too depressing in its arrangement and depiction of a failed love.

The Beatlesque "Superstar" is somewhat cynical look at rock music with quality harmonies

and the nice inclusion of a French horn. "Jimmy Fall Down" mines some of the same "failure of rock" territory. "Hard to Remember" is almost the quintessential Blue Rodeo song, a comfortable country-rock tune with soaring harmonies and organ fills about a past love who was "never satisfied." The music is so attractive even as the subject matter is somewhat bleak.

On a personal note, this is the first vinyl album I've gotten by Blue Rodeo since the mid-Eighties. The record is solid for a longtime rock group still creating new music, so it's a worthy introduction to the band although the greatest hits might serve the first-time listener better. As an aside for those looking for something more caustic, check out Blue Rodeo's punk gem *Graveyard*. — MIKE L. DOWNEY



SkyAcres
Protectors and Guardians

It's been six years since Austin heavy rock trio SkyAcres have had a new album to offer to the universe. A couple of years ago Marcos, Danny, and whoever was on drums at the time began to sneak some of these new songs into their live sets but this is the first time fans get a listen at them in polished studio glory. During those live shows it was obvious that SkyAcres was getting more aggro. Not that the band has ever been soft by any measure, but it appeared that SkyAcres had double d down on the grunge, and *Protectors and Guardians* shows that to be the case.

True, there's tons of buzzing fuzz tones, righteous detuned riffs, bizarre ensemble twists and turns, screaming but it's not only *Bleach* and *Ultrasone* OK SkyAcres references on this new album. Marcos Delgado, the de facto one man band of SkyAcres on record, has left behind the Trail of Dead inspiration and seems to have added some

righteous heavy metal and goth rock to the band's sound. "The Human Bees" ties on a bit of New Wave of British Metal hard machine gun riffing with melodic, dark, gothic echo-laden lead guitar before a mid-song breakdown ushers in a bit of dare I say Tool-style prog metal interrupted by a bit of tectonic Texas stoner sludge. "The Lake" mixes some of that righteous Eric Avery Jane's Addiction strong percussive bass guitar with colossal echo guitar and a Black Sabbath turnaround. "Soft, Safe, Secure," reminds me a lot of Perry Farrell's pre Jane's band Psi Com but with heavier guitar tones. "Guard Donkey" has ALL the Sabbath via Soundgarden riffs that a two minute song can stand.

It's with album closer "Kaleidoscope Quilts" where I stop thinking so much how hard the album rocks and find the emotional center of where the band is coming from. "If I knew you were fading away, had I known it was our last day I would've stayed" Marco sings plaintively. Our community has known immense loss in the past few years. Suicides, overdoses, accidents have taken a good portion of our friends and family in the BCS scene and this song is a proper lament for those we miss. From quietly beautiful to full on grunged out stomping catharsis, fading out to the horizon to the end the album. It is quite simply the most beautiful and impactful five minutes SkyAcres has ever created. — KELLY MENACE



Economy Island
Insides Out

Insides Out, the Economy Island album (the band's second full-length effort), fades in with the sound of fuzz pedal guitars buzzing like a hive of angry bees, before the band slams in with a slab of hard waltz-time grunge and singer Richi Father-ee declaring that "it might be time to panic." This is a good a

declaration as any of statement of intent. Whereas the band's first album looked within for its inspiration, *Insides Out* is more like "outsides in" as the band seems to be looking around them more than looking inside. The afore-mentioned "Panic," "Small Town Prince" and "The Jerk" definitely are social commentary at the executive office of our country. Combined with a more muscular sound from the ground up, thanks to the heavy rock drumming of Erik Schuman and the bedrock bass guitar and harmony vocals of guest Camaron Taylor (on loan from Jay Satellite), *Insides Out* feels like a large step forward for Economy Island.

Not only is *Insides Out* a larger sounding effort it also has more moments of noir and texture ("Lab Dreams" is absolutely beautiful moonlit midnight recalling the mood of '70s AM pop radio with a beautiful Don Felder-esque guitar solo from John Christoffel) with washes of synthesizer and Richi's voice disappearing into a larger cave of reverberation with each repeat of the refrain of on album closer "I Never". The band's debut album was a chronicle of what the band sounded like live but *Insides Out* shows what a bit of thoughtfulness and studio ingenuity can do for a band.

What I most like about *Insides Out* is that the band no longer appears to be hiding its strongest asset: Richi Father-ee's voice. It is a unique combination of sneer and whine that sounds like no other vocalist I know of. On the first album the

band double-tracked Richi and buried the vocals behind the admitted talent of John's guitar work. *Insides Out* pushes Richi's vocals front and center, single tracked and proud. This is just one aspect of the growth this band has shown from album 1 to album 2. Can't wait to hear where they go from here. — KELLY MENACE



Havok
V

Thrash metal never gets old. Anybody who considers himself/herself a metalhead knows how timeless and important this subgenre is because it has produced not only legendary and staple metal bands, but it has also spawned numerous metal subgenres. If one likes catchy riffs, shredding solos, melody, no melody at all, harsh vocals, clean vocals, speed, technicality, and/or brutality, thrash has it all; it is truly one of the most diverse of genres.

Since the time of the classic thrash bands, many young bloods have carried the torch and produced thrash worthy to contend with metal legends. One of the rising genre stars is Havok from Denver, Colorado. Havok made considerable waves in the metal community with their 2011 sophomore masterpiece titled *Time is Up*, and, since then, they have released three more albums that have gotten plenty of attention. Striking with the force of an angry libertarian shouting, "Sir, am I being detained?!" after getting pulled over by an unsuspecting police officer, Havok hits us again with the band's aptly titled fifth offering, *V*.

Let's take a second to appreciate that artwork. I mean, what can I say? It's yet another beautiful piece created by Eiran Kantor, who also did the artwork for Testament's *Titans of Creation* earlier this year. Like Testament's album, I was surprised to find this sort of art on a thrash album with its classical appeal, bright colors, and altogether somber ethos. There is so much going on with what appears to be a diagrammed human. Upon closer inspection, so many small things integrate into the overall image that one has to see in person to appreciate, such as the mushrooms growing on the figure's right shoulder. It is an unusual choice for this sort of music, but I like it! Soundwise, *V* is what one should expect from Havok; it's a slap-bass, groovy, high-pitched barking, Megadeth-esque thrash assault. What I love about this record is that the band has far more diversity with the tempo than usual. There are fast songs like "Post-Truth Era," "Fear Campaign," and "Phantom Force," slow songs like "Ritual of the Mind" and "Interface with the Infinite," and mid-paced songs like

"Pansychism". In addition, there is a mellow, yet sinister, instrumental halfway through the record that creates a welcome intermission. Later, *V* closes with an eight-minute denouement titled "Don't Do it". Lyrically, the music is as politically and socially charged as the last four albums with no sign slowing down. David Sanchez screams out rhymes dealing with topics like the band's disdain post-modern philosophy and crooked politicians, the war on drugs and "big pharma", and the growing dependence on technology and the eventual betrayal by it. One thing a listener should know when picking up a Havok record is that this is a band with a message, and one that gives the impression that to not craft lyrics with a higher purpose is to waste one's time. This approach gives the band a nice punk appeal, but it offers a breath of fresh air to hear political and socially-focused lyrics that are less to the social-left and anarchist right and more towards the center.

Initially, my first impression of *V* was somewhere in the region of "Meh." There is really nothing new in comparison to Havok's four previous releases in terms of sound or lyrics, and they have certainly done better in terms of creativity with records like *Time is Up* and *Conformicide*. However, after repeated listens to the album, it has grown on me. The more I listen, the more I sense a pattern in the song order, and I even find myself singing along when the choruses hit. To say the least, if a band is going to do nothing new with a new release, the fact that the sound can easily grow on the listeners in ways it hadn't with the first few listens is a sure sign that the band is doing something right.

Overall, *V* is a record that plays it safe, but even playing it safe has its advantages at times. Though fans of Havok will find nothing new, they will also not find anything to be disappointed about with Havok's latest offering in terms of sound, lyrics, or ethos. There is certainly something to be said for consistency and for bands who refuse to change their sound, and for those who truly love Havok's sound and their message, and who want to see them keep doing what they know how to do best, it is a slam-dunk of a record. As a fan, I have to tip my hat to Havok for putting out a solid record, and give them a solid 4.4/5. — CALEB MULLINS

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