

# STOREREPRESENT



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record reviews - concert calendar*



979represent is a local magazine  
for the discerning dirtbag.

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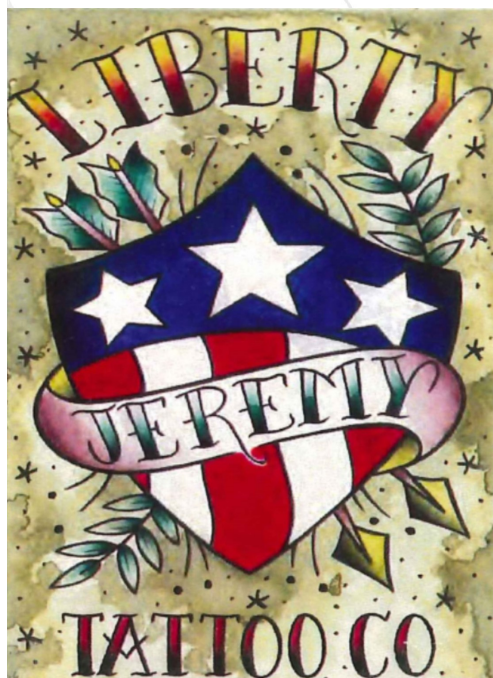
## MUSIC FRIENDLY DESIGNATION

Recently the folks at AdventGX hosted the Texas Music Office at the Grand Stafford for a seminar to help Downtown Bryan achieve the designation of a "music friendly city". There's so much comical, ironic, and a touch offensive about this move that I can't let it pass without some comment.

Many longtime readers of *979Represent* will indeed scoff at the idea that it takes a coronation from the Texas Music Office to kickstart the *development* and approval of a local Bryan/College Station music scene. There has *always* been a vibrant and original community of musicians in the B/CS area. From the Lyle Lovetts and Robert Earl Keens in the 70s to the Street Pizzas in the 80s to the GUTs and Boy Wonders of the 90s to The Hangouts and Guns of Detroit of the '00s to The Ex-Optimists and Magic Girl/Mary Charlotte Youngs of the '10s to whatever claws its way to the top of the '20s. Texas red dirt country to punk to postcore to indie rock to singer-songwriter to DIY electronica, these two cities have hosted many individuals who were able to not only express themselves in the manner that they saw fit but were also able to attract likeminded performers from other towns from Texas and beyond to the world to spend a night or two blasting out Revs, the Stafford (both Eric's dirtbag mecca and Advent's classier reboot), Murphys, The 101, and occasionally other places like Northgate, Post Oak Mall, and The Village's back alley. All of this without the *Texas Monthly*, *Texas Music*, nor much of the local media excepting yours truly, paying hardly any attention to it, let alone granting its blessings to its existence or deigning to promote any of it.

It is true that right now the B/CS music scene is in a rebuilding phase. Much like a professional sports team, many of the local scenes' most reliable players have moved on to other cities and states, not to mention that Covid put a halt to all live music. That may seem like the opening that is needed for the venues themselves to reach out to the Texas Music Office to liaison powwow together to encourage performers from other towns to bring their talents to local stages. Considering that all the previous iterations of this scene required was a place to play, a supportive infrastructure (or one that is not hostile to music at the very least), and musicians that were community-minded enough to spend the hours and dollars it takes to make things happen. B/CS is so wide open to anyone that wants to do something that it's kind of pathetic if one *doesn't* get involved in some way. What is worrisome is that it is again that douchebag sort of Northgate Music Fest/Rock the Republic sort of "there's nothing going on around here, please come and bring *culture* to our ass backward swamp" attitude. It seems that instead of having this sort of seminar where folks can sit around sipping wine and wait for the folks in Austin to show us how that they could learn how to develop and nurture the local scene that already exists. Book local artists to play with touring bands. Then book those locals their own shows. Showcase those local artists. Actively advertise that live and local is a thing every weekend of the month, not just on First Friday. If any of these folks actually went to shows they would discover that DTB is already a music friendly city. It's nice to get the state's blessing but it really isn't needed. Perhaps instead folks should just go out and support the scene that already exists. Or better yet, *contribute to it*.

— KELLY MENACE



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# YOU'RE NOT A DOWD ANYMORE!

I was walking to my bus stop one morning and a yellow elementary school bus, with its stop signs flipped out and its red lights blinking, was picking up some kids across the street. I was minding my own business, thinking about whatever it is I think about in the morning (people, sex, art, music, stories, etc.), and some little voice says something toward me. I turn to look, and it's a confident looking boy sticking his head out of the window.

"What?" I yell back once I realize he was aiming his comment at me.

"You're not a dowd anymore!" he repeats.

What the heck did he say? I try to clarify.

"I'm not a WHAT anymore?" I yell back. At this point I had stopped walking and turned toward him. My bus wasn't due for another few minutes, and this was interesting.

He yelled back the same thing. I didn't understand the key word. He laughed as he plopped down in the seat. I could hear other kids laughing as the bus drove off. I'm sure he felt super cool. I was confused. I shrugged and turned to walk toward my bus stop.

What the hell did he say? Bummer that I couldn't feel the full weight of his insult. I mean, I'm sure it was an insult, what else could it be.

As my bus arrived, the word "child" came into my mind. I looked down at myself, and realized that my 70s PacMan Metal Lunch Box was in my hand. Aha! That had to be it. "You're not a CHILD anymore!"

It was, in fact, an insult. Interesting.

Then began the dialogue that I pretended would have happened: "You know what? I know you meant that as an insult, but to tell you the truth, it's really an encouragement. I am in fact NOT a child anymore. And to tell you the truth, if you are like me, and probably a large percentage of the population in my estimation, you might be wondering about things like these when you are 50 and you've got responsibilities and kids and a good job but can't seem to attract the right people into your life or can't seem to stop drinking or feel guilty for playing

video games into the wee hours of the night (which you shouldn't feel guilty about btw).

"It's a philosophical discussion I have with myself often, and that is: Have I always been me? Am I all of my decisions? Even the me that sat in the school bus wishing I was as cool as the kids who sat in the back? Even the me that was embarrassed by the Sesame Street Lunch Box my mom bought me instead of the Kiss lunch box?"

"The fact is, this lunchbox is vintage. It's a collector's item. It's rusty in the corners, just like mine used to be. It's got the safety illustrations on the inside, it makes me super happy that no one I see uses one. I feel unique. It's a conversation starter. I love that my age and older people are the ones who point it out, and we talk about how things used to be and stuff like that. I love it. In fact, I love all of my lunchboxes (I have several). I just happen to actually use them for my lunch.

"It's quirky, I know, but it reminds me about things. How things used to be in the 70s and 80s. Arcades, the beginning of Heavy Metal, The Muppet Show, Mork and Mindy, Legos, Comic Books, Hot Wheels cars, all that stuff. You will have similar things. Maybe it will be Pokemon for you, or Fortnite, or Adventure Time, or Roblox, or My Little Pony. Whatever it is, it will be yours. You will cherish it for what it was: a simpler time. Well, hopefully. Hopefully you aren't dealing with a bunch of bullshit right now. Hopefully you aren't getting bullied, but it could happen. Hopefully you aren't getting rejected by girls, but it's gonna happen. Hopefully your parents aren't on your ass about every single fucking thing. Hopefully you are doing OK in school.

"But 100%, thanks for reminding me this morning of who I am, I appreciate that man. I hope you got some clout on the bus that day. I know you didn't realize that I didn't actually hear you, and even if I did, I would not have seen it as an insult.

"The fact that I didn't hear you is ironic, because I'm old, and I've listened to so much loud music growing up and in my life that my ears are fucked now.

"I hope you don't put too much weight on how cool you might feel about having yelled some insult to an old man holding a lunchbox, but you should be proud of yourself for having the balls to do that. Good for you." — JORGE GOYCO

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# SALACIOUS CRUMBS

I've been out of Bryan for about two weeks now, and have been blown away by the amount of vegan options in my new town, Fort Collins, CO! The giant Crumbs list of things to eat in BCS may be long, but it's not particularly filled with greatness and is definitely lacking in local businesses. I've done some research and had fun packing on a few pounds so that we have some great places to eat when you come visit!

When you get in, you might get here at a crazy hour because you got a really good deal on some late night plane tickets. It's pretty dark and quiet in my part of town, but never fear! **Krazy Karl's** late night pizza is here! Karl's has classic greasy takeout pizza, but from a local place and WITH vegan cheese and WITH loads of fun toppings, like green chiles (duh), walnuts, pickles, and sauerkraut. They're open til midnight and we can order it while we're on the way home from the airport so you don't have to go hungry! (*I concur - ed.*)

In the morning, we'll go to Old Town, the sort of downtown-y area, to **Mugs** for coffee and breakfast! Mugs has great coffee drinks with all kinds of vegan milks and lots of vegan breakfast bakes, bagels, and breakfast burritos! You'll see, this is a breakfast burrito town, and vegans are not left out. I've been able to get lots of the seasonal special drinks as a vegan version, and they have an awesome spicy chai that'll kick your butt with ginger. This is my favorite coffee shop so far - its cozy but open inside, has a really nice patio, and is a good place to meet up with someone and chill out without having to be sipping a beer.

We can mosey around and check out the shops and stuff in Old Town, and for lunch, go just around the corner to **Tasty Harmony**, a nearly-totally vegan restaurant. They have EVERYTHING! You want stir fry? You got it! Nashville hot tempeh sandwich? You got it! Nachos? They got 'em! French dip? AU JUS! Classic 70s vegan tofu Buddha bowl? Of course! Wanna make a Canadian cry? Vegan poutine! We can sit out on the patio and enjoy a beer and split the dessert o' the day, because vegan dessert is a thing you can get here!

Speaking of dessert, **Buttercream Cupcakery**, like a 10 minute walk from my house, has vegan cupcakes, there's a place called Poeme that has vegan macarons, and **FoCo DoCo** has vegan donuts if you're quick enough in the morning. They don't even really need the Crumbs here, they have it covered!!

When the weather suddenly changes and it gets chilly and blustery at night, we can take refuge at **Raska**, a local Ethiopian restaurant. The woman that owns it makes incredibly flavorful food and soft, puffy, tangy injera bread to sop it all up with. Ethiopian food is new to me, but it reminds me a lot of Indian-style curries -

loads of bloomed spices and warm, hearty veggies - perfect for warming up on a cold night! And capping it off with cinnamon rice pudding?! Yes plz!

This is a beer town, so we can spend the evening at one of the local breweries. **The Gilded Goat** is a responsible 10 minute walk from the house, and has really great beers!

In the morning, we can quench our hangovers with some brunch at **Rainbow**. For years I had to attempt to quell the same hangover as my friends with just roasted potatoes and a fruit cup from the Village, while they munched down on hearty egg and bacon dishes. It just wasn't fair! At Rainbow, we can get one of two DIFFERENT foot long vegan breakfast burritos, fill our gullets with migas, get french toast, or have a classic tofu/tempeh scramble/toast/potato feast. Washed down with mimosas on their beautiful patio, of course, because it's always patio weather when you're point of reference is two weeks in the middle of October in Colorado.

If you visit, we're gonna have to go to Estes Park, it's a measly hour away through Big Thompson Canyon! After a quick hike on Lumpy Ridge or a deeper drive through Rocky Mountain National Park, we can park at the far end of Elkhorn Ave, visit the sock shop, and walk down to **Ed's Cantina** and sit at the bar for cold beer and not-Texas-style Mexican food. They have lots of great labelled vegan options like chile en nogada and vegan enchiladas and lots of interesting moles and sauces. On the way back, we can walk past the elk in the city park and visit the rock shop (socks and rocks!) on the other side of the street before we take the short drive back to town.

Before our last night out in Old Town, we'll stop by **The Blind Pig**. It looks like just a generic whatever pub, you know, fat cheeseburgers, wings, nachos, but NO! They have TONS of vegan stuff! Yeah, you can get a vegan burger, cauli wings, or vegan nachos, but there's all sorts of other stuff - Thai fries, jackfruit or vegan chick'n tacos, fried cauli po' boy, even a vegan Oreo brownie! By the numbers half the menu is vegan as is or has a vegan option. And there is LOTS of RANCH. They even have an almond milk stout on tap right now (not a an almond milk stout, an milk stout made with almond milk!). And YES! We can go back tomorrow for brunch and more breakfast burritos after we've spent the night watching bands at Surfside (there's a strange amount of nautical-themed stuff here?!)!

Just drop me a line when you're visiting and I'll make sure there's a warm bed and a pack of beer in the fridge for you, dirtbags! - **KATIE KILLER**

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# ANTI-LIFE



A young friend of mine has a daughter who entered kindergarten last month. With a pandemic going on and no child vaccine yet, the kids were all wearing masks. His daughter, understandably so, had trouble keeping her mask on all the time. One of her kindergarten friends got Covid and had to quarantine at home. His daughter said to him: "Is it my fault she got sick because I wasn't wearing my mask?"

Why is it the young understand perfectly, but so many of the so-called grownups don't get it at all? This preschooler was concerned her not wearing a mask sickened another person. Why isn't the nation more like this?

The mask protects others from the disease just like the vaccine protects you. It's a community effort like obeying traffic signals – you are looking out for others. The anti-maskers just can't seem to understand that simple fact. It is not about you and your politics, your so-called "personal freedom." It is about caring for children, older adults, those with serious health issues. Doesn't anyone remember their history? How the Nazis wanted to purge society of the weak and the disabled? Is that what we've come to in America?

Of course, we are all tired of wearing masks. We miss seeing those smiles, getting all those social cues, understanding what people are saying. We all thought the lost year of 2020 would be the end of masks with the vaccines becoming available so quickly. However, political lies entered the picture all too quickly, and the next thing you know, not enough Americans are getting the vaccine to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their community.

Anti-vaxxers are political slaves. They can rant and froth at the mouth about not putting anything foreign in their bodies, but it's really a political decision founded on a lie. It's the same thing that a political quack like Ted Cruz who had an opponent insult his wife as ugly and imply his father helped assassinate Kennedy. Naturally, Cruz crawled to lick the boots of that opponent (Trump) when he was quaking he might lose his Senate seat. Politics and lies win out.

Yes, there are medical personnel who are refusing the

vaccine, but have they stopped wearing their masks during surgery? Stopped washing their hands? No. Why? Because masks (and simple handwashing) for more than 100 years have helped prevent infection. It's a medical fact.

So why are medical workers not getting vaccinated? It's obvious. They are ignoring the medical facts and making a political decision based on a lie. Past vaccines have saved tens of millions of Americans. The Covid-19 vaccines have saved uncountable lives and could save more. Medical workers are just as gullible as the rest of us. They bray against mandates and prattle about freedom while endangering their patients, their families, and the community at large. Shame on them.

It is hard to have sympathy for someone who loses their job because they refuse to protect themselves and others by simply getting a vaccine. Just to beat on Cruz a bit more, he blathered in a recent visit to the Brazos Valley that an anti-vaxxer NBA player was the most important man in America right now. Really? A multi-millionaire athlete who thinks the earth is flat and refuses to protect his teammates and fans is important? Cruz must be the stupidest man in America then.

And not to get into another red-flag issue, but the conservative right's counter to vaccine mandates of "My body, my choice" flies in the face of their long-time opposition to women's rights as pertaining to contraceptive medicine.

We lost 2020 due to a pandemic that medical science fought to understand. We sterilized our groceries; we wiped down our mail; we didn't touch our faces; we started wearing masks; we stopped shaking hands; we isolated ourselves from others. Science won out though, and the vaccine could have paved our way to normalcy again. Alas, it was not to be.

It looks like 2021 is going to be lost as well unless unemployment shakes up enough Americans over the next two months. The gruesome fact is that the deaths of enough anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers could right the scale toward herd immunity and safety for all. What a terrible thing to contemplate. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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# ELECTION NIGHT HOT TAKES

You have undoubtedly already seen the headlines. "Virginia a bellwether for 2022 midterms" and "backlash against Biden underway" and "Trump not a negative for candidates". The story is being fabricated for you that there is a national trend underway and that the 2021 elections are the first sign of that trend in action. Biden is soft, Biden is unpopular, Democrats have squandered their mandate, Trump's unpopularity is waning, Republicans have found the tools for national victory in 2022 and 2024, etc. Off cycle elections can indeed tell stories and reveal undercurrents where they have risen to the surface. But I'm unsure of whether or not we have seen the first indications of the corrective Republican wave to come, especially not because of Virginia.

Let's start with that race, since it is the "big one" from the 2021 state races. Former Democrat National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe lost in a fairly close race to Republican private equity exec Glenn Youngkin over Virginia's governorship. McAuliffe tied Trump around Youngkin's neck and tried to drown him with it. Youngkin, meanwhile, had a much stronger message about education that resounded strongly in the largely suburban Virginia political landscape that McAuliffe himself helped to make for Youngkin. The race became less about Trump vs Biden (and McAuliffe desperately wanted to make it such) and more about parents afraid of critical race theory. In a particular exchange over removing books such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* from high school curricula McAuliffe stated (and I paraphrase) that "parents have no business removing books from their children's required reading". Well, yes, parents do have that right and McAuliffe seemed really out of touch. Couple that with Youngkin claiming that his experience overseeing funds as a businessman would help him run a tighter fiscal ship AND the fact that McAuliffe kind of forgot Virginians and went for national themes and there was a recipe for the folks in the middle to again bend like reeds to the winds of public sentiment. The consequences of McAuliffe's weak campaign were high, as Republicans were able to sweep their state races and take control of the state for the first time since 2009. This is what happens when you run a weak candidate with a weak message. So perhaps if there's anything for the DNC and other liberal groups to learn from 2021 it's that they need stronger candidates with stronger messages.

That is one thing perhaps that does need to be bourn away and taken to heart. Strong candidates with strong ideas win out. Just not being Trump and trying your opponent to Trump is not going to help. Democrats have been trying to paint the 2020 presidential election as a resounding defeat of Trump and Trumpism but it really wasn't. If anything, it was a comment on how Trump beat himself by his gamble on Covid. Trump thought he could bully and bluff his way through it, making a public health issue into a political football to toss around, and while it was a very successful play (far more successful than I ever thought it could be) it ultimately turned off as many people as it galvanized. And with J6 hot on the heels of "stop the steal!" Democrats were certain that Trump was completely O V E R. Maybe Trump the candidate is over, but Trump the kingmaker and Trumpism the ideology is just getting started. Youngkin embraced his

endorsement by Trump but he was careful not to be seen with Trump or to use Trump's endorsement in talking points. It became a non-factor in this race. That is where you see the prevailing wave for 2022 and 2024 swelling up at you.

Youngkin used Trump's racist dog whistles to ride his way into Richmond. Republicans got caught flat-footed with America's response to the murder of George Floyd, the protests, and the national ascent of the Black Lives Matter movement. You see, more Americans than not began to listen the stories of how Black Americans have been treated in this country for centuries and how at the bedrock of every social, economic, and education system is the foundation of racial discrimination. This makes a lot of white people very uncomfortable. No one wants the guilt of dealing with the fact their success, however how hard-won and labored over it may be, has come at the expense of another group of Americans that were subjugated systemically. Something to remember for those who have been hip to this way of thinking is that for the majority of white Americans this is a new concept. It is not commonly accepted as truth yet. America is really only just beginning this conversation and coming to grips with its ramifications. The discussion is still morphing and that is how Republican opinion makers have been able to discover that they can condense this large and complicated argument into one soundbite friendly placard slogan bogeyman of "CRITICAL RACE THEORY" and how it's bad and how liberals all want to force it on your children and how they will come home one day from school and look at you with hateful disappointment in their eyes over how the house they grew up in, the car they rode to school in, the clothes you provided them, and the food you fed them all came at the expense of a Black person. And apparently saddling that bogeyman and riding him off into the sunset worked for Youngkin. Watch it come soon to a race near you.

For an example of a racist dog whistle that didn't play successfully one should only look west to Austin at the resounding defeat of Prop A. This proposition would have required the City of Austin to provide one police officer for every 1000 city residents, forcing a mad hiring spree on the department, costing the city an extra \$54 million to \$120 million a year. This was the "law and order" set wanting to make Austin's streets safe again. If you hadn't figured out what was making Austin's streets unsafe, it is certainly as bad as you can imagine. Brown people and Black people are allegedly what make the streets unsafe. Austin's voting residents did not agree and defeated the proposition 2-to-1. Take it, Austin is a liberal town and this proposition had a long road ahead of it to pass, but it was easily defeated because not only was it a bad law but organizers were very unclear about the messaging. No one knew how it was going to be funded, so opponents could easily claim that it was possible schools and libraries and other public works would have money siphoned from them to pay for the extra cops. It's hard to use this vote as a bellwether either, because Austin is a city that has had multiple problems with its police force and how it deals with minorities and polices during SXSW. Protesters have had pitched battles with APD during the protests of 2020

and APD did not handle those situations well.

Was there any true narrative from this election? It's that America has three sides. Left, Right, and Center. The wings are very strongly in their camps and opinion rarely is changed. America is defined by its center. It is how that center votes that decides our elections. I have often likened that center to waves of grain in a prairie field. They don't lean to either side but often are blown by the wind in either direction. It is the wind of distaste for endless Middle Eastern wars that blew Obama into the White House. It is the wind of distrust and cynicism that blew Trump into the White House. It was the distaste for how Trump dealt with Covid that blew Biden into the White House. And likely it will be the wind of Critical Race Theory and anti-Communism that will blow Biden out and sail some manner of Trumpist back into the White House in 2024. History tells us that midterms are bad for the party that elected the executive. This has happened to every president since I've been alive and I have no reason to believe that the 2022 midterms will be any different. Biden falsely believes that has to maintain the center because that center is what elected him. He is going to lose his majority anyways, no matter what he does. He has allowed that to water down his party's agenda. Democrats have already lost the judicial branch for at least a generation moving forward. Gerrymandering and the demographic realities of the Senate have made it very difficult for it to maintain the legislative branch, and the Electoral College ensures that the path to the executive branch has to go through centrist states whose political balances blow in the prairie wind. That wind appears to be blowing away from the Left again. It is time for Biden to steer towards what is right for this country, and that's shoving free community college, student loan forgiveness, paid family leave, a permanent child credit, and make the ACA the true pathway towards America's inevitable march towards socializing health care. If they are gonna call you commie than goddamn earn it.

Going in this direction will cost Democrats the White House. It is what the people overwhelmingly want. Polls show strong support for all those programs. Americans who were forced home last year and sometimes paid higher on unemployment than they were at their actual jobs found themselves in better straits than they were in before the pandemic. We spent enough money on failed nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan that would have given healthcare to everyone in this country or paid off everyone's student loans or given free tuition to everyone. These are no longer radical ideas that can be attributed to "red diaper doper babies". Ask Generation Z. They overwhelmingly support such programs, and that is a bipartisan fact. Democrats may lose in 2024, but Americans will ultimately win, and that is something that Democrats in the future can run solidly upon. Until the Republicans learn to message the cycle against it and the whole thing starts all over again. It's a constant struggle, a constant battle, but in the long run progress will not be stopped for long. If there's anything to learn from 2021 it's not a done deal yet. Post up. — KELLY MENACE

## USING EACH OTHER

It's so easy to forget that it's ok to be alone.



It's ok to feel lonely.

But that's not always the problem.

Some people focus on others to avoid loneliness, another portion focuses on others so they don't look at themselves.

Using friends and romantic interests as walking hits of dopamine, training their brains to always look outward. Until literally anything, anyone, is more important than anything they could find inside their own minds.

Don't worry about how you're doing, how are they? Don't think about the last time you ate, are they hungry? Don't ask yourself if you're happy, are they happy?

The idea of thinking inwardly is somehow flinch inducing, like there's some big bad inside your own head that you don't already know about, another buried memory that you would rather pave over than accidentally dig up by tripping over its exposed nose.

Not only are you neglecting your own happiness and fulfillment, but as far as the chosen distractions are concerned you are a place-holding mannequin with a voice box that only says "yes". Becoming less of a person and more of a background character in their own stories.

Did you even want to go out tonight? or are you hoping to run into that one funny friend who makes you laugh, maybe the attractive flirty interest who always gives you tunnel vision, or to simply blare away your own thoughts with the sounds of a crowd accompanied with loud music and copious amounts of alcohol?

I can't judge, I do it almost every night whether I feel like socializing or being alone.

I don't want to think, I don't want to feel, but finding my own distractions requires thinking about what I feel like doing. Sounds like a bad joke.

Fuck.

We're all just using each other.

Drink about it. — CAVAN THEISS





The memory-wipe gummy is illegal, of course, but I guess Savannah knew somebody. What did kids do in the old days, before you could erase the previous hour's embarrassment? It must have been a nightmare. Imagine working up the courage to spill your heart only to be shot down? Nuts to that.

Anyway, when Savannah invited me to this memory-wipe party I was super pumped. I had a speech prepared for her, and the other three girls who'd been invited were pretty cute. Who knew what might happen? I didn't know the other boys.

I wondered why she invited Richard, since she was all ice to him. If I asked Richard he'd say it was his overpowering charm, which accounted for a hopeless derp like me being allowed to tag along. Otherwise I'd never get invited anywhere. *Maybe Richard is torching for Savannah too*, I thought. Pretty girl, handsome boy.

We met in Savannah's basement rec room. Savannah's mom was there to make sure the fun stayed harmless.

It didn't work.

Savannah was crying in a beanbag chair when my fog cleared. Savannah's mom was kneeling by Richard, pressing a baggie of ice to his eye.

"I knew this was a bad idea," she said. "God, wait till your father gets home."

"My father doesn't come home," said Richard. "Ouch."

"I meant Savannah's father. Here, you hold it."

Savannah cried harder. "Don't tell Daddy," she said.

"Your father will blame me, as usual. God forbid Exley's little princess..."

My hand hurt. One knuckle looked raw.

"Why'd you hit Richard, Terry?" Savannah said.

"I don't know," I said.

"He lashes out when things get too much," Richard said. He touched his eye gingerly. "Usually not so sudden. Or violent."

I looked around. "Where are the others?"

Richard said, "The other girls chickened out and the boys left with them."

Mrs. Exley said, "Then this young idiot started pouring it all out. He'd been in love for years but never worked up the courage to lay it on the line. Huh!" she said. "He did today."

"I got carried away," Richard said.

"You think?" She looked at me. "And you." Her face softened. "I suppose I can't blame you. But you did set my daughter up for disappointment."

"You were very sweet, Terry," Savannah said. She honked into a tissue.

"How are you remembering? You were supposed to take the gummies," I said. "Both of you." My face felt hot.

"Well, we didn't," Richard said.

"Take them. Before too much time goes by."

# THE MEMORY

"It's a bit more complicated than that," Mrs. Exley said.

"It doesn't have to be," Richard said.

"Please, let's just take them," Savannah said. "I want to forget this horrible day ever happened."

My hand flared with pain. "Did I hit you when you confessed you were in love with Savannah too, Richard?"

"What?" Richard said. Savannah choked. Richard dropped the ice baggie and covered his face with his hands. "Oh, Terry."

"It was going to be perfect," Savannah said. "And at first it seemed..."

"You were manipulating out of your weight class," Mrs. Exley said. "It happens. Good lesson for a girl like you."

"You told Savannah you had a thing for her," Richard said. "All this flowery mush. You and your damn books."

I said, "And then you told her your feelings?"

"Oh, he told everybody," Mrs. Exley said.

"And I guess she picked you," I said. "I can't blame her."

Richard looked up. "You can't?"

"Well, you're you and I'm... just me."

"Yeah. Just you."

"Savannah, why are you crying?" I said.

"Idiot," she said.

"Still, I can sort of see it," Mrs. Exley said, looking at me with her head tilted to one side.

"See what?" I said.

"You hit me when Savannah started crying," Richard said.

I blinked. "When was that?"

"After I kissed you," he said.

"Why did you kiss me?" I said.

Savannah made a little squeak.

"Was I sad because Savannah shot me down?"

"You're not out of the gummy yet," Mrs. Exley said.

"It's not the gummy," Richard said.

"You can't mean he's always this thick," she said.

"It's kind of a miracle he lives through a day," Richard replied.

"Sometimes Richard kisses the top of my head when I'm bummed out," I said.

"It wasn't the top of the head," Mrs. Exley said.

"He filled his chest," Savannah said. She snuffled. "He walked over to where we were standing."

"He was very purposeful," Mrs. Exley said.

"So forceful," Savannah said. "I was thrilled. He gently separated our hands—you were still holding my hand, Terry." She smiled prettily at me, eyes glistening with tears. Then her face closed. "He dropped my hand and took yours in both of his. He--"

"Savannah, stop," Richard said. He rose smoothly and stepped over to me. He had a pretty good shiner coming in.

"I told you I love you, you big dumbass," he said.

"You what?"

"And that's what you said."

"Same blank stare," Mrs. Exley said. "Like you filled a sock with nickels and brained him with it."

Savannah had regained some composure. "The dear fool, I thought, so verklempt with love for me, he doesn't know what he's doing. Then I saw this hot, dreamy look in his eyes while he looked at you. This yearning. Nobody's ever looked at me like that. Not even you, Terry, when you were saying those lovely things."

"Then I kissed you." Richard closed his eyes. "It was worth getting punched."

Mrs. Exley said, "It was a hell of a kiss." She shivered.

"Mom!"

Richard said, "Then Savannah started bawling, loud and startling--"

"Her father likens it to an air raid siren."

"He does not!"

"--and you clocked me, and I guess that knocked something loose. Maybe I was counting on the gummies, but I spilled it all. Including some, uh, highly personal day-dreams."

Mrs. Exley said, "And you told me he only thought about sports, Savannah."

Richard groaned, scrubbed his face with his hands. "You listened for a while, or seemed to. Then you held up a hand and looked away. You reached straight into your pocket, fumbled out your gummy and swallowed it. Your hand shook."

"I can still taste it," I said. "Like earwax threw up."

"I'll get you a water," Mrs. Exley said.

"Why didn't you guys take yours?" I said.

"I was devastated," Savannah said.

"Remember, this all just happened," Richard said. "How's the hand, Terry?"

"You're worried about his hand?" Savannah said. "Look at your face!"

"He doesn't know how to punch."

"Why did you kiss me here?" I flung my arms around, shooting a wave of pain to my hand. "Now?"

"Maybe it was the things you said to Savannah. You were so—my heart just—I imagined you saying all that to me, only less rehearsed. And less about little denim skirts."

"How long, ah--"

"Years. Since your family moved here."

"Dude, we skinny dipped in your grandfather's pond. That time I caught cold and felt like I was freezing to death, you climbed in bed with me to keep me warm. You held me all night while I shivered."

"Best night of my life, mucous and all."

My hand throbbed like a second heartbeat. "You tossed Freddy Nunn in the ditch when he called me a fa-- oh, God."

"It's all right." He smiled. That warm, amused smile. No wonder Savannah was crushing on him.

"There!" Savannah piped up.

We looked at her.

"I've taken my gummy," she said. "Yuck."

"Here." Mrs. Exley handed around bottles of water. "I wondered how long you could stand seeing somebody else in the spotlight."

"That's not nice."

"You'll forget in a minute."

"That's going to swell up," Richard said. He stepped away and scooped up the baggie of ice. He whipped a red kerchief out of his pocket and was back to me in what seemed like a second. I had always envied his effortless movement. "Here." He took my throbbing hand in his, arranged the ice baggie over my knuckles, then lashed the kerchief into place. Secure but not constricting. Done well, like everything Richard did.

He reached into another pocket, then the glistening gummy was on his palm. It shook. I looked at his fingers. Long, sensitive, ghostly. Odd for a linebacker, I thought. And the vulnerable flicker in his eyes.

Handsome, confident Richard. Everything I wanted to be but wasn't.

"Call it," he said.

My protector. My hero. Standing before me with a naked heart and the black eye I gave him.

My own heart was smashing my ribs.

I stretched out my throbbing hand--

"Whoosh!" Savannah said. "That made me dizzy. Who wants to go again?" — *STARKNESS*

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# PEDAL PUSHING

About five years ago I went on a quest to obtain the "perfect" chorus pedal. You see, I love the dirty, chewy, thick, vintage chorus sounds of Alex Lifeson, Andy Summers, John McGeoch, and Robert Smith, that late '70s / early '80s sort of sound when chorus was still a new effect, before the '80s turned the effect into one of the decade's most overused production cliché, until Kurt Cobain rescued the Small Clone chorus from its place in the cardboard box of unwanted 70s effects pedals with its effective use in songs like "Smells Like Teen Spirit", "Come As You Are, and "Radio Friendly Unit Shifter". Turned out that finding the chorus tone I had in mind was somewhat difficult. I went through Boss CE-1 clones, a vintage Boss CE-2 as well as clones of that circuit, the Small Clone, flangers (that effect is a close sibling to chorus and is what Andy Summers and Bob Smith used), and ultimately settled on the Fulltone Choralflange, an excellent early '00s pedal that used old Panasonic BBD chips like the vintage '80s Boss units but had far greater control over the rate, depth, and preamp of the pedal. It's a total keeper, but it's hard to have on a pedalboard. For starters, that pedal is *complicated*. It has a lot of controls that interact with one another. If you move one it affects how the other controls behave. Another is that it's a really *big* pedal. I had been using a Malekko Chorus on my small boards but that pedal is very much a part-for-part CE-2 clone and being a 100% clone it also has the same volume drop problems as the original.

This past summer I traveled to B/CS to make an Ex-Optimists show. I did not bring a chorus pedal with me, thinking I'd use a flanger I had left in Wonko the Zuckerberg's care. But I noticed this really cool looking chorus on his bass guitar pedalboard. It was the **Walrus Julia V2**. I knew nothing about it, except that Walrus makes well-respected effects. I plugged into it and fell in love, even writing a brand new song pretty much on the spot. I knew when I got back home I would eventually see about getting one of my own, and this past month I did exactly that.

Let's get started here. The Julia is an analog chorus/vibrato pedal. It has controls for rate, depth, "lag", d-c-v, and an LFO wave selector. The range of rate is not really drastically wide, staying "musical" rather than allowing for the LFO to enter the audio range. The depth allows for subtle application versus all-out wetness. The lag

effect changes the focal point of the chorus, much like the way a Q or cutoff setting does for low pass filters. It shifts the overall frequency emphasis of the effect, from a more typical chorus tone on the counter-clockwise side versus something more metallic and flanger-like on the clockwise side. The D-C-V pot is D for dry, C for chorus, and V for vibrato. It works like a de facto second depth control, but allows for the second audio signal to be so-loed. A chorus in essence takes a signal and delays it by microseconds, and the delay time is often varied by a low frequency oscillator. If the effect is 100% wet, you only hear the doubled signal, which if modulated by the LFO, makes your dry signal warble in pitch. Hence, vibrato. The LFO can modulate with a sine wave or a triangle wave. The former is really subtle, the latter more traditional and "vintage". And top that all off with a soft switch, true bypass, an on/off indicator light, and another light that pulses at the LFO's rate.

The depth and lag settings affect each other, and to dial in a tone requires a bit of manipulation for both. I plugged both my Julia and the Choralflange together and spent about 5 minutes dialing in my #1 Choralflange setting with the Julia. While the Choralflange certainly has some things to offer that the Julia doesn't (such as stereo outs and the ability to use it as a sub-standard flanger), the Julia is much smaller, quieter, and adds a fully wet vibrato. Couple that with the Julia being readily available at most places and the Choralflange being out of production for over ten years now (Mike Fuller keeps promising a V2 for the Choralflange but never gets around to it) and the Julia easily supplants the Choralflange for live work, banishing the larger, OOP pedal to the home/studio board. There are lots of different limited art versions of the Julia out there. The one pictured above is the standard issue graphic. I have that graphic in gold tones, offered as an exclusive from Sweetwater. Wonko's is a limited Dia De Los Muertos graphic. I have seen two or three other variants, but as those were limited they have all sold out and are only available at inflated prices on the used market. The only difference between the V1 and V2 Julias are the graphics and a clicking footswitch (the V2 has the preferable soft switch). The standard version comes in at \$199 at most retailers. That is somewhat pricey for a chorus pedal, but if you are fussy (like me) and want the *right* chorus tone then at some point in your search you should spend some time with the Julia. — KELLY MENACE



# RECORD REVIEWS



## Kanonenfieber *Menschenmühle*

The Kaiser's War, the Great War, the War to End All Wars: metal titles if there ever were such. Often overshadowed by the preeminence of World War II, World War I often gets overlooked by the average American. It is rather tragic, considering that World War I was one of the bloodiest and darkest wars ever fought in human history. In particular, themes surrounding WWI have become quite popular in black metal, a scene that can often get bloated and stagnant with the typical satanic and pagan tropes. A brand new artist who stands out in particular in creating grim and foreboding WWI themed black metal is Kanonenfieber. Before recently become a full band, Kanonenfieber started out as a mysterious, one-manned black metal project out of Bavaria, Germany and released one killer debut titled, *Menschenmühle*.

*Menschenmühle* is an album which was painstakingly been created in such a way that every sound, every song, and every sampling is cohesive to the mood, atmosphere, and story being told. The opening track, "Die Feuertaufe" kicks off with a sampling of a speech, from whom I can only assume is Kaiser Wilhelm II, which builds into a melodic and mournful overture, setting the scene for the album. While Kanonenfieber's sound is easily recognizable as black metal with its raspy screeching vocals and tremolo-picking guitars, it is certainly not purely black metal. For example "Dicke Bertha"

opens with the sound of a howitzer cannon being loaded, escorting the listener into an extremely aggressive song with classic death metal riffing that is both frightening and manic. "Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg" has a more melodic death metal approach which works extremely well for a nearly 8-minute track. Introducing elements of death metal and melodic death metal gives Kanonenfieber a very well-rounded sound which only aids in communicating the message of each individual song and the record as a whole. The artist even showcases his talents beyond metal when he closes *Menschenmühle* with a sorrowful acoustic song featuring clean vocals, ending the album perfectly.

It should be noted that the impression left from Kanonenfieber is not that of blackened death metal. Despite the fact that there are death metal and melodic death metal influences in this album, the classic elements of black metal are always kept front-and-center. The vocals produced by the mysterious artist that is Kanonenfieber are also quite exceptional, as there are not many black metal vocalists which can produce the rasp that he does; it literally sounds like the skeleton on the album cover is doing the vocal work! Depending on the context of the song, his vocals can be either mournful or sinister, with very little changes to his vocal technique. What is yet more remarkable is that he never sounds like he is strained by his vocal work at all, delivering lyrics and projecting his voice smoothly and clearly. Furthermore, it is refreshing to hear this record in German, as many non-American bands tend to opt for English for various reasons, but it only makes sense to do a German themed WWI album in the native tongue.

From start finish, *Menschenmühle* is a flawless, black metal record. Since this album was released, Kanonenfieber has become a fully fledged band, yet all the members still choose to shroud themselves in mystery by dressing German WWI uniforms with black mesh

masks and gloves, making them appear as if they are faceless specters returning from the bloody battlefields of WWI to tell their grim tale. If one man can produce the masterpiece that is this debut album, I cannot wait to see what a full band can do. This is a contender for album of the year, and gets an easy 5:5 from me! — **CALEB MULLINS**



## Jose Gonzalez *Local Valley*

Swedish/Argentinian folk musician Jose Gonzalez takes *forever* between albums. He's 20 years into his career now and this year's *Local Valley* is only his fourth album. True, he has released music with his side band Junip a time or two during that 20 years, but he takes his time to get his albums together. Is *Local Valley* worth that wait?

Well, there's nothing going on here that you haven't heard before on Gonzalez's albums. Gonzalez presents plaintive straight-forward hushed folk songs, earnestly finger-picked on classical guitar and dominated by Gonzalez's slightly accented English. Folks have largely been drawn into Gonzalez's orbit by his unorthodox covers, such as Veneer's "Heartbeats" from fellow Swedes The Knife, and Massive Attack's "Teardrop" on *In Our Nature*. Once lured in, listeners found that Gonzalez was a sensitive and profound songwriter that owes debts to Simon & Garfunkel and Elliott Smith as influences.

*Local Valley* starts out in a

profoundly different way than his previous work. Album opener "El Invento" is presented in Spanish, as is the title track "Valle Local". There are more songs later in the album sung in Swedish. "Void" has Gonzalez quoting himself, repeating lines from "How Long", the song that leads off *In Our Nature*. There's a beautiful chord cloud underpinning "Head On". "Valle Local" shows off Gonzalez's talent as a guitarist with rapid flourishes and arpeggios. "Lasso In" breaks up the mood with subtle bossa nova rhythms via a vintage drum machine. "Lasso in the ruminating thoughts, acknowledge, pat them, send them off" Gonzalez gently implores. "Swing" follows a similar approach with an infectious drum machine beat and Gonzalez asking us all "to move our body, swing to the rhythm inside you". The album is a very pleasant way to pass 45 minutes of one's time. But therein lies the rub.

There's not a lot going on under the hood of these songs. Gonzalez has a knack for writing deeply personal songs and of digging out from emotional holes, but none of the new material presented on *Local Valley* digs into the depths of emotion Gonzalez is known for, other than the handful of lines in "Void" culled from a 2008 song and "Line of Fire" which was presented in band format on the most recent Junip album (from 2013). With nearly half of the songs presented in another language and the others preoccupied with letting go and feeling free it is hard to take *Local Valley* at anything other than at its face value of a pleasant sound presented pleasantly. There are worse albums to put on at a dinner party as background music. However, Jose Gonzalez has made his reputation on subverting the coffeehouse guitarist in the corner stereotype by foregrounding the background. For an album that took six years to create I'm unfortunately wanting and expecting more than what Gonzalez has given us. I'm rating it a solid "not bad but he's capable of so much more than this". — **KELLY MENACE**





# CONCERT CALENDAR

**11/4—Rightfield @ Grand Stafford, Bryan.**  
7:30pm

**11/5—Rickshaw Billie's Burger Patrol, Mutant Love, Sex Nap @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**11/7—Big Gay Drag Brunch @ The 101, Bryan.**  
3pm

**11/11—Daikaiju, Mutant Love, Skunk Money @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**11/12—Hello Monica, Above the Clouds, Great American Boxcar Chorus @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**11/13—Kritickill, Submit Thy Will, Broken To Brave @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**

**11/19—Lily B Moonflower @ The 101, Bryan. 8pm**

**11/20—Brazos Valley Roller Derby Prom Night feat. BCS School of Rock @ The 101, Bryan. 8pm**

**11/21—Big Gay Drag Brunch @ The 101, Bryan. 3pm**

**11/21—Luke Hender @ The 101, Bryan. 8:30pm**

**12/2—The Vintage Ramekins @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**12/3—Ride the Panda, Punk Rock Karaoke , The Prof Fuzz 63 @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**12/5—Big Gay Drag Brunch @ The 101, Bryan. 3pm**

**12/10—Drew Theiring, Torin Franklin @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**12/11—Joshua Ray Walker @ Grand Stafford, Bryan. 8pm**

**12/17—Dayeater, Wisdom Cat @ The 101, Bryan. 9pm**

**12/19—Big Gay Drag Brunch @ The 101, Bryan. 3pm**

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