

STOREPRESENT



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investment without investment - record reviews - 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 wheel werker

folks that did the other shit for us

mike l. downey - erin hill - caleb mullins -

haley richardson - starkness

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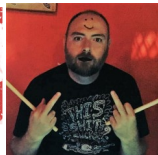
redchapterjubilee@yahoo.com

materials for review & bribery can be sent to:

979represent

3602 old oaks dr.

bryan, tx 77802



WELCOME 2 AGGIELAND

Late last year I was in a job interview at Western Carolina University. At one point during the day-long process I answered questions from a panel of faculty and staff members. A faculty member asked me if I could uphold the values of WCU, as they were quite different than those of my former employer, Texas A&M University. "I used to have a research partner who taught at A&M and that place is a cult," the faculty member said half-jokingly. Of course, I laughed it off and answered that a corporate culture is different than a person's individual culture and moved on. Yet I should've answered truthfully that yeah, if you look at Aggieland from the outside you could conclude that we all suffer from cult syndrome.


For the first ten years of our existence, each September would be *979Represent's* glorious Welcome To Aggieland issue, where we would pretend that our paper had some connection to the youths clambering into our towns for some of that higher education. Perhaps we could get to the ones who needed our freewheeling guide to the Brazos Valley, just to take comfort in knowing there were other dirtbags around here and they had a home away from home as long as they wanted it. Well, we've decided perhaps that an entire 20 pages of it was a bit much and, well, maybe we just don't care about you college chumps anymore.

That of course isn't true, we totally care. But mostly we've come to recognize just how much bandwidth Texas A&M sucks up in the Brazos Valley and that our humble little periodical has come to operate somewhat in spite of maroon and white rather than as a sort of satellite around it. Many of us make mortgage payments every month thanks to our individual affiliations with Texas A&M University. I remember when I first moved to College Station in 2006 and became involved with community radio. The person who trained volunteers told my crew that he had burned everything maroon he owned. I found that to be somewhat egregious at the time. Fast forward 13 years later and while I would not advance to that level of arson I understand that sentiment much more.

What I feel is best for us every September is for *979Represent* to continue to do what it does every month, which is provide a different perspective on what it is to survive and thrive in this godforsaken area code beneath the heel of the very large corps of cadet boot that is Texas, Texas, A-M-C. Man, I didn't even go to that school and I know its fight songs by heart. I assume Western Kentucky University had one while I was there but hell if I ever learned it. All of this is to say that we good on Aggie junk around this place. We're gonna get on with the non-Aggie stuff, showing you what else is going on around these parts that doesn't happen on Northgate or revolve around Kyle Field. If you are new to towns, man, we are sure glad as hell you have found us. — **KELLY MENACE**

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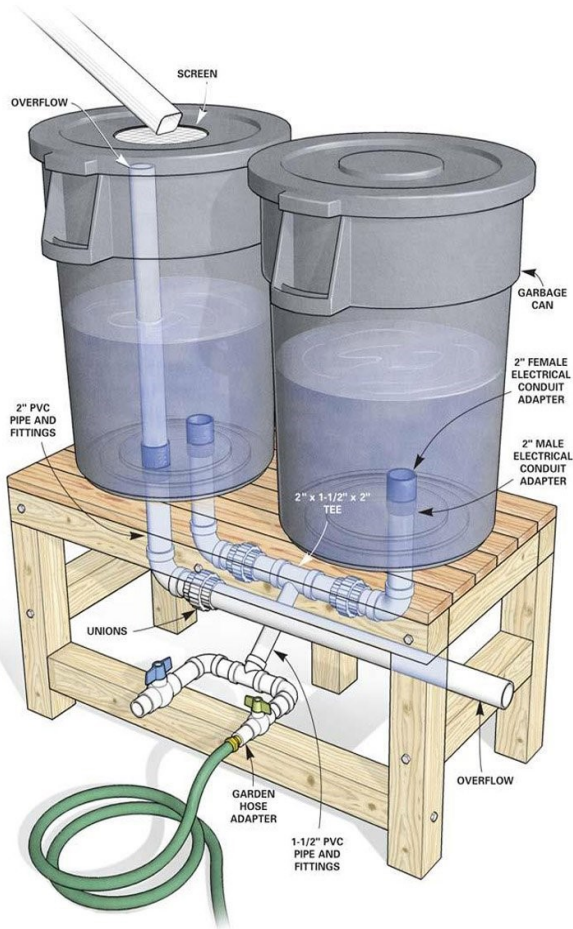
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ANARCHY FROM THE GROUND UP

It's still hot as balls outside. Here is a helpful DIY for anyone interested in rain water recycling.



Figure A:
Trash Can Rain Barrels



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IN THE YEAR 2025

In the year 2025, we open with the enactment of the Give 2 the Globe Act passed by Congress in 2024.

President Tulsi Gabbard, now in her second term in the White House, praised the bipartisan effort that last year created the program to combat climate change. The multiple national monitoring stations automatically contact select residents to forego driving their cars for two days when emissions reach certain levels. Citizens are compensated for the sacrifice.

Many point to the 2022 Summer Blackout across the nation as unprecedented high temperatures collapsed the electrical grid for weeks as the pivotal moment in the need to act on climate change. The heatstroke deaths of several elderly senators likely figured into the former deniers' actions.

This year also saw the second year of the Saving Sandy Hook law regulating assault rifle licenses and sales that was pushed by Vice President Elizabeth Warren and Texas Congressman Dan Crenshaw. During the weekly White House press briefing, spokesperson Anderson Cooper told the assembled media of the reduction of mass shootings credited to the law that peaked in 2019 – and the collapse of the NRA's political wing. Cooper also reminded media of the President's scheduled monthly press conference at the end of the month.

The year also marked the third year of former president "The Don" Trump's prison term in the Hazelton federal correctional institution, called "Misery Mountain" by inmates. Arrested for treason and other federal crimes following his 2020 defeat, Trump spent two years in court where his fortune -- less than \$10 million -- was spent in his unsuccessful bid to avoid jail time. Rumors still circulate he cried like a baby when his cell phone was taken and his Twitter account erased when first imprisoned.

Ivana and her husband have been hosting a reality television show after their prison time that continually drops in viewership as the pair struggle daily to compose a coherent sentence between them. The collapse and bankruptcy of the Trump brand left them few options since they never had discernible skills.

Former stepmother Melania, going by the single name since divorcing her convict husband, got what was left of

the family business and retooled it as "Tromp" to sell shoes. Trump Jr. is still in Lompoc federal prison in California after two lame escape attempts in 2023.

Health and Human Services Secretary Beto O'Rourke is still touting the effective immigration policy enacted in early 2021 that streamlined the process away from family separations and border imprisonments. Much of the Texas and California border walls have been dismantled as illegal entries have plummeted due to the four-year effort.

Defense Secretary James Mattis heralded the 2026 planned integration of the two Koreas after the entire North Korean government was wiped out in late 2022. Although China suspected U.S. drone strikes then, the world felt safer with one less kooky dictator around. Mattis credited the North Korean people for standing up to the tyrant, a position supported by all of America's allies who now rally around the U.S. once again as a symbol of right and might.

The overthrow of Putin in Russia also has contributed to a ratcheting-down of global tensions. In line with this, America's markets continue their upward swing although many single out the lack of President Gabbard's use of social media for the calm.

This is the fourth year of the Taxation with Representation Law that stripped away corporate and wealthy tax protections so that every company and millionaire paid according to their income. The IRS noted that individual compliance is also higher than ever, largely as a result of taxpayers feeling all share in the burden now.

Polls show a record number of Americans can name most of the Cabinet members since all have continued into Gabbard's second term as they were actually selected for their abilities to perform those jobs.

Finally, those same polls show Americans are optimistic about their future and the future for their children. Pollsters report that the past four years has shown that all that was needed was a chance to see how great America is. Like Franklin and Washington and Jefferson always said, the people are America. Those people stepped up in the 2020 election to make a difference. We in 2025 thank them all. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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THE CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE

I see now that when I jumped into my first high school teaching job as a 23 year old recent college grad, I didn't have much to offer but enthusiasm and cute bulletin boards. At the time, though, I sometimes compared my students, word processing with clueless ease in Windows 95, to my brilliant high school friends who had used electric typewriters like me and felt like "kids today" had lost some of the intellectual rigor my pals and I had clearly achieved. I mentioned something along these lines to my mother and she helpfully sent an envelope of some of my high school work — a research paper on Vincent Van Gogh and a book report about *The Lord of the Flies*, I think.

These essays were trash — and I'm not referring to the crumbly dot matrix printer paper or the cheap 1980s newsprint notebooks. My simplistic syntax and obvious conclusions sharply contrasted to the romanticized memories I'd been embellishing since I'd actually graduated from high school. Yeah, turns out we had not been the Algonquin Round Table circa 1990, or at least I had clearly *not* been the intellectual heir to Dorothy Parker.

Reading my own high school work was a good reminder that students don't already know everything they're supposed to learn and a testament to the power of excellent teachers I encountered along the way. They encouraged me and took my often clunky ideas seriously.

It's easy to forget what it's like to not know what we know, however. The phenomenon even has a name, the Curse of Knowledge, which sounds more like a Harry Potter fan fiction chapter than a 1989 *Journal of Political Economy* article. It reveals itself when individuals assume that others know more than they do or forget the difficulty of mastering a field of study. The curse is especially harmful when educators wrongly judge students as unintelligent or unmotivated for not

grasping something "basic" or "easy."

This semester has already enhanced my Curse detection abilities and we're only one week in. My brand-new college student son has been a bit flustered by the wave of Stuff To Know that's washed over him. In a semi-patient attempt to help him, I sat next to him the other night as he checked the online syllabus for due dates.

"That paper is due tomorrow," I insisted, pointing at the first written assignment in one of his classes. I also insisted that he finish the draft before he went to bed because he didn't want to start this class on the wrong foot and so forth. At 2 a.m. he poked his head in my room and sleepily whispered that he had finished the draft. I told him that I could walk him through uploading it in the morning, then went back to bed.

And in the morning, after logging on and clicking through, he and I both saw that the paper was actually due next week. The instructions weren't as crystal clear as I had first thought and the actual details were hidden away on a second screen. Sitting next to my bleary-eyed son helped me experience the possible perspective of some of my students. I've been teaching at this community college for 17 years and I still had a hard time navigating the web page sections that weren't familiar to me. I could see that for brand new users, it was even murkier.

I'd like to think that in the 22 years since I started teaching, I've learned something about being a compelling instructor. I know how to explain semicolons, if that counts for anything. But I also hope that I stay afraid of the Curse of Knowledge and remember what it's like to *not* know what I've figured out in the past two decades so that I can reach students the way my teachers reached me. — ERIN HILL





DRUNK DETECTIVE STARKNESS

This story is so bizarre that I'm almost like, you know what life, well played. I was not prepared to defend against these circumstances.

Blacked Out Me definitely wasn't. I don't think anybody was. I don't think you were, and you saw it coming. If life wanted me to get ski'd this badly. I suppose I just needed to go along with it.

This story starts sober (and now I know you guys are scared). Here I am, just got off work at 5PM on a Wednesday night, driving out to the bar and grabbing a bottle of truck whiskey on the way. Line is backed up, so I get to chatting with this girl behind me and (I would later learn) her two brothers. And she's giving me the classic "This guy's got the right idea (pointing at my handle of plastic liquor) I'ma go where he's headed".

And I'm laughing and give her the classic, "Well come on, then. Plenty of booze at my place" joke reply.

But then she's all like, "Alright, what's your number?" Deadpan. And I just freeze. I'm like, what? This is pretty standard booze buying banter. I've run through these jokes a million times. Lady, you're kinda fucking it up here.

But before I can figure out how to ad lib and save the joke, she's all like, "For real. What, you got a girlfriend? Gimme your number. These guys are my brothers, I just gotta cook some dinner real quick for them and then I'll call you and head over." Holy mother of fuck. This girl is serious. Wow. That is the ballsiest, most forward thing anyone has ever said to me. You know what? I'm in. I just have to see where this crazy train is going.

"Aiight. It's (((REDACTED))). I'm Starkness, by the way."

"A'right cool. I just called you. Save my number, I'm Diamond." Oh no. Oh fuck fist fucking no. I just gave my number to a girl named *Diamond*? So it begins. Strap in boys and girls for a night of HORRIBLE FUCKING DECISIONS!

Blacked Out Me: BWHHAHAHA, Drunk Detective Starkness, get over here, I want this on record. Sober Us, "Mr. Blacked Out Me why you always fucking up so bad?" just decided to take home a girl named after a stone. Now I've made some pretty big fuck ups, but this is right up there.

Drunk Detective Starkness: I hate to say it, Sober Us, but the drunkard is right. This is up there, man.

Me: Fuck you guys. For real. Fuck off. I know it's bad, but we in this shit now. Just try to stay as safe as we can tonight, ok? Cause clearly I don't know what the fuck is going on.

So I get back home and briefly consider trying to clean up some, maybe break down the huge stack of empty beer boxes stacked against my wall, but ultimately decide, "Fuck it, if *Diamond* is the kinda girl who decides to pick up dudes in shitty liquor store checkout lines,

based on three sentences of dialogue and, 'hey, he's buying a plastic handle on a Wednesday, he seems like a good time', then she prolly won't care." And I was right. When she gets here, she thinks it's hilarious and immediately takes a picture of my wall of beer boxes that I was using as a curtain and posts it to her Facebook. So we drink and shoot the shit for about 20 min, you know, "What do you do?" "Oh, I work in management, but end up doing a bunch of boring engineer type and sales type bullshit, you?" "I'm a dancer" "For real? My friend was dating someone over at The Dirty Sock a couple years ago" "Oh ya? I think I knew her." "Small world, haha", blah, blah, blah, fuckity blah.

About 20 minutes into the conversation, she asks, "You smoke weed?"

Me: "Nah, but I don't care if you do, go ahead."

Her: "Oh no, I don't. You do anything else?"

And cause I don't know this woman and I'm a fucking moron, "Used to be really into coke, but I've been clean about five years."

Her: "For real? Why'd you stop?"

Me: "Mostly the money. Too expensive. And honestly, who the fuck likes railing off a dirty toilet and it's not like we ever got anything good around here anyways. I'd probably do a line if it was in front of me though."

Her: "Oh ya, 'cause I got some?" Boom 30 minutes into knowing her, she busts out a baggie of blow in my house. Yup, she's a *Diamond*. And I'm thinking, "Whelp, I did just say that, and that is def free coke. I guess we're doing coke tonight."

So we do that for about an hour, and of course we run out, so now we want more, and I'm all like, "what's it running these days?" And she's all like, "About 60 a gram." And I know she's over charging me. The price of coke did not double in five years, but whatever, jokes on her. She doesn't know who she's dealing with. I got basically virgin nostrils right now and a history with it. I'll be snorting these bags twice as fast as her.

So we call her brother back up to come ferry her to the dealer, but while he's on his way, she's all like "coke makes me shit" and jumps in the bathroom. Ok, weirdo. So now I have to go guide this guy into the neighborhood, and by the time he gets here, she's still on the can. So me, being the polite coke head that I am, invite the guy in for a drink. Then he takes her to the dealer, comes back with her, and now we're all hanging around, her and me just fucking blown to the wind, her brother stoned as a motherfucker, shooting the shit about everything. We run out. We go back to the dealer. Rinse and repeat, like you do with blow, until her brother says he's gotta go, and I'm like, "Fuck it, let's just get a fuck ton this time before he has to go." So we do, and they go and get it and he leaves.

So now it's just me and her and a fuck ton of the fast

and white, a couple hours later, and that's when she's all like, "So what you tryna do here, baby, cause if you want some of this pussy, you gotta start tipping."

OHHHHHHHH Woooooow, so she meant she was a dancer/prostitute. Actually, this explains a lot. I know I should be disappointed that we're not gonna fuck now. But actually, the fact that this situation makes just a little more sense (not complete sense, mind you, still complete madness, but a little less insanity is better than a little more) is fairly comforting to my coked out brain. And, let's be honest here, even if she hadn't have been a hooker, do you think there's any way my coked out cock would have been able to hang?

Anyways I'm thinking, *Was I supposed to just assume you were a prostitute because you wanted to go home with a youngish guy who was willing to share his liquor with strangers? Cause I think better of myself than that. I mean, fuck. I'd fuck me for free. Where is my liquor buying guy to go home to? If anything, honey, I mean, you look good but not great. In all honesty, objectively, I was the one who would have been fucking down a level tonight. Not that I care, but it's true. And really, why did you take several hours to proposition me? We could have gotten this over with, like hours ago.*

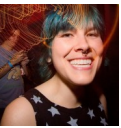
But what I said was, "Ooooh, I'm sorry, paying for sex isn't really my thing. Not that I think it's wrong, it's just not me. I didn't realize that's what was going on here. But, I mean, hey, we just went halves on a fuck ton of coke, it'd be a pain in the ass to split it back up, and it's always better to have somebody to talk to on blow anyway. So, you wanna just hang out here tonight and snort the rest of this shit?"

And she's a little bummed, but all like, "Meh, fuck it. Yeah, sure, I could use a night off."

So, we hung out and did coke all night and coke babbled our entire life stories to each other, because coke babbling, duh. And at some point The Great Coke-Thulu rose from the endless depths of the sea and the scales fell away from my eyes and I was driven blissfully mad by the insufferable truth that my reality consists entirely of the insane fever dreams of a wicked God. Or you know, maybe that was some coke madness and we in fact just ran out around sunrise and her brother came and picked her up and I slammed my head under a pillow, closed my eyes tight and pretended to sleep until I had to get up and go do an eight hour day at my office job on zero sleep, muttering "I'm getting too old for this shit" the whole time, but, you know, it's anyone's guess.

So that, ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, dirtbags of all ages is the long story of why I now know the entire life story of some random hooker. On the plus side, it was, in fact, really primo blow. And God damn was that high ever the best thing on earth that I always remembered. So, Starkness' advice is, if you're looking for good blow in a small town, track down a middle class hooker named after a rock. They have some great shit. — KELLY MENACE

SALACIOUS VEGAN CRUMBS



I read a headline recently that said "Sorry vegans, Burger King's Impossible Whopper won't do anything to save animals". It was written by a man who says he's vegan. He goes on to say that veganism is a lifestyle and a guiding philosophy, not just what we put on our plates. He then says that voting with your dollars by buying vegan options from large corporations does nothing but promote those corporations, and doesn't promote veganism (dang, I've been buying fries from Ore-Ida, a non-vegan corporation this whole time, hang me!).

I mean, I agree that I'd rather not have to give my money to a burger machine like Burger King, but also, there are literally no 100% vegan anything's here — there aren't even vegetarian restaurants or cruelty free stores. I'd starve, I'd be naked, and I'd never be able to go to the bar, and I wouldn't even be able to shop at HEB, but that doesn't matter, because I'd be dead because of my obsession for personal purity. That's an extremely privileged and condescending place to be coming from, and that's coming from an extremely privileged white woman. Fuck it.

Veganism is a lifestyle and a philosophy — of avoiding exploitation and suffering to animals as far as practical. That simple idea is the guiding motivation behind everything we do. It's a much bigger idea that just one person — it's all of us, it's OUR effect on the world and others. So I think that if you're telling me I'm a shitty vegan because I eat an Impossible burger, well, you can all go to hell and I'll go to Burger King. Just think — a handful of mice were hurt for what's basically government mandated animal testing on a brand new never-before-used substance (the plant-based heme that gives the Impossible burger its metallic, meaty taste), and in exchange, millions of people are exposed to cheap, accessible, familiar plant-based food. It's diverting the train to hit the one guy instead of the track full of kids.

This is high profile exposure to plant-based foods, and doing great things to get word out that it's not just for weird people who like to eat carrots and kale and tempeh (eat carrots and kale and tempeh, they're all delicious and not weird at all). Articles like that one saying that it will not help save animals are wrong (I'm assuming he's also against meat eaters taking a meatless Monday), and promote poisonous ideas about how to make decisions and treat others. If personal purity is your game, that's fine, but don't tell me that my decisions, which are focused on the big picture of world with no animal exploitation, are taking us backwards and doing no good. You are one whole person. What you do does make a difference. Don't be a dick. Do good. Even if it's just ordering a plant burger instead of a meat burger from Conglom-O. — KATIE KILLER

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I had a weird relationship with books as a child. My pull to books — to own them, to carry them, to open them and simply caress the pages — was preternatural. I took to books more profoundly than any other artform or medium, more than any toy I could manipulate with narratives or lose in my backyard. Books themselves became an obsession long before reading did. I was a late-bloomed reader, capably literate a full two decades before developing a reading passion. No, books were statically buzzing objects of possibility long before they became functionally communicative. I did not want what was inside books as much as I wanted *books*. My attraction to books, of all shapes and sources, was innate and immediate, and my fetish has only flamed within me more wildly and exponentially since. I admit this as a grown man who, as when a child, assures at least one volume is always within arm's reach. Preoccupations such as this seem easier to describe than define. So that's a good place to start.

My parents did not push books on me. Their indifference to my access to books only seems strange as I've learned more about my father's life in the 1970s and 80s. He was a massive reader, a cultural deep-diver benched in his nerdy passions during my childhood by a mounting post-Vietnam PTSD. No one knew what PTSD was in those days. My dad just knew that the creative pursuits — even the reading — he once relied upon for entertainment and escape no longer moved him. I never saw him read, and he did not read much to or with me. My dad gave me a VCR and a rented Beta copy of *The Neverending Story* before he ever took me to the library. When my parents divorced and my dad moved to Texas, he gave me a stack of Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley cassette tapes for my education. My mother never has been a reader, and libraries, I now believe, taunted her with a self-stirred shame about the kind of mother she should have been. I asked her frequently to take me to the Barton Public Library where I loved the giant pull-out shelves of topographical maps and oceanography charts. She told me to relish the library at school. Little good this did me in the heat of July, Barton Library located beyond the reach she allowed me to ride my bicycle alone. My mother simply could not bear the accusations inherent in so foreign a place.

My mamaw, mother to my nerdy father, gave me the book that launched my mania. It was a child's picture dictionary of "first words", which may speak to my still odd fascination with lexicographies of all manner. I do not remember the title or edition of this picture dictionary. I only remember it was big. The other children's books on my shelves were Little Golden Books the size of 45 rpm records. My picture dictionary dwarfed those Little Golden Books in a way that made me feel grown, sophisticated, maybe even a little badass — if a three year old can feel badass. I carried that picture dictionary all over the house — never outside — and I frequently opened it just to rub my hands over the pages and sniff the binding. Nearly four decades later, I can still remember the moldy bread aroma of those pages, the sharp tang of something not paper and not ink that did not belong in any other book I owned or perused at preschool. I remember sniffing books anywhere I could find them — church, family's houses, even at the grocery store — ever on the search for another title that shared that smell. I never found it. To this day I'm still sniffing a

STILL NERDING

books in the wild, like a dog in the park, on the hunt for stink that bewitched me long ago.

When I began kindergarten, my parents (surely my dad) decided I needed a proper library at home. He bought a monthly book delivery subscription from Disney that was similar to, though not as cool as, Sweet Pickles. The Disney titles that arrived and eventually lined a shelf in the family room were hardbound and brightly colored. Each of the old school Disney animated films — *101 Dalmations*, *Dumbo*, *Bambi*, the early misogynistic princess movies — had their own titles. One in particular won me over: *The Haunted House* was the title I went to repeatedly. I memorized the illustrations by tracing them with fingers, studying the colors and the facial expressions of Mickey and gang escaping a bed-sheeted spectre. I also marveled that the words on the page conveyed the situation in those images as clearly as the art work itself. How did those little blocks and curves of ink create the very words that told my parents what Mickey's ghost story was about? I was transfixed. (Forty years later, I am still transfixed by the mind's ability to turn print into meaning.) I also remember a particular two-page illustration from *101 Dalmations* of animals in a barn looking out into the rain that inspired my earliest attempts at prayer. Every night, when my parents came into my room and knelt beside my bed, I would thank God "for the rain so the animals can drink." This became my routine even on days without rain. In these prayers, I wasn't thinking of my cat named George or my Aunt Faye's chickens or the horses in a field near my Aunt Jenny's house. I was thinking of a big-eyed cow and his mutt-dog friends staring into a storm from the pages of a Disney early reader. I still see those animals at times, though I stopped beseeching God for their hydration five dog-years ago.

My initial obsession was with books — and the smell of them, it seems — not with reading. I simply loved books, and I wanted to be near them any chance I could. Somehow I could feel the possibilities of all those pages lined on shelves in my school library, on the newsstands in the grocery store. I could sense the distances those pages spanned, the people that inhabited them, the pre-internet omniscience bound and catalogued by sliced themes. A shelf of geology over here. A stack of history over there. A display of stories about pioneer families or animal friends by the front door. Was there anything — other than my own life — that was not explored and preserved in the books at my school library? I remember thinking the Westwoods Elementary School Library contained all the books in the world. I could never check them all out, haul all of them home and back one backpack load at a time. But I would try.

By first grade I had exhausted my enthusiasm for Disney readers and my parents World Book Encyclopedias, which I frequently took off the shelf just to feel their weight in my lap, to marvel at the sheer number of words crammed onto a single page. Recognizing the eternal options available to me in the school library, I

began checking out three books — maybe that was our limit? — each week with zero intentions of reading any of them. I didn't need to read them. I just needed to take them home, sit with them on the floor, hold each one individually, and flip the pages. I read words here and there, but I mostly wanted to touch the pages, to absorb something from them via osmosis.

Maybe that's not true. I remember actually reading a translation of the Austrian novel *Bambi, A Life in the Woods*, and I remember it devastating me into a self-induced illiteracy for a spell. I eventually recovered and read several much safer books about astronomy and marine biology and Ancient Egypt. I clearly remember reading a biography of Sugar Ray Leonard, which strikes me as beyond random, and every Beverly Cleary title I could find because they me feel pubescent beyond my years. I read and reread and nearly memorized Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories To Tell in the Dark*, a favorite at sleepovers, and a comedic family adventure story in the vein of *National Lampoon's Family Vacation* (sans references to "bopping the bologna") titled *Hooples on the Highway* by Stephen Manes. Between *Scary Stories* and *Hooples* the birth of my horror and situational comedy nerd-dom was birthed and nursed to fruition. My mother had no scope for the person I was becoming with each new stack of titles I hauled home from Westwoods' library.

However, the experience that sealed my fate, that haunts me and my wife to this day, was my introduction to Waldenbooks at the age of ten. I had never seen a bookstore. I did not know stores dedicated to selling books existed. This was a mindblowing discovery to me, and I met Waldenbooks with both a sense of homecoming and an incredulous annoyance that all this had existed somewhere beyond a horizon nobody considered pointing me towards.

I found the Waldenbooks in an Austin, Texas shopping mall. My dad and stepmother were elsewhere in the complex, seeking a distance from me they were all too willing to purchase with fifteen bucks and a command to be back at the food court in two hours. Nevermind that kids were being hauled off in garbage bags and station wagons in broad daylight all over America — my folks needed a quicky and a smoke in every fitting room the mall had to offer. Fine with me. At the top of an escalator and with a slight turn of the head I found a mecca I have been returning to, at least some form of it, with shameful frequency since. The bookstore. I did not know where to begin. There was too much of it, and most of it did not make sense to me. So I started at the only place that felt familiar — the classics. That day I bought four Puffin Classics — *White Fang*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Treasure Island*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* — for \$2.50 a pop. I still remember how charmed (or humored) the cashier seemed by my choices. "Oh, a reader of the classics, I see," she said filling me with pride. If only I'd known she was mocking me, the way my parents would shortly when they saw my

bag full of books. "You have this entire mall of cool stuff, and you bought books?" My step-mother saw me as alien. Her kids were too cool for books. They had loved rock-n-roll and cars and pocketing cold-hard cash over card games before they'd sprouted a single pube. She was learning that I was a shameful ball of emotions with a penchant for antiquities. The fact that I had chosen books over candy or records was reason enough to wrap me in a Glad cinch-sack and leave me on the hood of the first available station wagon. My dad, eager for solidarity, joined the revelry, but later confided in me that he had loved Jack London at my age. So that's where I started, with *White Fang* and with the pleasure of knowing I would never need to return this volume to anybody.

I've been a book hoarder ever since, eager to buy more titles than I can read, quick to believe my frenzied need to build personal libraries is a scourge that, like my step-mother was too gleeful to announce, makes me both an escaper and somebody worth escaping, as well. I found an identity first in books themselves and then in the act of book buying. I still do, and I can still be that loathful alien that prefers books over people, that prefers my own temporary fascinations over the agreed upon zeitgeist of cool. This is one thing I love most about them: books remain solid even if the trends that inspire or make them available bend and course away. The very creation of a book, as well as the decision to own a particular copy at a particular time, stands as a landmark. It etches a notch in the stock of time. It reminds the future that a need for this volume once existed, somebody saw fit to give it to the world, and somebody else saw fit to accept that gift. And perhaps my love for owning books, for stacking them around me like children at the feet of a sage, is bound up somewhere in that historical exchange. Perhaps I am actively building, volume by purchased volume, some record or defense of my own existence before I too, like all matters of brevity, bend and course away.

The greatest change in my relationship to books, as I have aged, is that I now look to books less to escape from the world than to dive into something that feels, at least in the moment, nourishing. That means that I still find solace simply being near books, walking the aisles of libraries and bookstores, touching spines and flipping pages I have zero intentions of consuming any more completely than by the osmosis of proximity. In such a moment between shelves, I seek nourishment over transcendence, walking away a bit more grounded even without a book in hand. It's a strange connection to have with books, to need their nearness even more than their contents, and I can name no other object that feels so much like food without requiring consumption. I don't question these things. Rather, I remember the boy in me who yearned for the library in summer, who brought home bags of books on the weekend, and who appreciated the weight of such volumes even before he knew how to pull them apart and make them his own. I feel about books the way I wish I could feel about people. Perhaps, inadvertently, I believe that books are the best that people have to offer — both those they produce and those they choose for companionship. If we truly are what we eat, then this is true. It has been true for me. And it was so long before I had a conscience say in the matter. Books sought me out. I've dedicated much of my life to returning the favor. — KEVIN STILL

Jael is angry again. I hate this part, but I won't try to stop him. I would feel the same way, too.

"It's not fair," he stated with a low sigh. "And it's not right. Why can't they figure out what this is? Why can't they fix it?"

Music blares from the speakers. The walls are paper-thin, but our neighbors are not home. Jael shouts over the lyrics, demanding to be heard. He paces back and forth in our tiny apartment with its drafty windows, his walk an awkward, lurching stumble. He only has one toe left, the baby toe on his left foot. And in the space where his other toes used to be? Nothing. Nothing at all.

"You won't even remember what I looked like," he says and sinks down on the floor, holding his hands around his head.

I shut off the music and sit down next to him, breathing in his scent, a soft, musky smell with something new hidden underneath, a smell like your jacket the next day after spending all night by a fire. "That's not true."

"I'm only thirty years old. It's not fair." He holds out his arms. The inside of his elbows are marked with swirls of purple and yellow. "Fuck the doctors. What's the point? They don't have any answers. No one has seen this before."

I take a sheet of paper and fold it until a dragon appears, the paper slick beneath my fingers. My mother used to say the best origami holds something inside—love or anger or hurt. Something to make it real.

I set the dragon on the floor next to my feet. Jael saves them all, even the ones that turn out wrong. He lines them up on the windowsills and calls them his gargoyles. They're not watching out, but watching in. Watching him.

"I'm glad my parents are dead," he says. "So they don't have to see this." He grabs my hand and gives it a tight squeeze. "Will you stay with me all the way to the end?"

"I'm not going anywhere. I promise."

He leans over and rests his head on my shoulder. Tears burn in my eyes, but I hold them in. Jael hates to see me cry.

A week later, his feet are gone.

After his legs vanish from the knees down, I make a red army of paper swans and set them on top of the refrigerator. He's sitting at the table, ripping paper into tiny shreds, and from where I stand, I can't see the missing parts. I can almost pretend everything is fine.

I don't watch when he crawls to the bedroom. But I hear it.

His knees disappear next.

"It hurts when they go," he whispers. "And even when the pieces are gone, I can still feel them."

LITTLE ELEPHANT

Jael's reading in bed when his fingers go. One minute he's holding the book; the next, it tumbles down onto the blanket, landing with a tiny thump. He gives a little grunt and his mouth twists down. I know what I'll see, but I look anyway. His fingers are pale and vapory, narrow ghosts fading fast. And then they're gone, leaving behind a little more of that old wood smell, and a little less of his.

"It was a stupid book anyway," he mutters.

I scoot over, not touching close, but close enough. He turns to me and presses his lips against mine, offering up what warmth he has left. He hasn't kissed me since he lost his feet.

In his kiss, I taste oranges and despair.

"Turn on the music," he says. "Please."

I do.

"Louder."

I turn it up until he nods. He shouts until the neighbor pounds on the walls.

I turn the music down and make a bird, another dragon, and something that was supposed to be an elephant. A baby's wail creeps in through the plaster followed by the muted tones of an argument.

"Can you put that one on the nightstand?" he asks, his voice scratchy and dry, nodding toward the not-elephant. "That's my new favorite."

"But it doesn't look like anything."

He smiles, the first smile I've seen in weeks. "It does to me."

I put it next to the alarm clock.

The rest of his hands are gone.

"Please don't forget about me," he whispers.

I wonder if there's another room somewhere, with someone like me, waiting. And another, like Jael, appearing in front of them.

I hold in my tears and pour my sorrow into a paper crane the color of a summer sunset.

A week later, his arms vanish. He doesn't shout. He doesn't say a word. Instead, the silence hovers, a sharpened guillotine waiting to strike.

I make another elephant; this one turns out perfect. I unfold it, rip up the paper, and throw the pieces away before Jael can see.

When there's nothing below his waist but air heavy with the scent of char, I sit in bed and he rests his head on

my lap. I play with his hair and run my fingertips across his eyebrows. There's a knot inside my chest; with every passing moment, it twists a little more.

"I'm afraid," he whispers. "There won't be anything left to bury or burn. It'll be like I was never here. Please say you'll remember me."

"I won't ever forget you. I promise I won't."

"Can I have the elephant?"

I set it on his chest.

After Jael falls asleep, I touch the empty space where the rest of his body should be. The knot inside coils tighter. I stay awake for hours turning paper into shapes while the not-elephant moves up and down as he breathes.

"Zou-san, zou-san," I sing, keeping my voice soft. The words are part of a song my mother sang to me when my fingers were still too chubby to make paper animals. But I cannot remember the rest, no matter how hard I try.

When the end comes, it happens fast. I sit by his side, talking about nothing until a lump in my throat steals my voice away. I kiss his forehead, and he closes his eyes against the pain. The air shimmers like crushed pearls caught in moonlight.

"I love you, Jael," I say, but he's already gone.

His voice whispers from the weightless spot beside me. "It doesn't hurt anymore." Then that, too, disappears.

And all the paper animals, the stupid folded pieces of paper that mean nothing, watch from the windowsills. With heavy steps, I go from room to room, stuffing them by the handful into a bag. Even through the bag, I feel the weight of their gaze, straining to break free.

But I know how to make them stop.

I carry the bag down to the bridge where Jael and I shared our first kiss. The river underneath, brownish-green in the fading light, rushes by; the muddy stink crawls inside my mouth and lingers in the back of my throat.

As the sun sets, I throw the paper animals into the water by the handful. They bob on the surface, turning end over end, bright specks of color in the fading light, until the water swallows them whole. The blue crane, with its secret heart of sorrow, is the last one to drop out of sight.

I drop the bag, and the not-elephant tumbles out onto the ground. The air rushes out of my lungs; everything turns to a blur. I cover my eyes to hold in the tears, but they won't stay inside. I can't make them stay.

The not-elephant still holds a trace of Jael's smell, not the stink of his illness. I cradle it to my chest, rocking back and forth while all the hurt he left behind spills out. There isn't enough paper in the world to make it go away. — *STARKNESS*

THERE'S NO INVESTMENT WITHOUT INVESTMENT

Over my ten years of teaching community college, I have learned a universal truth: there is no investment without investment. This is not a notion that applies specifically to community colleges, nor is it a knock against Gen Y (Millenials) or Gen Z (iGen). This "truism" seems to span most of humanity. A certain amount of buy-in solidifies the value of a thing, making more concrete what would otherwise remain fully theoretical. In this case, I'm specifically speaking about college tuition.

The University of Texas announced plans to offer free college tuition by year 2020 to those families who earn less than \$65,000 a year. So far, no stipulations associated with maintaining this tuition have been named.

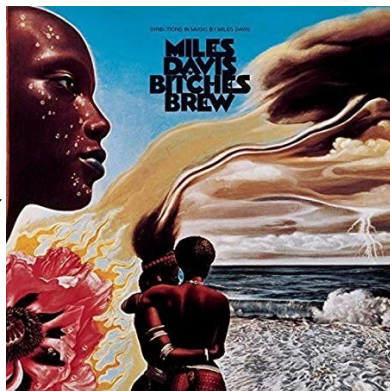
Surely, free college sounds like a fine thing. Tuition costs have risen almost exponentially in the past decade, as have non-tuition costs associated with materials, lab fees, housing and parking. As an emphasis (appreciation?) in trade schools and apprenticeship programs has decreased, an almost frantic push for bachelor degrees have taken their place, meaning that more students vie for classroom seats, meaning the demand of those seats becomes greater, meaning that the cost of access to those seats reflects increased demands. Ironically, when everybody wants a thing and then everybody gets that thing, the value of that thing inevitably diminishes. But that's another issue for another day.

But free college tuition, while it sounds good, is not necessarily a good thing — unless "free" comes with a cost. Texas A&M, for instance, offers students whose families earn beneath \$60,000 "free" tuition. However, those students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.5 in order to keep the scholarship. This seems like a small caveat, but it is significant for recipients of tuition assistance. My alma mater high school offered free tuition for all graduating seniors — no stipulations attached — and they found deplorable retention rates as a result. A drastically small percentage of students receiving free tuition completed their first year. The program was reconsidered, stipulations associated with grades and maintaining work study status was implemented, and suddenly retention rates leveled out and rose. More students graduated when they had to earn "free" tuition in a contractual manner.

I have seen with my own eyes that students who have some level of investment in their education are more apt to succeed across the board. Inevitably, those students who struggle most in my classes, who suffer most from anxiety and stress, who arrive to class the most disheveled are actually those students without jobs or without family responsibilities. Their time and energy to them are theoretical, easily frittered away as valueless. Add a job, add family members, add military or medical service to a student's life alongside school and their success increases. Oddly enough, such additions also correlate in decreased stress and anxiety levels. Why is that? I believe students with boundaries, those who measure and manage their time and energy (and money) as concrete depletable resources, sense their investment as worthy of protecting. They recognize the pull of a tangible cost. And without such a recognition of value, what good is any of this anyway? — *KEVIN STILL*

HYDROGEN JUKEBOX

In 1989 my oldest brother Chris wound up living with us again after dropping out of college. One afternoon my mother drove Chris over to some manner of strip mall record store so Chris could pick up a handful of cassettes he had ordered. One of these was Modern English's *After the Snow* and the other was a double cassette in a single case. The first time I'd ever seen such a thing. Usually a double cassette album just came in two separate single cassette cases. This album had a crazy African painting on the cover that looked like it was straight out of a '70s *National Geographic* magazine. It was called *Bitches Brew* by Miles Davis. And it blew my mind wide open.



The music was serious, dense, murky, druggy, and blurry. Clouds of electric pianos, meandering bass clarinet, fly-by snare drum rolls buzzing atop a steady rock beat, with Miles' echoplex'd trumpet blasting out clarion calls above the fray. It sounded to my 14 year old ears like what a jungle must sound like at night. It took years after that initial listen for me to learn that I wasn't hearing *Bitches Brew* the way it was intended. That 1987 double cassette was a part of Columbia Records' first foray into "digital remastering", and the remaster engineer (Vlado Meller) did an awful hatchet job on the album, making what was an admittedly dark and dense album more intensely dark and muffled. It wasn't until I bought my first copy of *Bitches Brew* (an early '70s repressing) that the individual pieces of the puzzle became distinct. And I became even more fascinated with the album. I could hear guitarist John McLaughlin comping behind the band. I could hear Lenny White sliding his drum punctuations between Jack DeJohnette's beats. I could at times hear Miles' voice quietly directing the band.

This is an important album. This album is often considered the first jazz-rock fusion album. It was at the time the highest selling jazz album. It became an acid test for jazz musicians open to the new thing and those who weren't able to move forward with the shape of things to come. The dozen musicians who played on this album with Miles became the vanguard for this new musical movement. It was like Miles threw a very large boulder in the placid lake of jazz and his sidemen became the ripples that rode the wave of *Bitches Brew* to shore with their own interpretations of Miles' sound. Keyboardist Joe Zawinul (who wrote many of the songs for *Bitches Brew*) and saxophonist Wayne Shorter (a part of Miles' classic mid 60s quintet) formed Weather Report and from 1970-1976 that band continued to explore the same European impressionism with a solid African bottom that Miles pioneered; John McLaughlin had already recorded *Emergency!* as a part of Miles alum Tony William's Lifetime band and would soon form the Mahavishnu Orchestra to play progressive rock with jazz sophistication; Chick Corea would mix latin fusion dates

with the progressive funk and rock of his band Return To Forever with fellow *Bitches Brew* alum Lenny White; and Herbie Hancock (one of the two holdover players from Miles' classic quintet) would join with Bennie Maupin to form the Mwandishi band, doubling down on the dense African poly-rhythms until wearying from playing to no one, the two condensed the essence of *Bitches Brew* into *Headhunters*, one of the most successful jazz albums of all time.

Miles himself doubled down on this approach and with a couple of dozen different players between 1969-1975 toured the world and recorded dozens of sessions. Miles would add Afro-Latin percussion, more electric guitar, organ, sitar, electronics, and most famously he would plug his trumpet into a wah-wah pedal to find new ways to express his voice. Many of his sidemen would, like the *Bitches Brew* participants, record their own albums in that same mode. Sets from Steve Grossman, Jan Hammer, Bennie Maupin, Eddie Henderson, Alphonso Mouzon, Stanley Clarke, Les McCann, Miroslav Vitous, Larry Coryell, Billy Cobham, John Abercrombie, Terje Rypdal, warped and shaped the music in their image. Herbie Hancock's *Headhunters* showed the jazz world how to take Miles' sound and focus more on the funk and soul grooves at the basis of the music and to shave off the avant garde edges atop of the arrangements. Artists like George Duke, Bob James, and Grover Washington Jr. polished away those edges and explored a smoother, more R&B based angle. The rock part of jazz-rock fusion evolved away, and fusion lost its edge. By the 1980s the genre may as well have been instrumental R&B and the initial rush of Miles' fusion had fizzled. Even Miles lost his way and retired away from music from 1975-1981.

The template for an entire decade's worth of music was set by Miles and company with *Bitches Brew*. It is almost like a textbook in that one can decode so many different messages within its grooves, discover so much music by following the musicians who played on it down their own musical paths, following the musical diaspora across dollar bins, A/V libraries, and Youtube rabbit holes. It is hard to believe that this music was created 50 years ago last month. Many current performers such as Radiohead, DJ Shadow, and Kamasi Washington are still finding new ways to decode the work of *Bitches Brew*. Hip hop owes a distinct debt to the cut and paste work of producer Teo Macero's assemblage of the sprawling *Bitches Brew* studio sessions into a cohesive 2LP statement. Rarely has a single album made the impact on the face of popular music in the way that *Bitches Brew* has. It has been an album on rotation in my speakers and headphones for 30 years now and easily finds itself in my Top 10 Albums of All Time. —

KELLY MENACE



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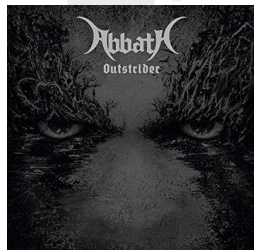


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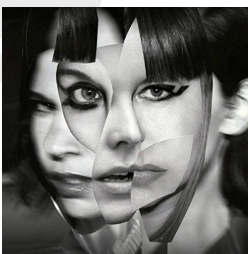
The Robin Williams of Metal is at it again. Since his exile from Immortal, Abbath has continued to carry his own black metal flag, first as a solo career, but now as a full band. With a successful self-titled debut in early 2016, Abbath came out swinging with the furious vengeance as black as the deepest bowels of Hades! Since then, he has had time to scheme and contemplate the direction of his sophomore release. King ov Hell (guitar) and Creature (drums) are gone, and new blood has entered the arena. The loss of former members, and the gaining of new members, means many things for Abbath, and a new ethos has emerged in *Outsider*, one that is far different from Abbath's premiere album.

So what's different? Unlike the self-titled record, there is an overshadowing rock n' roll vibe that dominates *Outsider*'s sound. The record is marked by melodies, guitar solos, and rhythmic drums with little to zero blast beats. Songs like "Harvest Pyre", "Calm the Ire of the Hurricane", and "Bridge of Spasms" demonstrate this vibe quite clearly. Abbath has stated in several interviews that he wanted to bring black metal back to its rock n' roll roots as it had begun with bands like Venom, and it definitely shows. Abbath's creativity and exploration has definitely increased since his self-titled release.

To say the least, *Outsider* is rather disappointing. This record lacks the grimness and anger that marked the first release, which I was hoping would be retained. Another problem is the lyrics...they're as terrible as the last album and have not improved at all. I mean, I am an English professor, and the grammar is absolutely atrocious! Whatever Jungian mystical and allegorical ideas they were trying to convey were totally lost in translation. The overall song-structure of *Outsider* also seems to be very repetitive, and the riffs feel too similar for comfort. Compared to the

debut, this was a step back; rather than black n' roll (which would have been a welcome change, in all honesty), the listener is given an album that sounds like a black metal band wanting to play rock n' roll.

On one hand I applaud Abbath for attempting to have fun with black metal and not be so serious like some of his counterparts (looking at you, King), but on the other hand, I feel that the quality was put aside in favor of fun. It's still too early not to mention Immortal's *Northern Chaos Gods* at this point, as two things have become very clear since Abbath went solo and Immortal carried on: (1) Abbath is certainly not an Immortal knock-off, (2) in terms of creating black metal, Immortal is kicking Abbath's ass all over the frozen North! For me, *Outsider* is a "sophomore slum" for Abbath, but there are still some good songs on it. It's not a bad record, just sort of an average record. 3.8:5 from me. — CALEB MULLINS



Sleater-Kinney
The Center Won't Hold

I went into my first full listen of this album with much trepidation and a lot of misconception. I knew ahead of time that the album was produced by St. Vincent, whom I happen to really like. But when I began to hear the songs leaked ahead of the album's release I was less than enthusiastic. In fact I was convinced that Sleater-Kinney had made a rather spectacular mistake by letting their identity be subsumed by their choice of producer who, at this point in the pop culture timeline, has a lot more juice than Sleater-Kinney. Then a month before the album was to be released long-time drummer Janet Weiss abruptly quit the band, stating that the band had moved in a different direction than she was comfortable going and it was a good point to part ways. I love Janet's drumming and wanted this to be the excuse I could use to completely prejudge this album as a disaster without actually listening to it. I am a dick for sure, but not enough of a dick that I would completely

write this album off without listening to it. And I'm glad I did, because *The Center Won't Hold* is not the trainwreck I secretly wanted it to be.

Sleater-Kinney have made the sort of reunion album most of their peer group have already made...except this is their second album in their second act. Both Ride and Slowdive, as example, released reunion records in the past handful of years that sound like albums made by newer bands inspired by Ride and Slowdive. The tones have updated, the production contemporized, the songwriting shows some a different sort of maturity. *No Cities To Love*, S-K's first album after a decade-long break, sounds like a band that got back on the bike after a nice pause. The band was still manic, rocking, angry, and intricate. In the last few years S-K principals Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstone listened to a LOT of pop music. In recent interviews the two have held Rhiannon and Depeche Mode as touchstones for their new direction. Add a whopping dose of the robot-princess art-rock of St. Vincent and classic Sleater-Kinney and you've got *The Center Won't Hold*.

Programmed industrial machine music begins the album before a pulse tone flatlines and the Sleater-Kinney of old slams into a big rock moment. First single "Hurry On Home" comes next and it shows a distinct debt to Annie Clark's sound, not just production wise with crispy drums and fuzzy guitars, but the vocal melody is super-melodic, the chorus is big and catchy with synth tones, almost like where Yeah Yeah Yeahs went with their big synth record *It's Blitz!* from ten years back. One major difference is that the lyrics are MUCH more straightforward and less coy than anything Anne Clark would write, but it is obvious the band wanted to make a pop music album. "Can I Go On" is bouncy and breezy even as the lyrics are dire. "Do you feast on nostalgia?" Corin Tucker asks while the band slinks behind her on "RUINS" but then Brownstone employs that nostalgia full-force in a love song to the days of van tours in the red on "LOVE". "Bad Dance" employs a melodic hook recognizable from dozens of '00s pop productions. "The world is going down in flames so let's dance!" "Broken" ends the album lyrically with a deep paean to Christine Blasey Ford but it almost sounds cheesy and lacks the sort of power that a Sleater-Kinney protest song usually packs. This is not a bang but a whimper. And this might be the take away from *The Center*

Won't Hold. It's almost like the politics of the day have completely flabbergasted these women and rather than confront what's going on with middle fingers raised and guitars blazing they have instead retreated into the solace of synthesizers and bubble gum pop with the occasional snarl. It's a very curious response and while it's not outright a failure I wouldn't even begin to call it a success either. There is enough to hold onto for older fans to not cast this one outright into the garbage, but it's probably not going to replace any of your other favorite S-K albums. Will it bring in newer fans who would perhaps be put off by the shards of geysser approach from the band's heyday? Perhaps. — KELLY MENACE



Sabaton
The Great War

There is no question that the Swedes know how to do metal, but most tend to think that means some form of death metal. Sabaton, however, has established themselves as a unique power metal act, and a leading flagship for the genre. With their breakout album, *The Art of War*, Sabaton has continued to put out album after successful album, pleasing old and new fans alike with their war themed lyrics and impressive live presence. With their new release titled *The Great War*, the band has given us a musical tour through WWI.

Despite first appearances, *The Great War* is not a concept album; even though there is the common WWI thread, this is an album that shows off the musical niche which Sabaton has chosen to occupy. Melodies, traditional heavy metal riffs, strategic keyboards, soaring vocals, and an overall epic sound communicates the paradox of triumph and tragedy, heroism and villainy, and the humanity and inhumanity of war. What I love most about this band is Joakim Broden's totally unorthodox singing. That is not to imply it is bad; far from it. It is simply not what one expects out of a power metal band. Rather than high

CONCERT CALENDAR

9/6—Flatland Cavalry @ Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater, College Station. 7pm

9/6—Desdimona, Magic Girl @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/7—deCasa, Mad Rant, The City @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/8—Sub Sahara, Pardon Our Mess, Shobobiedobies @ Revolution, Bryan. 4pm

9/12—Jimmy Raincheck, Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/13—Some Kind of Nightmare, Mutant Love, Madaline, Skunk Money @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/14—Jay Satellite, Glasshealer, Silver Bars @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/20—Funeral Horse, Rickshaw Billy's Burger Patrol, DAYEATER @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/21—Charm Bomb, Gentlemen Rogues, The Gary @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/26—Keith Michael Kallina @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

9/27—GO-GORillas, Thread Atlas, Wisdom Cat @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/3—Acquired Target, Desiring Dead Flesh @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/4—Charm Bomb, Super Robot Party, Arrogant Sea @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/5—Peter Panties, Long Tongue, Atarimatt, The Shut-Ups @ Revolution, Bryan. 9:30pm

10/10—Corusco, Neuromantics, Jasper @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/11—Carter, Darlings @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/12—Colton French @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/17—Kristy Kruger @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/18—Burnett, Desdimona @ Revolution, Bryan. 10pm

10/19—Zombie Pub Crawl @ Downtown Bryan. 2pm

10/19—SARC Benefit feat. Boy Wonder, The Ex-Optimists, The Damn Times, Yaupon, Bum Out, Cornish Game Hen, City Life, Antique Gardens, Other Horrible Animals, Shobobiedobies @ Revolution, Bryan. 8pm

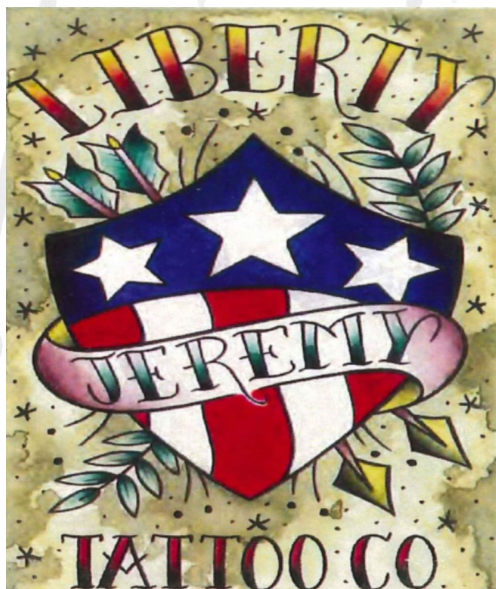
and tenor-like, his range is gruff, masculine, and, shall we say, "beefy"? He definitely brings an air of machismo that totally matches the image and lyrical topics of the band, driving the war machine that is Sabaton forward.

The songwriting is fairly strong. "Seven Pillars Of Wisdom", the "Fields of Verdun", the title track, and "Devil Dogs" are top-notch historical hymns that are all too signature of the band. There is a particularly exhilarating moment when Joakim belts out the famous words of Marine Corps Sergeant Daniel Daly just before the solo in "Devil Dogs", which are "Come on you sons of bitches, do you want to live forever?!" So good!

Despite the many positives of this record, there are still problems. While the songwriting is strong, it is not nearly as strong as it could be when compared to previous records. There are many good songs, but few I'd consider outstanding. The other problem is that the track "Bismarck" is nowhere to be found! Admittedly, the song

would be out of place given it is based on a WWII German battleship. Still, would it have killed Sabaton to make it a bonus track instead of only a download?

To sum it up, the song-writing for *The Great War* is very formulaic, making it easy to get the gist of it after just a few listens, and that's a good thing. Unfortunately, the easy flow of the record seems to have sacrificed the quality somewhat slightly. *The Great War* is a pretty good album, but not a great album. Nonetheless, Sabaton creates, shall we say, "intelligent" music in which the listener is not only getting quality power metal, but a valuable history lesson. For that, it gets a 4.5 from me. —
CALEB MULLINS



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*Benefit for
Sexual Assault Resource Center*



*Boy Wonder - City Life - Yaupon
Burn Out - The Damn Times
The Shookiedoodles - The Ex-Optimists
Antique Gardens - Cornish Game Hen
Other Horrible Animals*

*Revolution Cafe & Bar.
Saturday, October 19. 8pm.
Two stages, 8 bands, \$5*