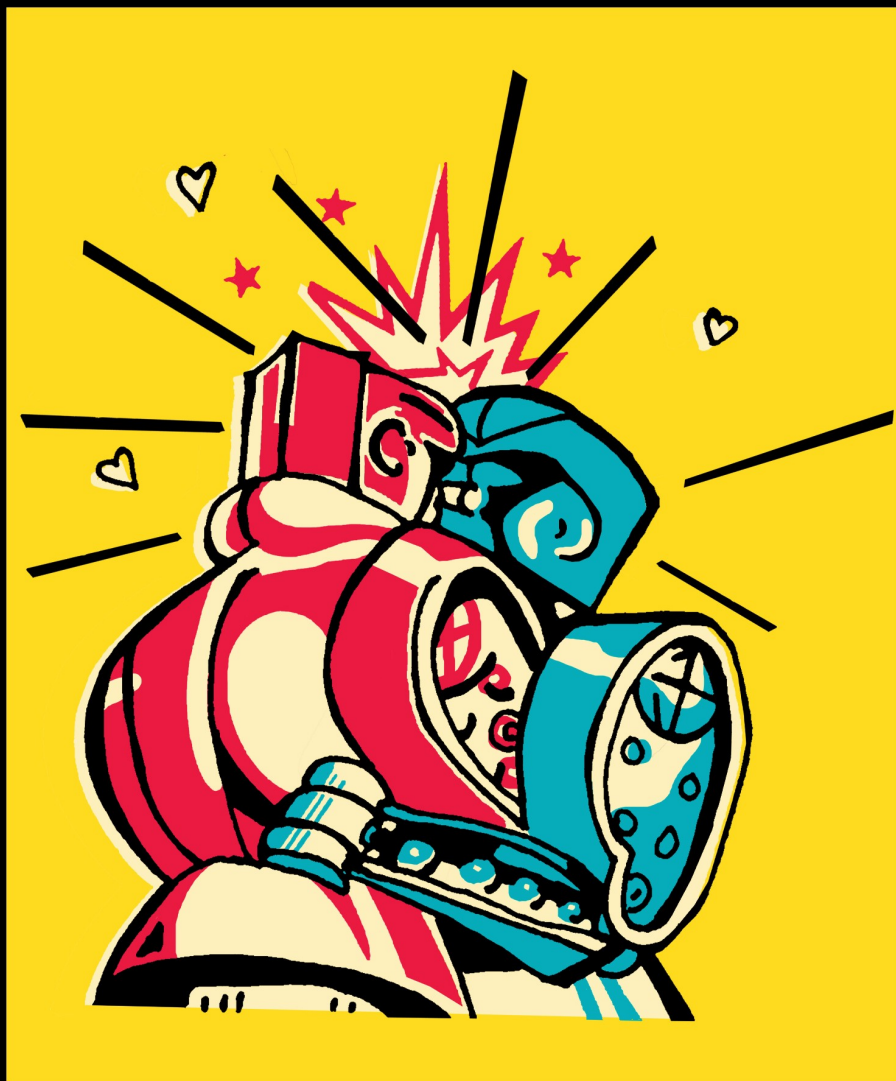


# STOREREPRESENT



september 2021  
vol. 13 issue 8



*inside: how the turn tables - absolutely nothing - para eric -  
afghan withdrawals - in memorium: mr. g - sins of the father -  
hitler & trump were not alone - the inklings - nevermind the  
consequences - record reviews - concert calendar*



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

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kelly menace

**art splendiddness**

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maren farmer, brea lara, & haley richardson

**print jockey**

craig wheel werker

**folks that did the other shit for us**

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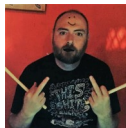
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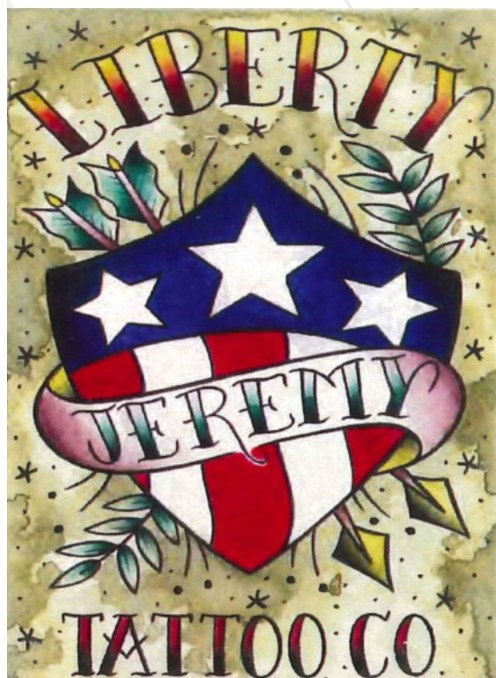
## HOW THE TURN TABLES

Every year for the past 13 or so years of this faire 'zine I've generally used this column to greet Freshpersons to towns, advising them to use their college years to their fullest, do some unexpected things, to expand their personal sphere of friendship and experience, to seek out some new shit and broaden they minds. I talk about all the great things available for them in Bryan/College Station area, etc. Blah blah. Of course, this year is almost a ditto copy of last year, except your government and your college's administration is not taking things as seriously this year as they did last year. Wearing a mask is now a point of personal choice. Vaccinations are actually available and encouraged, but also not required. You are being asked to act like an adult, to make an adult choice. Will you choose empathy? Will you emphasize the "responsibility" portion of the "personal responsibility" phrase? Sadly, it seems that whether you will be responsible and mask up, get a vaccination if you haven't already, and wash the shit out your hands will be less a question of personal responsibility but more a question of *personal politics*. That is a goddamn shame. But that is not why I'm here this month. This month something *is* different about this fall. For the first time I find myself the parent of a college freshman. A freshman? Perhaps.

I have told my son many of the same nuggets I've offered in this column over the years. Get into some new shit. Meet new people. Experience some new things. But I also for the first time understand what a parent goes through when they get back in the car and put their child in the rear view as they drive home without you. You are, of course, not entirely gone. You will return at certain points during the semester. Like the times you need to do laundry, the times you need money, and the times they kick you out of your residence hall. But it is still as momentous an occasion for your parents as it is for you. This is the first true step towards your path to independence. You are no longer just a kid. You are in that quasi-responsibility free zone that is the hallmark of your college years. It is one of the few times in your life that you are expected to make mistakes, do things that you will probably look back on and think "man, what the fuck was I thinking?!" and for the first time I am truly cognizant of the fragility of the college years and the massive bummer Covid has just laid on your baby soft skin.

These are the years that you experiment, do new things, fuck up, and not have to live with the consequences forever (in most cases...murder, child birth, STD's, etc. those are forever). The governor, the administration of TAMU and Blinn, the local governments...they all expect you to make the right decision about public health right now. Without any true guidance. Right off the bat you have to get this decision right, because the wrong decision may at the least have you back home and Zooming into class, and at worst that decision could send you home in a Covid-soaked casket or urn. That decision could lead to you sending a friend or family member to that fate instead of you. I am hoping that you make the right decision for your fellow classmates, your family, your friends, the random person at Laynes or Brookshire Brothers or Kyle Field or wherever you encounter people. Feel free to fuck around and find out with lots of things, but when it comes to the mask and vaccine, perhaps use your newfound freedom for good rather than bad, eh? —

KELLY MENACE



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# AFGHAN WITHDRAWAL



Coverage of the US military leaving Afghanistan has been god damn awful. Read on for one dirtbag's opinion and frustration with it all.

Before we get into any specifics note that 1) ending the war is popular. Very popular. The only people with whom it is unpopular are the super right-wing assholes who would be thrilled and giving the move A+++ ratings if Trump had done it; and 2) the "NatSec pundit/former soldier" universe that absolutely dominates media coverage of foreign policy stuff beyond any reasonable proportion to their importance or numbers. It doesn't exactly take a Marx-pilled cynic to realize that Forever War is a massive gravy train of federal dollars for think tanks, "independent contractors / analysts," and the war industry in general. Of the top 100 federal government contractors, it's difficult to find one that *isn't* directly servicing the Pentagon or DoD in some form or fashion. Simply put, these people see and will always see military action as the only acceptable outcome in any situation because that is what they are paid to see. Mainstream journalists (CNN's Jim Scuitto is a real good example) with close contacts in military and "NatSec" circles function as an extension of that worldview. These people collectively see the US military the way a Michael Bay movie does. Lives aren't really at stake, it's needed to sustain the narrative.

Notably, Biden is sticking to his guns. The ghoulish industrial complex is throwing every trick it knows at trying to build consensus in favor of going back in, or staying, or \*something\* that keeps the US military engaged in Afghanistan forever, and none of it seems to be working. As David Roth tweeted recently, they're like lab animals mashing a button to receive a treat but this time they're not getting their reward. The argument they're making, and the emotional manipulation they're attempting, is illogical and dumb at the most basic level.

The dominant theme for the anti-withdrawal message has been "Kabul in chaos." I won't even dignify the intellectually dishonest "Think of the Afghan girls and women" argument from people who could not possibly care less about the "girls and women" in countless other American allied countries with abysmal human rights records. To resort to that argument in bad faith as a way of prolonging military adventurism is several steps beyond pathetic.

The "Kabul in chaos" theme feeds into the storyline that sure, maybe Biden was right to withdraw but he's withdrawing the wrong way. There is some "correct" way to have done this that would, I guess in theory, mean Kabul would not be chaotic right now. Every version of that involves leaving some substantial US military presence behind all but indefinitely.

The base rate fallacy is overweighting event-specific or discrete data while disregarding the underlying, long-term data trends. The simplest example is assuming a baseball player is a great hitter because you saw one game and he happened to hit three home runs in it. Never mind that those were the first three hits he's ever gotten in his career as an abysmal player; based only on that one day, he looks terrific.

What the "Kabul in chaos" reporting blatantly distorts is

the reality that Kabul, and the rest of Afghanistan, was a place of substantial, normalized carnage *even during the US military occupation*. In other words, the withdrawal may be accompanied by "chaos" but in a country where at least 30,000 civilians were killed in various attacks and varieties of strife in 2019-2020 it is not necessarily a notable increase in chaos. It is true that it is chaotic now, which gives the reporting an air of legitimacy and fairness. But it has been chaotic for a very long time.

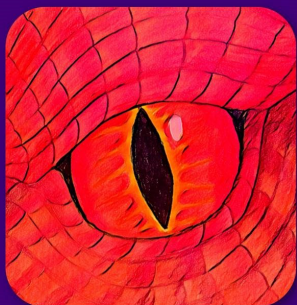
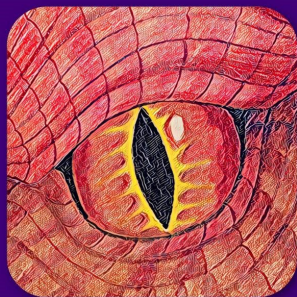
This is a conflict the American media all but gave up paying attention to in the last decade. To find the very occasional "What is going on with the war in Afghanistan?" story for the past few years required seeking out coverage. When it came up at all, it did so briefly in the context of American electoral politics – some presidential candidate or other pledging to fix it or end it or do it harder or whatever. Remember when Trump dropped a really, really big bomb on Afghanistan? That news item lasted about 12 hours in the cycle, almost certainly on the strength of the novel "lol world's biggest bomb lol" angle. It's not simply the public that checked out; journalism itself long ago lost interest in this war.

So, the day to day "chaos" that rivals what we are witnessing right now was happening in our blind spots. Had it been covered as breathlessly as the current situation is being covered and with the same all-caps gusto, Americans would have been left with the (accurate!) impression that Afghanistan is a violent place where the US military presence has been anything but a guarantor of peace and order. That long-term reality is crucial context in which the current "chaos" has to be evaluated.

This is not to disregard the human cost of what is happening now or to suggest that the strategy for withdrawing was optimal. Certainly mistakes will be pointed out and certain things could have been done differently or better. That is true and will always be true. And nobody in their right mind "likes" the Taliban or the idea of the Taliban in power. The point is that the departure of the US military has altered the format the violence is taking, but that violence has been a daily reality in Afghanistan for a long time even with the US presence. The false choice implied in the current news coverage is between US-enforced peace and violent chaos without the US. The violence is in fact the norm and has been for longer than any of us can pinpoint. The destabilizing presence of outside actors like the USSR and the US in Afghanistan has contributed to the many problems in the country. An American military presence is anything but synonymous with peace and order, so the implication that Biden reversing his decision to some extent would "return" the country to stable peace is simply false. The only extent to which Afghanistan under the US military presence has been peaceful is that until very recently the American media simply was not paying attention to or reporting on the violence.

Nothing about the situation in Afghanistan is good, but the question is not "Are things going well in Afghanistan." The question is, would a continued US military presence in Afghanistan accomplish anything? Was it making things better? Can an indefinite presence be sustained, financially, morally, or politically? Fucken no, Dave. — STARKNESS





<https://linktr.ee/MarenFarmerArt>

*the*

101

*cold beer live music*

# IN MEMORIAM: MR. G



questionable things, and sometimes aggravated the piss out of the downtown Bryan bigwigs, but there were two things you could never question about the man: Mr. G loved his family and was utterly devoted to them; and he loved his community and was utterly devoted to it. All three of his children attended Texas A&M University. Four successful businesses sprouted from the same household. The pizza is good at Mr. G's, but was somehow inexplicably perfected when reheated in Revolutions' toaster ovens. The calzone was fantastic and was often as big as a baby. Cenare remains the best Italian restaurant I have eaten at outside of New York, though Café Capri is no slouch. And, well, Revolution was our home away from home until the pandemic temporarily closed it down.

It is hard to believe that at one time in the not-so-distant past downtown Bryan was a cultural wasteland. The sidewalks rolled up at 5pm, there was hardly anywhere to eat, let alone drink or socialize, it was like any other small town downtown. All the nightlife and eateries were elsewhere. For the Cerone family this meant there was opportunity. Cheap rent, little to no competition, the ability to build and experiment without so many eyes watching and judging all the time. It was a perfect laboratory for father Giovanni, son Rami, and daughter Rola. Rami opened Café Capri in 1995, Giovanni opened Mr. G's in 1996, and Rola opened Revolution Café & Bar in 2003. The Cerone matriarch, Houda, bought Cenare in College Station in 1997 and ran it for over 20 years. To say that the Cerone family has had an enormous impact on the communities of Bryan and College Station is a gross understatement.

Mr. G, as most would know him as, worked his ass off to make his restaurant a success. He could be mercurial, he sometimes did or said some



The success of the Cerone business empire paved the way for others to open successfully in downtown Bryan, but few have done so with the style, panache, and grace that Mr. G and his family have done it. Mr. G's passing is a big blow to the community and a potential crossroads for that anything goes—laissez faire community that Giovanni Cerone stumbled upon decades ago and turned into his family's home. He will be sorely missed. — **KELLY MENACE**





Cabron,

Remember when you got arrested because the cop thought that you were on the worst kinds of drugs in the world but you were completely sober? Then the only thing they had to stick on you was a noise violation from years ago? Yeah, the time you were just being your weird self? I'll never forget it.

That was the time I got to do for you what you had done for so many others and would continue doing. That was to love and care you showed for others regardless of their mistakes or shortcomings.

You made myself and those around you feel comfortable in their own weird skin. You offered a safe place to those who would otherwise be alone and ostracized by those around them. You taught those around you what it was to care for others despite their faults.

The night your weird ass got arrested and everyone was worried for you, I wasn't. I knew that as soon as you got out you'd have at least one weirdo to welcome you back home.

When you got out of that jail, tired and beat up from spending the night in the drunk tank, your shamed face lit up when I gave you a tiny-ass trophy that read "F.S.U.". The 25 bucks I had at the time could only afford a trophy the size of an old school GI-Joe and the letters "F.S.U." (FUCK SHIT UP). Because, you know, we were all broke and they trophy place wouldn't print curse words on

# PARA ERIC



their trophies. (...bitches).

That was the first time I got to show you the love and understanding you had given to others and myself.

No judgment. No worries. Whatever problems may come, we can handle them.

I remember it so well because I put in practice what you had knowingly, or unknowingly, had taught me.

Love people.

It doesn't matter what they look like or what they've done. What matters is who they are now. However, always talk a little bit of trash. Keep everyone and yourself humble.

I will always continue to be that weirdo that is too loud. It is because of friends like you that I am comfortable with who I am as a person. I will be like you, a safe place of others to be weird and themselves. If they are around me, they will never feel alone.

You taught me that.

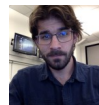
You left without saying goodbye. Because that is what you do. So, I'll never say it either.

I'll say what we always said. I'll see you later.

Te quiere y te extraña tu hermano,

Bernardo  
— BERNARDO RAMIREZ

## ABSOLUTELY NOTHING



The world is a pointless place, not a bad place. If shit sucked at least there would be a direction, even if it was a bad one.

This is somehow worse, like living your entire existence on an infinitely large blank page. No matter how far you walk or run in any direction all you will ever find is more nothing.

I don't know if it makes it better or worse that we do this to ourselves. You would think that with a blank sheet we would have the freedom to create amazing things, but instead we made a world that seems to hold the singular purpose of preventing people from doing anything.

I really don't have any right to complain, I'm just as bad.

I could have kept up with school, I could have gotten a different job, I could have done a million different things.

But I just didn't want to.

Apathy is the name of the game I guess.

Maybe that's why when people do care about something they do it with such passion and force, to sprint away from the truth that none of this really matters at all.

Religion, politics, relationships. It's all just filler content in the stories of our lives. Truly about as meaningful as the latest action film or football game.

Distraction, used as needed.

Don't look at the horizon. Don't try to find the edge. Don't think about what lies beyond your view.

Ignore the terrifying truth that there is absolutely nothing, and not even the kind of nothingness that has the decency to drive you mad.

Your entire existence is about as spectacular as an eye floater.

Drink about it. — CAVIN THEISS



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Sometimes we get put into situations that are uncomfortable. Sometimes we are forced to feel way too much and sometimes the only way we know how to deal with those situations is to shut down.

On April 24 my dad was admitted into the ER. He was hallucinating. He couldn't breathe. We had no idea what the fuck was going on and the doctors didn't do much to answer our questions. Was it Covid? Was it his cancer? Was it something else?

He got worse. He wouldn't eat. He was unresponsive. When he did come to, he was mean. Hurtful. Angry. And I wish I could say that this behavior was out of the norm for him... But it wasn't. My dad was not a nice man on his best day, but this was honestly a shock to the system. There was nothing left but that hate and anger. It was like whatever was killing his body was eating his soul too.

The relationship between my father and I has been so... did. I have completely shut him out in the past ... There are many reasons for this but the long and short of it all is he was an alcoholic. And he loved to belittle and make you feel small. Tiny. Ugly. Useless. There came a point in my life that for my sanity I had to stop contact. I just couldn't anymore and my happiness was worth more to me than a relationship with him.

Jumping back to the present, I really struggled with how to handle what was happening. With what to do. With how to feel and process what was happening. He had been diagnosed with cancer my senior year. We weren't sure he would make it then but this time was different. It felt final. And despite what he did and didn't do he was my father. I loved him. I still do. And I'm grateful for the opportunity to live this life because without him I wouldn't be who I am today. He loved music. He was a drummer. He was self-employed and could build anything he set his mind to. He was good at fixing electrical things and appliances. On his good days he was fun and kind. But I hated him too. Because those good times I mentioned were few and far in between. I was angry for the deep set fear I lived with my whole life. The guilt I felt. The shame. The worthlessness and uselessness. He would drink. He would get angry. He would belittle and taunt and hate. A part of me today still questions whether or not what happened actually happened or if I overreacted. Or if I made it up. Or if I'm crazy. Because depending on the day any or all of those statements can feel true.

April turned to June. Weeks turned into months and miraculously he woke up. They said his brain had swollen from the infection that they couldn't name. He had encephalitis and agitation, anger, and aggression were all side effects. He came back but was meaner than ever, more demanding, and more hateful. Whatever was left of him was gone and had been replaced with a nightmare version of who he was. And then I lost two friends. He was still alive. But two young beautiful souls had been taken from me.

The universe has a fucked up way of throwing shit at you. And I was angry. Livid. There are no words to describe how I felt. I mourned my friends. I mourned the man I knew my father could have been but never was. I was tired. Let the end be soon. I couldn't take much more.

There comes a point in everyone's life when you are just tired of sitting silently. This was it. This was my breaking point. I wanted people to know I was angry. I wanted

# BEHIND THE ART: SINS OF THE FATHER



[etsy.com/shop/meltedzipper](https://etsy.com/shop/meltedzipper)—[meltedzipper.com](https://meltedzipper.com)—[@melted.zipper](https://@melted.zipper) (Instagram)

them to feel my anger. To feel my pain. I wanted to break shit. I wanted to break him. Years and years of stuffing down thoughts and words and having beliefs instilled into your head that aren't yours and were never meant to be yours. I remember in high school stating that I wish he would have beat me. At least then I'd have proof. There's so much attached to being the daughter of an alcoholic that I will never find the words to express. There's shame. There's guilt. There's confusion. I doubt myself, my thoughts, my existence at times. There are wounds that run so deep that I honestly feel that I'll never be able to find them all. And I wanted to scream this out. I was done with being silent.

There was a night ... a true dark night of the soul. I felt so hopeless. I had cried so much I was dry. My husband had run out of words to soothe and his only advice this time was "You are an artist. Do what you do best. Make art." As I drew Tim's words, compounded by the twisted truths, lies, and pain that I had carried with me for years echoed in my mind. I screamed onto the page.

Sometimes the deepest wounds come from the people we love and care about the most and sometimes the only way to overcome those wounds is to transmute the pain, the blood, sweat, and tears from something meant to break us into something beautiful. Healing can be a long arduous process. This piece is a reminder that regardless of the "sins" we've endured we can stand empowered. We are sovereign, dark, majestic, beautiful beings regardless of what has happened. We can twist the ugliness of this world and turn it into something beautiful, if we so choose. And I choose to not let this be the end of my story. I choose to take the ugliness of what was given to me by no choice of my own and turn it into beauty.

On July 24 I woke up to a text that he had passed peacefully in the night and a weight that I had been carrying for years broke. I broke. I cried deep and long.

It's been exactly a month to the day as I am writing this. It has been a struggle and I'm barely just now coming out of a deep hole. Last year about this time I called him. I hadn't spoken to him in a very long time but I called him. I needed to make my peace. It was one of the last times I spoke to him. And I forgave him. In my heart deep down I forgave him. His words to me were. "What do I need to be forgiven for? I've done nothing wrong."

I truly wish my last memory of him was different, but that moment sums up our relationship.

Dear Dad, I know we haven't always seen eye to eye. I know however, despite that, that you did the best you could with what you were given. I wish I knew what you were running from. I wish the love I had for you would have been enough to save you from yourself. I have fantasies about the person I know you were capable of being. A father full of love and life and understanding. I wish you understood how the words you spoke and the lack of words you spoke molded my life. And how the anxiety, shame and guilt I felt stems from that. How the feelings of worthlessness and fear come from that. I hate that I can't remember most of my childhood. I hate that I have to write this as my farewell to you. That I couldn't say this to your face. Despite that, I know, I feel it, that you are finally at peace. And I am moving forward in my own way looking for mine. I love you dad. And am grateful for these tough lessons you have given to me.

Rest. In. Peace. — BREA LARA



# WELLHUNG

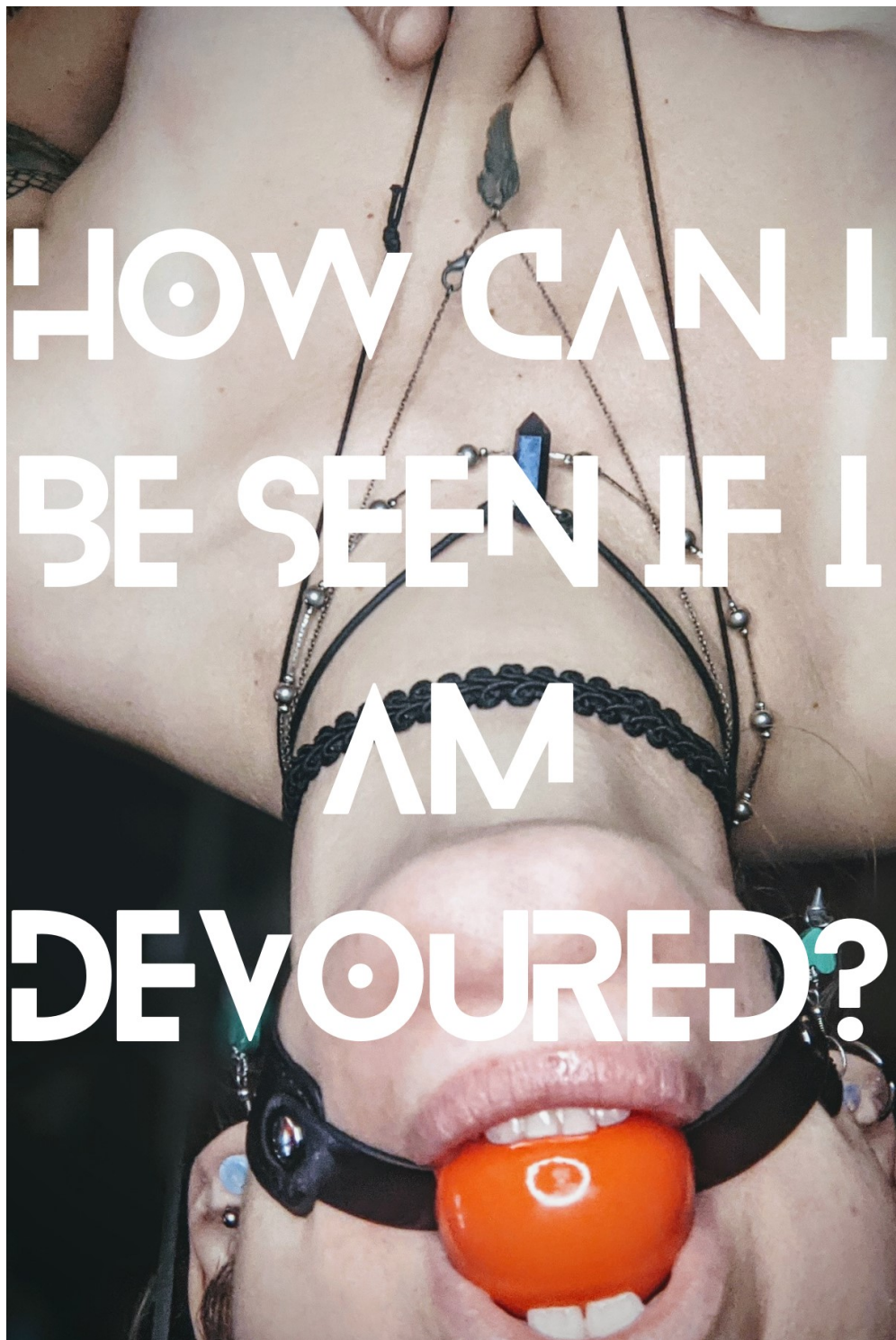
## ART GALLERY

PEPPER SPRAY A COP



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HOW CAN I  
BE SEEN IF I  
AM  
DEVoured?

# NEVERMIND THE CONSEQUENCES

We all know this image. It is the cover of the gazillion selling album *Nevermind* by Northwest rock band Nirvana. It's an iconic image, taken of one Spencer Elden. The photographer paid Elden's dad \$200 for use of the photo. It was then slightly altered and used on the cover of the album, released in September 1991. Only 20,000 copies of the album were pressed initially because the record label had only modest hopes for initial sales of the album. By Christmas time *Nevermind* edged out Michael Jackson's *Black or White* to become the number one album in the land, going on to sell tens of millions of albums worldwide.

This created a complicated situation for Spencer Elden. There were no legal documents prepared to allow Elden's photograph to be printed on the album, just a handshake deal in cash for use of the photograph. When Elden's father sold the photograph no one knew that it would be printed millions of times. The record label didn't even know it would be a hit, the band didn't know it would be a hit, no one knew it would become what it became. A year later Spencer's little dingus was everywhere. This would've been a good point for Spencer's parents to say "hey what a sec here, this isn't what we signed up for, someone owes Spencer a college education or a trust fund out of this" but his parents did not. At some point Spencer had to have been told that he was the baby on the Nirvana record. He was a perennial interview subject, sitting for photographic recreations of that iconic moment on four separate occasions over the years, beginning at age 7. For many years Spencer seemed completely cool with his popular culture status...until he wasn't. As Spencer became an adult his relationship with that status became complicated. He became frustrated that he would go places in public and know that "everybody (here) has probably seen my little baby penis," as he told the BBC. He also became frustrated that everybody else associated with that album seemed to have gotten rich and he did not, although that's his picture on the album cover. This led him recently to sue Nirvana and 14 other plaintiffs for \$150,000 each, saying he was "sexually exploited" by the use of this photograph.

Well, there's a lot to this. For starters, I wonder immediately where his parents were in all of this. When you are a child, your parents or guardians are in charge of your business. You have no agency in the eyes of the law until you are a legal adult. As a non-verbal blob of baby Spencer could not represent his position. Spencer's dad has stated that he was doing a favor for a friend and thought nothing of it until a few months later they saw the album cover. It was his parents' duty to protect Spencer's self-interest. This is where the thing started to sour. It seems that at some point Spencer began to try to trade on this infamy. How else would everyone around him know he was that baby? Perhaps they might have been tipped off when Spencer recreated that photo shoot at the 10th, 20th, and 25th anniversaries of the album's release. Spencer and his family were indeed all about Spencer's bit of fame when it likely paid out for him, as it is assumed that those recreations were paying gigs. As an adult Spencer has traded off of this connection. He said this to the London Guardian seven years ago when



asked about his connection to *Nevermind*. "I'm 23 now and an artist, and this story gave me an opportunity to work with Shepard Fairey for five years, which was an awesome experience. He is a huge music connoisseur: when he heard I was the Nirvana baby, he thought that was really cool." Recently Spencer opened an art show in L.A. and invited the surviving members of Nirvana to participate in the show. They declined. Soon after, the suit was filed.

I'm going to say that Spencer Elden does not have a legal case, but he does have a moral point, regardless of whether or not that this is purely a cash grab (and it certainly is). For starters, the case's main allegation of sexual exploitation is a non-starter. Naked baby pictures are not pornography. Spencer was not sexually exploited. However, Spencer's image was *commercially* exploited. Did *Nevermind* go multiple times platinum because of Spencer's image on the cover? No. Did it contribute in some way? In a very small way, maybe. Did Spencer himself ask for this complication to his life? Absolutely not. Did his parents screw up in some way with how this was handled? ABSOLUTELY. How it is that once *Nevermind* became, you know, *Nevermind* the elder Eldens did not seek legal counsel on whether or not it could be that they were owed a significant settlement from the David Geffen Company when the image went viral is beyond me. I do think that Elden is entitled to some sort of payout for his unwilling participation. There is no question it has complicated his life, even if he himself made it that much worse by making some really bad decisions related to it. He has alternately complained of the fame that has come from it and celebrated his connection to it. Heck, the dude has the word NEVERMIND tattooed on his chest. The whole thing was a fluke. What seemed to be a harmless photograph taken by a parent's friend for an art thing completely blew up. No one's truly to blame for how it happened, but the record label is clearly responsible for making it right.

It does beg a correlation to our current times when we know the images of many children, pets, and adult persons as used in popular memes. The toddler girl with the WTF eye roll; the fist clenched in triumph toddler; the Goosebumps teen; and so many others that have crossed our computer, tablet, and phone screens since the popularization of the meme 15 years ago. These images have become popular culture iconography, viewed millions of times, much like the cover of *Nevermind*. In most instances these randomly photographed individuals have a sense of humor and acceptance over their infamy. It is of course all about *how they handled their situation* that sets them apart from Spencer Elden. Spencer did not handle his fame well. He thought he was owed something from it, if not a semblance of schoolyard cool as a child or to talk up girls in bars. Spencer has admitted to the latter, saying that many former girlfriends were into him until they find out being the *Nevermind* baby did not make him rich, and then they dumped him. It's like being a Hollywood child star without ever actually doing anything working for it.

It also comes to mind that many parents of my generation have shared photos of our children on social media without giving any thought at all to whether our children would have liked to have had those images shared or not. Most of those photos are first day of school, vacation photos, riding a bike, skateboarding, hanging out. Some of them might be embarrassing, like for instance the video I posted a dozen years ago of my youngest falling asleep at the kitchen table because he wouldn't eat his vegetables. I have regretted that video many times over, not because of the video itself, but because I made that poor little guy fall asleep at the table over a spoon of veggies. It occurs to me now that the video might have been embarrassing and damaging to him had that video somehow become viral without his input or ours. For the record, Rowan thinks it's funny and thinks my current feelings about it even funnier. But still, billions of social media users probably have shared similar content without thinking about this at all...except for the few whose images and videos became viral meme content.

So I have some sympathy for Spencer's situation. The sexual part of this I don't agree with, but I'm also not Spencer. It's possible that he does feel sexually demeaned as a result of his baby dinger being visible for anyone to see. It is assumed that his 30 year old penis is somewhat different than his baby penis but it is not up for us to decide how someone should feel about their situation. That is for Spencer to decide. It is up to the courts to decide whether he should be compensated for it. My feeling is that the courts will not side in his favor because of the angle of the charges. However, I think it would be in the band and the record label's best interest if they were to seek an out of court settlement and flip Spencer some cheddar. He did not ask to be the Nirvana baby. No matter that he dealt with it poorly, he was never asked permission to be the Nirvana baby, he had no agency in any of this. A cash settlement will not likely improve his life. By this point the penis is already well out of the bag. But it is still the moral thing to settle and to recognize that there were indeed consequences to this most extraordinary of circumstances. — KELLY MENACE

## HITLER & TRUMP WERE NOT ALONE



One of the most powerful democracies in the free world was brought to its knees by an unrepentant bullying racist whose legendary lying catered to the worst in people. Adolf Hitler had a playbook that allowed him to bulldoze an entire culture, but he had plenty of supporters that bolstered his bigotry and his lies. Donald Trump also was not alone.

Hitler didn't need the help of Russian spies to cheat his way into leadership of his country like the gullible Trump did, but millions of Germans were complicit in permitting him to rise to power as well as stay in power. It is to the eternal credit that Americans grew weary—and leery—of the unheeded danger that Trump is and voted the twice-impeached loser out of office. The Hitleresque "big lie" of a stolen election is straight out of the infamous Third Reich playbook.

Like Hitler, Trump relies on the unthinking cult-like slavish devotion of his boot-licking devotees. Even though he was rejected by a large majority of Americans, there are still millions—unbelievably—who still swallow all the swill he shovels out. Even more distressing are the number of elected representatives who spew the same demented racist lies. Seeing the ignorant arrogant in Congress, governors' offices, and state legislature is an appalling reality. The good news is they can be voted out of office just like Trump was. The bad news is their slack-faced lackeys will still be out there.

The even scarier part about these Hitler lovers and Trump toadies is that we shop next to them at the grocery store. They wait on us in restaurants, fix our cars, help on our taxes, are driving in the next lane, could be operating on us next time. They may be living next door, could be in your family. So how do we handle that? We personally fervently know how dangerous Trump is and Hitler was, but there are so many out there who have gotten so off-center as to swallow lies without apparent thought.

One Hitler tactic was to politicize every decision, every action, every activity. Bring anything to mind? Face masks during a pandemic, right? For more than a hundred years, medical science has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt face masks prevent the spread of disease. Sounds like a no-brainer to wear a mask in a pandemic that's killed millions worldwide to protect yourself, your loved ones, and others, yes? Nope. People are disregarding proven science and medicine to believe a lie that it's a personal decision, a political decision. Hogwash.

Finally, the scorched-earth mentality that Hitler had and Trump disciples are slaving over is not the answer. The contention that the only good American is a Trump American, and all others should leave the country is not the answer. The same is true for those who vehemently oppose the anti-American unpatriotic Trump terrorism — getting rid of all those who adhere to that cult worship is not an answer either. The solution lies in that difficult ground called compromise.

That's how democracy works, has worked for more than 200 years. Sometimes you have to swallow hard to accept some tendrils of truth from those whose core beliefs you feel passionately against. And you are correct to expect them to do the same about your heartfelt beliefs. The real challenge is having to wait for them to find that acceptance of some of your values. The waiting, as Tom Petty knew, is the hardest part. Some healing takes longer than others. — MIKE L. DOWNEY



# WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE INKLINGS

I recently read *Bandersnatch: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Creative Collaboration of The Inklings*. Okay, this book is not for everyone, but it's got some intriguing insights into the creators of Narnia and *The Lord of the Rings* in addition to offering some good advice on how writers can help other writers through writing groups. Even *979Represent* is such a group, so food for thought.

The author, Diana Glycer, has spent three decades researching how much the Inklings, a writing group in England of around 19 authors including C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, impacted each other's work. While the other Inklings are not as well-known in America, they were hugely prolific in England. One member alone, John Wain, wrote more than a dozen novels, short story collections, poetry collections, theatre plays, biographies, and nearly 20 literary criticism books.

What follows is a hodgepodge of notes I gleaned from the book. By the way, *Bandersnatch* is a layman's version of Glycer's more intense academic research tome.

- This is probably my favorite tidbit about Tolkien from Glycer: the complete manuscript of *The Lord of the Rings* was 10,000 pages, a stack seven feet high. Keep in mind this is hand-written.
- Members meet often: regularly-scheduled meetings work best with predictable structures where routine creates a safe place for daring.
- Resonators: anyone who is a friendly, interested and supportive audience—the most important factor between successful and unsuccessful writers. Resonators encourage the writing and the writer. They help move the text from private to public sphere. Resonators help the writer get where they're going, to a larger public—get published.
- A writers' group prompts writing in anticipation of that audience to attract compliments and avoid criticism.
- Inklings helped writers like Tolkien and Lewis—and others—write for general readers ... and get published.

Lewis and Owen Barfield disagreed about everything in philosophy, language, literature, poetry. They argued for about a decade; neither convinced the other of his side, but they both got better in their analysis, their understanding, their writing by modifying their views, clarifying their convictions, due to that opposition from the other.

- The Inklings convinced Tolkien to leave out the epilogue he had written for the end of his famous trilogy and end it the way it does now.

- Lewis wrote the seven Narnia books in seven years while *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy took 14, something Tolkien may have been jealous of Lewis about, his speed in writing.

- Hugo Dyson hated Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* readings and contributed to the death of The Inklings by attacking the heart of the group by shutting down an author, limiting his very participation.

- Strong creative groups need two things: a passionate interest in the same things and a variety of personalities with diverse points of view. Without the second, participants won't have the benefit

of multiple talents, perspectives, to help make a real difference. Striking the right balance between correction that's helpful and condemnation that is dismissive and destructive is the challenge.

- Individual talent is enhanced by creative connections. Personal innovation is enhanced by community.

- Writers' groups work when they stay focused. Inklings regular meetings focused on sharing and improving their writing. They followed a structure, a ritual.

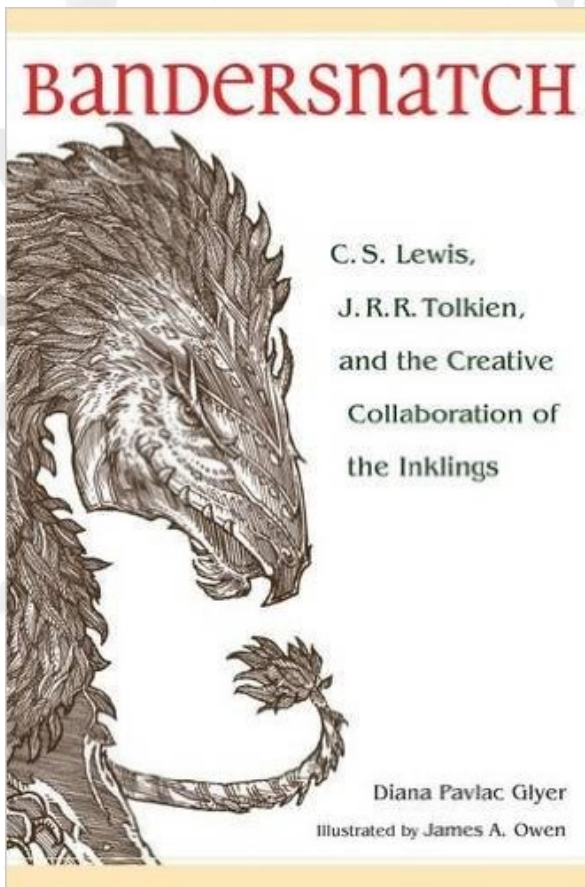
- Cultivate conversations with people who see things from a different point of view. Listen generously, especially when you disagree.

- It's never too early or too late to contribute to the success of a piece of writing.

- Learn to tell the difference between "I don't like this" and "This doesn't have any potential."

- Feedback is not telling someone what is wrong and how to fix it. There's a whole menu of thoughtful responses. The right response at the right time is the key.

— MIKE L. DOWNEY



# CONCERT CALENDAR

**9/3—Yaupon, Desdimona, Mary-Charlotte Young**  
@ The 101, Bryan. 9pm

**9/11—Sykotic Tendencies, Reagan Era Rejects, Mad Rant** @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm

**9/19—School of Rock End of Term Show** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 2pm

**9/25—Colony House, Fleurie** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 7pm

**9/26—School of Rock End of Term Show** @ 3rd Floor Cantina, Bryan. 3pm

**10/15-17—LOUDFEST XIII** feat. Antique Gardens, Charm Bomb, Economy Island, Jay Satellite, The Prof. Fuzz 63, Only Beast, A Sundae Drive, SkyAcre, The Ex-Optimists, The School of Rock Metal Show, Manther, Carnage Guisada, Sykotic Tendencies, Electric Astronaut, Cop Warmth, Boy Wonder, The Glory Holes, Rickshaw Billy's Burger Patrol, Mutant Love, The Shut Ups, Peter Panties, Roma, Yaupon, From Parts Unknown, Wisdom Cat @ The 101, Bryan.

**10/22—Vacation Manor, Night Traveler** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

**11/18—Joshua Ray Walker** @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm

# RECORD REVIEWS



**Luci**  
*Exhumed Information*

Zombies, horror movies, and death metal go together like marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers; this statement is one of the most obvious facts in music history. However, typically, this is something that grows together organically, and not something that is purposefully pursued; but then you get those bands who create their entire musical approach off the films of a single man whose video nasties have become hidden treasures for both horror and metal fans alike. Enter Italy's brutal death metal act, Fulci.

After having released a killer sophomore album, titled *Tropical Sun*, in 2019, Fulci has become somewhat of a rising star among the new wave of old school death metal bands along with Skeletal Remains and Gruesome. Though their sound could easily be considered brutal death metal due to the

deep guttural lows, pig squeals, and two-minute tracks, Fulci infuses and undeniably addictive old school flavor into their music that makes it much more accessible when compared to other brutal death metal bands. One could think of Fulci's sound as a brutal death metal for those who don't like brutal death metal. Furthermore, the band's lyrical and aesthetic direction is based on the films of Lucio Fulci, whose legendary movie, *Zombie: The Flesh Eaters*, shocked audiences throughout the world. This is a band who certainly knows their horror and knows how to make it fun.

After a year of silence, Fulci has dropped another album titled *Exhumed Information*. Like the previous album, the band took great care to produce a cover art that matches the spirit of Lucio Fulci's work, drawing on an old school 70's and 80's horror vibe with hooded ghouls chasing a damsel in distress through a foggy graveyard. So far, so good! Upon spinning the first half of the record, the listener is greeted with the intro track titled "Autopsy" which is a sampling of a doctor performing an autopsy with each specific cut he makes described in medical detail. With the intro finished, the album wastes no time in kicking it into gear. The pummeling, crushing sound that Fulci has made themselves known for has certainly not been compromised as tracks like "Voices" "Nightmare", "Evil", "Funeral", and "Tomb" so easily

showcase. One addition that was quite welcome in the band's brutal death metal approach is that they have now included to some high-pitched, black metal-esque, shrieks to complement the brutal grunts of Fiore. A very nice touch indeed!

Despite delivering some extremely heavy and brutal death metal, five tracks are all the death metal the listener gets with *Exhumed Information*. To say the least, the remaining four tracks are instrumental, but they are not even death metal. They are electronic. That's right...FREAKING ELECTRONIC instrumentals on a death metal record! It appears Fulci, in addition to creating some 70's and 80's style, horror-themed brutal death metal also wanted to make an electronic film score that matches what can be heard in Lucio Fulci's movies, so they collaborated with another music group known as TV-Crimes to produce this electronic sound. While I understand why the band made this move, and I get that it certainly helps with the image the band is attempting to portray, all I have to ask is "Why?!" The idea of creating a record that portrays itself as a death metal album by a death metal band, but only half of it is what is advertised is a big disappointment. If I really wanted to listen to creepy horror film scores from the 70's and 80's, I would have bought a soundtrack from one Lucio Fulci's movies. This approach was a super big risk, and

sometimes those risks pay off, but in this case, I'm of the opinion that this risk fell flat on it's face.

Despite the disappointing later half of the record, were the five death metal songs enough to redeem *Exhumed Information* in some way? Not really. Though the songs are good, they are not that good. The quality of the songs of the previous release were absolutely superb, but *Exhumed Information* is anything but. Had the five songs been released as an EP with a few electronic instrumentals stuffed between the songs, I could see the band's recent work getting a much higher score from me, but alas, the band released it as their third album, and not even as a split with TV-Crimes, and that is what I must review it as. To say the least, this record was let-down; it is not that I don't think bands exploring creative arcs is a band thing, it's just that I don't think just because a band can do death metal well means it can another genre well. I mean, George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher is a fan of Saxon and Dio, but does that mean George should start a band with that particular sound? Definitely not, and the same could be said for Fulci attempting to put out an album which is half death metal and half electronic, the latter half not even being their own work. *Exhumed Information* get's a 2.5/5 from me.—CALEB MULLINS



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