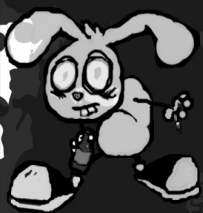


979 REPRESENT



January 2019
vol. 11 Issue 1



inside: 979rep picks the best of 2018 - the wall or bust - cardamom & coffee - salacious vegan crumbs - hydrogen jukebox - still reading - oh the animals we will meet pt 2 - concert calendar



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

editorial bored

kelly menace - kevin still

art splendiddness

katie killer - wonko zuckerberg

print jockey

craig mack wilkins

folks that did the other shit for us

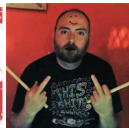
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hansen - caleb mullins - rented mule - starkness -
william daniel thompson

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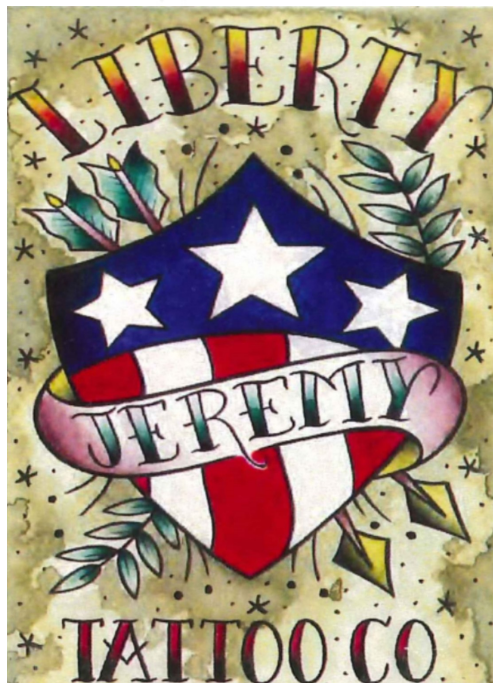
THE WALL OR BUST

President Donald Trump has shut down the federal government until he gets THE WALL. That is the easy disco headline version of the story. To put it less succinctly, the president refuses to sign into law any federal funding bill that does not include "big league" funding for a wall on the country's southern border. Trump frames the discussion in terms of "safety", as in "I won't sign a bill that compromises our country's safety". Late last month the federal government went out of business...sort of. People on Medicare and Social Security still get their checks, the military still gets paid, etc. The key infrastructure of our nation persists. However, most federal employees are furloughed from work, meaning that they aren't allowed to go to work and cannot get paid until the government reopens. National parks are closed. The IRS won't verify income and other information important to homebuyers and loan lenders. The FDA stopped inspecting food. So it's not exactly a picnic either.

This is nothing new. The government has been shut-down 19 times since 1980 when Congress allowed the first funding lapse to result in shutdown. Most such shutdowns occurred over a weekend and lasted for less than 3 days to minimal effect. The U.S. has had three true shutdowns: two during the December-January period of '95-'96 while President Bill Clinton sparred with Congress over spending priorities for a total of 26 days; and in 2013 for 16 days. How long will this one last? It is entirely unsure given the capricious nature of our current president and the mid-January turnover of the House of Representatives from Republican domination to a Democrat majority.

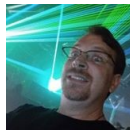
It is interesting to me that President Trump is putting all his cards on the table over a border wall. It tests very well with his support base and nearly no one else. So he is placing his entire presidential legacy to this point on a 2000 mile \$5 billion slat fence (his compromise on the steel and concrete wall he ultimately wanted but knew he could not realistically fund) that only 20% of Americans truly want that doesn't address the largest source of illegal immigration in this country: people who come legally on visas but overstay their visas. Environmentalists hate it for what such a fence will do to natural wildlife migration and ecotourism (Trump and Trumpers could care less about these "snowflakes"), true Libertarian property rights hawks hate it for the massive eminent domain land grab the project demands, Texans hate it because we know that people are going to cross the border regardless of the wall but commerce will suffer, making it harder for trade to cross for goods we sell in Mexico and goods Americans need from Mexico, and humanitarians recognize it for its government sanctioned racism.

Who will blink first? For now, both sides seem ready to stand pat and see what happens. Trump will look weak if he bows to pressure. Because he placed so much political emphasis on the wall he could live and die by it. Yet Trump has shown remarkable ability to be distracted from platform planks he previously embodied only to move on to a completely different stance, leaving his base and his nimble White House press staff to explain it all away. As January progresses we will certainly learn whether we see Trump double down or suddenly fold. —
KELLY MINNIS



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ON THE ANIMALS WE WILL MEET PT. 2



BEAR PLAYS GUITAR FOR HIS DAD

Bear was the only animal in the forest who had a guitar. How he got it is a mystery. He claims it fell out of the sky, but there are rumors about a place in the outskirts of the forest where a human might be buried. I'm sure that's just a rumor.

Bear loved the tone of this guitar and played it all the time. Many of the cubs in the forest envied his talent and hoped to one day be just like him, and he would humbly encourage them to keep practicing.

But Bear had a secret hardship. His dad had never thought he'd amount to much.

One day, Bear decided that he was ready to show his dad his favorite thing in the world, hoping his dad would approve. He sat his dad on the most comfiest of stumps, gave him some very strong warm, honey ale, and played for him.

Bear had never played better. When he had finished, his dad was speechless. Impressed...but speechless. That's all Bear needed.

HAWK GIVES ADVICE TO THE DUCKLINGS

"We will always watch out for you!" said Hawk in a moment of serious clarity. And he meant it from deep down in his raucous and sauced heart.

The ducklings hung onto his every word. They admired and relished his attention. They knew he was on their side. They knew he wanted the best for them.

"Just keep those little webbed feet kicking under that water!" he said. "Also, no one can tell if you've done it incorrectly!"

These things all went deep into the malleable folds of the ducklings little brains. Sure, they might not have understood completely enough to make practical use of the weightiness of his words, but his muscles, his amazing beak and his gorgeous feathers would forever enchant them.

One day, it would all make sense.

COYOTE INVENTS SOMETHING COOL

Coyote is a quiet type. You won't see him without his best friend, who just happens to be the tiniest little squirrel. On cold days, Coyote wraps up his little friend in the cutest little bundle so they can always be together.

Everyone knows Coyote because he gathers acorns during special events at the clearing and gives them to the performing animals...keeping a few for himself and his best friend of course. Some try to sneak in without dropping off acorns, and he sees them...and makes notes.

What many don't know is that he is a great inventor. He

has figured out, with just sticks and stones how to make a vehicle so he can get around faster. There's even a rumor that he's figured out how to make a vehicle go by itself. Speculations abound that this contraption is powered by some sort of magic that he gathered during a thunderstorm.

Coyote is also a historian of sorts. He's seen everyone come and go, and watched the clearing change and evolve. One day, mark my words, Coyote is gonna amaze and enchant the whole forest.

THE RAT BROTHERS HAVE A PLAN

Late one evening at the clearing, several of the rat brothers fully fleshed out what they would do in case something tragic happened to the forest. They imagine it would be a sickness of some sort, and it will turn every animal (except them of course) into some sort of angry, giant crab.

The Rat plan involved digging a huge underground bunker, filled with comfy places to sit, with plenty of dark places to grow mushrooms, which just happen to be their favorite snack.

"We will stick our heads out every once in a while to see if the crab giants are still out there." They planned. "If they are, we will throw them mushrooms. They will eat them, get addicted to them, then throw them more until they explode!"

"Then we can eat their carcasses!" Said the most cunning of the Rat brothers. "They will be soooooo tasty!" Sounds like a good plan.

WOLF ALMOST DIES

Wolf's long luxurious fur, that is the envy of all at the clearing, once almost killed him.

It was a dark and rainy night, and the Duck family was the evenings entertainment. They had noisemakers and vines tangled all throughout the clearing. The Duck family was really bringing it that night.

Wolf got so excited that he started flipping his fur all around. From side to side, up and down, and even in tight little circles. In his elation, he just happened to stumble too close to one of the vines, and his fur began to tangle with them.

He didn't realize what was happening, and what he thought were cheers, were actually screams of panic and concern. So he just kept on flipping his fur. So much so that it began to lift him off the ground, and ultimately, tangle around his neck, which began to strangle him.

Hastily, the animals of the forest grabbed him just in time and helped him untangle, all the while, the Duck family just kept going with the show. They knew it's what Wolf would have wanted. — JORGE GOYCO

CARDAMOM AND COFFEE

The problem with seeing the future is that you can do nothing to change it. Ami had figured this out long ago, when she was still a young child. People would ignore you, disbelieve you, or resent you. After enough failed attempts to change the course of events, she stopped trying.

This made it no easier to go about her life. She gained and lost friends, failed exams, fell in love, and had her heart broken. When she went to college and majored in physics, she felt the mathematical beauty of her foresight for the first time. Of course she couldn't change the future. Time was an illusory concept. Everything that was going to happen had already happened, and she was simply another node in the fabric of the universe—along for the ride but with an extra-dimensional view.

The realization led Ami to change her major to philosophy, and she went on to form her doctoral thesis around the subject. Naturally, this came as no surprise to her.

When Ami was twenty-seven years old, in the midst of writing her dissertation, she met Isra. Isra was gorgeous: petite, curvaceous, dark hair, thick lashes, and deep brown eyes that were almost black. She was also like Ami's favorite rock.

Throughout Ami's life, she had found comfort from objects that changed little through time. The oak tree in her parents' backyard was one. The granite boulder in her grandparents' garden was another. The boulder was particularly soothing since it was effectively unchanged on the timescale of Ami's life. It was a relief for her to cling to its rough surface and let that part of her mind rest.

Isra was like that rock.

Ami had seen her many times at the coffee shop where Isra worked. She had foreseen their failed, short-lived relationship, but a silent movie of her own future told her little about the other woman's life.

The first time they touched, hands brushing as Isra handed her a mug of hot chocolate, she saw Isra's future: an unending sameness. Not literally, of course. Isra lived, breathed, moved, took coffee orders, and wiped tables. She went home, had lovers (there was Ami herself), moved to other towns. But she never changed. Ami stood at the pick-up counter, steaming drink in hand, and hoped Isra couldn't see the shock on her face.

"Hi, I'm Ami," she blurted, trying to cover her confusion.

"What a beautiful name," Isra said politely. "Where are you from?"

"I'm Japanese, short for Amiko."

"You don't look Japanese," Isra said. Her smile took the sting from the comment.

"My Dad's from Japan. Mom's Ethiopian. Everyone says I look more like her."

Isra shrugged. "Either way, I think you're beautiful."

A few days later when the moment and the memory aligned, Ami asked her out, and Isra accepted. They first kissed under a full moon. Isra's lips tasted like cardamom and coffee. Ami was intoxicated and utterly at peace as she held Isra in her arms.

For two weeks, Ami enjoyed the romance and avoided the questions, but then it was time. She held Isra's hand as they meandered through the arboretum. Sunlight speckled the ground around them, and the breeze carried the astringent scent of eucalyptus. Birds chattered, and leaves rustled, but they were otherwise alone. No human ears would be privy to this conversation.

"What are you?" Ami asked.

"What do you mean?" Isra said, sounding puzzled.

Ami stopped walking, not letting go of the warm fingers entwined with her own, and forced Isra to a halt.

"You never change. You never age, or grow fatter or thinner. You'll never have a gray hair. You just go on and on and on." Ami's voice faded as she drifted into the bliss of timelessness. "It's wonderful."

Surprise. Suspicion. Doubt. Fear.

Isra had an expressive face.

"How do you know?" she whispered, fingers tightening painfully.

Ami took a deep breath and said the words aloud for the first time in her life. "I can see the future of anything—or anyone—I touch."

Isra stared at her for a moment and then demanded, "So tell me when mine will end!"

"I don't know," Ami said, taken aback. "I can't see past my own death."

"You're lying! You're going to kill me!"

"What? No. Don't be crazy. I could never—"

"Please!" Isra released Ami's hand and grabbed her by the shoulders. "Just do it!" she said, shaking Ami with all her tiny might.

She pried Isra's hands away as gently as she could. "I'm sorry."

Tears pooled in two sets of dark eyes.

"Go to hell!"

"Why?" Ami said, her voice raw.

"You really have to ask?" Isra cried a bit. "I've been alive so long, I can't even remember how I got this way. I'm tired. So incredibly tired."

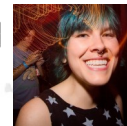
"I'm sorry," Ami said again. "I wish there was another way I could help. Stay with me," she pleaded, ignoring the part of her brain that told her the truth, that she would never see Isra again. "Maybe I can make it better—somehow."

Isra sighed. The desperate anger in her face melted into desolation. "You'd be the worst of all. With anyone else, I can fake it. Have a fight, leave, start over. I can pretend to be someone new. I'm even good at lying to myself, but with you? I'd have to face the truth. Every time I looked at you, touched you—no. I can't do it. Good-bye, Ami."

Isra stood up on her toes and kissed Ami on the cheek. Ami's heart ached. She had seen this moment, knew it would come, but it still hurt.

When Isra had gone, Ami walked over to the pond and pulled her favorite stone out of her pocket, one she'd chipped off her grandparent's boulder. A great grey slab jutted over the murky water, and she lay down on its sun-warmed surface. For once, she didn't care who saw her or what they thought. For once, life had surprised her, just a little bit, and she held tightly to that feeling. She closed her eyes, breathed deeply, and imagined the aroma of cardamom and coffee.—*STARKNESS*

SALACIOUS VEGAN CRUMBS



BEST OF 2018 EDITION!!!

Best New Recipe—Sam Turnbull's (It Doesn't Taste Like Chicken) chocolate chip cookies or Lisa Lee's (The Viet Vegan) seriously fluffy pancakes

Best New Snack—Siete Nacho flavored chips—like vegan Doritos!

Best New Sweet Treat—Almond and coconut Reddi-Wip (at Kroger!)

Best New Vegan Cheese—Violife Just Like Parmesan Wedge (Whole Foods)

Best New Vegan Cookbook—The Hot For Food cookbook—the seitan is my favorite seitan recipe yet!

Best Meal—Late nite Frito pie from Arlo's in Austin, sitting at a picnic table with a bunch of other DTB dirtbags

Worst Other Best Meal—Buffalo nachos and a chai milkshake from Spiral Diner in Dallas while on the Xops and Charm Bomb big band family vacation.

Best New Vegan Restaurant Find—THREE types of vegan hotdogs at Dat Dog on Northgate!

Best Vegan Burger in Town—Impossible Burger at Hopdoddy, NOW with vegan mayo and cheese

Worst Vegan Burger In Town—The one at Grub because they don't freakin' have one.

Best Accidentally Vegan Surprise—The vegan tamale booth at the Punk Rock Flea Market at Revolution.

Best Vegan-Friendly Bath & Body—Acure and Love Beauty & Planet tie here for their great level of accessibility and quality!

Favorite Vegan YouTube Channel—Four way tie between Gaz Oakley's Avant Garde Vegan, Gretchen Price's Gretchen's Vegan Bakery, Lauren Toyota's Hot for Food, and Lisa Lee's The Viet Vegan.

The Great Cookbook Ban of 2018 is officially over, so be on the lookout for some new cookbook reviews and guides this year!

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—KATIE KILLER

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UNHEALTHY KATIE TO HEALTHY KATIE

There used to be a lot more of me. Like, 50lbs more. My old roommate and I ate so much Freebird's, we were in the running to be part of their new ad campaign. I couldn't really fit into any of the clothes at the store I worked at. I had literally never done a full push up, and I actually LOST my freshmen 15 when I went to college because I had been that sedentary in high school. I was Un! Health! Y!

A lot of my friends here don't know that. They think I'm just a regular normal sized person that just eats and drinks whatever and stays normal sized. Pffft, yeah, I wish! I went from 190 at my peak during my junior year in college to 115 at my lowest a couple of years later, and have settled at a comfortable weight for the past seven years or so. I've been through disordered eating, criticism from friends and family, my own severe anxieties about my size, being made fun of for choosing to eat a vegetable over a hunk of cheese, and literally running away from group workout classes. It's a lot, and it's always going to be on my back, so, you know, there's the context.

I want all of my friends to be healthy and feel good and feel good about themselves, and I get really into it when one of them tells me they're about to embark on a new diet or fitness regime because I've struggled through it myself. Here's some good junk to help you along!

1. Get a good baseline of your eating habits right now! I know you think you have a good idea of the calories you consume and the exercise you do (or don't do), but I promise you, if you're not already tracking that stuff, you don't. The losing weight side of this is purely calories in VS. calories out, so grab yourself a free calorie tracking app like MyFitnessPal and track EVERYTHING you eat and drink for a normal week. You'll be able to see a true picture of your diet, and you'll probably also be depressed by how many of your calories come from booze. The truth hurts!

2. Set up calorie goals! If you're trying to lose weight, you're gonna have to cut calories. 500 calories cut per day means a pound of fat lost per week, which is sort of the max that most people aim for. If you have an app to help you track calories, it'll let you enter your weight and offer calorie goals for losing one lb, half lb, etc per week. Choose your goal, and then look back at the week you tracked your diet. You should be able to pick out a couple things to either cut out or cut down on to help you come closer to your goals. When I started out, I stopped buying Cokes, and then fries with my Whataburger—and that was just because I was cheap, not trying to lose weight!

3. Start working in some exercise! Believe it or not, exercise isn't 100% necessary to lose weight, but it'll let you eat more and it'll make you feel great. Nothing about this needs to be hard or intimidating. Walking is a great start, and your puppers will thank you for the extra W-A-L-Ks. If you find that you do well in group exercise classes, do that! If you're already a gym rat, keep it up! I

subscribe to a streaming service called Daily Burn that has completely new live total body workouts everyday, and an entire library of programs from HIIT to strength-focused to kickboxing to recovery workouts like yoga, and it's taken away the stress of trying to come up with a workout plan or be weird and anxious about going to a gym. Just find something that works for you, track your calories burned as best you can (accuracy is your friend!), and don't feel bad about cycling through different approaches—know when something isn't working for you!

4. Make it sustainable! Eating the cabbage only diet might make you lose weight, but it won't keep it off, because even though you've lost the weight, you still haven't figured out how to eat like a person at your goal weight. For me, this is stuff like splitting orders of fries, bulking up pasta with more veggies and proteins and fewer noodz, and yeah, cutting out weeknight booze except for special occasions. Your little habit changes don't have to be these exactly, I just do this stuff because it's easy for me, makes a big difference in the long run, and I don't feel like I'm missing out on anything. Small or easy changes over time are what you're aiming for!

5. Exercise doesn't have to be exercise! The important part is to get your heart rate up for half an hour or more a few times a week. If you're one of the many dirtbags who's relocated to the Rockies, go hiking! If you're in derby, you're already getting in some great practical workouts. If you like riding bikes, work a little more into your everyday—ride up to HEB to pick up stuff for dinner, ride with your friends to the bar. These are all super practical and great for you, and don't have the stress of needing to be worked into your schedule like a 6 AM pre-work sweat session. Plus things like hiking and derby are social activities, so your brain doesn't feel so much like you're being forced to workout.

6. Train your brain! You'll probably have a really great first week or two starting out with your little changes on your way to a healthier lifestyle. But then, you'll hit a plateau, or things will ramp up in your workout program and you'll get discouraged. Maybe the scale will stop moving. Maybe you start feeling shameful when you chow down on chips and queso. Don't stress! Don't make yourself feel bad! If this goes slower than you anticipated, so what! It's going! Don't let yourself shame yourself for not meeting a goal in time, or skipping a workout, or for gaining Loud!Fest pounds. You may have a date for your weight loss goal, but in reality, this is a lifelong thing. Keep it in perspective! This is really hard, and I still find myself going through a cycle of stressing, reminding myself it doesn't really matter, and chilling out about it. CHILLING OUT IS SO HARD!

Ok, that's all the junk I got for you. Go conquer your resolutions and get healthy and strong and learn to knit and cook and be better at talking to people and manage your budget and get 8 hours of sleep each night! — KATIE KILLER

STAFF PICKS FOR BEST OF 2018

Best New Band —Flasher

Came across this band online and checked out their debut *Constant Image*. From the first song in I could tell I would dig it, then the second track "Pressure" had me completely sold in no-time with its gang vocals and perfectly placed tom hits and bass flourishes. This album is a stellar mix of new wave punk, shoegaze, synths, and hooks.

Best Album Listened on Repeat—The Ex-Optimists *Drowned In Moonlight*

Not brown-nosing on this one—despite hearing the songs numerous times live for a year or so beforehand I was floored at how much ass this album kicks. It's been cranked up in my car numerous times while traversing the Houston streets, sang in the shower, and had its title track aped via my Les Paul and tiny apartment amp.

Best Speakeasy Discovered—Volstead's Emporium Always on the lookout for a good speakeasy when I'm visiting a new city. This one is located in a hip area of Minneapolis, entrance found by walking around to a back alley and banging on a big metal door. Great cocktails and classy vibe inside, and a hidden room found by walking through a telephone booth.

Best Bar Stumbled Upon—Leon's Lounge There's always more places to find back home, too. This one rescued us from a bad karaoke night at the Maple Leaf. Leon's is an old school chill spot in the midst of the Midtown riff raff, complete with stained glass windows, the right amount of dim lighting, a solid beer selection, and Stones on the soundtrack.

Best Surprising Meal—BCK Kitchen Just when I was expecting some average American food I might have found the second best burger in Houston (after Lankford's). Located in The Heights, BCK looks snootier than it is with its valet parking and yuppie crowd. Sit at the bar and order some of their locally-themed cocktails. Also, the stuffing mushrooms appetizer is a must have.

Best Show Played—LOUD!FEST Obviously there wasn't going anything that topped LOUD!FEST—this was the one show in 2018 that Yaupon played with some balls and really rocked while keeping things at the right balance between tight and loose. Even got to bang out a T. Rex cover to close the set, and it's always the best to play for so many friends.

Best Show Attended—Shame/Snail Mail/Bat Fangs at Satellite Bar I went to this show to see Bat Fangs, who delivered the rock as and won over the earlybirds. Snail Mail was good enough for a normal indie band to silence typical Houston chatter. Then Shame (unknown to me to that point) blew the roof off the place, playing brutal punk like a modern day Wire and getting me into the pit with business clothes on like Jason Segel.

Best Rock Read—Just Around Midnight

A great read for fans of classic rock, this book follows popular music and rock journalism through the sixties and makes the argument that critics hold a lot of responsibility for transforming rock into "white music" by the end of the decade, even as black and white artists influenced each other in sound and style.

Best Dramatic Film—First Reformed Being one of those guys who used to have Taxi Driver in his Top 5, this highly anticipated film did not disappoint. Ethan Hawke delivers an award-worthy performance of a downtrodden priest and his path on a crisis of faith, and the story weaves together weighty themes of institutionalism, climate change, and substance abuse in an intimate and personal way.

Best Movie That Made Me Cry—Won't You Be My Neighbor *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* was a small slice of the pie in my television watching as a child, but this documentary is so well done that I couldn't help but shed some tears in the theater. The story shows his motivations for making programming that spoke to children as intelligent people and a man who genuinely sought to make the world a better place.

Best Movie That Scared The Shit Out of Me—Hereditary Horror films are not usually my forte, but this one got enough buzz that I had to see it and then stuck with me for weeks after. Well-paced with lots of small foreshadowing details and smart twists made it unique from recent genre fare, and the climax got my whole body to cringe. Toni Collette deserves a Best Actress award for this.

Best Baseball Moment—the feels 2018 was filled with numerous Adrián Beltré moments of sentimental hijinks. Perhaps none was better than his final game at Seattle, when he and longtime rival-buddy King Felix hugged over the dugout railing after Beltré grounded out into a double play and ran over to him. Baseball will lose some joy next year with Adrián no longer manning the hot corner. —TODD HANSEN

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18 best beers I drank in 2018 in no particular order

- Honey Please, **Armadillo Ale Works**, Denton, TX
- National Park Hefeweizen, **Big Bend Brewing Co**, Alpine, TX
- We Are Your Overlords, **Braindead Brewing**, Dallas, TX
- Rocket Fuel, **8th Wonder Brewing**, Houston, TX
- Yellow Rose, **Lone Pint**, Magnolia, TX
- Big Bad Baptist, **Epic Brewing**, Denver, CO
- Bomb!, **Prairie Ales**, Tulsa, OK
- Headroom, **Trillium**, Boston, MA
- Black Butte XXX, **Deschutes Brewery**, Bend, OR
- NW DIPA Citra, **Cloudwater Brew Co.**, Manchester, England
- King Julius, **Tree House**, Charlton, MA
- Woods & Waters, **Maine Beer Co**, Freeport, ME

- Kentucky Pumpkin Barrel Ale, **Lexington Brewing & Distilling Co.**, Lexington, KY
- Firestone Lager, **Firestone Walker Brewing Co.**, Paso Robles, CA
- Jai Alai IPA, **Cigar City Brewing**, Tampa, FL
- Cloud Catcher, **Odell Brewing Co**, Fort Collins, CO
- Hazy Little Thing IPA, **Sierra Nevada**, Chico, CA
- Lone Star Beer, **Lone Star Brewing Co.**, San Antonio, TX

—STARKNESS

=====

Best show of 2018—Electric Light Orchestra. This could have gone wrong for any number of reasons: ELO haven't had a hit in the states since the Early 1980's. Jeff Lynne's Orchestra Driven power pop could have easily have come off as irrelevant; or worse overblown pretentious crap (which did happen to ELO from time to time; even in their gravy days). Or Lynne could have done it on the cheap and presented the hits as a sterile parade of "hits" with MIDI strings and the like. However, ELO pulled it off with enough majesty to remind you why those tunes were hits in the first place.

Runner up: "Lets party like its 1980 something (or 1970 something or 1990 something)". There were a ton of old acts hitting the stage again this year: Dream Syndicate, OMD, Face To Face, Utopia, Stryper, Quiet Riot, Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Culture Club, The Alarm, Killing Joke, PIL, Simple Minds, Smoking Popes. This was by no means all of them on the nostalgia bandwagon; just the ones I caught. Most of these shows were at least competent or better. Killing Joke, the Alarm and PIL were as good this time around as they were in their heyday. The cheesy acts (all the 1980s metal acts) were as cheesy now as they were back then so they are continuing to meet specifications I'm conflicted as to whether this much nostalgia is a good thing or rather sad and pathetic. If you think it is the latter than count this as the worst of 2018.

Worst of 2018—The Political Climate circa now. Unfortunate lesson learned: Tribalism is infectious. I wish the fate of the country didn't have to be a proving ground for the ridiculous extent that people will hang onto their most cherished illusions— whether Democrat or Republican. Whatever, the case— assuming there is a country if I again in 2019—here is wishing you the best.—RENTED MULE

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Best Show I Saw—Jawbreaker Reunion show
Best Show I Played—Screaming Females and Kitten Forever @ The Stafford
Worst Show—The one Charm Bomb played at Rudz and the band booking it didn't bother to book any local bands so literally no one showed up
Best Boy in the Neighborhood—Toonoces
Softiest Boy in the Neighborhood—Toonoces
Prettiest Boy in the Neighborhood—Toonoces

Best Girl in the Whole Wide World—Zoot
Best Cat Toys Pull Out from Under the Sofa at Once—8.5

Weirdest Thing—The composition of my boogers changed when we went to Colorado and hasn't changed back.

Best TV Discovery—Letterkenny. Now get to chorin', pitter patter!

Best Beer—Uber Slayer from Jagged Mountain Brewing in Denver, CO, which is probably the most indescribably fantastic beer I've ever had.

Worst Beer—Shiner S'mores, she said confidently without ever trying it

Best Thing—Triple tie between Dirtbags Do Jawbreaker, my first real big kid vacation, and good family stuff — seester getting her dream job out west and brother reopening his hobby shop

Worst Thing: Kelly moving to North Carolina and my brother and his family moving so far away.

—KATIE KILLER

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Best Show of 2018 — Jawbreaker in a field in Austin. Even if it was godawful hot, the sound was atrocious, and the show was over by 10pm. Runner up: Darwin's Finches at Revolution. Friends been telling us for years that we need to make shows with those fools and now I know why.

Biggest Surprise of 2018 — Not only that Charles had a good idea but that I actually took him up on it and Benghazi Osbourne became a thing. Not just a thing but a *good* thing. I learned how to play drums sitting on the side of my bed air drumming to the Rush, KISS, Zeppelin, Hendrix, and Sabbath cassettes on my shitty fake Walkman. Playing those Ozzy Sabbath songs with Brammer, Brando, and Charles and actually pulling it off...that sure was a beautiful surprise.

Biggest Stroke To the Ego of 2018 — People were awfully kind to me this year, between the reaction to the new Ex-Optimists album, the kind words and actions to me on my way out of town, and the accommodation of my very long goodbye. Wonko and Katies deserve a medal in that regard.

Single Worst Thing One Could Do in 2018—I'm being somewhat facetious, but turning on TV news or reading the news online or wherever was a big fucking boner killer. I survived the Dubya era with a twinkle in the eye and a little bit of humor. Yeah, our country had just been through the ringer but the Obama era began that healing process. Never ask if anything can get any worse than it already is, because it always can and will get worse. Much worse. I got no humor, no chill, no cool, and certainly no twinkle in the eye trying to fathom the depths of Donald Trump's bullshit and the endless Clorox'ing of his actions by his political base. We really really really could use another healing presidency in 2020.

CONT. -->

Best Beer of 2018 — New Main Brewing **Nueces County Nut Brown** knocked my goddamn socks off and I've been largely barefooted like a trustfund hippie ever since. A close second goes to **Milk & Cookies**, an amazing winter stout brewed on golden raisins, vanilla, and cinnamon by Wicked Weed Brewing. Surprisingly the bourbon barrel aged version does not really improve on the original.

Best Thing I Learned From Living At Killerberg Manor — Roasted Brussels sprouts are rad as fuck and one can never overuse paprika. Thanks K2T2! — **KELLY MINNIS**

Because my internal organs appear designed by Marcel Duchamp on a triple-dog dare, I slept and farted and cradled pugs in upright-fetal positions more this past year than I care to admit. For these reasons, I'm glad to slowly crush 2018—like a bathtub dwelling cockroach, listening gleefully for the pop that is his soul-bag bursting—beneath my bare heel. Regardless, 2018 bore a few redeeming pleasantries. Here's 18 pleasure diffusing albums grouped unnecessarily (and un-commissioned) by sixes.

SIX 2018 ALBUMS THAT MADE ME GLAD TO STILL BE ALIVE (aka. my top albums of 2018):

1. Charm Bomb's *It's Just a Formality*: Yo, that ain't yarn on the cover! More importantly, tracks two "Always Mean" and five "Hit the Road" lift this entire record above sheer nepotism and make the whole damn thing ridiculously repeatable. I kept this sucker close to my Protege's compact disc player all year, never knowing when I'd need Kiri to "wooo-ah-oooo" me some lady power. More please!

2. The Ex-Optimists' *Drowned in Moonlight*: If any nepotism's to be found here, it's for Katie Killer's musical prowess. This record—to borrow a Beyonce-ism—slays. But that final track—"Sweet Away", Wonko's magnum opus—especially fulfills it's title and makes me turn out the lights. Just let it wash you out to somewhere swimmy and un-sober, doing musically what beer does best.

3. Mammoth Grinder's *Cosmic Crypt*: According to Spotify, this was my most played album of the year. We've got Power Trip's drummer Chris Ulsh here on vocals and guitar being too loud and too fast and too angry—so, you know, just right. But be careful! Tracks like "Blazing Burst" or "Superior Firepower" can stick in your ear like popcorn husks in your gum-line. Sure, you can try to tongue it out with something more appeaseable, but why would you? Life is too short—and so is this record. I've barely listed my complaints and grievances before it ends. Oh well, replay!

4. Dodsrit's *Spirit Crusher*: There's something wildly Lewis Carroll about this one-man wonderland of a record, about the way it throws you down a crusty hole, performs it's title on you, and reminds you that grand, beautiful adventures can be found in perverse despair. I'm for it! Is this dude singing/hollering in Swedish? I'm for it!

5. Windhand's *Eternal Return*: Hey, hey now, friends, let's just skip all these lame squabbles about where this new record ranks in Windhand's canon and which IS their best record (ah-hem, *Soma*)—let's skip all that there nonsense and genuflect on the sheer grooviness of this here opening track, "Halcyon". What's that? Am we dancing to Windhand? Am I'm shaking my size-28 Levi's waist to Windhand? Dadgum right I am! This sucker makes me wanna bob my head all the way to the dirty

woods so I can bury something secret and barely breathing. Oh, too dark? Then Windhand's not for you, son.

6. Pistol Annies' *Interstate Gospel*: Yeah, so a confession is probably in order here. You see, I've got this weakness for plain vanilla country pop, especially when it features Miranda Lambert's can't-give-a-boot-scurf lyrics and some sweet, sweet corn-mash feminine harmonies. The first three tracks here are already worn laser thin on my Target purchased CD, with that third number, "Best Years of My Life", comprising the kind of melodramatic balladry that make me circle the block a few too many times while biting my lower lip (*not* in Green Day fashion, you perv).

SIX 2018 ALBUMS THAT MAKE ME HOPE FOR MORE ALIVE-TIME (aka. new albums that tickled me but got away):

1. Tribulation's *Down Below*: I'm just so glad that somebody in our post-*Twilight* world can still make vampires and creatures of the night inviting. *Down Below* is a beautiful record, almost too beautiful, so much so that it usually sends me back to Tribulation's debut, *The Horror*, which is not beautiful by any means, and therefore better than their new synth-heavy, Vitamin-D deficient goth rock.

2. Immortal's *Northern Chaos Gods*: While arguably one of the most perfect records of 2018, I just couldn't stomach being yelled at often enough to eek this into my Top Six. Does that mean I miss a froggier voiced Abbath at Immortal's helm? Well, sure. But Demonaz spins a Nordic battle tale with convictions aplenty. Maybe I just felt a bit more wilted than warrior-ready this year. Sigh.

3. The Sword's *Used Future*: Alright, y'all, it's time to just (wo)man up and accept the fact that The Sword who cranked our (lady) nads barely a decade ago is no more. This is a new Sword. This is a swankier, swagger stained, lounge van and Purple Kush puffed Sword. But—eh, eh!—that ain't necessarily a bad thing. Though they've traded in their metal lipped "Iron Swans" for a "Twilight Sunrise" (that title alone sounds hippy-dippity) they've redeemed themselves on *Used Future* with a newfound—how you say?—carnal allure. No doubt, "Don't Get Too Comfortable" is, in my opinion, 2018's sexiest song about the apocalypse. Them guitars alone can pillow talk me all the way to Kingdom come.

4. Panopticon's *The Scars of Man on the Once Nameless Wilderness (1)*: Oh man. There is so much happening here. I'll try to condense. This dude from Minnesota, A. Lunn, cut two records simultaneously this year. Two records that he recorded almost single-handedly. Part 1 is comprised mostly of traditional black metal, interspersed with acoustic guitar numbers featuring the sounds of fire consuming wood. Part 2 is old school Americana. Together it's a big package from a dude you can tell makes art so he doesn't end up shriveled in an abandoned school bus clinging to a Tolstoy novel in the Alaskan wilderness. God bless him. And I love that about him. Personally, I dig Part 1. Lunn may be from Minnesota, but he's got Norwegian bloods in him somewhere.

5. Jeff Tweedy's *WARM*: Confession: I've never liked Wilco, even when I was supposed to. And I've never asked Jeff Tweedy into my heart, mainly because his disciples drive me agnostically bananas. But, with this here *WARM*, ol' Jeff has released the saddest dadgum record of the year, and (as you know by now) I lap up the sad-saps like a hot kitten to a creamicle. And hey, hey, where was this record when I was hella anemic and

staring holes into the walls as deep as my tush caved the couch cushions this summer? I might have learned the banjo if I'd had this record to buoy me back to shore. Or not.

6. Lana Del Rey's *Venice Bitch*: 2017's *Lust for Life* was about 15 tracks too long, and it contained 16 tracks. This new single is about ten minutes too short, and it's already nearly ten minutes long. I will never understand Lana Del Rey's approach to song-writing or album-releasing, but I'll chase down everything she tosses our way, searching always for bits as perfect as this and "Mariners Apartment Complex", also released this year. By the way, we had Lana Del Rey tickets for the day I went under the knife. Pour one out for your boy.

SIX NON-2018 ALBUMS THAT PROVE I'M A LATE BLOOMER (aka. the albums that found me out of time):

1. Bully's *Losing* (2017): Kelly and I were sipping stouts and playing YouTube jukebox when he cued the third track from this record, the 90's guitar slick "Running". I was bummed (naturally) and vitamin deficient (cured), so the nostalgia of my high school existential ennui, woven fine by Alicia Bognanno's intimately whispy and bellow peeled vocals, wrapped me like good plaid flannel and a Michael Jordan tee. Overall, *Losing* punches cover-to-cover with equally comforting *mehs* and *whatevs*, bringing the past into fuzzed focus, making me question what the crap I rocked last year that outshined Bully.

2. P. J. Harvey's *Rid of Me* (1993): That was tenth grade. That was Alice in Chains and Faith No More and the beginnings of a bizarre but short-lived Mariah Carey obsession. In those days, we traded CDs and cassette tapes at school, burning half our collections from one another, which meant we were limited by crap record store options, top 40 radio, and the limited tastes of our peers. Stranded in that South Arkansas musical wasteland, overly mellowed and melodramatic by my generation and my tiny stature, I somehow missed P. J. Harvey's raw and glass-gargled inception—that is, until about a month ago. Now, I'm convinced Alanis Morissette and Jewel would have held no sway over me had I discovered P. J. Harvey's *Rid of Me* in the throes of my pubescence. Oh well. Harvey arrived just in time for my mid-life puberty—it's *not* a crisis!

3. Gloria Estefan's *Mi Tierra* (1993): Found this sucker at a garage sale this summer for a quarter. By track two, the title track, I could barely keep the car on the road. This record is on fire! The horns! The percussion! Those vocals! I played "Mi Tierra" in class one day and one gal had the nerve to say, "Ugh! How do you even know what she's saying?" I said, "Girl, when Gloria Estefan's at the mic, she can say whatever she wants!" Fire! Fire, I tell you!

4. Kenny Burrell and John Coltrane (1963): Straight bop and quartet jazz took the backstage to jazz fusion this year, but the one jazz record that stole my attention was this self-titled sax and guitar driven session, with Tommy Flanagan on piano and Paul Chambers popping the bass. Coltrane was criticized in reviews for holding back a bit here, allowing Burrell to shine, but, in my opinion, this is when Coltrane is at his best: stripping down, coupling with other musicians, pulling them forward, keeping pace with the whole band. I've only ever heard Coltrane this measured on *Duke Ellington & John Coltrane*, recorded the year before this collaboration with Burrell. The stand-out track here is "Why Was I Born?", a mellow, perfectly pitched gin-and-tonic duet between the title figures. Lord, this is good making-up after the big fight kinda music!

5. Joe Farrell's *Canned Funk* (1974): Jazz fusion was my gospel music this year. And jazz saxophonist/flautist Joe Farrell was to my 2018 what Chick Corea was to my 2017: an evangelical, musical reminder to look to the hills for Hope is on the way. Between *Canned Funk* and *Moon Germs* (which is technically more hard-bop than fusion) it's tough to remain in Sheol when Farrell's at the pulpit. His funkiness swims in fusion infested waters, and I—for one—am for it.

6. Modest Mouse's *No One's First and You're Next* (2009): Have I told you that the wife and I walked out of our wedding to Modest Mouse's "Float On"? Yeah, just hang around. I tell everyone repeatedly like it's my one claim to cool. Social awkwardness demands you find one good anecdote to lean on fully like bowling lane bumpers. But, lo, I digress. "Guilty Cocker Spaniels" here features my new favorite Isaac Brock vocal track—"I drew a blank/we put it in a frame"—twirled on the edges by a *Bob's Burger* like guitar twang, right before bursting into a bass and rhythm guitar rippling parachute cacophony. Songs like this make me want to renew my vows just so I can exit on a fresh anecdote—**KEVIN STILL**

2018 was my year for growth. It was actually a very difficult and hard year in the beginning but that's what made it wonderful. Growth is actually quite difficult and can be painful, but in the end it is quite beautiful. 2018 was the year I was finally able to attain and maintain sobriety for the first time in my life. It was hard at first but god damn it was the very best thing that has ever happened to me. I began a new career and developed a relationship with a very special mentor that continues to teach and educate me not just with her experience and know how but also with her heart. Because of her I'd adopt a herd of mommies. I'm now surrounded by very strong and powerful women that care for me very much. The person aiding me in my journey of sobriety is the best thing ever. I've never felt like someone just knew me so intricately so immediately. She has really helped me as I've gone through my growing pains of sober life and I can attest she may have had a hand in being one of the single persons to keep me on the straight and narrow. My friendships have grown far more intimate and caring than ever before. My budding friendship with a group of B/CS women has got me through some difficult times and made me the happiest I've ever been. They've been one of the better things to happen to me in 2018. I look at them as sisters. My dude friends here in Houston have also become very close to me and I was very fortunate to ring in the new year with them. They have and will always be my brothers. My ex and I are still working on our friendship and enjoyed an amazing Christmas Day with both of our families and then spent a couple days hanging out happier than we'd ever been before. I developed so many new relationships this year and feel the most comfortable in my skin as I've ever felt. I have so many people in my life that care as much about me as I do them and for that I can say I am humbled. 2018 had some moments that hurt. Some moments that were very sad. I said goodbye to a romantic relationship I wasn't ready for it to end but I did begin to evolve and now I have a best friend. I had some people pass away. I had to close the door on many things I didn't want to or didn't think I was ready for, but to say it was a bad year would be wrong. Yeah, it was hard but it certainly made me better. I'm doing great. I feel great. I feel so
CONT. -->

knowing it'd get me where I am now.—*CREEPY HORSE*

For those of you who have read my reviews, you may be surprised at the ordering I have here. My album ratings are based on my first impressions, and I attempt judge the music according to its genre. This list is based on which albums I enjoyed the most in 2018.

10. Skeletal Remains – *Devouring Mortality*. This death metal piece deviates slightly from the band's original sound with a fast-paced and technical approach which is not as easy to digest. It's certainly not the best Skeletal Remains has put out, but it's not a bad record and makes for good head-banging.

9. Breaking Benjamin – *Ember*. This record is BB's tried and true method put into practice, however, *Ember* has much more filler songs than previous records. Nonetheless, there are plenty of tracks that will get the listener singing along. A good entry into the band's discography, but not great.

8. Dödsrit – *Spirit Crusher*. "Bleak" and "hopeless" are words that accurately describes Dödsrit's sophomore offering, which perfectly balances black metal and crust punk. Compared to the band's debut release, the songs are somewhat less memorable and lack a ray of hope, but the mood of hopeless surrender to the inevitable void is communicated perfectly.

7. Hoth – *Astral Necromancy*. Hoth distinguishes themselves from other black metal acts by creating a melodic black metal paradox, which is both raw yet clean, and fresh yet kvlt. This method creates an atmosphere that is perfect for musical story-telling, and *Astral Necromancy* is masterfully done both musically and lyrically despite the sound not capturing the mood of a chaotic, journey in endless directions that the band wanted to present.

6. Exmortus – *The Sound of Steel*. Classical music never dies, it is simply reborn, but many would never think of it being reborn in thrash. *The Sound of Steel* is an epic piece of neo-classical thrash filled with tales of sword and sorcery, fist-pumping anthems, and very approachable technicality that isn't overdone. In other words, this album is not a craft ale, but it's a refreshing cheap beer.

5. Cancer – *Shadowed Grippd*. This is a straight-up death metal record with no bullshit to spare. Harkening back to the early days when death metal possessed strong thrash metal roots, Cancer has awoken from their dormant state and has had a monstrous recurrence from the bowels of the underground.

4. Dagon – *Back to the Sea*. Dagon has returned with yet another thrash-infused melodic death metal masterpiece. Though keeping true to their original sound, they

have branched out in terms of lyricism and adapted historical and current events involving the ocean to their music. The songs are so well-written that it's hard to say any are fillers, though some are certainly superior to others.

3. Svavelvinter – *Mörkrets Tid*. This album is all over the place, musically. Prog? Check. Pop? Check. Black metal? Check. Melodic death metal? Check. Clean and growled vocals? Check! Christian Älvestam has once again proven he is a musical genius who is having fun and making the music he wants to make. Herr Joseph Hayden would approve.

2. Immortal – *Northern Chaos Gods*. Is Immortal still Immortal without Abbath? You bet they are! With Demonaz on guitar and vocals, the band has preserved their iconic sound and given fans a raw, primal, and unforgiving black metal album. With so much experimentation with black metal, it is bands like Immortal that remind metalheads what black metal sounds like in its purest form.

1. Visigoth – *The Conqueror's Oath*. I'm a sucker for traditional heavy metal and hymns of battles long past, so it shouldn't be surprising that Visigoth's record ended up my number one. Jake's vocals are flawless, the guitar gallops are provoking, the melodies are altogether epic. This is an album I have listened to time and again. It may not be perfect, but the fact that it keeps me coming back for a listen speaks volumes for *The Conqueror's Oath*.—*CALEB MULLINS*

The best thing that happened this year is an individual thing. I – we – paid off the mortgage on the house. My wife and I decided it was time. So, for the first time since I started living away from my parents in the late Seventies (yes, I'm old), I am not paying rent or making a mortgage payment. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to feel. I remember reading about people decades ago who would have a mortgage burning ceremony when they paid off their home, but I don't think people do that anymore.

This year had plenty of things to offer in the form of good and bad: a favorite aunt died early in the year; a number of notables died, particularly Stephen Hawking whom I saw speak at A&M and author Ursula LeGuin whose science fiction and fantasy I read for decades; the president managed to not blow us up; and plenty of good music came out including albums from Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Jamie Lin Wilson, and the Great American Boxcar Chorus.—*MIKE L. DOWNEY*

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STILL READING CURATES 2018



I have two spots in my house where most of my reading is performed. Downstairs, near the wife's Young Living diffuser (make mine Bergamot) and my turntable, I can sit an entire day on the north-end of our love-seat, within reach of a small drink holding table, flanked by at least one pug curled on a fleece blanket to my right. I like this spot because it faces our back patio window where I can see squirrels and the neighbor's cats muck about through small fits of black wasps, black-dropped by the green sway of water oak trees above the fence and across the street. Upstairs, I begin most mornings in an armed recliner situated between my desk and the wall, backed by my bookcase that holds DVDs and reference materials (which I frequently reference). I don't sit in this spot as long. The view is limited, the air grows thin, but I still like the Hobbit-hole claustrophobic dare of squeezing myself with a book and hot mug into a small space in a small room.

The majority of my 2018 hours were waged in these two spots. For reasons both necessary and designed, I also spent the majority of this year alone. It's taken me 41 years to find peace with being alone, and I highly credit Jonathan Franzen—a gleeful fellow introvert and "serious reader"—for settling (ironically enough, through essays in his book *How To Be Alone*) this particular anxiety of mine. The extrovert is championed for her fun. The introvert is concerning for his isolation. For these reasons, I fought my introversion for years. The great blessing of my 2018 health crisis was finally dropping my shoulders, slumping into the couch, and finding the quiet sufficient.

This past year I switched my monthly 979Represent column from "Still Drinking", a monthly craft beer-log, to "Still Reading", an uncommissioned nerd's prideful celebration of isolated activities. I also figured that people would find their own beer pleasures just fine on their own. What I truly value—and hoped others would value and return to me as well—are curators. The world is vast, the titles in every artistic format out-number our days and hours, so we need advice knowing where to put our energies. Here in 979 Todd lives in film, Kelly hydrogenates his jukebox, Rented Mule attends punk shows, Jorge reports on where to most enjoyably lose weight, Mike and Caleb and Josh review new records, and Katie Killer wins readers over to the meatless side. Call it what you will, but this is pure curation at its best. My hours often feel long but they pour through my days quicker than I'd prefer, so I need all the trusted curation I can get. It's my hope—from my quiet couch and corner—to offer the same.

That being said, I read a great deal this year. Not all of it was good or bucket-list worthy, but much of it was. Below I've narrowed down the three books I read in 2018 that more people should at least have on their shelves, if not challenging their next set of moves. I'd be anxious to know what you may think about these titles, but, since I'm still celebrating isolation, we probably won't have a change to discuss

1. *The Shallows: What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains* by Nicholas Carr—*The Shallows* was the very first book I read this year, and it set the stage—as well as the standard—for everything else I read. Unfortunately, due to its titles and subject matter, *The Shallows* is a very difficult book to recommend. Usually, I receive groans and eye-rolls when I mention or recommend it. The truth, however, is that Carr is an amazingly engaging,

entertaining, and wise writer. He points the majority of fingers at himself, holding back from finger-wagging the youngsters in the room with their electronic devices, which keeps his writing from feeling preachy by any means. Carr's primary thesis here is not about the dangers of the internet as much as he warns against our natural temptation to submit the majority of our personal faculties (memory, creativity, entertainment) and daily utilities (research, writing, communication) to the internet. In doing so, Carr argues, we lose the muscle memory our brain's have gained over the years to engage tasks slowly and meaningfully, to be constructively bored, to be content within the quiet and with one another. Carr praises the internet for its advances and global connections, but he questions, within chapters that sit as interconnected individual essays, what might be at stake in our more and faster and the infinite. I've already planned to revisit this title, as well as to embark on Carr's latest title, *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us*, early in 2019.

2. *The Mars Room* by Rachel Kushner: I reviewed *The Mars Room* in our July pages. In that review, I mentioned the difficulty in recommending Kushner's novel about a single-mother and ex-dancer weathering life in a woman's prison. That difficulty stems from the dire subject matter, which many will too quickly and wrongly equate with Netflix's comedy series *Orange Is The New Black*, as well as the tragedy of Romy Hall's story. I hear that most people read to "escape the realities of life". Okay. You can do that. But there's also the opportunity to experience other realities, some that are uncomfortable but are so tangibly constructed to make our own day-in-and-day-out feel suddenly all the more welcomed, less desirous of escape. *The Mars Room* is the rare novel that sticks fully to your literary ribs. It hangs on. It doesn't let go. Months later, I think of it often, and I'm anxious it this new year to tackle Kushner's earlier works. She's the kind of writer that makes me want to quit everything, burn my journals, and devote my days to telling stories someone else will find difficult to recommend.

3. *The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath* by Leslie Jamison: This here's a tricky title to put on my Top Three Reads of 2018 because I have not finished it yet. However, even with nearly 100 pages to go, Jamison's memoir/exploration of fellowship recovery programs/ literary analysis of alcohol in the works of several sloppy drunk writers—all this intricately and seamlessly and compelling intertwined—has proven to be the most readable book of the year for me. I can't put the damn thing down. In fact, it hurts to write this here instead of read more pages. Jamison's drunkenness resonates far too intimately with my own, and her efforts to quit, to really mean it this time, to overthink and overfeel her way into sobriety feels painfully and embarrassingly familiar. But if this resonance weren't enough, Jamison brings Raymond Carver and Denis Johnson and David Foster Wallace and Stephen King and John Berryman and Marguerite Duras and Jean Rhys to the table as well, making this a nerdy smorgasbord of black-outs and hang-overs and second-attempts at life. I can't for the life of me fathom who I would recommend such a tome to, so I'll recommend it broadly. There is certainly not something here for everyone. There are only a few things here for the few people desperate enough to say, "Quit reading my shit out to the world!" But I'm one of those people. If you are too, may God grant us both the serenity...
— KEVIN STILL

HYDROGEN JUKEBOX

In 1994 I was a college radio DJ, which should come as a surprise to exactly no one. The college rock radio station was the closest place to a utopia the Generation X music geek could hope for, aside from the independent record store. College radio, free from commercial constraints of selling advertising and measuring listenership, balanced playlists of underrepresented artists and late night freeform programming where Throbbing Gristle, Hank Williams, The Smiths, and John Coltrane often rubbed right up against each other, sometimes in the same half hour set! Naturally I would be attracted to having access to such a thing, after many years of listening to college radio in Kentucky and Tennessee growing up.



At my humble radio station (WWHR 91.7 "New Rock 92") the station manager and music director recognized my keen interest and made me a music reviewer, sending me back to my dorm room nightly with gigantic stacks of CD's and vinyl to review for the radio station. I discovered many gems this way, some artists that to this day are held sacred in my heart. One day I recall picking up a CD with a collage on the cover consisting of a floor tom with a doodled-on drum head inserted into what looked like the Sahara desert. The band was called Guided By Voices and I thought that might have been the best band name I'd ever heard. The back photo showed a bunch of scuzzy dudes around a different floor tom and a song listing of 28 songs, but the album was only 40 minutes long! I was intrigued. This was *Alien Lanes*.

My first impression was that I was really unimpressed. It sounded like it was recorded in someone's garage by some dudes who absolutely could not pay attention to a song long enough to finish most of them, leaving fragments behind presented as full ideas with nonsensical lyrics, recorded poorly on a cassette boom box. I picked a couple of songs suitable for airplay ("Game of Pricks", "Closer You Are") and didn't think any more about it for probably another 18 months when I made the acquaintance of Jason Clark, otherwise known around here as Jay Satellite.

I could probably write a novelette about meeting Jay but I will instead focus on a very small but meaningful part of that day. Jay was a certified Guided By Voices fanatic. I was familiar with the one CD I reviewed and I expressed my opinion to Jay about that experience. He explained to me that to *truly* get GBV it helped to have someone curate the introduction, as their albums often slot amazing songs beside 40 second long atonal bursts of drunkenness. Jay promised the next time I came over to his and Marigold's place across from campus he

would set me up. And indeed he did. A Fuji 90-minute tape with typewritten track listings was prepared for me. One side included an assortment of songs from *Alien Lanes* with some songs switched out for stuff from the many 7" singles and EP's the band released around *Alien Lanes*, the other side of the tape took the same approach for *Bee Thousand*, the band's previous album.

Jason was right. The studio recordings of "Game of Pricks" and "My Valuable Hunting Knife" from the *Tigerbomb* EP (in my opinion probably the band's finest and most concise statement), the single versions of "Motor Away" and "I Am a Scientist" plus the excellent b-sides from those singles made GBV easier to digest. I wore that cassette out.

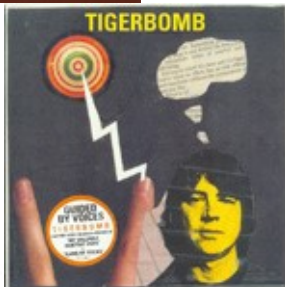
The band has a very interesting back story and had released over a dozen albums, singles, and EP's by the time I heard them. In the coming years I would begin to understand the cultish following for the band and come to grips with the kind of pointy-headed cooler-than-you

record collector smart-asses that often claimed the band for their own. I would spend hundreds of dollars trying to collect all the band's output, as each year often saw an album or two, a single or two, and EP or two, and tracks farmed out to compilations *each year* throughout much of the '90s and '00s, not to mention the side projects and solo albums. I eventually had to give up. What type of band could warrant such output? One that orbits around the genius songwriting of Robert Pollard, a former school

teacher and high school jock from Dayton, Ohio. His songs had the ring of classic rock to them: I could hear The Who, The Kinks, The Beatles, and '70s power pop that comeingled with jangly '80s college radio rock like R.E.M. *Bee Thousand*

and *Alien Lanes* can come off like an infomercial for '60s lost post-British Invasion pop, like an alternate *Nuggets*.

"Game of Pricks" is a whipsmart power pop song about the dangers of the recording industry (before the band had really graduated to the majors); the hi-hats in "Pimple Zoo" bark like seals while Pollard harmonizes "Sometimes I get the feeling/that you don't want me around" with himself, fading out before a minute elapses; "Closer You Are" combines nonsense with a jackhammer of a chorus "The closer you are, the quicker it hits ya/Try to be nice and look what it gets ya"; "Motor Away" is a classic song of wanting to get the fuck out of wherever you are, "Why don't you just drive away?/Speed on"; "My Valuable Hunting Knife" as presented on *Alien Lanes* is literally Pollard banging on a pots and pans but in its full form on *Tigerbomb* it truly reveals the metaphor "I want to start a new life/with my valuable



CONCERT CALENDAR

1/17—The Ugly Architect @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

1/18—Magic Girl, Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

1/19—STEPHSTEPHSTEPHFEST feat. Boy Wonder, The Thief & The Architect @ Revolution, Bryan. 9pm

1/24—Sissy Brown @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

1/25—From Parts Unknown, Mutant Love @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

1/26—Graham Jones, The Wild Tinderbox, GOODGIRL, Darwin's Finches @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

1/31—Black Catholics, Rickshaw Bilile's Burger Patrol @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/1—Mutant Love, The S chisms, Hammer Party, The Shutups @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

2/2—Khan, Electric Astronaut, The Vinous, Tongue Punch @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

2/9—North By North, Mad Rant, Mutant Love, Beige Watch @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

2/14—LUCA @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/16—Thread Atlas @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/21—Magic Girl, Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/23—The Shoobiedoobies @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

2/28—Cactus Flowers @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/2—Kristy Kruger @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/14—Sludge By Sludgefest feat. Iron Slut, Dirt Hooker, Benghazi Osbourne, The Shoobiedoobies @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

3/16—The Ex-Optimists, A Sundae Drive, The Prof Fuzz 63 @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

3/17—Altercation Hangover feat. Mutant Love, Super Cobras @ Revolution, Bryan. 2pm

3/21—Magic Girl, Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

hunting knife/It will not bust into tears/or it will not lose its appeal over years". There was some heady stuff buried underneath layers of tape hiss and poor editing. And *Bee Thousand*, the band's best album...well, that's for another day.

Once the curated version of these albums clicked for me, I was able to go back and appreciate the original albums as a whole. This approach was similar to the one where in I discovered Bob Dylan, needing the aid of a Dylan scholar (in this case it was a colleague of mine in the music department at Amazon) to guide me towards what he felt was the easiest way to absorb what was essentially great about the art in a way that made it easier to eventually appreciate the whole thing rather than just a portion of it. Once I got *Highway 61 Revisited* I could then get the other eras of Dylan too (well, except for some of those dreadful early '80s records). It took the easier digestion of Jay's GBV compilations to lure me in and then, once hooked, send me back to the original source with a much greater appreciation. This gets to the root of perhaps the biggest criticism of the band. Robert Pollard needs an editor and/or a producer in the worst way possible. In 2018 the band released an album, a live album, two EP's, and two singles; in 2019 the band expects *three* albums and two EP's. It is difficult to

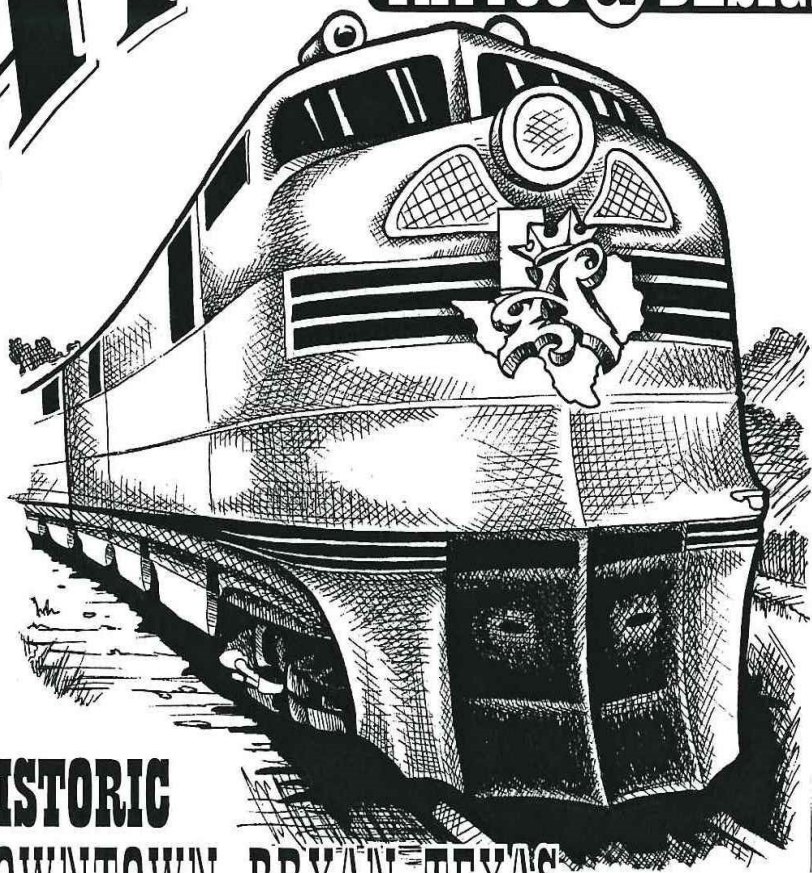
know where to start and, even for lifers, it is hard to stay interested and to keep up financially. GBV fans could greatly benefit from a subscription program or a 19th century style artist patronage. Honestly, even I as a hardcore fan often subscribe to the point of view that Pollard and the band could condense three good albums of material into one insanely great album. But that goes against the grain of the band's ethos: throw it all out there and see what sticks, and what sticks for one fan may not for another.

The collage on the cover of *Alien Lanes* should have prepared me for the contents of the album. The band cuts and pastes disparate things together to create something new. Pieces of rock, pop, noise pasted together, snatches of righteous rock riffs cut against an acoustic guitar that sounds like it might have rubber bands for strings, glimpses of a mighty singalong pop chorus that fades out before it can be fully absorbed, replaced by someone shouting through a megaphone inside a drum shell. It can be a frustrating listen, but once it clicks, it really does click and one becomes a GBV lifer like myself. I'm forever grateful to Jay for helping to break down this band for me. Otherwise *Alien Lanes* and *Guided By Voices* might have passed me by.

— KELLY MINNIS

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