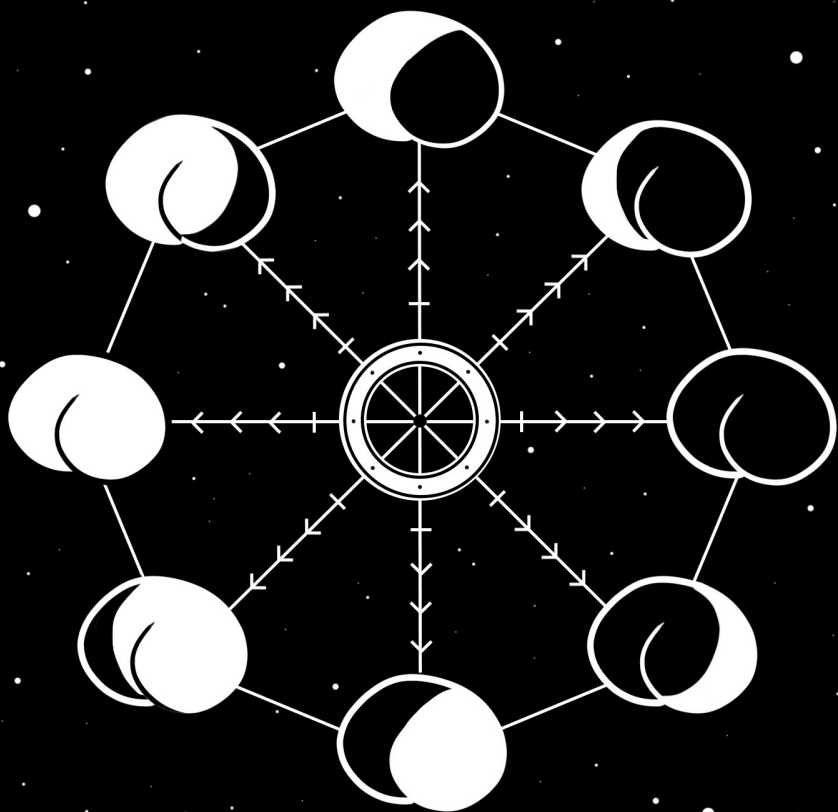


STARGO REPRESENT



may 2021
vol. 13 issue 4



inside: missing your shot - chauvins appeal process - using comic books to teach kids - hands - salacious crumbs - jim steinman - the loveletter - ask creepy horse - promising young woman - deluxe pedal pushing - reading rocks - record reviews



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

editorial bored

kelly menace

art splendiddness

katie killer & wonko zuckerberg with maren
farmer, jorge goyco, james gray, dj moon, &
william daniel thompson

print jockey

craig wheel werker

folks that did the other shit for us

creepy horse - tim danger - mike l. downey -
jorge goyco - todd hansen - caleb mullins -
rented mule - starkness

on the interwebz

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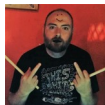
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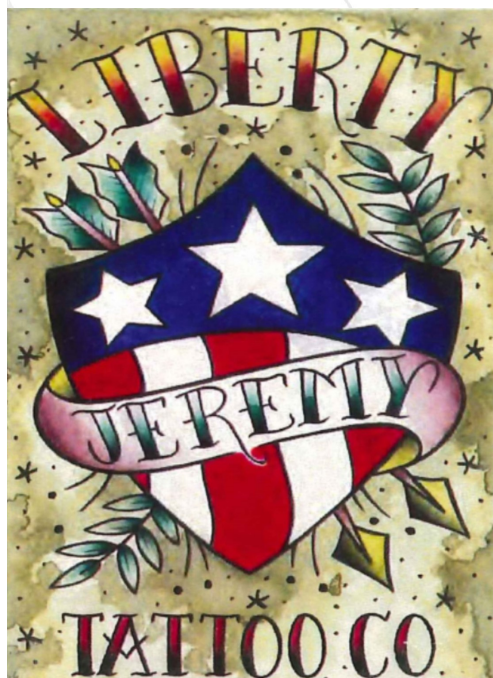
MISSING YOUR SHOT

Midway through last month a bunch of 979Rep contributors popped into the Brazos County Vaccine Hub to proudly roll up they sleeves and get that good Bill Gates microchip juice pumped into they arms. These individuals understood that in order to help get the infection rates down and to not unduly suffer at the hands of the 'Rona theyselves that getting the Covid-19 vaccination was imperative. Good public health policy, good Golden Rule policy, good mental health policy. Nothing but wins all the way around.

Except while these paragons of public safety were getting their shots they learned from the staff that the Hub had way more vaccine than people to give shots to. Part of that is because they were allocated more vaccine in the first place. The other part, the staggering part, is that just under half of the people eligible for shots between the ages of 16 and 64 in Brazos County had received their first shot. One out of every two people you see driving down Texas Ave., shopping at HEB or Target, serving you takeout, etc. has not had their first shot yet. This is not because there aren't enough shots to go around. The Brazos County Vaccine Hub had *2000 first shots just waiting to go into people's arms*. These shots will certainly not go to waste. They will be reallocated elsewhere in the state where they can be used. The point is that somehow there are tens of thousands of folks in the county that haven't made it a priority to get their shot or, even worse, don't plan to get a shot at all.

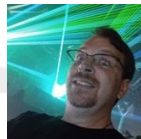
I should not be shocked at all that public health policy in the middle of an epidemic could be subverted in a cynical attempt to gain political points for an ideology slowly aging out its power structure. Capitalizing on conspiracy and fear to gather a political base at the expense of public health seems like it could not be successful. But considering the base that is being targeted politically refuses to believe any news other than Fox News and other farther-right outlets whose stories have been consistently critical of the pandemic this should come as no surprise. Also consider the Texas factor (c'mon, y'all *all* know what I'm talking about here) and the folks in the African-American community who have a justified distrust of a government person wanting to test drugs on them (and let's be honest here, we are indeed running a very large lab experiment here), the folks in the Latinx community who are still afraid of ICE roundups, and this is how we get to half the people who just won't take their jabs.

Whether the ignorance is willful or justified, it is still ignorance. The Biden administration needs to do a better job of helping to convince skeptics of the importance of getting their vaccination. The message doesn't need to just come from the top-down. We need to help convince our friends, neighbors, and colleagues that the sooner we get inoculated the sooner we can get full control of how the virus is spread. Fewer people will get sick, fewer people will die. Selfishly, this will also accomplish bringing back their backyard barbecues, sporting events, tailgates, dances, eating dinner out inside a place, drinking in bars, and going to shows and concerts. Win win win win win win. All the winning. It doesn't seem like this should be where we are, but this is where we are. If you have not had your first shot yet, PLEASE MAKE A GODDAMNED APPOINTMENT AND GET YOUR FUCKING SHOT. — KELLY MENACE



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USING COMIC BOOKS TO TEACH MY KIDS



Back in the 50s, there was a dude who made it his mission to portray comic books as mind rotting crap, worth nothing. It actually worked. You don't see it anymore, but there have been references in movies and cartoons about kids hiding comic books in text books and even presenting comic book readers as delinquents and troublemakers.

Well, I see it differently (as did many), and I'm sure glad for capitalism and underground perseverance, because comic books can be (is a) legitimate forms of literature and art. Obviously some comics are just for entertainment and distraction, but I've read a good amount that are true works of art.

I'm homeschooling our kids, and they are finally old enough to be able to deal with the horror and terrible themes of *The Walking Dead*. I read it a few years ago, and the whole time I was convinced it would make a really good curriculum primer. As of this writing, we are probably about half way through it. It's a big series. 193 issues. We are reading 16 issues a week, having discussions on Wednesday and Saturday. It's been pretty cool.

The story is interesting enough on its own, but what got me geeking on it was that there is so much depth to it. If you are only familiar with the TV show, then you've only got a portion of the whole picture, and a sensationalized picture at that. TV sells ads, so it has to be cliffhangers and dramatic and have the right pace and all that. In my opinion, that's bullshit. The comics have the pace originally set up by the author (Robert Kirkman) and the tension and intertwining of themes and stories is fantastic. We in fact do talk about the events in the story, and the plausibility of the situations and all that, but we also get in depth about a ton of other things.

For example, we've talked about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, considering the fact that they are in a constant hunt for safety, rest, shelter, belonging, food, skills, and all that shit. Robert Kirkman didn't just make a slasher horror story, he connected people in relationships, had them reacting to the actions and reactions of others, dealt with trust issues, sex, loss, traditional beliefs, and kindness.

Another thing we've talked about is "Learning". The characters in the story are constantly learning, and learning has a rich depth, so much so, that it's become a character in and of itself. If they don't learn, they don't survive. If they resist learning, they make things harder for themselves. Learning brings change. Learning creates opportunities. Learning forces skill building and bettering. All in the midst of keeping to the rules set by the author for the Zombies and characters.

The rules that Robert Kirkman adheres to are also a thing we're exploring. The zombies are a certain way. They don't change. More is revealed about them, but it only expands what we know about their existence. Robert Kirkman doesn't suddenly throw in a runner, or a smart Zombie that uses a rock to break a window, or give one of the zombies a weapon. Nope. He sticks to the rules,

which makes him (the author) a "friend".

This "friend" concept is something I've been thinking about. Think back when you've read a book or comic. The author sometimes emerges in my mind when something happens. Maybe it's a, "Holy shit! How can someone think about something like this," or, "Whoa, the author really thought through this," or, "Man, I didn't expect that turn of events." What's interesting about this is that for an author to be a "friend", there are certain things that need to be established. One is that he doesn't change the rules. Another is that he presents moral dilemmas. Another is that he uses people that we can relate to (and no fucking Deus Ex Machina bullshit!).

Well, I'm not sure these rules are for every story, but it is for this one. At one point he presents us with a priest who talks to a couple of them about faith and shit, but it's a passing conversation, and it's done well. We also find out that the priest did some pretty terrible things, which humanizes him. Makes us relate better with the character.

Another thing we've talked about is ethics, specifically through the actions of the characters. There are many instances where the action, although reprehensible, is justified because of the situation. Like the age old argument of the man stealing bread for his moneyless, starving family, in this case, it's running over a potentially innocent man with an RV to keep him from possibly telling bad people where their safe haven was. Complicated, I know. A fun metaphor that is one of my favorites so far is that they found a prison and made it a safe haven. This is a place where criminals were kept so society would be safe from their actions. But in this case, it's to keep themselves safe from the outside. It's a cool metaphorical image.

I've really been digging talking to the kids about all this stuff. It's stuff I remember (barely) from high school, but I'm geeking on it way more than I ever did. They really have no idea how boring public school is. Sure, *The Walking Dead* is not written like a novel, but it's got all the elements of a work of literature...and a bunch of pictures. (YAY!)

This is one thing I am pretty damn happy about living in Texas. Texas Homeschooling laws are pretty hands-off. I can do whatever I want. But if you are reading this and are considering it, please be wary. Homeschooling takes a ton of effort and time and stress, and trying to get teenagers motivated is super difficult with TikTok and COD and YouTube and Discord and Twitter and Endless Anime series and all that other bullshit fighting for their attention. But it can also be really cool.

How fucked up will my kids be? We will see. Maybe they will just be "different", and "unique". That's fine.

In case you care, I have an ongoing list of reviews of comics I dig here: <https://offpaneljorge.wordpress.com/>
— JORGE GOYCO

So, the jury said their piece. Chauvin has been found guilty of all counts. I figured many of you are wondering what's going to happen next. I'm just a fucking moron like the rest of you but, I've been anticipating this moment for a while. I've read the filings and I'm familiar with the sentencing laws, and this is pretty much what I can figure out. See below for some answers to questions:

Where is Chauvin now? After the verdict was confirmed, Prosecution made a motion to revoke Chauvin's bail. He is now being held in custody without the option of posting bail to get out. He will remain in custody until he is sentenced, at which point he will be in the custody of the Department of Corrections (prison). He probably will not be held at Hennepin County jail, for security reasons, just like last time when he was being held-pretrial months ago.

What happens next? Judge Cahill set out the scheduling at the end of the verdict reading. The parties will submit written argument about Blakely factors within one week. Cahill will issue factual findings on Blakely one week later. Court ordered a pre-sentencing investigation (PSI for short) will occur immediately. It will be finished likely four weeks from now. Parties must submit written sentencing briefs about their proposed sentencing within six weeks. Sentencing will be eight weeks from now.

What is Blakely? When a person is found guilty, the prosecution can request a second trial about "Blakely" factors. These are facts that, if found true beyond a reasonable doubt, enable the judge to give a sentence *above* the sentencing guidelines range for a particular defendant's criminal record score. The prosecution filed notice of their intent to have a Blakely trial months ago.

How is Blakely being handled in this case? Normally, Blakely evidence is decided by the same jury as the jury that determines guilt. You literally seat the jurors back down and begin hearing more witnesses and evidence about the additional Blakely factors. Yesterday, on April 19, 2021, after closing arguments concluded, Eric Nelson announced that they would waive a Blakely jury trial in the event of a guilty finding and ask Judge Cahill to make the findings instead of the jury. It is fully within the defense's right to waive the jury trial and allow the judge to make the decisions on their own. Judge Cahill must decide whether the Blakely factors are true beyond a reasonable doubt. The facts that go to Blakely have already been entered into the record during the guilt phase of the trial. For whatever reason, the defense agreed to let the State present Blakely evidence during the trial itself. That is why you heard so much evidence during the first few eyewitnesses about children being present.

What are the Blakely factors in this case, and what do they do for the sentence? Blakely factors give judges the *option* of sentencing a defendant above the guidelines range that they normally qualify for. In legalese, it's called an "upward durational departure." It departs from the guidelines and imposes an "upward" duration of prison time. The judge is *not required* to do this, even if the Blakely factors are proven. There are dozens of Blakely factors a prosecution can offer in a trial. Things

like "used a firearm," or "kidnapped the victim," or "showed particular cruelty," or "left the victim in a vulnerable environment," or "committed the act with more than two codefendants."

Here, in this case, you can read the Blakely factors the prosecution is asking Cahill to consider: <https://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/High-Profile-Cases/27-CR-20-12646/ProposedInstructions10122020.pdf>. The factors they are offering as a reason to upward depart are:

- crime was committed with three or more active co-participants
- crime was committed in presence of children, and the child(ren) witnessed the crime
- defendant acted as a police officer and used his police license to facilitate the crime
- defendant displayed particular cruelty (knowing victim was handcuffed and in physical and emotional distress)
- defendant knew or should have known that Floyd was unable to breathe and then went unconscious
- defendant committed crime despite pleas from eyewitnesses that he was killing the victim
- defendant continued with the crime after victim went unconscious
- defendant showed disregard for Floyd's life
- defendant impeded efforts by others to provide medical assistance

This is an astonishing number of Blakely factors. It is highly likely Cahill will find most of them have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

What range of time would Chauvin normally be exposed to, without Blakely? In Minnesota, when a defendant is found guilty of multiple acts all against the same victim, they are only sentenced on the top count. In this case, that means Murder in the 2nd Degree Unintentional. To find out what Chauvin is exposed to, you must refer to the [sentencing guidelines](#). M2 Unintentional is a level 10 offense, and Chauvin has zero criminal history points. That means he normally would only be exposed to a sentence of 128 to 180 months. There is a presumptive sentence (the standard) that someone with zero criminal history points will get a sentence of 150 months, but Cahill gets to choose between 128 to 180 unless he considers Blakely and departs upward. That would be a sentence between 10.5 to 15 years in prison. You serve approximately 2/3rds of that in prison, and the last third on parole. Chauvin also has approximately six to eight months of jail credit towards that sentence. So Chauvin would normally get about 6 to 9.3 actual years of time if Cahill ignores Blakely.

What sentence is Chauvin exposed to if Cahill finds Blakely is proven? The statute for second degree murder, [609.19](#) is a very strange statute. It has four different provisions, two for intentional murders, and two for unintentional murders. The intentional murders are a "level 11" offense on the guidelines grid (which gets you *twice as much prison time* as the unintentional murders). But none of that matters if Cahill finds Blakely. Because, if you look at the subdivisions for both types of 2nd degree murder, the *maximum sentence is*

the same. Chauvin is exposed by Blakely findings to an absolute maximum of 40 years. That would be a gargantuan sentence for an accidental killing under Minnesota law.

Will Cahill find Blakely and go for the max? Highly doubtful. The judge would basically need to make a finding that this crime is so serious that he should treat the defendant like someone with a maximum criminal history score of 6, and then go higher even still from there. He'd need to find it's as serious as the worst *intentional* murders in Minnesota. He will almost assuredly not do that. More commonly, when substantial Blakely factors are proven, Minnesota judges might go up 2-3 boxes in criminal history. So, Chauvin could realistically be looking at a sentence as high as 19.5 to 21 years of prison, before you account for the third-off and 8 months of jail credit. Cahill is unlikely to go any higher than that. To be honest, I will be surprised if he gives Chauvin 20 years, but we shall see. Could he go higher? Sure. You gotta remember though, that we do live in hellworld.

What happens after Blakely factors are decided? Is that the same thing as the sentencing? No. Cahill will tell the parties what his ruling is on the Blakely stuff, and in the meantime, Hennepin County Probation will be meeting with and interviewing Derek Chauvin for a "PSI," which is basically an interview of Chauvin and other interested people involved in the case, to come up with a recommendation of a sentence to give to the court. The PSI often includes interview with "collateral" personnel — Chauvin's family and the victim's family. Probation will be interviewing Chauvin to get a sense of his position on the trial — whether he expresses remorse or whether he maintains innocence, and whether he has psychological or chemical health concerns that could weigh in favor of increasing or decreasing the prison sentence. The probation officer doing the PSI will write up a 5-10 page report with all of this information and offer his/her own recommendation on a sentence, with different options for the judge to consider.

What happens with sentencing briefs? In a written brief before sentencing, each party will argue for decreasing or increasing the sentence based on reasons having to do with the seriousness of the offense, defendant's acceptance or non-acceptance of responsibility, and any Blakely factors that Cahill finds are proven.

What happens at the sentencing hearing? On the day (or, hell, could be a week) of sentencing, the court will first hear from victim impact. This means family of George Floyd will testify, or submit written statements to be ready by a victim witness liaison, or present video, photographs, etc. Because of the infamy of this case, I expect the prosecution's victim impact will be quite voluminous and time-consuming. Definitely longer than several hours. Could be over a day long just for the prosecution input. Then the State will orally argue in support of their written brief for the higher end of the sentence. Next, the defense will present their own testimony and exhibits. This will likely be the first time we

finally get to hear Chauvin speak on this case. He is allowed to testify at his sentencing, and he gets the final word. The last thing anyone says before sentencing is pronounced comes from the defendant, unless he waives his right to say anything. It is possible he will do so, just because I'm sure he feels there's nothing to be gained by saying anything. He plans on appealing his case, and he may not wish to say anything, even an expression of remorse, that could jeopardize his chances on a second trial later if one is later granted down the road. Anything he says at sentencing taking responsibility for the crime could be used against him at a second trial later. I am sure that the defense will likely get family members lined up. They may play a video about Chauvin's life and family, show their own photographs, tell their own stories about the good parts of Chauvin's life. Overall, sentencing hearings in murder cases are incredibly emotion. I think it will be emotional on both sides. Finally, at the end, Cahill will have to decide what to do. He'll have to settle on a number. The number will be the months of time Chauvin must spend behind bars.

Is there anything else that can happen between now and sentencing? Yes. Chauvin's legal team will be filing motions for a new trial, motions for judgement of acquittal notwithstanding the guilty jury verdicts, motions for mistrial, etc etc. Cahill's probably going to deny these challenges and punt them to the appeals process.

After Chauvin' sentenced, how long will his appeals take? Nelson will begin work on them immediately. But realistically the first appellate court to decide anything, the Minnesota Court of Appeals, won't hear argument for over a year from now, and they won't issue a decision until months after that. If the CoA doesn't help Chauvin, then it will take approximately another year or so for the MN Supreme Court to hear his appeal and decide issues of their own.

If Minnesota courts deny Chauvin's appeals, can the US Supreme Court grant an appeal? Yes. Chauvin will be appealing many issues that a federal court will have authority to decide.

What issues will Chauvin be appealing? Almost certainly, he will be appealing the denial of the change of venue, as well as the denial of Nelson's request to sequester the jury during selection and the trial itself, as a violation of statutory and constitutional rights to defense under both Minnesota and federal law. He may also appeal the way in which evidence was disclosed in a disorganized and late fashion at times, and the manner in which the State was allowed to call so many eyewitnesses and expert witnesses who testified to more or less the same information, as a violation of rules of evidence, rules of criminal procedure, and constitutional or statutory due process. There are probably several others as well, but no need to go into all of them here. All of these issues could foreseeably land in front of the U.S. Supreme Court depending on how badly the SCOTUS wants to address issues that it finds lacking from the Minnesota Supreme Court. Two issues that are more likely to come down only to the Minnesota Supremes are: (1) is the Murder 3 conviction proper for the facts of this case? (see Noor case, appealing the same issue);

CONT. ->

and (2) whether the prosecution committed prosecutorial misconduct by belittling Eric Nelson in its closing argument. Those particular issue rest almost solely on MN state law, and are not something the US Supreme Court would likely be able to consider.

Will Chauvin win on appeal? I am not commenting on Chauvin's chances of winning any of these issues. It's not productive to do so. Nobody knows how his appeals will shake out. But I can say what *could* happen below.

If Chauvin wins an appeal, what could happen? There are four possible outcomes of an appeal:

- The higher court upholds the trial court's decision and affirms the guilty verdict.
- The higher court overturns the trial court's decision on an issue, but holds that it was harmless error because of other overwhelming evidence of guilt, and still affirms the guilty verdict.
- The higher court overturns the trial court's decision on an issue in the case, finds it was not harmless error, and declares a mistrial, ordering that a new trial be held.
- The higher court overturns the trial court's decision on an issue in the case, finds it was not harmless error, and dismisses the case against Chauvin with prejudice.

The last option is *extremely unlikely* and almost never happens. The only times it happens are when a prosecution has been proven to have engaged in bad faith violations of ethics rules, like concealing exculpatory evidence from the defense. That does not appear to be an issue in dispute in this case. Now, the other three options? Any of them could happen depending on things way outside our ability to predict right now.

What about the other officers? The prosecution team will be full steam ahead now towards the trial for the other three officers. At this time, they are set for trial in August, 2021. Unlike Chauvin, the other three

codefendants have not been severed from each others' trials. This means all three are presently set to be tried together, in the same courtroom, with each of their lawyers able to present arguments, call witnesses and cross-examine the prosecution witnesses. They may end up getting severed due to any combination of reasons related to fairness, practical logistics, or courtroom security. If you thought Chauvin's trial was a shitshow, just wait until there are three defendants, three defense lawyers, and an extremely chaotic set of legal theories where they try to argue reasonable doubt on Floyd's cause of death all over again, *while also blaming Chauvin and each other for what happened.*

What needs to be proven for other officers to be found guilty? Unlike Chauvin, none of the three codefendant officers are charged with the actual crimes of manslaughter or murder. They are charged with aiding and abetting Manslaughter 2, Murder 3, and Murder 2 Unintentional. To be guilty of aiding and abetting, the defendant must *specifically be aware* that Chauvin is committing a crime, and they must *specifically intend to help him commit the crime.* The State must also prove that each specific officer actively, overtly helped in at least some specific way that helped cause Floyd's death. These issues create a much, much higher standard of culpability. I think the prosecution will have a more difficult time with that one, but it also depends on the individual officer. Officer Lane, for example, may have an easier time at trial than Officer Tou. But who knows?

Can Chauvin's guilty verdict be used as evidence against the other three officers? No. Not in any way whatsoever. And that would have been true in the reverse, too, if Chauvin was acquitted, although the prosecution likely would have dismissed the other officers' cases in the interest in political practicality following a full acquittal of Chauvin. — **STARKNESS**



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ASK CREEPY HORSE



A curious question popped into my noggin the other day. Redemption. Do we give that to anyone? Do we realize they are just as in their heads as you are, as I am even? Myself included, as I thought more about this, I realized we really don't let someone evolve, learn, get better. I reflected for a while on this. Grudges in my past that I held onto for years if not even decades. Let me tell you. Those motherfuckers don't even remember my ass and I'm over here wasting my beautiful life time stewing on them. Well, as an example. Not me, of course. I shit rainbow sherbet and piss lightning.

I've been working very, very hard on my mental health and I'm proud to say I'm in the best headspace I've ever been in. I know, I've said it before but that's like a kindergartner not liking onions and then an adult is like oh shit it's onions! Let's fuck it up! Because onions are fucking good and kids are stupid. It was so much work but well worth it. Unfortunately I am fucking shocked and appalled by all of my behavior the last I don't know. Three to four decades?

I've virtually become agoraphobic and if I see anyone from my past, I'll probably dive into a bush or hide in a dumpster. I have no excuse. I mean, hello! I'm mentally ill, how are you? Explains. Doesn't excuse it. So I had to work on myself. As I said up there, very, very hard. Lots of medications and trying to find the right combo, intensive therapy, being clean and sober (hey, I get it. drinking and drugs ARE cool. just not for me. I'm better off.) I had to face people I didn't want to. I had to address and even discuss my wrongs. I couldn't be the secret cockroach person I am anymore. I'm openly a cockroach person now.

I've come out on the other side much like Dewey Cox in rehab. It ain't rainbows and lollipops, hell nah. I've had a real shit year, but working on and changing my

behavior led to me coping with this far easier than the Chicken Little I was before. It was legit. I really truly felt the way I acted. That makes it worse.

I've realized I'm at peace now. I lost my family due to their religious beliefs. I had to let them go. Let go of the memories and everything that continued to hurt. Basically, I don't fuck with that bitch no more. I've gotten to the point that if something is remotely negative, I cast it away. I'm done with suffering. Constant pain. Turmoil. Misery. I just want to be happy and I'm more content with sitting on the couch crocheting, while my kitten sleeps in my lap and we listen to The Supremes than anything else.

Look. I'm always going to be a shit. I'm trying hard to be better. I also accept that I am a shitty cockroach person. I don't want to be like this the rest of my life. Sad. Depressed. Angry. Suicidal. Scared. It's exhausting. I bet you've felt that and yes, ding-ding-ding, so has your grudges. All the people we hold captive in the prisons of our minds are frozen in time. More menacing than probably what originally happened, and they definitely should feel sorry for their harm to you. We do not know what a person is going through. Hell, half the time, I don't know what I'm going through.

Some people are just going to hate my ass. Some are just going to not like you. Maybe you remind them of someone or rub them the wrong way. And that sucks because I would totally drink Icees and watch Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movies with just about anyone. But there's going to be some folks you just can't win over. It sucks but hey. Their choice, not mine.

Work on you, take care of you, love you. I really mean it. And try to be a little forgiving. To yourself and others. — CREEPY HORSE

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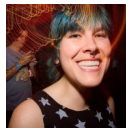
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SALACIOUS CRUMBS

A couple of Crumbs ago, I told you about Butler Soy Curls (available at butlerfoods.com and Amazon, but I bet we can request them from Village Foods). Shelf-stable! Versatile! Not seitan! They're little dried strips of soy goodness, that you re-hydrate and turn into all kinds of tasty vegan things you've been missing—shredded chicken, beef, jerky, calamari, anything! I've gone through a whole big box of them and just reordered another and thought I'd share how I've been using them the past three months. All of these portion sizes are for two people because that's how many people live in my house, and you can scale 'em up as large as you have pans for.

Buffalo Soy Curls

I serve these guys in a bowl, with dilly rice, roasted cauliflower and green bell pepper, vegan ranch, and lots of chopped up fresh dill and green onion sprinkled one top. They'd be awesome in a sandwich or bundled up in a crescent roll or eaten off your favorite person's favorite buttcheek.

- 2 oz soy curls (about 1.5 c)
- 3-4 Tbsp Frank's Red Hot
- Pat o' vegan butter or glug o' oil
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 1 capful liquid smoke
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup or something sweet
- 2-4 Tbsp coconut milk/cashew cream/plain vegan yogurt — something creamy that will temper the stupid saltiness of Frank's

1. Soak the soy curls in water for about 10 minutes, until they're all nice and tender and hydrated. Squeeze out all of the liquid.
2. Heat a pan over medium heat, and toss in some butter or oil, and then toss in the soy curls. Let them hang out for a minute or two and get a little bit of golden browning on them.
3. Toss in the Frank's, spices, liquid smoke, maple syrup, and creamy stuff. Stir it all together and let that cook and reduce, around 7-10 minutes, stirring ever so often so nothing sticks. When it's finished, the sauce will be thick. If it's too salty from the Frank's, glug in some more maple syrup or creamy stuff.

BBQ Soy Curls

I like to pile these babies on baked potatoes, loaded up with vegan butter, maple mustard sauce, Miyoko's smoked mozz, and fresh chopped red and green onions. Throw on some chopped Better off Dead spicy bread and butters from The Pickle Witch if you're feeling extra spicy!

- 2 oz soy curls (about 1.5 c)
- Pat o' vegan butter or glug o' oil
- 1 Tbsp of your favorite BBQ-y seasoning OR 1/2 Tbsp smoked paprika and 1/2 tsp each of chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, and fresh cracked black pepper
- 1/4 - 1/3 cup of your favorite BBQ sauce (HEB's Texas style and most Stubb's are vegan)
- Capful of liquid smoke

1. Soak the soy curls in water for about 10 minutes, until they're all nice and tender and hydrated. Squeeze out all of the liquid.
2. Heat a pan over medium heat, and toss in some butter or oil, and toss in the spices to bloom for just a second, and then toss in the soy curls. Let them hang out for a minute or two and get a little bit of golden browning on them.
3. Add the BBQ sauce and liquid smoke, and stir it all together. Let that hang out and reduce for 7-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thick. Add salt if you're BBQ sauce wasn't salty enough.

Shawarma Soy Curls

I made these when I was testing lemon bar recipes and had pounds and pounds of lemons on my counter. They're great nestled next to some yellow rice or Niko Niko's style Greek potatoes, roasted onions and peppers, and vegan tzatziki (Kroger has some!), or throw into a pita with fries, pickles, spicy peppers, and tahini sauce.

- 2 oz soy curls (about 1.5 c)
- Minced garlic, you know how much you need
- Pat o' vegan butter or glug o' oil
- 1 Tbsp+ shawarma seasoning
- Juice of a lemon
- 2-4 Tbsp coconut milk/cashew cream/plain vegan yogurt

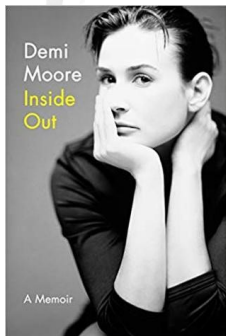
1. Soak the soy curls in water for about 10 minutes, until they're all nice and tender and hydrated. Squeeze out all of the liquid.
2. Heat a pan over medium heat, and toss in some butter or oil, and toss in the garlic. Let it saute until it's just fragrant, and then toss in the soy curls and spices. Let them hang out for a minute or two and get a little bit of golden browning on them.
3. Toss in the lemon juice and creamy stuff, stir it all together, and let it hang out for 7-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The creamy stuff should basically disappear, it's just there to give the "sauce" on the soy curls a little bit of body and keep them juicy. Add more lemon if you want it more zing, add some aleppo pepper if you want it to be spicy.

These all follow a similar pattern of soak, squeeze, brown, and cook in sauce, but you can also coat soy curls in panko and crispy bake them, or bake them on a low temperature for jerky, or fry 'em up. I haven't gotten around to all of those things but maybe you'll see another soy curls edition later this year! If you really want some soy curls but don't want to order a pack, I'll give you one next time you're over! Soy curls for everyone!

Also, I have to issue a retraction from the March 2021 issue. A friendly reader spoke with someone at Cuco's who said their refried beans and some of the rice was vegan friendly, and on that advice, another friendly reader visited Cuco's and asked about the same things. They got a conflicting answer, so for now, avoid Cuco's if you're vegan or you're taking vegan friends! — KATIE KILLER

READING ROCKS

As a big fan of memoirs by the famous and the non-so-famous, I am always surprised by some facet of a life that one learns reading the words someone has written about themselves, whether it's a celebrity or folks like you and me.



Naturally, with someone like Demi Moore, we have seen her literally grow up on screen ... and in the tabloids. It's somewhat amazing to me that people who are constantly being watched by millions have anything resembling a normal life. Naturally, that life under a microscope is made even harder if your life before fame is fairly screwed up as was Moore's.

Her parents were both basket cases, especially her mother. Both were self-centered alcoholics and drug addicts. Moore was in her teens when she discovered the man she thought was her father wasn't her real father wasn't much better, so she was stuck with the guy her mom had married. Her egotistical mom—when Moore became famous—her mom was notorious for selling the tabloids behind-the-scene pictures of Moore with her husbands and kids. She even sold nude pictures of herself.

The most interesting part of any celebrity memoir is the insights into the art that person is famous for. Moore's many movie roles ranging from *Blame It on Rio* to *Ghost* to *Gl Jane* to *A Few Good Men* were discussed in varying degrees, but one never gets much of a behind-the-scenes feel for those and other films. Moore's depiction of the pressures as a female to constantly lose weight for film roles feels very real though as well as the indignity of having to appear naked in front of cast and crew so often.

However, it's a bit disconcerting to read all about that attention on her body and how negative she felt it was, but then to realize how much plastic surgery she's obviously had in later years. Still, at least, that was her choice and not something forced upon her by the industry.

Oh, I did like the tidbits about the second *Charlie's Angels* movie with Drew Barrymore et al. Moore seemed to actually have fun in that role on screen and off.

Moore is candid about her two high-profile marriages to Bruce Willis and Ashton Kutcher. Willis comes off the better man after the dissolution of their marriage while Kutcher turns into something of a jerk after the fact. Moore is just as hard on herself in the problems with her relationships. Even Moore's kids abandoned her for a few years due to her problems with addiction.

Inside Out is an easy read. While it's somewhat hard to believe that the book was written exclusively by Moore, the voice certainly seems to be hers throughout. You could read worse. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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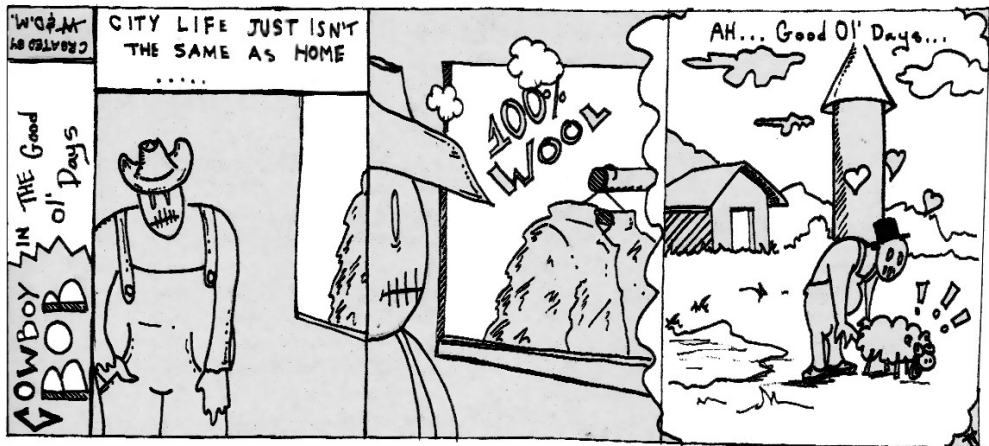


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Kathryn drew her first map at age five, nubby red crayon in her fist. She thrust the sheet into her grandmother's lap, warring for attention against four squalling cousins.

HANDS

Withdrawing to her bedroom and online high school courses, her predictions focused on herself.

"This is where I'll fall in love."

"This is where I'll buy my first cigarette."

"What's this?" asked her grandmother, her cracked and dry lips pursing in a frown.

"That's where you'll die," said Kathryn.

The maps continued, etched only for herself or loved ones, though not all were dire:

"This is where I'll have my first kiss."

"This is where Jimmy'll fall from a tree trying to save a cat."

"This is where the jasmine will bloom, even though you don't plant it."

None bore a timeline, only saying where, not when. Her fingers preferred drawing in dirt most of all. No sticks, no rocks — fingers furrowing through dust and grime.

The social workers, the therapists, each noted it in her case file: "A manifestation of a turbulent youth, a desire to seize control over aspects of her chaotic life." Kathryn already showed strong anti-social tendencies, running away to the woods for hours at a time. One doctor theorized that maybe she contracted something there, out in the woods, but if so, it was impossible to tell; she was like a fly flitting through the undergrowth, still for mere seconds at a time.

Kathryn's grandmother died where depicted, despite her strong avoidance of that intersection. Cousin Jimmy broke his legs trying to save a cat. Jasmine bloomed, fragrant as heaven.

Kathryn didn't want to draw her maps. She screamed and fought against the compulsion of her fingers. Her hand, bound in bandages, would writhe its way free. In the night, her nails gouged pathways and words onto the headboard as she slept. In a way, foster care was a blessing, distancing her from attachments and love, as that love seemed requisite for a map.

At age nine, on a rare visit to her mother, she battled against her fingers as they jabbed through the rock bed of the apartment landscaping to find dirt beneath.

"This is where you'll get AIDS," Kathryn said, hating the words, the way the knowledge trickled from her fingertips and up her arm, the sensation warm and disgusting like feeling urine in a pool. The map showed the apartment complex itself, an X on the residence of her mother's boyfriend, a man she had never met or known about.

Doctors, psychiatrists, and all others examined her, trying to determine what magic graced her. When one told her she was blessed, Kathryn screamed and lunged for the shrink's eyes, her right fingers curved as claws.

She embraced her role as a rebellious teenager, discarding friends as a cat sheds fur, with no discretion, no attachment — or so she tried. Kathryn ached for companionship the way an early spring seedling ached for the sun, but at the first realization that she cared for someone, she made herself sever contact. She didn't want to know where the cancer would grow, where their brother would die in Afghanistan, where they would lose their favorite aunt.

"This is where I'll be when I find out he cheated on me."

She broke her fingers after that — not for the first time — yet still they quivered out their diagrams, agony dappling her eyesight. She had tried to slice them off, only to lose a fight against herself.

Kathryn graduated from the foster system and acquired her case file, a disk drive loaded with encyclopedias of data. She skimmed for any clue of what caused her fingers to rebel, what made the words travel up her arm and escape her lips. There were no answers, only theories — a rare disease, a blessing, a curse, all of the above. She shunned the city and escaped to the Rockies. A lone and isolated, the compulsion lessened, but when maps did come her independent fingers shivered in ecstasy.

At the fleshy distal points, her fingers began to turn as brown as the soil they loved. The joints stiffened like twigs as the coloration spread. She perfected the use of her right hand for everyday tasks, her tapping on a cell phone or the flick of her lighter. Kathryn hiked through meadows and clambered across plutons, ignoring humanity and showers in her quest for an answer to her curse.

Her left fingers became useless husks, the bones within rattling like seeds in a gourd. Still, the messages came to her, written by nerveless flesh.

"This is where I'll catch a glimpse of God in the stars."

"This is where I'll see twin fawns graze."

"This is where my fingers will leave me."

She followed that map with urgency in her stride and stood at the edge of a swampy meadow, far, far from civilization. Kathryn stared at her fingers, feeling strangely devoid of emotion. The left hand didn't fight now. The pocket knife sliced through the base of her pointer finger as though cutting into crusty bread. No blood, no pain. The finger plopped into the water. A sprout emerged and bloomed a dazzling red flower, velvety petals begging to be touched.

She stepped back, suddenly understanding. Like poison ivy, this plant spread poison premonitions. If her right hand touched the bloom, the curse would spread again.

Kathryn sliced off her other fingers onto a nearby boulder, and with an expert flick of her lighter, she burned them. The seeds writhed as fire claimed them, but she didn't feel happy. She felt nothing at all.

She smacked down the bloom with a branch, herded the petals from the water and crushed them beneath her boots, pounded at the seedling until she could not breathe. Her distorted reflection wavered in the dark water.

All her life she had run from love, run from the maps it evoked. Now she could visit her mother in the hospice, get a job, go to college — live. Now she had no excuse.

Kathryn blinked at her maimed hand. She was utterly lost. — *STARKNESS*



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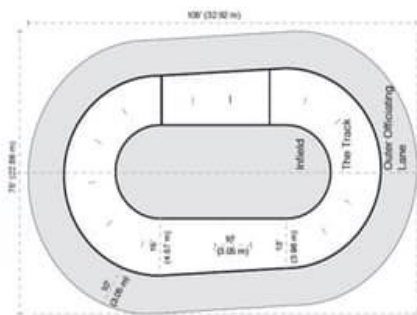
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TODD ON FILM: PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN

The film I can't stop thinking about, discussing with others, or simply admiring from this past year is *Promising Young Woman*. When I saw the trailer (slightly before the pandemic) I was immediately excited by the mood and vibe, not knowing what to expect from it but booking tickets for it in my mental spreadsheet. Like many other 2020 films its release was delayed, but finally the movie came out available via video-on-demand during the winter for \$20. The price seemed high for a home viewing, particularly in the midst of longing to go to movie theaters again (ideally, we would have gone to River Oaks Theater on opening weekend). We waited one week, then another, then another and the price had stayed the same. Finally we relented, and maybe five minutes into starting the rental I wished we'd paid up the first week. This piece will be an amalgam of personal thoughts and points made by my partner and friends (at this point they have become a bit of a blur), but the hope is to intrigue and inspire others to watch the incredible film as well.

The concept of *Promising Young Woman* fits in a few sentences yet cannot be relayed in so few words. Cassie is a medical school dropout who works at a coffee shop during the day and spends many of her nights faking the behavior of stumbling drunk at bars in order to lure predatory men. Once the guy invites her back to his apartment and starts making unwanted advances, she snaps out of it and freaks him out through sudden sobriety and verbal teardowns. On the surface, Cassie's goal is to make these guys think twice about trying to pull the same thing on another woman the next time. Beyond that, she is avenging the memory of her best friend Nina, which moves from an underlying motivation to the central driver of the story once a MacGuffin comes into play. We meet several obvious slimeballs, nefarious characters, and seemingly innocent bystanders along the way.

One of the amazing things about this movie is how it strikes a delicate balance in shifting tones as we move along, sometimes being laugh-out-loud funny and other times heavily bleak, all under a candy-colored palette of production design that is meant to make you uneasy about enjoying it. But if you buy in to the humor of the movie, the reward comes in how smart the satire is constructed at all corners by Emerald Fennell. *Promising Young Woman* sticks to its concept and doesn't pull punches, a slick and sharp black comedy centered on a revenge fantasy against perpetrators of sexual assault. In lesser directorial hands this could have been a disaster that's not funny at all, disrespectful to victims, too cartoonish, or shift to a tear-filled final act. Instead it handles its subject with care while keeping a tight grip on the knife it wields.

Some of the characters encountered are clear exaggerations of terrible men or their defenders, but even in their outlandish acts you realize in the moment you've met that person before, that they're real and in this world. In the setting of the film, the only cartoon character is Carey Mulligan's Cassie. She's a superhero with an origin story, displaying unthinkable behaviors and acting out a continuous vendetta. Her actions may not be rationale or reasonable to expect for someone on screen

in a "real world" setting, but her anger and turmoil very much are. This contrasts her with everyone else in the movie; the awful things said by bad men, good guys, and their allies on their surface could seem overly simplistic or not realistic, until you remember that you've read those exact news stories or met that disgusting pig before. The men Cassie encounters and tricks into trying to take advantage of her aren't deserving of redemption. Some viewers were bothered by Cassie's motivations as a character, as she is drawn very thinly and non-sensical for your standard strong protagonist, but somehow she's a perfect fit here.

The movie brilliantly also points its angry finger at the bystanders and support systems that allow such awful actions to be acceptable or attributed to adolescent mistakes. Alison Brie brings her best Trudy Campbell-energy as a college friend of Cassie and Nina's that has chosen to ignore and move on from whatever might have happened long ago. Connie Britton appears as a dean at the school which Connie meets with (in perhaps the most shocking scene in the movie) to draw out culpability from her past. Cassie's brand of justice is very black and white, but at nearly every opportunity that she confronts someone that's a link in the chain, the accused only think about the ramifications for themselves and grasp for straws to define their innocence or deflect blame (only one confrontation ends with a full admission of guilt and acceptance of responsibility, and in the tone of the movie it's probably one of the weaker scenes). This series of confrontations and immediate defensive mechanisms displayed work so well because they're superbly condensed versions of what plays out in online discourse about these situations.

The movie hints at a way out from Cassie's routine through a chance encounter with Ryan, another old college friend played with a lot of dorky charm by Bo Burnham. They have a meet-cute at her coffee shop, and while she initially resists going out with him, she ends up agreeing to a date after a couple more visits. We're tricked into rooting for their relationship, rooting for Cassie to break out of her self-made prison with this good guy, as echoes of every romantic comedy we've ever seen play out in their scenes (even as those scenes are bookended by darkness). However, in this sweetness it's easy to overlook some of the troubling things about Ryan in their interactions. When a mutual



acquaintance named Al or other college friends of theirs come up in conversations (people that were clearly involved with what happened to Nina), Ryan casually dismisses Cassie's expressions of uneasiness and says that those guys "aren't that bad". He also continues pursuing Cassie after she turns him down the first couple times, respecting when she says "no" in the moment but coming back again the next time. When they do go out the first time, their walk back from dinner abruptly ends when they end up outside his apartment building, obviously not by happenstance. He may not be the guy at the bar preying on drunk women, but the cracks in his character are visible upon closer inspection. Even giving him the benefit of the doubt on those points, keen watchers know that some point the other shoe is going to drop with Ryan, that he is not all that he appears to be (more to come on that later).

To be clear, it's certainly understandable to not like this movie if you are a survivor of sexual assault or have been affected by such an incident in any way—truly I cannot relate to this and can merely offer support. *The Bechdel Cast's* discussion of *Promising Young Woman* expressed these issues of trying to enjoy a movie on a tough subject matter that may feel like it's being treated flippantly and triggering of traumatic experiences. With that said, I've still been a bit surprised by the lack of critical or movie fan appreciation for this film since its release, and I wanted to touch on what seem to be the three main problems that viewers have with the movie; most of them having to do with the climax and apparent resolution of the movie.

Fair warning, the rest of this writeup will discuss the film's outcomes so here is your SPOILER ALERT.

One, in confronting Al at his bachelor party, Cassie ends up getting suffocated to death by Al after the handcuffs she puts on him fail and Al refutes any responsibility for what happened to Nina. Not only that, but we as the audience watch for two excruciating minutes as Cassie painfully dies in a continuous take. In a movie centered on violence and abuse by men against women, the only character we see any physical pain occur against is a woman. It's twisted and dramatic for sure, but the scene reinforces the point that when confronted with their past a perpetrator will do anything to protect their livelihood. Al's best man Jerry finds him the next day and quickly leads the charge to get rid of the body, protecting his bro

above all else rather than becoming horrified that his friend had killed someone that night.

Two, the next day the cops show up at Al's wedding and arrest Al along with several groomsman, after Cassie as a backup plan had sent evidence to the police department of their involvement with Nina. Most viewers seem to be taking this ending of the movie very literally, that the justice system will take care of these terrible men, Al's life will be ruined, and Cassie wins in the end. If that were my interpretation as well I would also be bit frustrated with that resolution, but I don't see it that way. We all know what *actually* happens next after the credits roll: right white guys get off and are given all benefits of the doubt by a system that is set up to believe them/ignore others first. The ending on screen itself is a fantasy sequence, a false conclusion of wrongs made right, and we can imagine the rest ourselves. Showing Al behind bars or Cassie yelling at him in a courtroom wouldn't have been cliché rather than cathartic and out of place with everything the film had built to that point.

Third, the cast and environment are mostly upper class, privileged, and white. This is certainly a fair criticism and more could've been done to have better diverse characters in this story. Laverne Cox is present in the movie but basically given nothing to do but be the supportive friend (despite being Cassie's boss at the coffee shop). Sam Richardson has a small turn for a couple scenes but is not a full character. Along with this, the perspective of the cops arriving to save the day in the last sequence obviously has very different connotations for black and brown individuals, compared to the crowd of white people on screen who understand that no matter what happens in that moment that are not possibly in danger of being physically harmed. The film utilizes the memory of a college sexual assault incident (such as the Brock Turner case) as the foundation for everything in the story, and while it does that effectively with its characters the same points could've been made with better representation.

To end on another note of appreciation, before we get to the bachelor party climax the other shoe does drop for Ryan. In the key confrontation with him before beginning her final act, Cassie demands to learn the location of the party from Ryan through blackmailing him with the evidence she's obtained about the night of the Nina's assault. Ryan does the same as Al will later on, the same as most other men we've seen so far to this point: he cowers and protects himself, does whatever he can to get out of trouble, to protect his livelihood. Ryan's not a monster, he doesn't spout terrible things, he's not a rapist himself. And yet he is agreeable to letting the past be the past, to keeping his medical practice and cushy life, without care about what happened to the actual victims. Truly a brilliant writing decision to have his character turn without becoming predictably evil, a further demonstration of all the nuances these horrors can take. In real life, Al, his buddies, and the good guys are nearly always depicted to be promising young men who might have made a mistake and shouldn't have their lives ruined over it. Meanwhile, not enough is said about the promising young woman whose life was actually ruined. — TODD HANSEN

In 2008, I went through a divorce. It was pretty sudden, and even though it had to be done, I was still left heartbroken, lonely and with a hole in me I didn't know how to fill.

I spent the first three months in a haze, bought a bottle of Jack every night, logged into an MMO computer game, and played until I fell asleep. I also read comic books by the stack and got into Netflix (back then you could order DVDs via mail and send them back when you were done).

Around month four, my buddy Neal asked if I would help him write a song. He came over to my tiny studio apartment at the time, and played what he had on guitar. I took out my keyboard, filled in some simple strings to back it up, and helped him write some lyrics. The song was called "30 Pounds" and it reflected exactly what was going on in my life...

"I lost 30 pounds since you left me, I can't eat and I can't sleep, I can't do most anything at all. I lost 30 friends since you left me, I can't socialize you see... you used to socialize for me"

What came out, is what came out. It was honest and true and quite frankly a good song. We quickly recorded it. I also took the time to dig up some older piano songs and before you knew it ... we had a decent little set list going.

Everything from that night on for the next three years happened really quick. The band seemed to form overnight. I met Danny in a bar after a drunk girl introduced us ... "Tim is soooooo punk rock..." she slurred, "you're lucky he doesn't kick your ass right now." I quickly apologized for our mutual friend's behavior, he told me he played mandolin, guitar and a few other instruments, and the next day I called him to see if he wanted to practice. He instantly became one of my best friends.

We needed a place to practice, so I talked to a local manager of a restaurant. They had a back room they were remodeling for parties but it was such a long way from being completed, I offered to buy food for the band and pitchers of beer at every practice. (The bill was still cheaper than renting a space and the restaurant was struggling.) He agreed and for the next few months, we played in secret in the back, our only listeners were the kitchen crew who came back to smoke.

The music was this weird folk indie hybrid. We didn't have a set sound, it's just the way it came out. A strange sing-song mish-mash of music and emotion. Sometimes I look back on some of the songs and cringe a little. I never was a great songwriter but I feel like I could do better. Other times, I listen and know EXACTLY where I was at the moment. The hurt, the loneliness and it fits. So we kept playing what we knew. If something came out weird, we let it stand.

Most of the band members came from different genres, Neal played in an acoustic joke band, I was a punk rocker, Danny played in indie bands and Corndog... well we weren't sure what Corndog did, but he didn't mind beating on weird percussion instruments. Before long, we knew we wanted to play a show. But nothing had really come up. Neal called up the local Hastings and asked if we could play their coffee shop area, billing us as this chill

acoustic act. They agreed and to my surprise, that little cafe was packed as we burned through a 20 minute set of weird unplugged noise. My friends in an actual punk band gave us our next gig, and by then "30 Pounds" had already hit MySpace and Facebook, so people were singing a long. After a couple of more rowdy coffee shop shows, we were not really welcome back but the stages of regular bars were already opening up.

2009 brought the fully realized band to focus. We put out an album called *Broken Heart Social Club* since everyone in the band was going through a breakup at the time. And to my surprise it sold really well. Some songs began to get radio play on terrestrial radio. We started hitting songwriter circles as a band and became a fixture in some of them, always offering a lonely guitar player an accompanying band for what ever they needed

The restaurant we were practicing at became a no-fly zone after the manager left and a new one came to take his place. The new manager was no longer interested in a band of unkempt hobo musicians with a drinking problem hanging out once a week, so he told us to scram. Danny then mentioned he had a house, (unknown to all of us) that we could practice at. The house was an old thing, with a huge front porch (:perfect for parties) parts of it had holes in the floor you could literally see the ground below. There was no back door and the power was on half the time. It was a perfect punk rock house, and within a few months, the band began leaving their homes of luxury and simply lived in Danny's house paying a hundred bucks rent and making music.

The house was basically the sixth member of the band. It had character. We wrote our best stuff there. We had the BEST parties there. We froze in the winter, and



provided they told us the key he

around that time) and we took off for two weeks.

It was the first tour for all of us, and honestly one of the best times of my life. For two weeks, we budgeted gas, ate fast food, slept in cabins, on couches, and in haunted motels. I remember the third day of tour as we stood on top of enchanted rock, Danny looked at me and said "I could get used to this traveling and music thing" (he continued to do it for years).

When we returned Neal got married, and I asked Brea to take his place. She accepted and the process of her moving into the band house began, as did our relationship. They say you really get to know a pair of pants on tour, the same can be said for your band members, as I began to fall in love with her a little more every show.

The band got a lot of good press from the local papers and outlets. The people at shows seemed to like us just fine. We got a little weirder with stuff, experimenting with instruments. I got as many weird percussion

burned in the summer. I had a gallon of drinking water next to my bed for brushing teeth and often felt like I was living in this weird garrison in another country. But no matter what, the muse lived there. She filled us with so much art it was scary. Danny painted constantly. The house organ was constantly churning hits. We wrote songs and stories on the fly. We smoked cigarettes and drank coffee on the porch after parties and on perfect fall days. I may have been an adult man working a 40 hour job, but I loved it.

Before long, we decided we should tour. We bought one of those hooky souvenir maps of Texas that had things like "The world's largest chicken statue" and "The Big Pecan" in Seguin, and booked our tour around that. I asked Brea to be our opening act (she was doing a solo thing

songs about robots in love, haikus, and science fiction.

After a couple of tours and three albums, we did one final piece of work. The writing on the wall was evident. Brea and I were doing a podcast and flirting with the idea of doing punk rock again. Danny was already sitting up his new project Poor Favor and the locals were loving it ... So our swan song was locking ourselves up for a weekend and recording one final EP.

The EP had two parts, a recorded part in the house and a live part that included our "hits" played in a college auditorium that was scheduled to be torn down the next week. The caretaker was a friend of mine and informed me that we would be the last band to ever play on stage so make it sad ... and we did.

So three albums and a double EP, two tours, and a solo tour, countless shows, and new projects on the horizon we slowly faded away. We never really said goodbye. We would play a show here and there, maybe one a year, but by 2011 we were really kind of done.

Looking back, I was surprised at all the hate we had. At the time I never noticed. But sometimes I look on some comments of message boards or YouTube comments of our old videos and see some of the stuff people used to say. We had a lot of hate from some local musicians too. It's cool I guess, I wasn't trying to be anyone's friend. I was trying to distract myself.

When I say music saves lives, I mean it. It saved mine more than I can count. And I used it to pull me out of a slump. That band took me all over. I was so busy booking shows and being creative, I didn't have time to think about what my ex-wife may or may not be doing, nor did I care. Three years after The Loveletter's creation, I realized I wasn't depressed anymore. bl had come out of the other side (with an awesome woman who would become my wife) and a beat up keyboard that would happily take another trip around the state if I needed it to.

It's OK if the songs were kind of simple. blt was an honest gut reaction to my plight. There was one day my ex-wife blasted me on social media really pissed off because of the music I was making and told me to "get over her." I wrote a song called "I Don't Miss You At All," recorded and posted it in three days ... and the video had hundreds of hits within hours from her little friends who loved the drama.

I think the best compliment I ever got was one day, not too long ago I was in the grocery store. This guy came up to me and said "Hey didn't you play for this band... called The Loveletter?" I nodded yeah, and he shook my hand. "I saw you play DTBG years ago, me and my girlfriend, it was our first date," he said, "I bought your CD, we still play it ... matter of fact, we got married and your band was the soundtrack for our first date." That story always stuck with me. When I say music saves, sometimes it does for other people as well.

Here's to one of the best projects I ever did, 10 years later.... — *TIM DANGER*

things as I could for Corndog to hit, (the guy at Red 7 in Austin said he had never mic'd a trashcan). I picked up a keytar and some other weird things and we wrote

THE LOVELETTER...10 YEARS LATER

DELUXE PEDAL...ER, AMP PUSHING

Technically this month we aren't talking about guitar pedals, but we are talking about amps that, in one case on the used market, often comes up at a price not far off that of a good boutique guitar pedal, and in the other is the same size and cost of a guitar pedal. Let's start with the Marshall Origin 20 head.

The O20H is a 20-watt all tube amplifier. It is based loosely around the idea of being a budget JMP "plexi"-ish sort of amp with a variety of power scaling options. Marshall gets 20 watts out of two EL34 tubes. There is something special about the technical aspects of that particular power tube that offers Marshall engineers the ability to use cathode biasing and smaller transformers to not only keep the power output down but to offer settings for 20w, 3w, and 0.5w. I'll get to that in a moment. The Origin series has tube FX loops and 8/16 ohm outputs to run single cabs as well as two 16 ohm cabs in series.



Let's talk about the front panel. Where I describe the amp as "Plexi"-ish it has to do with the controls as well as how the amp sounds. There is a typical Marshall layout of controls: Bass, Mid, Treble, Output (master volume), Gain (preamp volume), and Presence. Like most Marshalls, the preamp EQ does not really drastically alter how the amp sounds. Lowering the presence does help to pull down some of the ultra highs. The gain control has a pullout boost. This is not accomplished the same as in most amps that bring in the other half of a preamp tube or to simply boost volume. Marshall accomplishes this by using a FET circuit that is not unlike a "colored" boost pedal. In practice it pushes low-end as well as gain. Some users like to pull out the gain even at lower settings to give the amp a more loose bottom end, more like the '60s JTM Marshalls in character. One would not mistake this amp for a Bassman or JTM-45 but the boost does give more of that loose character. The amp itself does not have a lot of gain to it. It is by no means a "clean platform" like a Twin or a Hi-Watt but it is also not a hot-rodded distortion monster like the '80s JCM series. While the JMP Plexi series amps did not have master volumes stock until the later '70s, they did offer two channels of input: normal and bright with two inputs each (0dB and -6dB). The Origin does not have the same 4-input setup as the JMP's but accomplishes the same thing by a "Tilt" control. It is a continuously variable pot that alternates between the Normal channel (counterclockwise) and the Bright channel (clockwise). While it does not allow for individual control of each channel's volume like stacking both channels together with a patch cord it does allow for continuous blending. This is a de facto third treble

tailoring control. Marshalls are very strident with highs and upper mids. Some call it "kerrang", but on most other Marshall or Marshall-styled amps I've owned or spent time with I tend to refer to it as "clank". The Origin 20 definitely has that Marshall thing and one has to REALLY like that character, since there's not a lot of gain to hide the clank behind. No can of bees thin distortion but no full Fender clean either. It is because of this nature that others on the guitar forums have come to regard the Origin series as Marshall's version of a pedal platform. This is in a sense correct. If you want higher gain you will want to goose it with something (this amp loves colored boosts and distortions more than overdrives). Perhaps the 50w version could be used as a true pedal platform, but the 20w does not have a lot of headroom at stage volume to be used in that fashion.

And that is certainly the draw or the dealbreaker for this amp. It is not that loud of an amplifier, all things considered. It is certainly not a bedroom amp at full power but if you want to have any sort of clean tone at stage volume you are either going to have be mic'ed, be the only guitarist in the band, or use a very efficient speaker cabinet (preferably with 4 speakers). This is not a problem if you prefer to run your Marshalls hot for tube saturation. To get a 2203's power tubes cooking you have to run it jet engine loud. This amp starts to give up what it has to give up at a relatively comfortable stage volume. Unlike most Marshalls, running this amp with a higher preamp gain and a lower master volume doesn't make it sound thinner. And the power scaling actually works very well. I tested all three settings with a reactive load and they sound almost identical when you turn up the volume on the box to make up for the power attenuation. The line out doesn't sound awful but it isn't great either. I just pretend it's not there.

There are some issues to consider with this amp. For starters, early in the run the speaker outputs were wired incorrectly. One could not run two speaker cabinets at once. Marshall has corrected this problem with the amps made after 2019. Others complain about the FX loop not being always on. One has to use the included footswitch to switch in and out the FX loop. I don't use FX loops so this doesn't phase me. The combo versions of both the 20 and the 50 have heat issues from a lack of ventilation but that's not a problem for the heads. And of course, the lack of high gain can be an issue for some players.

In use, if you want that Free/Humble Pie/Malcolm Young

hard rhythm sound the Origin 20 is a great way to get it at reasonable stage volumes. In fact, I'd say this is perhaps one of the best rhythm guitar amps that Marshall currently makes. Where it really shines is bang per buck. This is a \$399 amp pretty much everywhere and much cheaper used (I got mine for \$250). One can't touch a similar amp anywhere near this price.

=====

I started a new band a couple of months ago. Another band-mate offered to play bass in this band ... but he had no bass amp. So I needed to come up with something in a hurry. I did some forum searching and asked for some advice and, after digging up a great deal on an old SWR cabinet, I decided to park this little guy atop it and call it a day. This little guy is the TC Electronic BAM200 bass head. It pumps Class D solid state power at 100w for 8 ohms and 200w for 4 ohms. It's seriously tiny (like some of Atarimatt's Idiotbox pedals are bigger than this amp), all at a very affordable \$159 price.

Those wary of Class D should be reminded that the tiny Class D amp has come a long way in the past dozen years since bass amps like the Orange Bass Terror began to be based on the technology. The early Class D amps were unreliable. With the Class D technology completely revolutionizing the tiny guitar amp industry it was only a matter of time before bass amp manufacturers caught up, and manufacturers like Quilter, Trace Elliott, and now TC have followed suit.

The BAM is the bare essentials for bass guitar amplification. Three band EQ, gain, and master volume are the only controls on the amp. The EQ's frequency sweep is tweaked to favor bass guitar. The preamp is very neutral. Turning up the gain just allows for knocking down hot signal from active pickups or boosting older, weaker passive pickups. Cranking the gain does not make the front end breakup in any appreciable way. TC seems to have designed this amp to be in essence a bass pedal platform. Many users have reported great results putting "bass amp in a box" style pedals on the front end, like Sansamp, Blower Box, Darkglass B3K, or some other bass preamp du jour. A speaker modeled headphone out completes the front controls; around to the back of the amp is a DI out and 1/4" speaker out.

The BAM is very much a neutral amp. Whatever you give it is whatever comes out of it. It is often compared to the only other Class D amp of its size near its price, the Trace Elliott Elf. The Elf has a more colored preamp and has more of its own sound than the BAM. It is also twice as expensive, retailing around \$279, and one has to like

the Elf's front end, as there is no power amp in or FX loop to bypass the Elf's front end. Many don't consider the BAM to be a serious amp because of its size or tonal neutrality in much the same way many guitarists can't wrap their heads around the tiny Class D guitar amps being "serious" instruments and want to relegate such gear for backup. The reasons may not hold up, but having such a small amp as the BAM sitting in a gig bag makes for an amazing backup solution if someone's gigging amp goes down. But it would be a mistake to consider such a piece of gear only as an emergency solution. The BAM is DEFINITELY loud enough into a

large 4 ohm cabinet to hang acoustically with a loud rock band. You're not going to make pant legs flap with it but you won't necessarily just want to hit front of house with the DI and use your cab for monitoring. This amp has the power and the low end to hold its own in the room.

In practice, the BAM-200 is a very boring, basic bass amp. I worried that with such a large cabinet and a tiny little box on top that it would look weird. And I suppose it does. I thought the amp might move around from the cabinet's vibrations or that I might accidentally yank the amp off the cabinet tripping on a cable or even by just moving around while playing. The amp stays put and even with a straight cable does not move around like, say, a micro pedal does sometimes on a pedalboard. It's small enough that it could be pedalboard-mounted and one could just run an extra long speaker cable from the floor to the cabinet. Or put together a board with a tuner and a preamp and place it atop the cabinet. Either way, you have plenty of options based on the size factor. Tonally, with a single coil P-bass style bass guitar it sounded like, you know, a bass guitar does. It did not wow me like plugging into a tube Ampeg or Fender bass amp, but neither did it underwhelm me either. It was just "generic bass guitar". Like how Fender Hot Rod Deville is generic electric guitar. It does what it's supposed to, no more and no less. Plenty of low end, plenty of power, but no "HOLY FUCK!" sort of response. Just good bass guitar. It does make me want to pick up a Blower Box or such to hit the front end for more color. The caveat is that you will need a 4 ohm load for this amp to get the most from it.

At \$159 the BAM has little competition. It competes more with other "my first bass amp" choices like old Peavey gear that's been god knows where and cheap practice combos that sound awful and aren't anywhere close to loud enough to gig with. The BAM and a used 4 ohm cabinet is plenty of bass amp for anyone and a blank slate to pile pedals atop to create one's own sound.—KELLY MENACE



IN MEMORIAM: JIM STEINMAN

In a particularly-bleak time a couple of decades ago after my second wife left me and our two young children, I was stumbling around doing the single parent thing, playing the same two songs on the van stereo over and over again.

One was "Dancing with Myself" by Billy Idol, of course. The other was "Rock and Roll Dreams Come Through" by Meat Loaf, a tune written by Jim Steinman, who died April 19th. While Billy's tune was mostly adrenaline-filled, Steinman's lyrics, so ably sung by Meat Loaf, kept me going through those desolate days, weeks, months, years.



One line in particular in "Rock and Roll Dreams Come Through" resonated with me, someone who has leaned on music to deal with some dark times since my teen years: "If you hold onto a chorus/You can get through the night." Often, that's all that's needed, just getting through one more day.

I was a somewhat late arrival to Steinman and Meat Loaf's music. When their seminal *Bat Out of Hell* album came out, I was a fervent *Rolling Stone* magazine reader (my college ambition was to become a writer for them), so when it dismissed that album, I did too. It wasn't until years later with *Bat Out of Hell II* that I found what I had missed all those years.

Most of the darts thrown at Steinman are over his music being too pretentious and bombastic and over the top. Really? I thought the whole idea of rock music was to be all of those things. While on a personal level, I wish many of his and Meat Loaf's songs were more

pop-music in length; that's just quibbling though.

Another *Bat Out of Hell II* song that got considerable play during my harrowing years was "Everything Louder Than Everything Else." Mixing that tune in with the punk I soaked up during those times certainly expressed my desire to drive out the shadows with volume. "Out of the Frying Pan (And Into the Fire)" was another rocker that delineated what I was feeling.

I discovered that even *Bat Out of Hell* had a song that fit those times: "All Revved Up With No Place to Go." The other tunes from that first album were found to be much better than I ever expected. I even enjoyed the *Dead Ringer* album, particularly the hilarious duet with Meat Loaf and Cher. Talk about over the top.

Not everything Steinman touched turned to pop gold. His solo albums didn't do that well, and *Bat Out of Hell III*... well, it's less than half Steinman. He and Meat Loaf spent too many years battling over rights and credits and all that. Both should have been better men about it all, but that's another story.

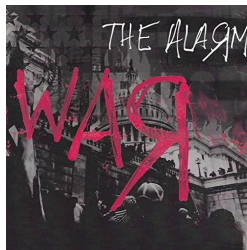
So, I lament for Steinman's demise as there will be no more of those marvelous songs. However, we are left with his legacy so well sung by Meat Loaf. Thanks for pulling me through it all, Jim. Solace to your family and loved ones.

"The beat is yours forever/The beat is always true/And when you really realize need it the most/That's when rock and roll dreams come through, for you." — MIKE L. DOWNEY



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RECORD REVIEWS



**The Alarm
War**

The Alarm's 9th studio album — not counting live albums and fan club releases — was inspired by the Pandemic and more specifically the insurrection at the US capital on January 6th. Recorded and completed in just over 50 days, *War* succeeds when playing to The Alarm's strengths; anthemic pop songs that split the difference between the first wave punk and folk rock. Put another way, the songs that work best on *War* sound like typical Alarm songs.

Things start off strong with the song "Protect and survive" with some pretty barbed comments about political trolls and the Impeachment hearings. "Tribes (Stop the War)" is probably the strongest song on the album with its blunt message to the Jan 6th rioters that "Democracy is the only way we shall overcome." The song "Fail" rewrites the alarm hit "Strength" with a quasi-ska verse that actually works. "Still Unsafe" revisits the lyrics to the Alarm's first single "Unsafe Building" with a song written for the long standing Alarm fans; honestly the only people still listening to the Alarm at this point.

Then there are the rest of the songs. "We Got This", with uplifting lyrics about overcoming the pandemic, starts off with a riff that wouldn't be out of place on a Stone Temple Pilots song. Then, seemingly out of nowhere on the chorus, come keyboards set on the "Van Halen Jump" setting. "Crush", a song about being locked down during the pandemic, is marred by the ridiculous horror film chanting backing vocals on the chorus. "Safe From Harm" is a Massive Attack cover. I'm unsure if this is strongest song on the album or the most embarrassing dad rock attempt at rap this side of Rush's "Roll the Bones". The rest of the songs are pretty forgettable which is unusual for an Alarm album. As always, the Alarm's heart is in the right place. I wish the songs on this album were as good as the lyrical

content. *Raw* is an ok album, neither great nor horrible. As is the case with many things during the pandemic, OK will have to do. — RENTED MULE



**Orden Ogan
Final Days**

Power metal is one of those genres that a metalhead either likes or dislikes. Yes, it can be gimmicky, cheesy, and just plain ridiculous, and because of this, some elitists have consigned themselves to never take power metal seriously, but what happens when a power metal band actually does take their art seriously? Enter Germany's Orden Ogan.

I should clarify that there is nothing wrong with bands who do not take themselves too seriously. Some power metal acts have managed to make successful careers by not doing so; bands like Dragonforce, Gloryhammer, and Wind Rose come to mind. Unlike these bands, however, Orden Ogan draws inspiration from legendary German power metal bands like Helloween and Blind Guardian, and has done a fantastic job of making power metal serious again. After releasing three successful albums in the past nine years, the band has written another chapter for their mascot, Allister Vale, with *Final Days*, taking the listener into the future where space travel has become a norm, artificial intelligence has become self-aware, and humanity's very existence is threatened by its own creation.

Orden Ogan has, once again, managed to craft songs with near instantaneous hooks and sing-along quality choruses. The opening track introduces the villain with "Heart of the Android." It's a mid-paced song that creates an ominous feeling of eminent doom. The speed kicks up with "Dawn of the A.I.", which is paired with a perfect mid-paced choral chorus. With "Inferno", the listener gets another mid-paced song with a definite upbeat pop undertone; the chorus "We're gonna burn it down!" followed by a "Hey!" in background is instantly

likeable. The fourth track is the incredibly epic "Let the Fire Rain" before jumping to the speediest song on *Final Days* titled "Interstellar", wherein the band has not only managed to create more addictive hooks, but also very clever rhymes for the chorus. This is only the first half of a ten-track album, and the band has proven that they can still do what they do best without boring the listener.

So, what are my gripes with *Final Days*? Namely, it's the latter half of the record. The more I spin it, the more I found myself zoning out after the fifth track. It is not that I hate the latter five songs, or that they were objectively bad, but they simply lacked the "kick" that their first five songs possessed. For example, I normally look forward to Orden Ogan's ballads, but "Alone in the Dark" lacked the sensibility of the ballads from previous records. "Black Hole" attempted to play to the band's strength of incorporating a catchy chorus, but given the song is darker, and the hook is only two words long (the title itself), it creates a song that is easy to grasp, but not as fun to sing along with. In other words, a good song, but not a great song. The final three tracks also suffer from similar problems, but there is also a problem with the melodies. Though the melodies are present, the darker nature of the latter half of the album makes these melodies far less memorable, and at times, even grating. My last gripe is that the final five songs fluctuate between sorrow and danger, whereas the first half of *Final Days* still had the sense of humanity's end approaching, but it was done in such a way that the listener enjoyed the journey.

In comparison to the last three records, which are definitely the highlights of Orden Ogan's career thus far, *Final Days* feels like a step back, but not a major one. The album still shows that the band has not lost their touch, as they are still operating with the same tools they have used to craft their music over the years. However, the quality of the product they have created, which bears all the same maker's marks as the previous products, is not what it could have been. Nonetheless, the first five songs are incredibly well-done, and there are many enjoyable moments in the latter half; overall, I find that a less-than-fully-favorable album by Orden Ogan is often much better than that of many other run-of-the-mill power metal bands. *Final Days* gets 4.5 from me. — CALEB MULLINS



**Die Welttraum Forscher
Die Rückkehr Der Echten
Menschheit**

Die Welttraum Forscher (which badly translated is "The World Dream explorers") is the one man band of Swiss artist Christian Pfluger. Pfluger has self-released cassettes, album, and CD's as Die Welttraum Forscher fairly regularly since 1981. Pfluger doesn't seem to care at all whether the unwashed masses listen to his music or not. I couldn't find a website or a Facebook page for this artist. Aside from 2-3 other albums a much incomplete compilation of his discography can be found on YouTube.

Die Welttraum Forscher can be best described as a minimal wave cross of the Residents, Trio, and Kraftwerk. The language barrier isn't an impediment to enjoyment of the songs as many of the songs are instrumentals and the songs with vocals have deadpan vocals that don't get in the way of the songs. The song "Liebe Lilli" sounds like Trio on speed and "Der Sternmann" sounds like a more accessible version of the Residents. The few songs with English lyrics—"Seashells and Flowers" and "Take me Away" don't change the sound much (truth be told, I prefer the songs with German lyrics as it add mystery to the songs).

The second volume offers more of the same, but with better electronics and production values. The songs on both volumes, while being artsy in the best way possible, are surprisingly accessible. "Das Land Loon" for instance is quite catchy even with the language barrier as is "Take Me Away". The above releases are presumably meant to be an introduction to Die Welttraum Forscher to those that haven't heard of him (probably most listeners out there) and succeeds admirably in that regard. Hopefully Bureau B or someone will officially release more of Die Welttraum Forscher's vast back catalog. — RENTED MULE



**Call The Next Witness
Monsters**

Call The Next Witness is a rock trio out of North Carolina featuring 979Represent's esteemed editor Kelly Minnis aka Kelly Menace. This self-titled EP is the group's first recording.

As often with EPs, there aren't any really weak tunes on this disc that was co-written by the three band members: guitarist Liam McKay, bassist Maxxx Steele, and Minnis on drums. All three share vocals although to my ears, I never picked out Kelly's voice. The songs are all primarily straight-ahead modern rock best exemplified by "In Depth," a fast-paced catchy song that manages to rock and be evocative at the same time. It features solid guitar by McKay with firm foundational support by Steele and Minnis. The trio's voices harmonize well on the robust chorus. The cryptic "retire inside my hull" closes out the song.

Almost as strong is "Close Your Eyes/Adolescent Emotional Breakdown" that ends the EP. The lead vocals are particularly strong along with McKay's guitar in this dynamic rocker. Another favorite is the punchy rock of "Monsters" with the great repeated line: "People who lie/Some of them are monsters." Amen to that.

"Captain's Right" is a great opening song, basic rock with a steady drumbeat courtesy of Minnis and more of that McKay guitar and Steele bass underlying it all. "It's been a long swim up to the light" is one great lyric in it. "Chalky Pale" is a great title as well as yet another effective rocker. "Watch It Shine" is the slowest of the half-dozen songs and boasts some nice lines: "This dark heart aspires to be your valentine" and "pretending to be profound."

You can find Call The Next Witness on Sinkhole Records and Bandcamp. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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