

PEARLS & BRASS,
RURAL BLUES ROCK

APPLIED
MAGIC (K)

RUSHKOFF VS.
RELIGION

GOING FOR
THE BIG WIN
IN IRAQ

MARCH 2006

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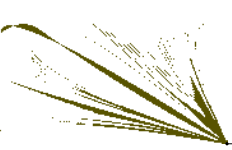
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ACROSS USA
AND CANADA



INNER SPACE ODYSSEY

HOW DELIA & GAVIN ARE MAKING EARTH COOLER



AIM HIGHER

“THE PROBLEM REMAINS: how to cast the Devil from the hearts of swine?

“Since we’re in an apocalyptic situation, old historical dialectics no longer apply. I prophesy that the only way to reverse the apocalypse is white magic, because the apocalypse itself is incarnate black magic.

“What would be the effect of total sacramental harmonious shamanistic ritual prayer magic massively performed in the American political theater? Exorcism!

“We need a million children saints adept at high unhexings, technological vaudeville, rhythmic behaviors, hypnotic acrobatics, street trapeze artistes, naked circus vibrations–magic politics to exorcise the police state. Is there a kind of poetry and theater sublime enough to change the national will and to open up consciousness in the populace? If the direction of the will can be changed and consciousness widened, then we may be able to solve the practical problems outlined: ecological reconstruction and the achievement of clear ecstasy as a social condition. And once that is achieved, people could relax and start looking for the highest, perfect wisdom.”

–Allen Ginsberg, in a 1968 interview published in *Playboy*, April 1969

A recent article on the upcoming changeover at *Harper’s*–Lewis Lapham, the magazine’s \$315,000-a-year editor is stepping down–bemoaned the state of thoughtful periodicals in this country. “*The Atlantic* has lost money for all of living memory, and *The New Yorker* was unprofitable for most of the last two decades,” wrote the piece’s author. “So are all the little weeklies. Call it cultural philanthropy or call it vanity publishing, but without rich guys willing to take financial baths, magazines of literary and political journalism and belles lettres would scarcely exist in America.”

It is true that these magazines have depended on the kindness of endowments, foundations, anonymous million-dollar donations and such to survive in a cultural environment hostile to considered thinking. But there are other ways for such publications to survive with editorial vision intact. Far be it from us to suggest that *Arthur* exists at anywhere near the literary or cultural level of *Harper’s*, *The New Yorker* or the *Atlantic* (let alone *Playboy* circa 1969). That said, we do feel we have made a small contribution to the culture–without the help of trust funds, rich donors, endowments and the kindness of rich guys. (Not that we’d turn any of that down, of course.) In fact, whatever *Arthur* has managed to do has been achieved by following a *completely different* ethic. We’ve relied on our personal credit cards for start-up capital, on our willingness to live with incomes below the poverty level, and, most of all, we’ve been absolutely dependent on the goodwill, labor and contributions of literally hundreds of people in our first three-plus years of *Arthur’s* existence: the network of volunteer distributors, the magazine’s barely paid editorial “staff,” the hardworking-on-deadline contributors and columnists who work for barter, the many artists who have contributed material for our various CDs and posters, the loyal advertisers who’ve supported the magazine from the beginning, and so on. *Arthur* has been a labor of collective love. That love is not always pretty or perfect, but it is REAL.

But we’re not finished. We want to take *Arthur* into sustainability, so that everyone involved in the magazine’s production and distribution can be fairly compensated financially for their labor. We want to continue to increase our

printrun so that we can reach more people. We want to publish more frequently. And we aim to do this now, even as independent, dissident voices continue to disappear from the airwaves, from the newsstands and from the streetcorners of America–silenced by foolish business decisions, small businesses’ lack of access to capital, corporate acquisition (see: *New Times* chain acquires Village Voice Media chain) and intimidation, governmental mis-regulation (see: the level of miseducation on the public-owned airwaves), police state intimidation (see: recent reporting in the New York Times on both NSA wiretapping and FBI provocateurs’ illegal infiltration and sabotage of demonstrations at the 2004 Republican Convention) and the perennial problems of personal cowardice, lack of imagination and/or inertia-born-of-despair.

So. To simultaneously combat the robot mind/police state creep and strengthen *Arthur* and what’s left of independent America, we are proud to inaugurate with this issue THE ARTHUR INDIE PAGES: pages of low-cost advertising, demarcated by city or region, which will be devoted SOLELY to independently owned and/or operated businesses in that area. Cinemas, bookstores, bars, clubs, clothing boutiques, salons, yoga centers: if it’s local, if it’s independent, it can advertise with us for very little–and reach not just the neighborhood in which the business operates, but the rest of the nation as well. We’re gonna try to further stitch together the network of independents that we’ve built with *Arthur* to date.

Why do we know we can do this? Because we already are. Because, *if* you are willing to work collectively, *if* you are willing to be poor (by the first world’s elevated standards), *if* you are willing to share any rewards equitably, you can still get a lot done in this country, even in 2006. Who knows: you just might make the sublime poetry and the high un-hexings and the naked circus vibrations–the “magic politics”–that bring us nearer to achieving the Ginsbergian goal of ecological reconstruction with ecstasy as a social condition.

It’s worth a shot, don’t you think?

Jay Babcock, Editor
Laris Kreslins, Publisher

ARTHUR CONTRIBUTORS

Brian J. Barr is a former Pennsylvanian now living in Washington State where he writes for *The Believer*, *The Stranger* and other publications. He is a workshop instructor for 826Seattle (www.826seattle.org), a tutoring center that doubles as a space travel supply store.

J. M. Brand is addicted to the office variety ballpoint pen. jmb@unofficialmasters.com

Poet and novelist Michael Brownstein is the author of *World on Fire*, the global justice manifesto. He has recently completed a new novel about the shamanic healing of Dick Cheney.

Byron Coley is growing a beard in preparation for attending the ArthurBall.

Trinie Dalton lives in Los Angeles. She writes about music, art and books. Her two books are: *Wide Eyed* (Akashic) and *Dear New Girl or Whatever Your Name Is* (McSweeney’s).

Ben Jones is a member of the collective Paper Rad and they have a new book out called *BJ and Da Dogs*.

Dylan Martorell hails from Melbourne and has some terrific T-Shirts and prints at www.hiddenarchive.com

Thurston Moore is in the studio recording new *Pink Flag Wire*/early Go-Gos-inspired Sonik-Youth release.

Ed Piskor is currently drawing a graphic novel with Harvey Pekar called *Macedonia* for 2006 release.

The Pizz has a show titled *Choking Hazard* opening March 24, 2006 at Rotofugi gallery in Chicago.

Richard Pleuger is a German writer and photographer who came to Los Angeles to help solve the Black Dahlia murder case. After being convinced that it will

never be solved, he wrote a book on Hollywood filmmaking and continues to be amazed by the outer limits of American pop culture. Today he divides his time between Munich and L.A. and hopes that *Star Trek*-style beaming is invented somewhere in the near future.

Charles Potts has two new collections of poetry, *Knot: Selected Poems from 1963-1977* (Blue Begonia Press), and *The Portable Potts* (West End Press), encompassing 40 years of engagement with the phenomenal world. He is the leader of The Temple Inc., a nonprofit group that seeks spiritual solutions to political problems by artistic means.

Evan Quigley makes wine and draws in his apartment in Toronto. www.evanquigley.huronstreethuntclub.com

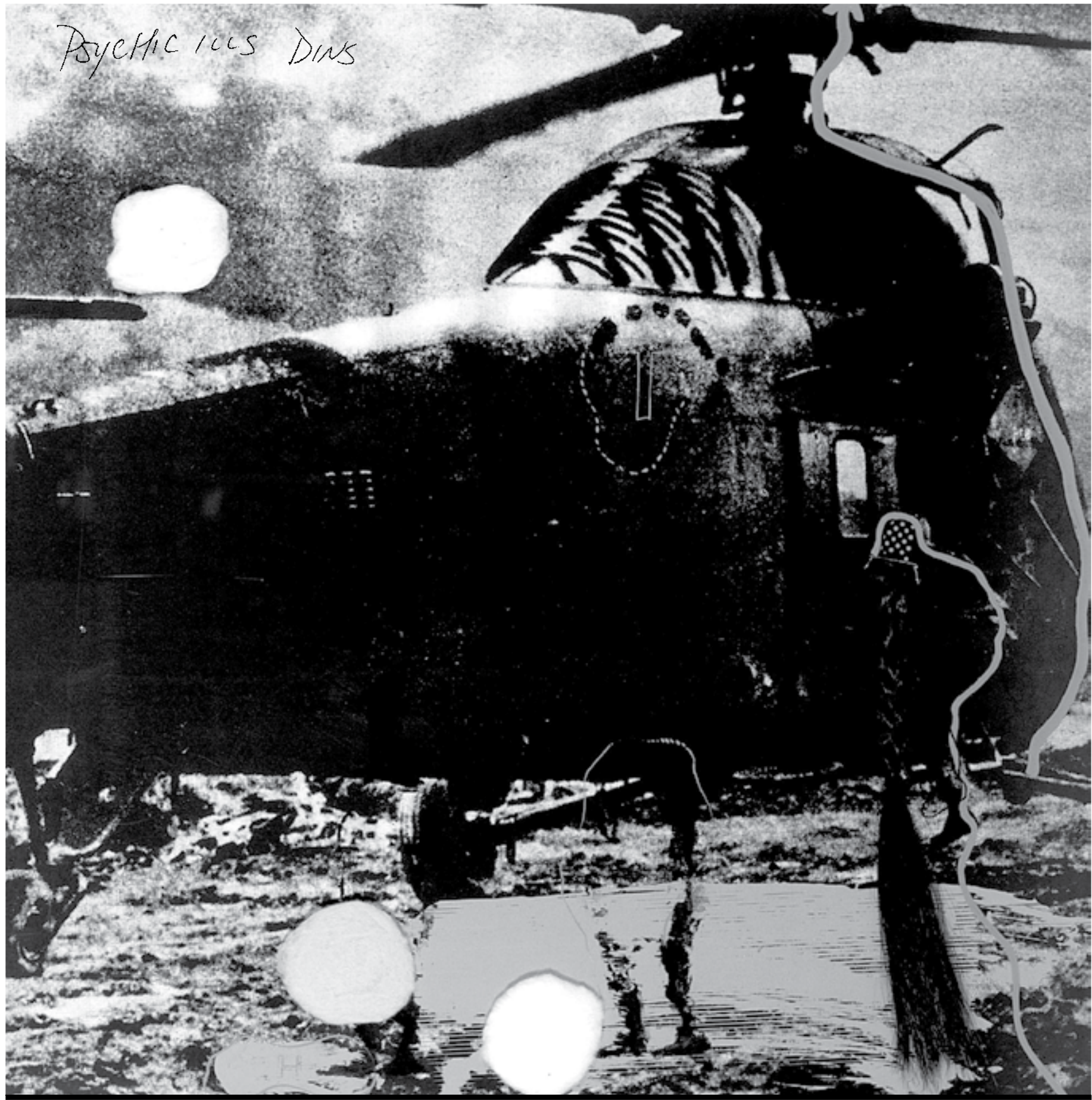
Dave Reeves begged us to put him down as “Henry Kissinjah,” but we said no because it isn’t half as funny as he thinks it is.

Sharon Rudahl was born in Virginia in 1947 and has been active in most radical movements since. She is one of the original underground cartoonists, and author of the 1969 cult novel *Acid Temple Ball*. She is at work on a graphic novel-style biography of Emma Goldman for The New Press.

Douglas Rushkoff’s new book, *Get Back in the Box*, means to turn capitalism upside down. His new comic, *Testament*, means to turn the Bible right side up. He teaches at NYU’s Interactive Telecommunications Program, where up and down are meaningless conventions.

Nathaniel Russell makes art and music that makes you believe in sasquatch at: www.thisishowwedo.com

Becca Taylor draws a mini-comic called The Wonderful Year. www.sharptonguedshrew.com



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HOUSEKEEPING

The photo of Sunno))) on page 33 in Arthur’s February issue should have been credited to Jenn Garrett. We regret the omission.

“Ask T-Model Ford” will return next issue.

Letters to the Editor are totally encouraged. Send to editorial@arthurmag.com or Letters to the Editor, 3408 Appleton Street, Los Angeles, CA 90039.

And finally, with the publication of this issue we bid a fond fare thee well to Capt. Neema Enriquez, Arthur’s first distribution chief, who is stepping down after three years of noble, selfless service to the *Arthur* cause. Thank you, Neema.



G O D L E S S

OKAY, SO LET'S GET INTO THIS GOD GAME.

I think it's time to get serious about the role God plays in human affairs, and evaluate whether it's appropriate to let everyone in on the bad news: God doesn't exist, never did, and the closest thing we'll ever see to God will emerge from our own collective efforts at making meaning.

Maybe I'm just getting old, but I no longer see the real value in being tolerant of other people's beliefs. Sure, when beliefs are relegated to the realm of pure entertainment, they pose no real danger. So, a kid believes U2 is really a supergroup on par with The Beatles or The Who. That's *his* problem, and it doesn't really do a lot of harm to anyone except those of us who still stop by MTV occasionally to see what might be playing.

When religions are practiced, as they are by a majority of those in developed nations, today, as a kind of nostalgic little ritual—a community event or an excuse to get together and not work—it doesn't really screw anything up too badly. But when they radically alter our ability to contend with reality, cope with difference, or implement the most basic ethical provisions, they must be stopped.

Like any other public health crisis, the belief in religion must now be treated as a sickness. It is an epidemic, paralyzing our nation's ability to behave in a rational way, and—given our weapons capabilities—posing an increasingly grave threat to the rest of the world.

Just look at the numbers. A FoxNews poll claims that 92% of Americans say they believe in God, 85% believe in heaven, and 71% believe in the Devil. (That's right—the guy with horns and a tail who presides over hell: the DeNiro character in *Angel Heart*, Pacino in *Devil's Advocate* and the one who tricks people into signing contracts on *Twilight Zone*.) Given FoxNews' accuracy, we can cut these numbers in half, yet we're still confronted with a deeply frightening prospect: half the people amongst us believe some really fucked up shit. They've taken the metaphors of the Bible or Dante's *Inferno* and gone ahead and decided that these images and allegories are *real*.

Add to that the more reliable polls finding that 35% of Americans say they are “born again”—a particularly modern phenomenon that came only after the charlatan rabble-rousers



NATHANIEL RUSSELL

LIKE ANY OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS, THE BELIEF IN RELIGION MUST NOW BE TREATED AS A SICKNESS.

during the Great Depression—and you get a picture of a nation hoodwinked into a passive, childlike, yet dogmatic relationship to the myths that were originally written to sustain them, spur their motivation to social justice, and encourage continuing evolution.

As I've always understood them, the stories in the Bible are less significant because they happened at some moment in history than because their underlying dynamics seem to be happening in all moments. We are all Cain, struggling with our feelings about a sibling who seems to be more blessed than we are. We are always escaping the enslaved mentality of Egypt and the idolatry we practiced there. We are all Mordechai, bristling against the pressure to bow in subservience to our bosses.

But true believers don't have this freedom. Whether it's because they need the Bible to prove a real estate claim in the Middle East, or because they don't know how to relate

something that didn't *really* happen, or because they require the threat of an angry super-being who sees all in order to behave like good children, true believers—what we now call fundamentalists—are not in a position to appreciate the truth and beauty of the Holy Scriptures. No, the multi-dimensional document we call the Bible is not available to them because, for them, all those stories have to be accepted as historical truth.

Forget the fact that this is pretty much impossible to do. The Bible contradicts itself all over the place. There are even two different creation stories! (One in which Eve is created at the same time as Adam, and another where she is grown from his rib. And they're less than a page apart.) Forget that the myths of the Bible had already been understood as mythology by the pre-Biblical cultures from which many of them came. And forget that the Bible comments on its own stories, as stories, directly! On numerous

occasions, the narration asks its hearers whether they get the joke.

That's because, for the Torah's first hearers (Torah is the first five books of the Bible), all those jokes really were jokes. They understood that Jacob's sons weren't really the fathers of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but parodies—racist parodies, at that—of the qualities that had come to be associated with each of these existing groups. They understood that the “plagues” against Egypt were literary desecrations of the Egyptian gods. (Blood desecrates the Nile, which was a god. Locusts desecrate the corn, a god, and so on.)

That the Bible could be understood metaphorically helped people relate to its “God” metaphorically, as well. It's not that God is some character who really exists, but a way of relating the events in the world as they unfold. No one can grasp this, however, if they're stuck believing.

So I think it's time those of us who have transcended this primitive approach to collective storytelling to speak up. This liberation from belief systems is precisely what the Bible is about. A people liberate from the death of a creationist model of reality and go out into the desert to write their own laws.

It's analogous to the story of America, in fact, where a bunch of people leave religious oppression in order to write a Constitution as an evolutionary document—something that, instead of being believed in forever, is understood to be an ongoing process. A participatory event.

Right now, America's true believers are locking down its laws along with its Bible. They are fighting the science of evolution because it accepts that things change over time—and such change is incompatible with static, everlasting truths. They are doing to today's progressives the very same thing that the Bible's Egyptians were doing to the Israelites. And they're doing it in the name of a God who they believe they'll meet when they die. This is the very mindset and behavior the Bible was written to stop.

Perhaps the best way to kill their God, in fact, is to take charge of the Bible. It is—in my own opinion as a media theorist—the Greatest Story Ever Told, and deserving of our continued support and analysis. For my part, I'm doing my comic book series *Testament*, which I hope will bring these stories—told both in their Biblical context and

(continued on page 61)

A HEAVY DOSE

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APPLIED MAGIC (K)

Like “art,” the word “magic” can be very confusing for people. It simultaneously conjures notions of trickery, witchcraft, illusion, mysticism, fantasy, and a vast array of products, services, and popular culture references. Many of these notions evoke a dismissive response from people when they encounter the term, partly because they tend to immediately latch onto a single notion of magic that they reproach: cheesy Las Vegas sideshow; dreadlocked Wiccan hippy; Dungeons & Dragons wannabe; Satanic drug fiend; pet psychic; reality escapist; and so forth. Of course, by conjuring such characters as Gandalf, Harry Potter, Sabrina, and John Edwards, popular media does its best to fantasize, infantilize, and capitalize on our collective desires for more than another sequel to “Life as We’re Told It Is”. The Center for Tactical Magic does not exclusively align itself with any one interpretation of “magic,” in part, because the vastness of the interpretations of “magic” is what gives magic its power in the world of meaning. Therefore this column is likely to exploit many of your preconceptions of magic(k) in an effort to dislodge your comfortable sensibilities.

In nearly all of the permutations of magic(k), the conventions of presenting information are completely fucked with. A stage magic trick is a good example on many levels. For starters, a magician often uses “patter” or a story to provide a context for the audience’s experience of the illusion: “Ladies and Gents, as a special treat for you tonight, I’m going to make the president disappear. Now before anyone gets too excited, it’s an already dead president—Andrew Jackson on the twenty dollar bill—our racist, Indian-killer president.” In the patter, the magician may or may not lie, but the intention is always to manipulate the audience’s perceptions. This is done easily enough because the information presented in the form of patter *appears* to coincide with the visual information

presented through the magician’s movements and use of props. (Andrew Jackson *does* appear on the twenty dollar bill; however, historians debate whether or not he killed more Native Americans than some of our other racist presidents. *And* the \$20 in the magician’s hands *will* disappear... from view, but not likely from material existence since s/he needs it for rent). And of course, the magician’s movements are deceptively “natural” in appearance: a well-placed cough or a hand on the hip doesn’t generally attract attention. Similarly, the props are shown to be beyond suspicion: an audience member inspects the bill; the magician’s clothing looks normal enough; the hands are shown to be empty; etc. If performed successfully, a good magic trick will

have a convincing effect largely because the magician has presented several forms of discordant information in a harmonious manner. The verbal info, the body language, the sequence of events, and the overall physical appearance conform to the audience’s expectations of normalcy (i.e. the magician used a hidden gimmick to ditch the bill half way through the performance, yet kept a closed hand in plain view while continuing to discuss the merits of vanishing racist presidents). When the magician finally opens the fist to reveal not a twenty but a handful of pretzels the audience will attempt to bridge the gap between what they believe they have witnessed and what they formerly believed was possible.

In the Western traditions of ritual

magic(k) and occult practices there is often a “lust for results” that demands linearity in the form of cause-and-effect. In such cases, practitioners become ill at ease when they summon a demon to defeat racist presidents and no one shows up to take the job. That said, nearly every other expression of magic across the globe regards the magical act as a liminal space that appears during the performance. This is a zone of transformation; a place where the rules of everyday life are suspended and alternative realities can trickle in. In some cases, a shaman will perform a conjuring trick as a way of illustrating the zone of transformation. Thus, it is not the “trick” which is magic, but the performance/perception. The tricks are part of a performance that leads the audience to a mental state where the *real* magic can take place: the shift occurs in the perception of the audience rather than in the hands of the shaman. The best stage magicians also recognize this dynamic among their own audiences and perform accordingly by designing and performing illusions and/or rituals that are relevant to people’s lives: Houdini emphasized self-liberation from the constraints of everyday life, such as prisons, handcuffs, safes, ropes and packing crates. Likewise, Cagliostro defied the strict 18th-century norms of society by allowing both men and women, aristocracy and commoners, to join a vast European network of Egyptian Masonry and partake in rites not likely described as modest even by today’s standards.

One goal of the following exercises is to create this meaningful shift in consciousness; to locate and inhabit this secret pocket. The shift may be immediate or in the form of a mental time-bomb. You can treat these magic exercises as experiments, interventions and alternative forms of entertainment. Have fun & good luck, and please let us know how it was for you by emailing to: goodluck@tacticalmagic.org

EXERCISES IN MAGICAL THINKING, ANALYZING POWER, AND ACTIVATING HIDDEN FORCES

1) Plant three seeds of a vegetable plant of your choosing. Label each container respectively: positive, negative & control. Provide each plant with equal amounts of water, soil, and sun. Dedicate at least 6 minutes of each day (3 minutes per plant - positive & negative only) on focusing positive & negative thoughts. Record your results and enjoy the fruits (vegetables) of your labor.

* This is an exercise in developing your telepathic abilities, exploring modes of unregulated communication, collaborating with non-humans, and bringing your thoughts and desires to fruition.

2) Write your own survey to elicit responses from other members of the general public. You may decide to pose questions, ask opinions, or provoke thought. Then, conduct the survey for at least 3 hours in a public space of your choosing, or until the “authorities” inform you that you are trespassing on public property.

* This is an exercise in activating public space, determining the limits of public space, and generating a non-commercial exchange of ideas among strangers. Most people are happy to express their opinions when asked, especially when they are informed that their participation does not involve a sales pitch, future

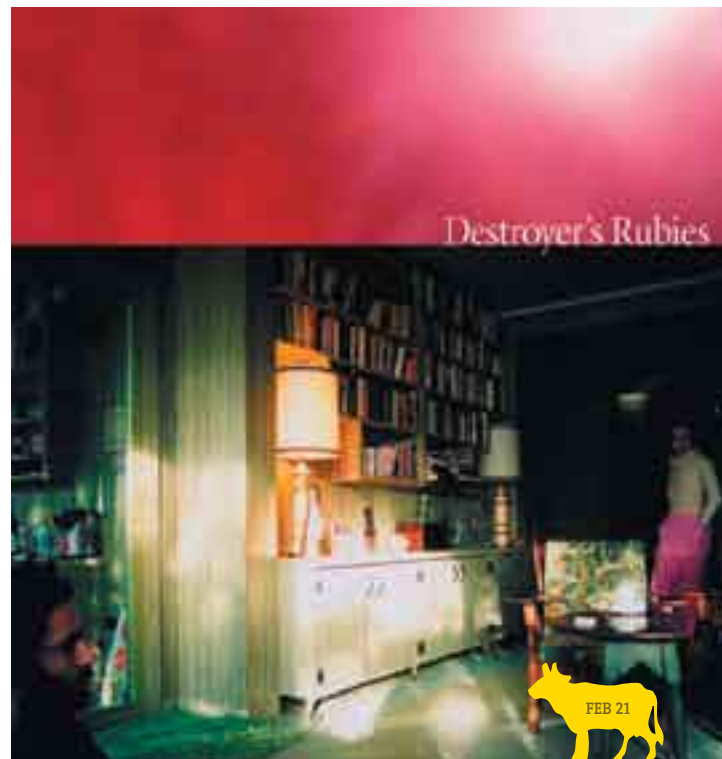
mailings, religious conversion or product development.

3) Get a rope (at least 30 feet) and a friend (or a friendly stranger). Take turns tying each other up and escaping.

* This is an exercise that explores restriction, control, and self-liberation. You’ll be amazed to find how easily one can liberate oneself!

4) Get a group of friends together at night and find a public space to beautify as you see fit. Consider the site beforehand and plan your action thoroughly (but don’t bring along any evidence of your conspiring). Your

(continued on page 61)



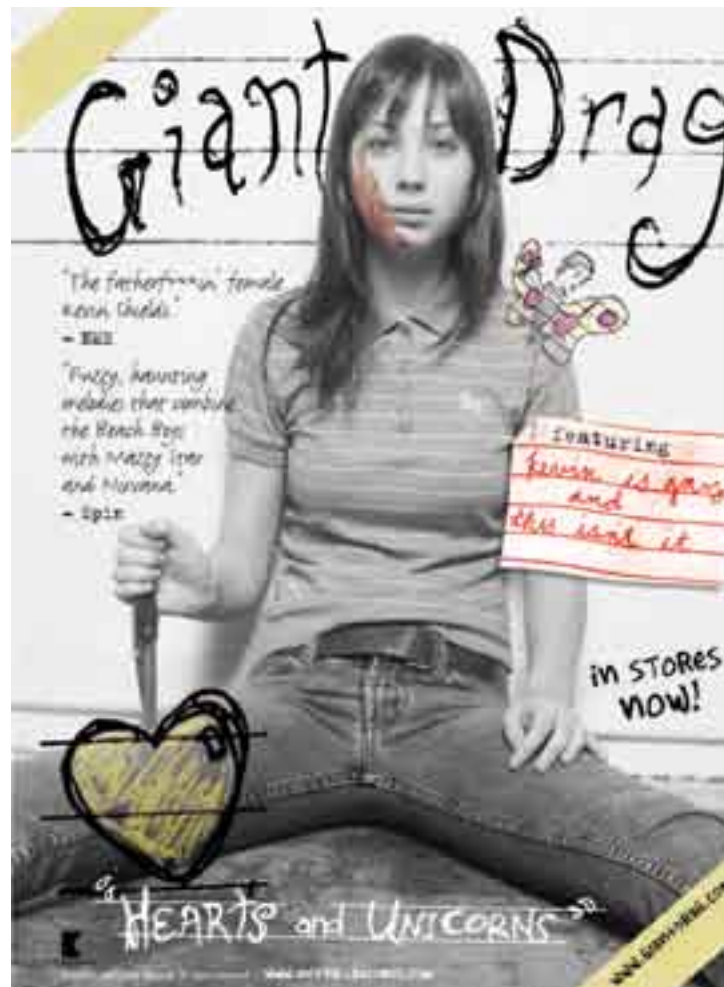
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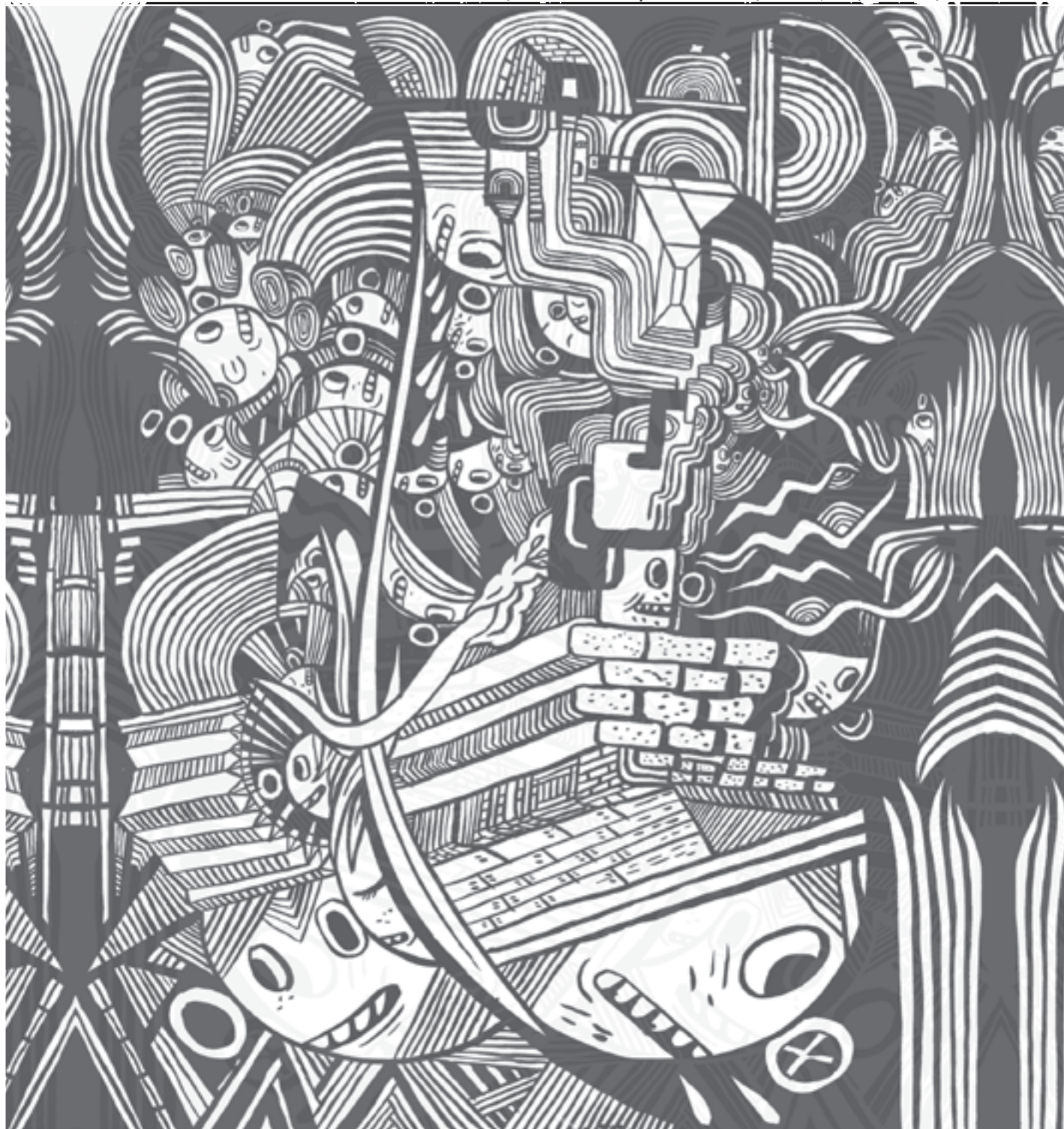


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PENNSYLVANIA IS A GENTLE STATE,

its curving hills blanketed by lush maple, oak and chestnut trees whose leaves all turn to a dazzling spectrum of red, orange and yellow each year around October. Over the past several million years the glacial run-off carved deep river valleys into the land, and in the mid-state region left the soil flat and fertile enough for farms and high school football fields. Outside the concrete sprawl of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia (the port cities bookending the southern region) Pennsylvania is pock-marked by countless factory and agricultural towns, nearly all long past their economic peak.

Pearls and Brass hail from Nazareth, Pennsylvania, a rural nowhere of about 6,000 situated near the New Jersey border, a mile from the Appalachian Trail that stretches from Maine to Georgia. The Martin Guitar factory, maker of acoustic guitars, is in Nazareth; so, too, is the Nazareth Speedway. But like most rural Pennsylvania towns, Nazareth is desperately non-descript; its smallness is its defining characteristic.

“Nazareth was your typical small, working class town,” says Randy Huth, Pearls and Brass’ guitarist and vocalist. “Not a whole lot going on, y’know. But that pretty much made us do our thing.”

Alumni of Nazareth High School, the members of Pearls and Brass (Huth plus Josh Martin, drums; Joel Winter, bass vocals) come off as sincere and plainspoken guys whose roots run deep through



SONS OF NAZARETH

HOW BLUES ROCK THUNDER CHOOGERS PEARLS & BRASS FOUND THEIR SOUND IN RURAL PENNSYLVANIA.

BY BRIAN J. BARR. / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIA TESSA SCIARRINO

their town. Together, they play a bluesy power trio rock that has as much to do with Skip James as it does Blue Cheer; loud, melodic, eerie and crammed with enough riffs to dizzy Tony Iommi or Matt Pike. It’s as if they successfully boiled down the basics of the blues, cranked the volume and carried on the tradition of early Black Sabbath and The Groundhogs. Not to mention they narrowly avoided a case of blue-collar ennui by investing in the healing powers of rock n roll.

If we are to ascribe a myth to Pearls and Brass, it will be one of “local boys make good” romanticism. One imagines Pearls and Brass as the Cobainesque outcasts of Nazareth High, taking refuge in their record collections and loud guitars. We picture them drinking whiskey and smoking grass in a parked car out in the middle of the woods on Friday nights while their classmates cheered on the home team. Most likely they’re holding down low-paying jobs to afford their vices; bagging groceries at Giant Food or bussing tables at De Nisi’s Family Restaurant, whatever teenagers do to get by in these places, the weary townships of rural America.

If we were to ascribe such a myth it wouldn’t be far from the truth. Huth, Martin and Winter went to school, smoked grass, worked shitty jobs, went for long walks alone in the woods, playing guitar. Individually they’ve spent their post-high school years either in-and-out of college, or employed at labor-intensive, low-wage jobs. As a band, they’ve released a single little-heard album on a tiny label—2003’s *Pearls and Brass*, on Doppelganger—which may have sold in the low triple digits. They’ve never toured for more than two weeks.

And yet, despite this relative isolation and obscurity, Pearls and Brass scored a gig at February, 2005’s Slint-curated All Tomorrow’s Parties festival at Camber Sands, recorded a new album in California with Fucking Champs’ Tim Green, and have found a higher profile home at indie label Drag City—all the result of a single right-place, right-time event.

As Martin recalls it, Pearls and Brass had booked a small tour in support of their debut. A week before they were to hit the road, all shows were cancelled. They loaded up their gear anyway and

barnstormed the East Coast, looking for clubs that would take them on as an opener for whoever was scheduled that particular night. In Louisville, Kentucky they found a fan in the manager of Za’s Pizza, who was so compelled by the disc they handed him, he called David Pajo, who was scheduled to play that night with his band Papa M, saying: “Hey, I got this band from PA here, they’re really good. Could they open for you?”

“We had no idea who Papa M was,” says Martin. “But Pajo told the guy no. We spent that night on the stoop drinking 40s and smoking cigarettes. But I guess the manager was playing our record when Pajo was setting up.”

A year and a half later, Huth receives a call from All Tomorrow’s Parties organizer Barry Hogan, who informs them that Slint (Pajo’s former band, who had recently reunited) has selected them to play as part of their curated show in the UK.

Martin: “I wouldn’t be surprised if maybe 100 people bought that first record and now some dude from ATP is asking to play? We had never played in front of that many people before. I know it sounds cheesy, but I was seriously looking at the audience and thinking, ‘Wow, there are a lot of people here.’”

All the while Pajo had been talking the band up to Drag City and it wasn’t long before two of the label’s reps traveled from Chicago to catch the band in Toledo, Ohio.

Business was discussed the moment they set their instruments down.

As it happens, Pearls and Brass (the name means nothing whatsoever, they claim) is just another band these guys formed.

“Since we’ve been playing music, we’ve been playing together,” says Martin. “Randy and Joel are cousins. And Randy and I have been playing music together since we were twelve years old. Then Joel began playing bass. We’ve gone off and played in other bands, but we always come back to one other.”

Throughout their teens they played in a series of ‘82-style hardcore acts like The Gatecrashers and The Ultimate Warriors. (Huth also had a gritty solo project called Slogan Boy.) Because Nazareth couldn’t contain them, they played gigs all over the state, in hard-luck towns

with names like Meadville and Oil City.

Somewhere along the way, though, they all shifted from punk to riff-heavy rock; thick, bluesy jams that are bombastic, supernatural and dense. Martin blames it on marijuana, Huth sees it as a natural progression. Much is also owed to their discovery of the ancient bluesmen. Says Martin: “I remember sitting around talking about Robert Johnson one autumn night with those guys and I said, ‘Hey, I have this Robert Johnson anthology, let’s listen to it.’ We played it and we had to get out of the car. The music was that scary. From that point on it was Skip James and Mississippi Fred McDowell and Blind Lemon Jefferson and all the rest.”

“The old blues stuff is sincere,” says Huth. “Just one guy and a guitar. We just do our interpretation of what that would be like loud.”

Of course that was also the strategy of many ‘60s electric rock guitarists, and so, after high school Huth found himself diving heavily into those elder statesmen of riffs, spinning sides of Zeppelin, Cream, Randy Holden and Mahavishnu while lost in his headphones all day. It was only natural that his fret hand would begin to form similar chords.

Pearls and Brass’ debut was the work of a band that had done their Music of the 20th Century homework. Like a more muscular Allman Brothers, Pearls and Brass upped the roots quotient in a way akin to The Black Keys. They fueled their blues with working-class angst, playing because they were damned if they’d spend the rest of their lives inside some Nazareth factory. It was the kind of record that would have fit squarely amidst the whiter side of the Fat Possum roster.

On *The Indian Tower*, released in late January, the jams are bombastic, dense, almost mystical, like some sort of blues from beyond. The album’s feel makes all the more sense knowing that the album’s namesake and thematic base, the real-life “Indian Tower” pictured on the album cover, is a graveyard perched on the outskirts of Nazareth.

“It’s an Indian graveyard, actually,” says Martin. “And the (Indian) tower sits right next to it. There’s only maybe three Indians buried in this tomb among all these colonists. They named the Indians things like ‘Sara Indian’



Worth all the money your hippie neighbor has in his pocket: Pearls and Brass' Randy Huth, Josh Martin and Joel Winter.

and 'John Indian' and "Benjamin Indian.' (The tombstones) don't have Native American names."

Built by colonists and originally intended as a lookout for invading armies, 200 years later the Indian Tower was party central for Nazareth teens.

"We'd go there to drink beer, smoke pot, make out with girls," says Martin. "And later on we'd just go up there and stare, y'know, not really do much of anything. It's always been there and it's always been a sanctuary. But it's also a place of death, it's a graveyard. There's something really peaceful and tranquil about it, but also something rather ominous. The record, lyrically, was written with kind of a death theme. So it seemed appropriate to blend the two ideas together. You know, there's this place—the Indian Tower—that was kind of mystery and kind of a sanctuary to us, and then we mix in the death element with it. It was perfect for us."

If the songs were not written with the tower in mind, then they were at least inspired partly by local stories, say Huth.

"We used little pieces from our youth as inspiration. Like 'Black Rock Man'—one of the album's highlights—"there's the Black Rock Woods that's right in Nazareth near the Indian Tower. When I was a kid I found a little hut some dude had built and was staying in with a little campfire, some clothes. The guy must've been living in the woods. So I took and embellished

little bits to make a song about a guy who was living in the Black Rock Woods."

"We grew up around woods," says Martin. "That's home, it feels the most comfortable. So that's what we're gonna focus on with music and with the ideas we have."

Tim Green's production on *The Indian Tower* features the same sound you remember from your parents' vinyl collection. It's familiar, soft, warm, and likely to trigger flashbacks for seasoned classic rock fans. (When I played *The Indian Tower* for my longhair, Sabbath-crazed neighbor back in Pennsylvania, he said he loved Pearls and Brass so much he wanted me to give them all the money he had on him. Which was only four dollars, but he assured me he meant every cent of it.) What's ultimately most mindflogging about the songs, though, is the sheer number of hulking riffs and rhythmic shifts in each song. That kind of thing is hard to pull off without some sort of militaristic approach.

"There is a regimen to it," admits Martin. "We've done it the same way for a long time and we stick to it. One part follows another part and we know when to change. We're in no way, shape or form loose with our songs. The old blues stuff, when I listen to it, is really complex. But it's complex on a really simple palate. That's what so intriguing. It melts my brain

"WE GREW UP AROUND WOODS. THAT'S HOME, SO THAT'S WHAT WE FOCUS ON WITH MUSIC AND THE IDEAS WE HAVE."

every time I listen to it because it's so lo-fi and so simple, but amidst that is so much emotion, so much feeling. Even the style of playing sometimes is so wild, the time signatures aren't even following anything. I think ours is more contrived just because that's how we grew up playing, with some kind of structure."

He continues, "I love to think of the riffs and melodies and the rhythms as being a mountain. I always want to have the vision of wilderness, of a mountain, and following the curve of a mountain, following its peaks, the scenery, and trying to attain that vision with the melodies and rhythms. That's what it's always been for me. It's always a vision of a bird soaring and dipping, and a mountain arising out of that."

Pride in one's tiny hometown is something normally reserved for WWII veterans, sports stars and government candidates. Pearls and Brass, however, are wearing "Fuck yeah, we're from Nazareth" pride on their sleeve the same as The Ramones did NYC. But while outsiders are known to declare I Heart NYC from afar, pride in a town like Nazareth can only result from being born and bred there. And though they are inextricably tied to their hometown (going so far as to brand their disc "Nazareth Straight Bourbon Sounds"), they will also forever be associated with their practice space/venue Jeff the Pigeon in Allentown.

"We have friends who were doing this really super noisy rock n roll band called Air Conditioning," says Martin. "They were practicing down there (in Allentown) and they were also doing shows. Our area was used to the same punk rock and hardcore shows, but this guy Matt from White Denim records was doing some really wild shit. Like, getting Costes from France to come over and do this really offensive performance art, having a lot of noise acts come in, just totally weird electronic

groups. And when we moved in, the only thing we brought was beer. So it was like 'Hey, let's have this great music here and party at the same time.' And Allentown is a real shithole, so it makes the experience of going there stranger. It doesn't belong. I mean we were having these shows in literally a sweatshop. They're making tags in this warehouse that say 'Made in the USA,' but there's no garment attached to the tag."

Jeff the Pigeon played host to a host of acts as wide-ranging as Espers, Jack Rose and Chris Corsano and Paul Flaherty. Jeff the Pigeon was also where Face Down In Shit, Pissed Jeans and Oscillating Innards played. It was the kind of spot where beer empties were smashed rather than thrown away.

"It was in a shitty spot in Allentown," says Huth. "So you never had to worry about the cops. And there were never any morons there that wanted to fight."

"You could express yourself in any way possible," says Martin. "People were cutting themselves and doing drugs and just having a good time. Over time it got more popular, and more dangerous."

But for all their love of both Nazareth and Allentown, Pearls and Brass pulled up their bootstraps and got tout while the getting was good.

"We're all in Philly now," says Martin. "I got here just two days ago. I was sort of the last [Nazareth] holdout. I ended up at the dive bars every night by myself, and realized how absolutely morbidly boring it was. It was like 'Wow, I gotta get out.' Here, there's more things to do and a lot more people to exchange ideas with."

"We were trying to get (Martin) to move to South Philly," says Huth. "Cause Joel and I live on the same block, we live two doors down from each other. And there's a few other Nazarenes here, as well."

"We refer to it as The New Nazareth."

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a chainsaw
should be
fully aware
of the
hazards
involved.

Becca Taylor

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Plunging us all into the icy waters of selfish calculation.

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Plant and animal species disappearing at warp speed.
Soil turned to dust, aquifers drained dry.
And I see it's too painful to go there.

It's too painful to go there, I'm headed outside for a smoke.
It's too painful to go there, I'm busy learning Italian.
It's too painful to go there, my therapist told me to stay positive.
She said that whatever I experience is up to me, that I create my own world.
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But it's funny, no matter what they say I keep seeing this weirdness out of the corner of my eye.
I see undercover agents on every transport platform, watching over my fellow Americans strapped into bucket seats.
I see my fellow Americans weighed down by schedules and cellphones and computers and wristwatches.
I see their children swallowing pharmaceuticals to get through the day.
While in nearby fields the birds and animals look on with infinite patience, waiting outside of clock time for us to burn out and disappear.

(The yellow-throated warbler singing, "Is that the best you can do? Best you can do?"
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I hear the siren song of nationalism driving us onto the rocks.
9/11 and the war in Iraq no more than red herrings distracting us from this fact.
Cause Iraqis are people just like us. How can their deaths be worth less than ours?

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EFFIGIES OF GEORGE

CHARLES POTTS

We're going to burn you George,
Just as you burned us.
History and the American people
Aren't going to forgive you.

It takes a heap of ignorance to be
Wrong on every subject
But you've managed it with Rove's help,
Pipsqueak fascist Machiavellian organ grinder
Feeding lies to the smirking monkey cheerleader of
An empire of Republican draft dodgers.

For your persistent misuse of their savior's name
Even the rest of the Christians who don't already
Will come to despise you.

I'll call you out who cannot admit
Even unscreened little old ladies of the loyal opposition
Into your pitiful rallies
Where dupes pay to be lied to.

Let's meet on the gravel parking lot
Of a road house in Texas,
A little place called Hamburger Dam.
I've just returned from Texas.
It's full of generous intelligent people.

You're dead to the core.
You lie reflexively and
The habit blinded you.

It won't be long until
The financial disaster you've exacerbated gets here
With force and fury typically reserved for
The legless horses of the Apocalypse in a
Book of Revelations
Luther had the good sense to shitcan.

It's time you learned how to
Duck motherfucker.
The truth is on its way to
Set you free.

@

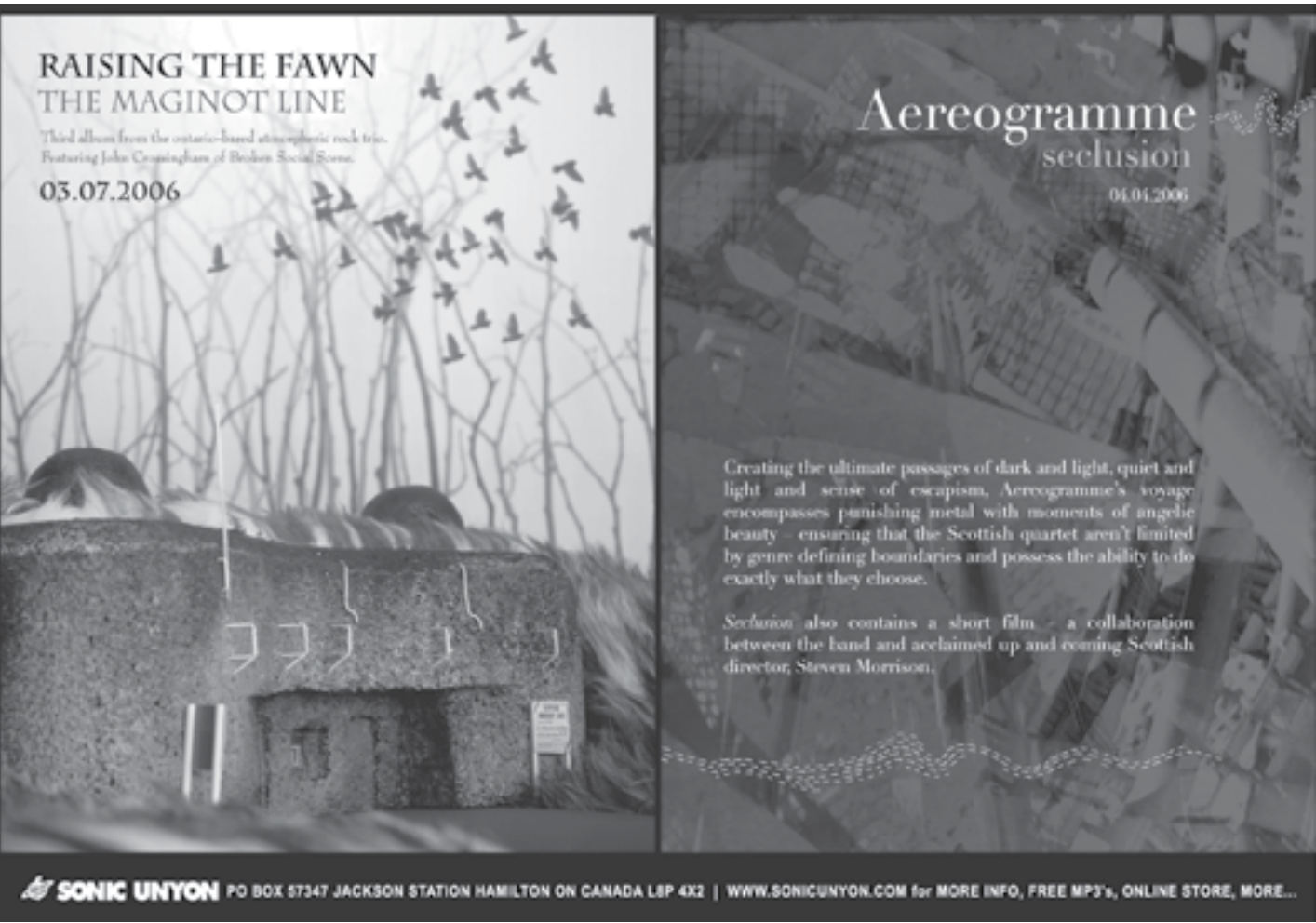


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WE SAW THEM
SEIZED AND DRUGGED
THESE PRISONERS LED
TO SECRET CAGES
BEYOND THE REACH OF LAW,
NIGHTS CHAINED ON
THE SADIST'S BED.

SO MANY YEARS I
PONDERED,
BUT I KNOW TODAY~
THOSE ORDINARY FOLK
WHO READ TO FRETFUL BABIES
AND WORRIED ABOUT JOB
LOSSES IN THE LOCAL NEWS,
HOW THEY COULD LET
THE JEWS BE MARCHED AWAY.

Sharon Rudahl
Dec. 2005



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(continued on page 44)

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MIND MELDERS

AT HOME, AT WORK AND AT PLAY WITH
THE VISIONARY ARTIST-MUSICIAN DUO
DELIA GONZALEZ & GAVIN RUSSOM

BY TRINIE DALTON | PORTRAITS BY HADLEY HUDSON

MATT AND I ARRIVED on our bikes to this chic Berlin restaurant that had no sign, and I wouldn't have known we were at the right place had there not been a long dinner table set outside where a Stevie Nicks-ish redhead sporting a '70s military jacket sat next to a semi-crusty, spaced out guy with really long hair and a beard that looked matted as if he had just gone scuba diving; his locks looked like they were caked with sea salt. *I hope we're eating with them*, I thought, in awe of their awesome style. I also immediately liked them because we were gathered to visit mutual friend, artist AVAF, a.k.a. assume vivid astro focus, a.k.a. Eli Sudbrack, and friends of Eli's are all jovial and talented. Eli had just come from Brazil via London and was in Berlin for two days before going to Barcelona, or something. Next to him was artist (and also, like Matt and I, summer Berlin resident) Terrence Koh, wearing a buckled up Michael Jackson leather jacket. Then there was gallerist Javier Peres, the ultimate host, who'd just flown in from somewhere like Greece, England, or the U.S., and was stopping through before a trip to Estonia to pick up travel partner and permanent Berlin-resident, Danish artist Kirstine Roepstorff. The other ten people at the table were French or Spanish DJs.

I locked up my bike, sat down, ordered some champagne and a bowl of white asparagus soup, and introduced myself to Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom, the most stylish couple in the world. They looked like a couple I could relate to: same age as me,

creative, but with a way advanced fashion sense. I chatted with them while I waited two hours for the waitress to come out and tell me they were out of soup, and it was now too late to order more food since the kitchen was closed. Oh well, I enjoyed more champagne and listened to Delia talk about horoscopes and her visit to a highly-skilled psychic. It was a summery night and Delia and Gavin had only spent a few months thus far in their new Berlin apartment, where they moved to escape the New York art world and high cost of living. They met eight years ago in New York, where they're both from. Matt and I enjoyed discussing the beauty of discovering a new city with them. I felt a bond with Delia and Gavin, a sense of expatriate camaraderie, which imbued the rest of my stay in Germany with the comforting knowledge that other youngish American artists were living only blocks away. Even if I didn't get to hang out with them, since they had an intense traveling schedule, they were still there, making the city cooler. Delia and Gavin made Berlin feel less foreign to me.

Therefore, I first met Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom as visual artists. They've worked as a pair for the past seven years, used to be a couple but aren't anymore, and live separately, sharing each others' apartments; Delia's house is the art studio and Gavin's is the music space. I'd seen their sculptures, knew they were represented by Daniel Reich, and seen another piece of theirs in a catalog for a group show in Austria. Their sculptures look like



Dionysos from the "I Feel Love" exhibition in Naples, 2005.



"Synthesizer sculpture titled *Tomorrow* (right). These sculptures are made of simple modular forms in Formica, which are arranged to simultaneously suggest fascist architectural projects, minimal sculptures and vanity mirrors. They have analog synthesizers built into them that play meditative, repetitive sound based on the settings of knobs on a control panel built into the sculpture." —D&G

"These two stills (below left and right) are from a video we made in 2002 called *Initiatic Journey Through the Vibrational System of the Planetary Mind*. The video goes through the color spectrum as a metaphor for the initiation experience."



minimalist architecture, gleaming and pristine, hypnotically formal, and are either covered in cowrie shells or sequins. Sometimes they're laquered or gold-leafed. They have a sort of punk-new age spirit, if one could mention the two together without extreme cheesiness. Their artwork's punk glamour is cross-pollinated by a fascination with the occult. The sculptures are inspired by Art Deco, the Golden Age of Disco, and '70s Italian horror movie sets; some pieces have religious undertones, referencing Latin-American and African ceremonial totems and shrines, and illuminated manuscripts. Human-sized cubes and cones

get cowrie shell eyes and mouths, transforming simple geometric shapes into magical talisman. Most of their sculptures are soundtracked by Delia and Gavin's trance-inducing disco.

But Delia and Gavin didn't begin as a collaborative sculpture team. Delia, originally from Miami, moved to New York in the mid-'90s to dance in troupes like Fancypants. Gavin, from Providence, was hosting magic shows under the name The Mystic Satin when the two met at a loft party. At first, Delia joined The Mystic Satin, while her and Gavin tinkered with prop making, set design and several varieties of modern dance. Since then, they've made videos, starring themselves,

about zombies who wander Times Square; performed live magic acts dressed as a ballerina (Delia) and a warlock (Gavin); danced in their troupe called Black Leotard Front, and played in a heavy metal band, Fight Evil With Evil. Their first 7" single (and straight-up music project) "El Monte," came out in 2004. Last October, hip electronic label, DFA (home of LCD Soundsystem and The Juan Maclean) released Delia and Gavin's first full-length album, *The Days of Mars*. They'll be playing some U.S. gigs while here for their art opening at Peres Projects Los Angeles in April. They'll also be promoting the release of their single and video, "Relevee," out

this month.

Days of Mars is like Brian Eno, Goblin, and Kraftwerk combined into four long synthesizer tracks that are ambient but layered with pulsating rhythm. Gavin makes their analog synthesizers. When you listen to it you feel like you're traveling to well, Mars. But their music is really more about life on Earth, Delia and Gavin each told me separately over the phone from Berlin. I spoke with them both as they passed their phone back and forth. Their wide range of interests reflect how limitless the idea of making art is to them. Genres don't matter. Music, video, dance, magic show, sculpture, drawing: they love it all. ➤

ON SCIENCE FICTION
SOUNDTRACKS,
HOT LESBIAN AUTHORS,
AND HOMEMADE
SYNTHESIZERS

Delia: *Days of Mars* is named after a Winifred Bryher book. She was Hilda Doolittle’s girlfriend. I had a little crush on her. It’s about WW2 in England. Bryher lived in Switzerland, but when the Germans were bombing England, she went back to support her friends, and kept a diary. The way she described people’s reaction to the war, the way they ignored everything that was going on, reminded me of Bush’s reelection. Everyone was threatening to leave the country, revolt, but when he was reelected, no one did anything about it. Everyone was in denial. “Black Spring,” the fourth song on the album, is also named after a book, by Henry Miller. I found out about that while reading Anaïs Nin. **Gavin:** To make this album, we used synthesizers. I always related to music, and I wanted a more fluid relationship with my instruments. Building synthesizers was something I really wanted to do. In 2000, we were doing performances, and I wanted to make more synthesizer music. I made connections with people in NYC and over the Internet until I figured out how to build analog circuits using parts from Radio Shack and mail order electronics catalogs. I even etched the circuit boards in our apartment, until I figured out a more efficient way to do it. We use regular keyboards; since a lot of what we do is based on pulsing rhythms, the synthesizers allow us to separate out parts of the sound and give them their own rhythms. The sounds are mechanically generated so they interact with what we’re playing.

But really, I don’t know anything about electronic music. The only person I’ve been inspired by in that realm is David Tudor, John Cage’s pianist. He did the “Silence 4’33” piece, for example. As a composer, his basic idea was that the score is a circuit. He built what he called Black Boxes, so that the music he composed would serve as connections between them. Then there’s Louis and Bebe Berron, they made the soundtrack for *Forbidden Planet*. They felt that a soundtrack should not only be a soundtrack but also the sounds of the events in the film. There was the ongoing score then action sounds. They built a lot of their own stuff, and had this idea about theCybernetic, that all instruments should have a life of their own. You’d turn the instrument on, it would create sound for a while,

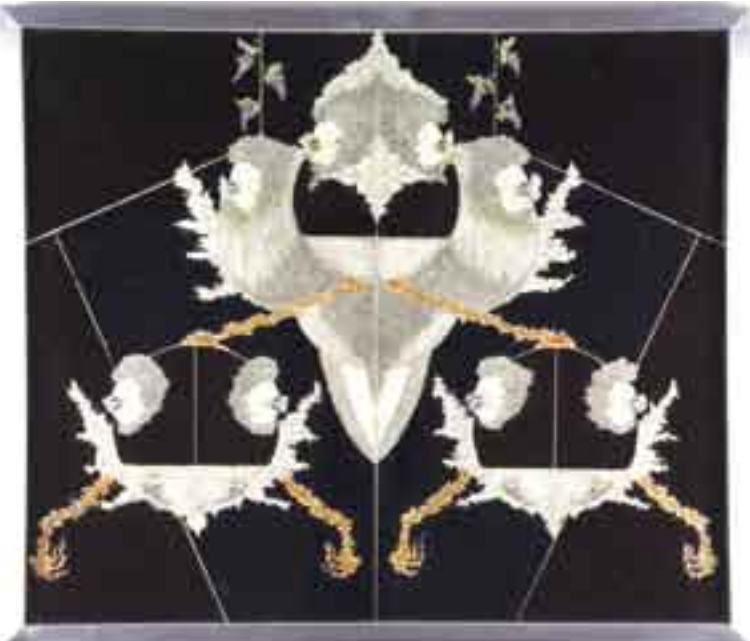
then it would die. What’s interesting about making soundtrack music that isn’t a soundtrack for anything is that it becomes an analog to experience. It’s not fixedly about something visual, but to me it’s a way to be very expressive. Also, it articulates something about living in a time of war. People are in weird states of mind. Critics make this surface comparison of our music to ’70s synthesizer music, whether German or Vangelis, but that music is about escapism, creating an alternate world, whereas what we do is more aboutdescribing an inner world. **Delia:** Since we make the instruments, there’s already a story in them. We interact with the instruments. And since we’ve worked together for so long, we work so intuitively that we really just sit down and start playing. We think up themes for the songs on our own, but together we just play.

ON KENNETH ANGER,
PERFORMANCE ART,
DRESSING UP,
AND STAGEFRIGHT

Delia: Style is important to me. I’m definitely motivated by beauty, as well as Gavin. No contemporary styles fall into that category, though. Our pieces have entertainment value because we grew up watching TV and movies. Hollywood has influenced us. In that way, we are like Kenneth Anger. Gavin and I always have a dilemma of how to look on stage. When we performed in the past, we made all of our costumes. Now, when we play, we feel like it’s really us, so it’s harder to come up with a visual. We’re used to performing live in galleries. But our music now is more personal. Before our record came come out, I was nervous to tour because I get so embarrassed. For our shows coming up, we are for sure renting costumes! Then, I can totally perform.

Everything I do is extremely personal. For our sculptures, we take more into account what people will think, but really, we’re not even interested in that. Living in New York, it bothered me that so many people make art for commercial value, to get ahead. So we both made work against that. Our work is personal on purpose. **Gavin:** Kenneth Anger makes me think of the aesthetics of magic. The most important thing is that magic or religion works. So in that sense, it doesn’t matter if art is made to entertain others or if it’s for yourself. You can look at Anger’s movies as Egyptian Magic

(continued on page 46)



“A drawing by Delia, from ‘I Feel Love’ in Naples. This series of drawings depicts a vision of the moment when an interior world is glimpsed through a crack in the corporeal.”



The Other Side, a “Magic Show” from 2000 (left): “This performance was in Sweden. We did a lot of performances under the rubric of ‘Magic Shows.’ Basically the idea was to create a magical atmosphere using very poorly executed and totally un-mystifying illusions, disco music and a lot of fireworks shot off indoors.”



DELIA & GAVIN’S
PLAYLIST

Delia and Gavin are all into dance music. I got curious about it and asked them to make a little playlist as if they were DJing. —TD

Rhythm is Rhythm, “Nude Photo”
Tony Conrad with Faust, “From the Side of Man and Womankind”
Gwydion, “Sun God”
Luciano Berio and Cathy Berberian, “Visage”
Love and Kisses, “Romeo and Juliet”
Meredith Monk, “Dolmen Music”
Celi Bee and the Buzzy Bunch, “Superman”
Boudewijn de Groot, “Nacht en Ontij”
Adonis, “No Way Back”
Alice Coltrane, “My Favorite Things”
Anything by Blood on the Wall



Vesuvius also from the “I Feel Love” exhibition in Naples, 2005 (left): “Fertility symbols given obsessive attention and repetitive glamorous decoration, evoking the trance inducing properties of late disco music and connecting them to the Bacchanal cult and to the Erotic art found at Pompeii.”

assume vivid astro focus
 Dan Atton
 Chris Ballantyne
 Dan Cohen
 Liz Craft
 Folkert de Jong
 Amie Dicke
 Kaye Donachie
 Jim Drain
 Delia Gonzalez & Gavin Rusconi
 Matt Greene
 John Kleckner
 Bruce LaBruce
 Terence Koh
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INSIDE THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

MY TRAVELS WITH ROCK 'N' ROLL
LEGEND TAV FALCO
AND HIS UNAPPROACHABLE PANTHER BURNS
BY RICHARD A. PLEUGER

THE LEGEND OF THE PANTHER BURN

"Around the turn of the last century—1900 or so—they started clearing more land for the cultivation of cotton and other crops around the Mississippi River. These big piles of trees and bush were left there to be burned later. And the animals that were living in these areas—foxes, bears, rabbits—had no place to go.

"There was this wild cat, a panther, who was very cunning and howled all night. Faced with the destruction of his own habitat, the panther started to raid the farmers' chicken coops. The animal became a general nuisance. They tried to hunt the panther

down, but he eluded their traps.

"One night the farmers ran the animal into a canebrake, a stand of wild cane bamboo growing there, and they set the canebrake on fire. The shrieks of the panther were so intense that it was unforgettable. The location became known from then on as The Panther Burn. In essence, it was a symbol for the downfall of the last vestige of frontier America and the onset of European civilization in the South. And this is where we derived the lore of the Panther Burn."

—Gustavo "Tav" Falco, in conversation with the author, 2002

THE STORY BEGINS

in Germany in 1981, a full five years before I met Tav Falco. At the time, I was studying art and film in Düsseldorf, but often traveled to Berlin. There, I discovered the mythical power of rockabilly music along with a tight group of friends who had formed The Legendary Golden Vampires, the most fearsome band in Berlin. While their peers Einstürzende Neubauten exorcised their German demons by eating rusty metal, the Golden Vampires had been authorized to use the honorarium "Legendary" by an obscure relic of American music, The Legendary Stardust Cowboy of Lubbock, Texas. The key influence on the Golden Vampires was The Cramps, whose musical psychosis was highly seductive at a time when New Wave felt mighty pretentious.

My head was being blown open by The Sonics, The Droogs, Link Wray, Benny Joy, The Gun Club

and the darker side of country music. Not only did these artists provide me with the outsider anthems I required, they seemed to suggest a code of ethics that was cemented further by Robert Mitchum's performance in the film *Night of the Hunter*, which we watched obsessively.

In essence, my friends and I lived in our own world of American underground pop culture. We identified with the dark anarchy underlying the birthplace of Rock'n'Roll, and I was particularly haunted by the work of American bandleader Tav Falco, whose first EP "She's The One to Blame," released on his own Frenzi label in 1980. Tav tunes like "Bourgeois Blues" and "Hairdresser Underground" contained a transformative energy found in only the most truly unpredictable Rock'n'Roll.

But besides the music, Tav himself seemed to have a deeper connection to the historic evil heart of Rock'n'Roll: he came

from Memphis, Tennessee, the heart of the American South. His voice evoked the spectral quality of "Strange Fruit" hanging from poplar trees, and the haunted sound of crickets chirping in hundred percent humidity on a night when a race-related killing has taken place.

Tav Falco oozed American authenticity. His brand of music seemed simultaneously experienced and unpredictable. When I saw Tav staring down conspiratorially from the cover of his first album, 1981's *Behind the Magnolia Curtain*, I felt a deep inner connection with this slightly melancholic, Chaplin-'stached Southern Gothic Dandy. In those dark and sluggish days in '80s Germany, Tav Falco and his Unapproachable Panther Burns inspired me, and in fact ended up drawing me to the other edge of the Western world and into the dark undercurrents of American pop culture.

Tav Falco and Lorette Velvette
leaning on Tav's 800 Norton, their armed
neighbors behind them.

INSIDE THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

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Tav Falco and Lorette Velvette
leaning on Tav's 800 Norton, their armed
neighbors behind them.



Lorette Velvette, leader of the Hellcats, and Panther Burns' Italian drummer Giovanna Pizzorno drive over the train tracks somewhere in Arkansas.

Tav Falco was born into Italian roots in Gurdon, Arkansas, a sleepy railroad town between Little Rock and Texarkana, east of the Interstate on Highway 67. As I drove with Tav through rural Arkansas in his 1964 Ford Thunderbird, the sight of the train tracks just outside of Bluff City, Memphis brought him back to his childhood:

“I was living out in the backwoods between Gurdon and Whelan Springs, Arkansas, a whistle stop on the railroad where the cannonball freight ran through it, way in the backwoods and not much bigger than Panther Burns in Mississippi. “When a steam train came through, it covered the whole town in black smoke, you couldn’t see anything. It was like a fantastic mist that transported you into the netherworld of the imagination and the unconscious.

“Even today, the whole essence of the Panther Burns is to stir up the dark waters of the unconscious mind. That’s why we’re here. You can have a party, you can have sex, you can find your husband or wife—all this happens at Panther Burns shows. You can get spaced out. You can get drunk. You can lie on the floor, get stomped on. You can intermingle with the races, you can dance your ass off. But the essence of it is: stir up the unconscious mind.”

Childhood experience inspired young Tav to become a brakeman on the Missouri-Mississippi railroad, not unlike Jimmie Rodgers, the great country singer of the 1920s. In fact, in the beginning Tav and his band were billed in Memphis as Tav Falco, the Beale Street Blues Bopper and The Unapproachable Panther Burns. Later he changed it into Tav Falco, the Steppin’ Brakeman and the U.P.B.

Tav: “The brakeman separates and couples the cars together. He climbs up on the car and sets the big round handbrake. He gives hand signals when to do what. A very romantic job.”



At an after-concert party in San Francisco, Lorette Velvette curls up in a chair, playing country blues, while Ross Johnson listens.

IN THE MID-’80s

I had sung in my own '60s-style garage band C.H.U.D., named after an obscure American horror movie. (We had our moment in 1986 when our song “Rumble at the Love-In” was included on Lee Joseph’s *Sounds of Now!* compilation on Dionysus Records.)

My interest in Americana eventually took its toll, as the fierce focus of my obsession contributed to my girlfriend leaving me. After that, there was nothing keeping me in the Heartbreak Hotel called Germany. I applied for a grant to study in the States, got it, and was on my way.

I landed in San Francisco to study filmmaking at the Art Institute with George Kuchar. On a cool late summer night in 1986, I went to see Tav Falco unleash his unique blend of rockabilly and country blues in a club down on Broadway. Sporting a big black curly pompadour, Tav proved to be an even more powerful performer than I could have imagined. He drove his group, the Panther Burns, like “the last steam engine train on the tracks that does nothing but run and blow.” The power of the music propelled the crowd into other realms of fierce, ritualistic reality. During the a hypnotic rendition of “Jump Suit,” Tav proclaimed: “Panthermen and Pantherwomen, this is the Invisible Empire!” The audience then stormed the stage to sing along.

After the show, I introduced myself to Tav, and was pleasantly surprised to find this feverish performer to be highly approachable. Warm and welcoming, Tav invited me to come along to a small informal aftershow party being thrown by a friend of his in an apartment by the beach not far from Golden Gate Park.

There, we sat and talked. Lorette Velvette, a warm and lanky Southern Belle and Tav’s muse at the time, sat curled in a chair strumming country blues songs on her acoustic guitar. Tav, dressed in a smart blue-and-white striped dress shirt with a white collar, long-sleeved vest, black cigarette pants and pointed black boots, stated his specific fondness for German Expressionist Film. He enthused about the trance-like states achieved by the medium Cesare (played by Conrad Veidt) in Robert Wiene’s 1920 silent classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. We bonded over a mutual affinity for the under-appreciated storytelling titan Erich von Stroheim and his romantic stylization of Vienna in the late Austro-Hungarian Empire. I played a mix-tape of obscure '50s and '60s music, including

Tav at home in Memphis wrestling with his Panther.
Tav’s Panther Burns Memphis HQ was a modest house at 2425 Princeton Avenue close to Overton Park. After having dinner at the Arcade on Calhoun Street, one of the best preserved '50s restaurants in Tennessee,

Tav screened the director Rudolph Mate’s glorious 1953 Technicolor riverboat classic *Mississippi Gambler* (starring Tyrone Power as gallant gentleman and quintessential showboat gambler Marc Fallon) as inspiration for a video shoot with the author.



TAV SAID HE DROVE THE BAND LIKE “THE LAST STEAM ENGINE TRAIN ON THE TRACKS THAT DOES NOTHING BUT RUN AND BLOW.”

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DIXIE FRIED
FRI. - JUNE 26th
8:00 P. M.
* * * THE LEGENDARY * * *
TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS
★ NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALL STARS ★
WITH EAST MEMPHIS SLIM
* * * FROM GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI * * *
T-MODEL FORD
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the melancholy, almost Viennese, Hawaiian song “White Birds” that Lorette later adapted on her debut album.

Tav told me in his characteristically refined Southern drawl that he had at one time been an assistant to famed Memphis photographer William Eggleston. I knew of Eggleston and his status as the man who’d introduced color photography into the world of fine arts. I mentioned my fascination with a particular Eggleston photograph of an older, forlorn-looking white man standing beside his car close to a river, while behind him, with reverent distance, stood his white-uniformed black driver. Tav explained that Eggleston had taken the photograph at a funeral ceremony not visible in the frame, thus accounting for the somber atmosphere of the scene. We spoke about Astor Piazzola and Tav’s fascination with tango. Tav also wrote down a list of books I should read, including *Against the Grain* by Anthony Dunbar, *Elmer Gantry* by Sinclair Lewis, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner and *Walk on the Wild Side* by Nelson Algren. Outside, the Pacific Ocean lashed the beach in dark waves.

We continued to hang out over the next few days, and by the end, Tav had commissioned me to film a movie/video clip for “Shadetree Mechanic,” the lewd double-entendre blues by Z.Z. Hill on Panther Burns’ new “Shake Rag” EP. We made a plan: I would fly to New Orleans, get picked up by Tav, go on tour with Panther Burns to Baton Rouge and Atlanta, then return to Memphis to shoot the movie. Almost all of the

photographs that accompany this article were shot during this two-week adventure.

TAV HAD A RICH background in filmmaking. Back in 1974 he'd recorded a black and white open-reel video of Delta bluesman R.L. Burnside (whose first name Tav pronounced "Rural") performing in Burnside's own honky-tonk, the Brotherhood Sportsmen's Lodge near Como, Mississippi.

"R.L. used to play acoustic guitar in the '40s and '50s," Tav told me, "but the first time I saw him, he was playing electric." While I was staying at Panther Burns headquarters in Memphis, Tav screened his Burnside footage for me (some of it was later used in the Fat Possum documentary *You See Me Laughin'*). It blew my mind: I saw poor people dancing barefoot on a sawdust floor to the hypnotic beat of the local master, escaping life's misery into the sanctuary of moonshine and cheap beer, entranced by a volatile, mass hypnosis-inducing, one-chord Blues in a wooden shack somewhere deep in Northern Mississippi.

It was Burnside, Tav told me, who had inspired him to pick up the electric guitar. The instrument became one of Tav's primary tools during events that normally might be termed gigs, but because of Tav's particular methods and aims he referred to as "art actions."

It was during one such event in 1979 at the Orpheum Theatre on Beale Street in Memphis that the Panther Burns were born. There, Tav delivered a frenzied solo performance of Leadbelly's "Bourgeois Blues." Recalling the event, Tav says: "I did an art action with Jim Dickinson's band, Mudboy and the Neutrons. I performed alone in full evening clothes, wore white gloves with the fingers cut out. I wanted to express publicly the frustration, alienation and discontent I felt, being some kind of trash from Arkansas, an artist and living on the margins.

"I got tired of the bourgeois thing happening in the States at that time. I was trying to work as a photographer and filmmaker and felt thwarted. I was a product of the '60s, a time when I met a lot of people on the road. There were these mass movements of people across the country then, and a great deal of that time was dedicated to the rediscovery and the celebration of the Blues. I took up a guitar out of frustration. Bought this five dollar Sears Silvertone guitar and thought, *I'm gonna give notice to the people, I'm*



Tav, stretched out at Sam Phillips, 639 Madison Avenue, Memphis (right).

Richard Plueger: "After another fine fudge ice cream at the Arcade, Lorette, Giovanna, Tav and I went across the street to Candleroom 14, a local gris-gris voodoo shop. Inside it was pitch dark with the exception of weak neon tubes barely illuminating some glass cabinets displaying magical herbs for every possible evil deed and thought. The complete silence in the shop was only interrupted by an insanely old German shepherd licking one of the cabinet windows. "The owner, a sophisticated older black

man, appeared from behind a dark curtain and gave quiet instructions on different mojo hands and magic candles. I purchased a special book on herbs and a black candle in the form of a naked woman.

"During a photo session on the first floor of Sam Phillips' studio on Madison Avenue, lawless elements broke into Tav's Thunderbird and stole money and my book on herbs. We cursed the robbers to get 'stinging nettle-afros' and 'thistle-mullets.' I still don't know what god or entity had a problem with my acquisitions, but he, she or it clearly did not want me to have them."

After frustrating experiences telling German barbers how to carve something that looked like early Elvis (and oftentimes winding up looking like a sprouting potato), the author eagerly anticipated his first appointment with an American barber.

Richard Plueger (right): "Upon my arrival in San Francisco I went to an old hairdresser on Market Street, showed him photographs of rockabilly singers Tex Rubinoviz and **Billy Lee Riley (farther right)** and got exactly what I wanted: a straight old duck's ass, lubricated into aerodynamic, jaw-dropping shape with gel and Final Net. I now had a tornado-proof helmet of defiance against all unnecessary trendiness."



Panther Burns perform live in downtown Atlanta (right). The club was full of A Flock of Seagulls-type New Wavers who had never seen anything like The Panther Burns. The band had Giovanna on the drums, Rene Coman on bass, George Reinecke on special claw-hand guitar and a red-caped Tav thundering through "Cuban Rebel Girl" (named after the Errol Flynn movie filmed during the Cuban revolution in 1959), "Dateless Night" from Cordell Jackson's Memphis-based Moon label, "I'm on This Rocket" (a cover suggested to Tav by the Cramps' Lux Interior) and a version of Z.Z. Hill's "Shadetree Mechanic."



L.A. rockers Kip Tyler and the Flips' rockerbride-anthem "She's My Witch" got Tav's eerie desert nightwind treatment which tested the hairsprayed New Wave happyhelmets up in front. Tav finished the set with the upbeat dance numbers "Mona Lisa" and "Tina, The Go-Go Queen," climaxing with the psychosexual tango "Drop Your Masque."

After the show, the band and their young hosts-architecture students and big Alex Chilton fans-ate at a restaurant close to the venue in downtown Atlanta. My rockabilly pompadour raised many an eyebrow in this Southern establishment.



(Below from right to left) Lorette Velvette ,Tav, New Orleans blues radio DJ Melinda Pendleton (who was going with PB guitarist George Reinecke at the time), and the author.

"I GOT TIRED OF THE BOURGEOIS THING HAPPENING IN THE STATES AT THE TIME. I FELT THWARTED."



gonna destroy my guitar and tell them, it's a sad bourgeois town, and they can kiss my ass!"

"I was alone with the guitar, a police whistle, a SKIL saw and a chain saw, all put in use against each other. And little Bill Eggleston was there on my own Televista camera, videoing the entire event. He was videotaping onstage and it was being played back in real-time on a massive television monitor that I brought to the stage and aimed at the audience. So the powers-that-be could not control what I was feeding back to the audience, since I had my own video. Many people noticed my gesture, like they were thinking the same thing, of doing some kind of spontaneous action. I hadn't been thinking too much about it, because I was already living in that kind of art-action way. Alex Chilton was in the audience that night and we formed Panther Burns with Ross Johnson."

TAV ALWAYS COLLABORATED

musically with his idols. Beside playing with Chilton, Charlie Feathers and James Luther Dickinson, he had blues singer Jesse Mae Hemphill (a.k.a. Shewolf) and the marching drummers of Napoleon Strickland's Cane Fife Band heavily destabilizing the already raucous rendition of "Bourgeois Blues" on his band's debut album, 1981's *Behind the Magnolia Curtain*. But despite the band's impressive collective pedigree, Panther Burns was not about musical virtuosity, it was about an aesthetic.

"To this day I regard myself more as a performer than a musician," Tav told me in 2002. "It takes a special individual to play in the Panther Burns. You can't just plug a musician into this music. To play this music is hard work for musicians, but easy for an artist. I would rather work with someone who's got more of a philosophical orientation than sheer musical virtuosity to display in the band. I'm looking for something ineffable."

MY TWO-WEEK TRIP

into the world of Tav Falco and the Panther Burns was an inspirational fever dream that was over too soon. Yet the Panthers Burns themselves have never stopped.

Astoundingly well preserved over the last 20 years, the result of a physically, intellectually and artistically stimulating lifestyle and vegan diet, Tav Falco could be the true Dorian Gray of Rock'n'Roll. Now rumored to be approaching 60 years of age, he appears two



Tav and a Kingrider inspect the Thunderbird's engine during the shoot (above).

"I REGARD MYSELF MORE AS A PERFORMER THAN A MUSICIAN. I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING INEFFABLE."



Tav's neighbors, Sammi Lee Williams, wife Jeany and daughter Sharee Ann (right).

Richard Pleuger: "When Tav and Lorette introduced me to their neighbors, it dawned on me that these were the people on the porch behind them in the photograph on the back cover of the "Sugarditch Revisited" EP, an image that I had enlarged and hung on my wall in Germany.

"Their neighbor, Sammi Lee Williams, was an Indian from Mississippi. His massive frame was sat either on his porch or in a wheelchair. Years before he had wrecked his Honda 450 on a stormy day in Memphis. He was thrown through the air after hitting a car and came down in a liquor store parking lot. They put him into two plastic bags and thought he was dead. Sam survived somehow, but

never healed. His leg always had an open, gangrenous wound in which strange things grew.

"Sam collected trash for a living and stored most of it in a rusty school bus in his backyard. Sam had a coyote called Blue Eye, a couple of dogs, and about eighteen overexcited puppies.

"His wife Jeany and daughter Sharee Ann were very nice, mentally handicapped people, who under Sam's direction had built a huge fence around the property. Those 'goddamn young hippie-redneck' neighbors had apparently been drunk out of their mind two months back and had a ball shooting two of his beloved dogs in the early morning hours. Since then Sam's paranoia had risen. He told all of his visitors—including us—not to make any sudden movements in the house, and to step lightly. The fuses of

the live hand grenades he had stored in sawdust 'somewhere in a backroom' could go off any second. (Tav told me that Sam had also molded his own bullets out of liquid lead.)"

A year later, Tav recorded the rockabilly song "Warrior Sam" by Don Willis and the Orbits and wrote in his liner notes that "Warrior Sam lives on the porch next door." When Tav returned from his first European tour, Warrior Sam was no more. Sammi had the habit of slapping Jeany and Sharee Ann with his crutch when he was displeased with their work on the high fence. Apparently, he had done that once too often. Jeany knocked him over in the wheelchair, took all the money in the house and left for Mississippi with their daughter. Sammi Lee Williams had a heart attack and was left to die, which he did.



Drummer Giovanna Pizzorno, Tav Falco and Lorette Velvette at Sam Phillips Recording Service.

Tav Falco and friends during "Shadetree Mechanic" shoot (Left).

"Say you ain't had a tune-up in a long, long while/ I'll give you good service with a smile." —"Shadetree Mechanic" by Z.Z. Hill

Richard Pleuger: "The idea of the "Shadetree Mechanic" video was for me to show a day in the world of the Unapproachable Panther Burns: their women, house, cars, hogs, dogs, garage, music, bodyguards and rituals.

"The film begins with Lorette and Giovanna getting out of bed in the morning with their wire-haired dachshund Daniac. They cruise around Memphis in a Thunderbird, buy an ice cream and drive through the surrounding countryside in Tennessee and Arkansas. They pick up hitchhiking love-starved guitarist George Reinecke, who behaves badly and is thrown out quickly near a pigsty. On the way back to Memphis, their car breaks down and they have to take refuge in an enchanted garage with several engineering professionals. One in particular, Tav, gets the attention of Lorette.

"The shoot took place at night in a warehouse garage in an industrial area in Memphis adjoining the black neighborhoods that were complete ghettos. A very dangerous place. The garage was inhabited by Randy, the mechanic who went with Diane Green, one of the guitarists in the Memphis girl-band The Hellcats.

"Filming at night in the end of November in Memphis quickly put the mechanics of Tav's own 16mm Bolex camera to the test.

The spring-wind, with which you wind the camera up until it runs for about 30 seconds without electricity, did not work properly at times due to the freezing cold. The Stroheim-like precision with which I swore I would make this video clip into a dark Southern Rock'n'Roll masterpiece went unnervingly out the proverbial window in this windowless garage.

"We had assembled a strange mix of people, meeting then and there for the first and maybe the last time. Tav Falco, the Hellcats, Sammi Lee Williams with his blue-eyed coyote on his thigh, Sam's daughter and his wife holding the stick with the all-seeing hand (an emblem of Panther Burns lore), and Ray Dayton, president of the all-black Harley Riders Motorcycle Club, along with his fellow Club members.

"Lying on a board fixed to the wall overseeing the whole scenario underneath me, the malfunctioning Bolex brought me to the verge of inner hysteria. Yet any possible volatility among this crowd I had envisioned beforehand was replaced by a camaraderie and kinship that only Tav Falco could have created. Meanwhile I did my best in directing and created the desired precision later on the Steenback in the editing room.

"Two days after the movie shoot two members of our film crew were beaten up and robbed. It seemed like yet another example of Sleepy John Estes' statement that Memphis is the leader of all dark goings-ons in this world."

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ANGELS OF LIGHT SING OTHER PEOPLE



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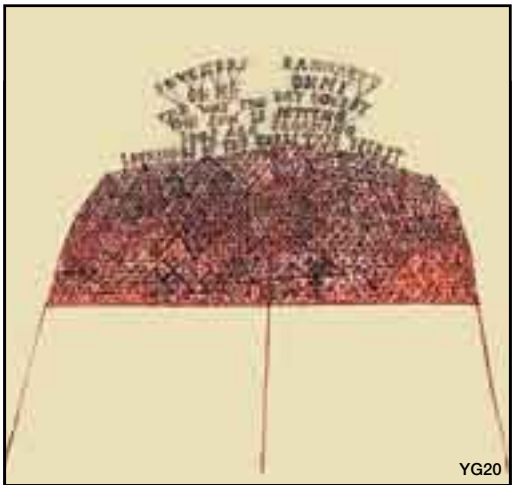
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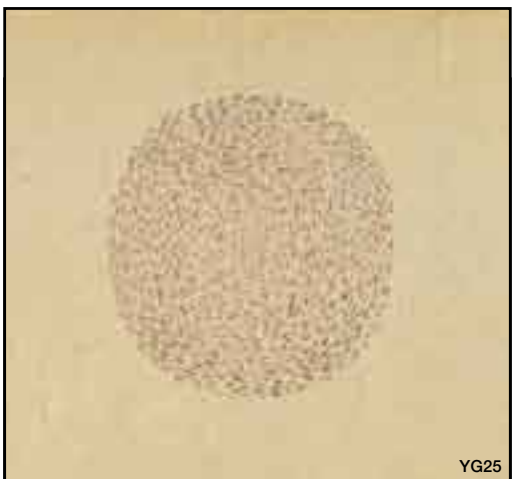
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decades younger, especially energy-wise. Surrounding himself over the years with a set of arresting if not controversial men and women, this consummate entertainer continues to present his plethora of personas: rockabilly psycho, Italian crooner, heartbroken tango shadowdancer, country-blues aficionado. Like any intelligent original artist, he has explored different musical paths over the last 25 years, and now has the understated authority of a man who's survived a quarter of a century worth of artistic dread and cultural homogenization.

There still is a fire burning in the Panther's eye, and I admire him for that. And now, through the passage of time, his fire burns with a finer grain. I feel a bit like Claude Rains, talking to Humphrey Bogart at the end of Casablanca. I never met a finer Southern gentleman than Tav Falco, and those days almost 20 years ago were the beginning of a beautiful friendship that continues today. As Tav himself signs his correspondence: Panther Burns Forever Lasting!

The historic Showcase Lounge in Memphis, photographed in 1974 by Tav (right).

When talking about Memphis, where he honed his creative fire and formed the mythical basis for his work, Tav becomes ominous.

"When B.B. King, Bobbie Blue Bland and Jacky Wilson headlined at the Memphis Auditorium in 1966, there were only three white people in the audience: Randall Lyon, Robert Palmer from the New York Times and myself.

"In 1968, I went to the Showcase Lounge at Orange Mound to see Howlin' Wolf. Only six white people in the joint that night, nobody else."

"Memphis is a place of murder and death. They kill artists there, it's documented. They tried to kill the great piano player Phineas Newborn, broke his hand. They killed supreme guitarist Lee Baker, who used to play with Jim Dickinson and his Mudboy and the Neutrons. A kid who was renting a house from Lee shot him.

"They killed the great painter Dwite Jordan. Shot him, point blank range. Race plays a part. 'Cause he was going with Connie Gidwani,

one of our go-go dancers. He was a black artist and she was a white girl. Jordan was a quiet man, a gifted painter from the Oakland School of Arts and Crafts who studied with Diego Riviera and became a mural painter. This wealthy art patron from Memphis took him in and he painted murals in banks. Connie's brother, a convicted felon just out of jail, shot Dwite in her living room.

"Memphis is full of crazed random violence. Memphis killed Elvis. He died of loneliness there. Memphis will never be safe. Maybe this is good for Rock'n'Roll, I don't know."



Tav Falco and his fully extended "Tapir Billy" hair, at William Eggleston's villa.

Richard Pleuger: "We drove to Eggleston's villa on motorbikes. I was riding Tav's 1968 Triumph Trophy 650 that he'd bought off a deputy sheriff in Bryant, Arkansas. Tav took his 600 Norton. I told Tav that in the '30s and '40s my uncle was known as 'The Race Tiger' on his NSU-cycles and cars, made by the company that is now Audi.

"It was the first time I rode a motorcycle, and we had to duck bats going through a city park. Tav came up with the name Bat Marauders M.C., and later integrated this imaginary gang into his movie script Girls On Fire.

"After arriving at Eggleston's villa, we were treated to a listening session to the music of then-hot country band Asleep At The Wheel on Eggleston's newly self-created speaker-system. The debonair photographer then showed us some of his newest 11x14 color prints, containing his usual trademark empty spaces

Alex Chilton enters his parents' house (right).

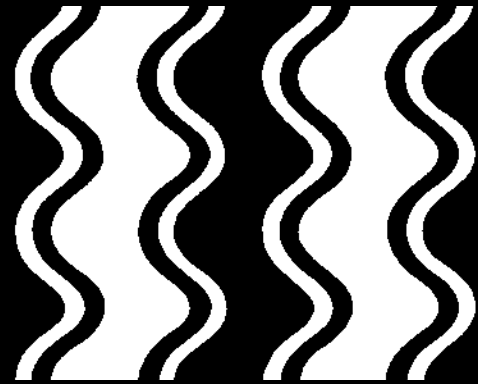
Richard Pleuger: "Tav introduced me to his friend Alex Chilton in a Memphis guitar shop. I remember Chilton as a very gentle and intelligent man, genuinely interested in issues not related to music (although he did tell me I should listen to Slim Harpo).

"On the way to Chilton's parents' house (where he stayed when he was in town), Chilton told me about the urban renewal that had changed certain areas in Memphis in the '60s and '70s. The black slums became white slums, and the path Martin Luther King walked from Clayborn Temple AME church to Beale Street was paved with concrete. Even the little shortcut to the house of Chilton's parents was blocked by construction.

"I wasn't feeling sneaky when I turned around and photographed this tragic hero of timeless music entering the house. It was just the right mood in the last light of this late autumn day. A few years later, Chilton's mother, a former gallery owner and one of Eggleston's earliest champions, burned to death in this house."



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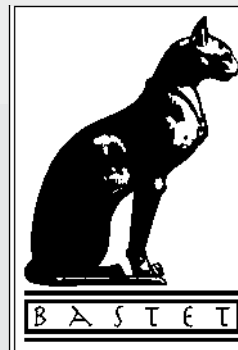
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—Karelia, long beach magazine

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(continued from page 28)

Tools, or Hollywood Spectaculars. There's this over-saturation to the point that it becomes ecstatic. What inspires me about Afro-Latin-American religions is that they take from everything. If some image from pop culture works in a magical context it becomes integrated into the system. The cool thing about music versus art is that music functions as entertainment even though it is really personal too. It's high intensity since it's social.

ON MAGIC, CUBAN CULTURE, AND THE OCCULT

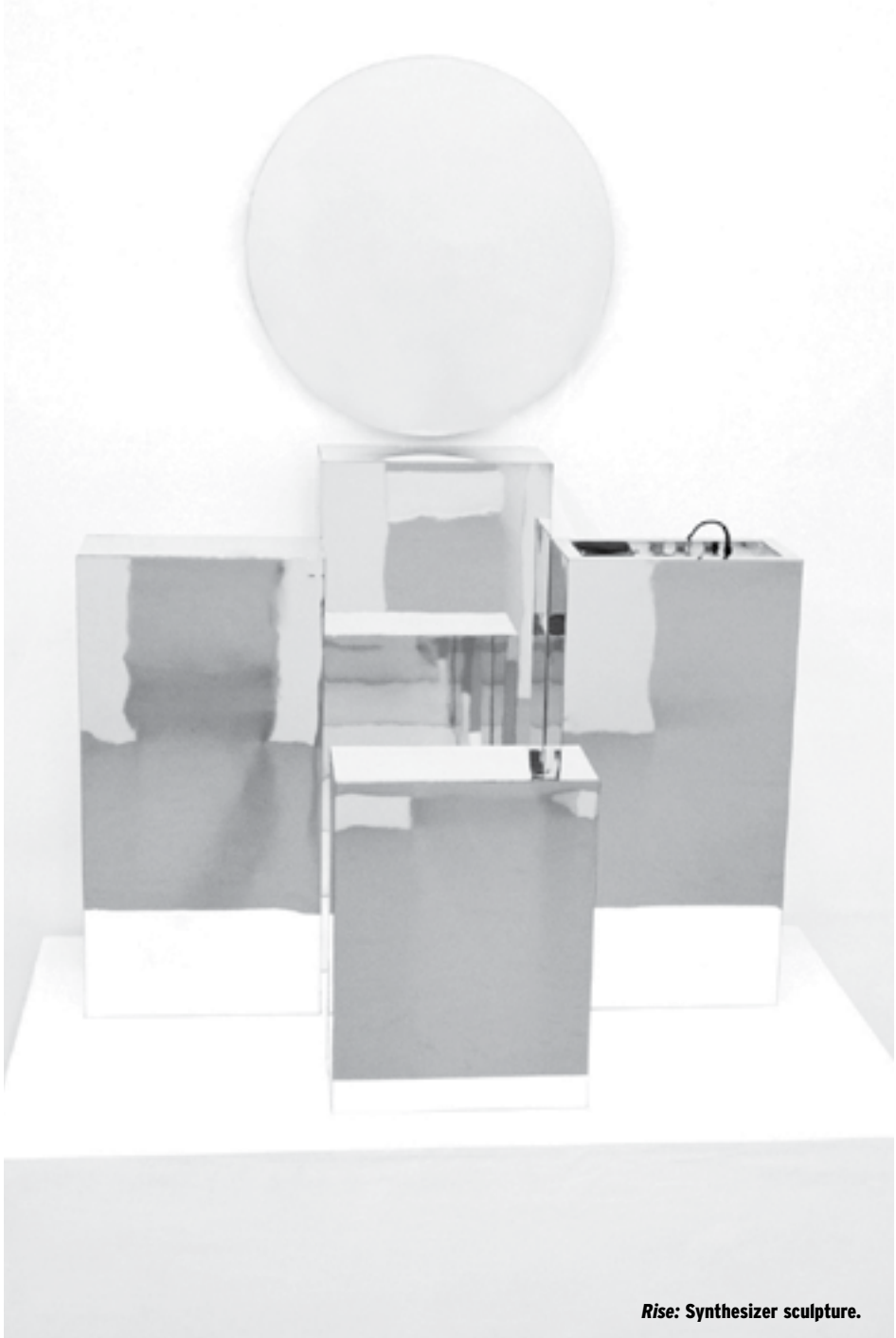
Delia: I have a definite interest in occult systems. My parents are Cuban, and Santería has an impact on Cuban culture whether you're into it or not. When I met Gavin, he was interested in Santería too. We're not involved in occultism, but we're interested in expanding our consciousness. We're interested in both the supernatural and natural ways of looking at things. There's a lot of struggle in our music. While we were recording *Days of Mars*, there were so many things I was holding inside that needed release, and I couldn't put them into words. Music is spiritual for me.

Gavin: I'm interested in trance phenomenon. As a kid, I wanted to put myself into trances. Going to punk rock shows as a teen was ritualistic for me. So I started researching occult ideas, and how they manifested themselves in other cultures. I was interested in meditation and the psychedelic experience, because in my mind, the function of music is to access some deeper state.

ON COLLABORATION, MINIMALISM, AND FINDING YOUR CORE

Delia: We have conversations and come up with ideas together. Since we've been working together for eight years, it just happens. At first, it was hard for Gavin to work with someone else, and it was easier for me. There was a power struggle. But then we spent every second of the day together. We'd never spent a night apart, so we became in tune with each other. We exchange ideas all the time, so in some sense we're one entity.

Gavin: At first, we introduced so many things to each other. Then we searched for things together, and now we're back to showing each other things from different directions. Delia brings literary



Rise: Synthesizer sculpture.

influence. She knows about 20th century literary social circles, like the Surrealists, like the poets Hilda Doolittle and Edith Sitwell, and she's also aware of fantasy stuff. We're both hugely into cinema.

Delia: Our work is somewhat visionary, but mostly intellectual because ideas come out of conversations we have. The reason our work looks so bare and stripped down is because we're collectors, so when we lived together, we had too much shit. When you walked in, everything was about to fall in on you. That affected our artwork. We almost have too many ideas, so we want to strip everything to its minimal essence. Individually, our instincts are to make crazy, elaborate stuff. If we made things separately, everything would look way different. Our aesthetic is shared. We want to find our core.



Video still from *Day of Blood*, 2003: "We play vampires and go to Times Square. Using magic we make all the billboards, and eventually everything, bleed. While we were filming it, there was someone playing those Andean pan pipes really poorly. A loop of that sound is the bulk of the soundtrack."





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the minus five
The Minus Five (aka The Gun Album)

This odddefying spectacle combines the liminal output of the **Peter Buck**/**John Ramberg**/**Bill Riefflin** lineup with such radiant celestial bodies as **Wilco**, **Colin Meloy** and **John Moen** (Decemberists), **John Wesley Harding**, **Kelly Hogan**, **Morgan Fisher** (Matt) and **Sean Nelson** (Harvey Danger/Long Winters), creating what is perhaps the seventh fulllength in a career marked primarily by catastrophe, shame and filicuffs that could not have happened without the superhuman efforts of **Scott McCaughey**.



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BULLTONGUE TOP 80 (+ 1) OF 2005

- 1. VIDEO MADNESS 1** VHS tape (Aryan Asshole): Astounding lo-tek, plexiglass disturbance of TV transmission video psyche-mung. On Wolf Eyes' Nate Young's "label."
- 2. GREG KELLEY I Don't Want to Live Forever** (Gameboy/Little Enjoyer): A fantastic conceptualist known for his Salt Peanuts from Hell trumpetizing with Nmperign, Kelley creates here a supremely sonik slipper of a disk. Remarkable. And his ice hockey skills are legendarily brutal as will be seen when he singlehandedly desecrates Aaron Dilloway's pathetic Michigan "team."
- 3. EYE Black Ice** CD (United Fairy Moons): No, not Eye from Voordoms but a trio of Peter Stapleton, Peter Porteous and Ryan Cockburn from New Zealand ripping forth mesmerizing rockadrone swoop core.
- 4. ARCHAEOLOGY IMPULSE** book, Eldon Garnet, ed. (Univ. Toronto Press): Incredible compendium of *Impulse* magazine materials, Toronto's edge slicing lit/art mag of yesteryear (1975-90) with Kathy Acker, Chris Burden, Devo, Jenny Holzer and a myriad more.
- 5. HER NOISE** exhibition and catalogue as presented by Electra (Anne Hilde Neset and Lina Dzuverovic), featuring Jutta Koether and Kim G.'s karaoke tent, Christina Kubitsch wonderment and other femme sound noise installations. Wish we were there.
- 6. SIBYLLE BAIER Colour Green** CD (Orange Twin): Total, heart/mind-melt acoustic bedroom action, recorded in the early '70s by a German woman, whose only known recording was as part of the soundtrack from Wim Wenders' *Alice in the Cities*. Lost until now, but recovered through a weird chain of events. Couldn't be better.
- 7. DEAD MACHINES / DOUBLE LEOPARDS Fuck Victoriaville** one-sided LP (American Tapes): Say no more. Killer kuts from crazy kids creeped by kanada.
- 8. REBECCA GODFREY Under The Bridge** book (Simon & Schuster): Detailed account of the before, during and after killing of 14-year-old Reena Virk by other teenagers in View Royal, Canada in 1998, penned by the author of the amazing *The Torn Skirt* from a few years back. Excellent perspective of teenage foster home psychosis.
- 9. MARY GAITSKILL Veronica** book (Pantheon): Rich, deep language reveals the heart and soul of an aging supermodel. Unicorn and heavy thought trip.
- 10. MUGSHOTS** cassette series (Fargone): Ass-crackling noise cassette design series with new and classic jammers from The Cherry Point, Roxanne Jean Polise, Monster Dudes and other remarkable destructos.
- 11. CAN'T New Secret** LP (RRR): 2005 was

Jessica's year all the way. Along with this wicked pic disc was a slew of hot cassette releases like *Private Time*, *Long Slow Changes* and her mother of a 7-inch on Ultra Eczema. All exhibit Rylan as an altogether distinctive force/voice in noise newness.

12. PRURIENT / AARON DILLOWAY Disappearance of the Maya 4Xcs (Hospital): Dominick Fernow has always been there with the most scarring and borderline insane vocal chord insane asylum dance. Here he connex wwith Aaron Dilloway fresh from sick head trip days in distant lands where snakes dance for men with rotting eye sockets.

13. SICK LLAMA unholy ghost 3Xcs (Fag Tapes): Heath Moerland continues his spread of infectious assault with a stunning release blitzkrieg from his Fag Tapes empire. Sick Llama is his skum drool of sound project and it's been consistently mindwiping.

14. TARPIS TULA Steel Rods Bruise Butterflies CDR (Chocolate Monk): Love buzz stoned humz from the heart-to-heart village core of David Keenan and Heather Leigh Murray. Mmmm.

15. X.O.4 All Alien part one CDR (Wabana): This is a reissue of a monster earload from X.O.4's Bill Nace's openmouth cassette label. Wabana has been releasing skull + crossbones CDRs of critical swoop for a bit now and this one is most welcome as X.O.4 are criminally underdocumented and have blown out many psyches live. This shall be rectified. But this ain't to discount openmouth, they just released a gushing wealth of material we're still trying to interpolate. More next time!

16. LESLIE KEFFER Devastates CDR (no label): Keffe is Ohio's most intriguing raw sound annihilator since the Pere Ubu/Devo shows of 1972. *Devastates* takes off where her earlier *Pollutes* only hinted at. Keffe is set to profoundly detonate in '06.

17. CHARALAMBIDES Live/Dead CDR (Wholly Other): This was sold on the Charalambides' Euro tour of '05 and was recorded at the earlier West Coast run of '04. Stark and



Jessica Rylan, Can't

deep and completely soul-scraping.

18. AUGUST KLEINZAHLER *Cutty, One Rock - Low Characters and Strange Places, Gently Explained* book (Farrar, Straus & Giroux): Grizzly, leave-me-alone scribe gets woozy in memoiristic flash pen. A great American writer akin to the primary Beat canon of which he is concurrent to but way too boss to dick around with.

19. FONOTONE RECORDS CD box (Dust to Digital): It's not that the appearance of this makes us stop salivating about the idea of Revenant's forthcoming set of Fahey's complete Fonotone recordings, but hey—this is probably the most extraordinary documents of late-period roots archaeology that will ever exist. And the booklet and the bottle opener both work great.

20. SUNBURNED HAND OF THE MAN *Puppet Heaven* cs/zine (Manhand): Thank God for Boston's most favorite sons since Aerosmith.

21. ULTRA ECZEMA: Belgian dude Dennis Tyfuss' label, which is an astounding palette for his own art mania. Along with Double Leopards' Maya Miller, Tyfuss has infused the New Weird Earth with a living, screaming rush of horror confusion graphix.

22. NO NECK BLUES BAND *Ovaris* 2LP/CD (5 rue Christine): The other night we were at some hunting lodge for the traditional yule game feast and we kept hearing this heavy fucking music coming out of the kitchen. Finally we asked what it was and the kitchen guys told us it was this new NNCK. Which they actually own on vinyl. Lucky fuckers. Sweet No Neck have grown with their devotion and this killer double is as listenable and genuine as any of their previous output. In fact it's an exciting signpost for them as they head into the March 06 No Fun Fest as headlining close-out act.

23. JOHN COLTRANE QUARTET *One Down, One Up: Live At The Half Note* 2CD (Impulse): Still the father. An amazing document of a complete connector to the star world of mythos.

24. DIRTBOMBS *If You Don't Already Have a Look* 2CD (In the Red): In a world of scum perfection, Mick Collins would get carried around in a very

special chair. Thankfully, that is not the case, so we get to carry around this collection of singles and outtakes and whatnot, by his band instead. What a very flat garage.

25. THE DRUMMERS: Coming out of the legion that was Adris Hoyo, Tom Sural, Susie Ibarra, Willie Winant, *et al.* we have the new bloodz Chris Corsano, Nate Nelson, Trevor Tremaine, and Pete Nolan super-destroying time and space with Kong-like energy and thought.

26. MOUTHUS *Told by the Water* CDR (Our Mouth): Brian Sullivan and Nate Nelson blew out a few different Mouthus releases this year delighting our nether-ears with an interstellar blowout of skree.

27. LAYNE GARRETT *Space Superiority Is Not Our Birthright But It Is Our Destiny* (Question the Truth): A sprawling and creepingly engaging disk. Long, patient cosmo-dronez with ear juice acoustic guitar improvisations and just fine clackery. Dude also is righteously activist with direct action blog.


28. LAU NAU *Kuutarha* (POK/Locust Music): Laura Naukarinen of Finland drove across the USA this year with pregnant body singing and enchanting the land with beautiful Finnish new folk magic. Startling.

29. FAMILY UNDERGROUND *Slingshot Feud Vol. 2 (Sloow Tapes)*: From Denmark. Family Underground have been releasing awesome high-core rock eruption for a couple years now. And it is all good.


30. JACK ROSE 78 lathe (Heresee): 'true that the titles are unknown and the tracking on the turntable has to get fucked with *quite a bit* for this to play, but what the heck. As beautiful as Jack's recent LPs have been, there is something very *right* about hearing his guitar tones emerge at 78.

31. WOODEN WAND & THE VANISHING VOICE *Buck Dharma* CD/2LP (5RC/Time-Lag): Well, who could actually pick just one from the vast batch of roach-acid-bath-glossalia this crew has spewed this last year? All you can really say is that *Buck Dharma* has the heaviest outer-raunch atmospherics, at least as perceived right now. But gee, just got their new CD3, *How the Winds Are Born by You* (Dark Holler), and there's no denying its tribal ring elegance.


32. AMERICAN PRIMITIVES VOL. II 2CD (Revenant): *GOOD FOR WHAT AILS YOU* 2CD (Old Hat):




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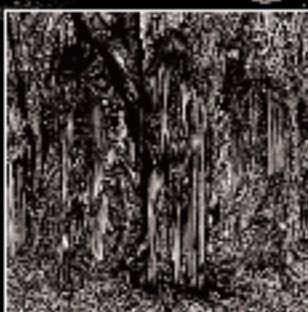
MORD *Belonging* CD (Mord)
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 Craft is a new band from the underground scene. They are a mix of old and new, with a focus on the heavy, dark sound of the past. Their music is a blend of old and new, with a focus on the heavy, dark sound of the past.



EARTHRISE *The Long and the Short* CD (Earthrise)
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SUNNO *Black and Blue* CD (Sunno)
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Impossible to deny that the first *Am Prim* set opened some very specific reissue floodgates, but don't gripe! These two new sets actually go beyond the beyond, pulling things from the air of the past that you never dared imagine.

33. FURSAXA at the Montague Bookmill early this past year was one of the best examples of ghost-voice burn ever attempted. Tara Burke has perfected a thing for which many can only woof.

34. FRED ANDERSON/HAMID DRAKE/ WILLIAM PARKER *Blue Winter* 2CD (Eremit): Although it has always been easy to dig Anderson's tenor, since he started recording again, there's never been a set that really captured the genius of his incredible technique until this one. Two disks that flow over your head like lava.

35. ALAN BISHOP had a heckuva year for releases. Besides the endless brilliance of the Sun City Girls and Sublime Frequencies material (all of which you should own, if your pockets are deep enough), he rallied with some great solo stuff, specifically Uncle Jim's *Superstars of Greenwich Meantime* LP (Black Velvet Fuckere), which is the funniest comedy record anyone has heard in a long damn time, and Alvarius B's *Blood Operatives of the Barium Sunset* LP (Abduction), which transmutes the horror he sees into a kind of beauty.

36. LITTLE CLAW *s/t* LP (Ypsilanti): Like a stun-doughnut set to explode in your mouth, the debut LP by this Michigan trio is a primitive cave-full of no-noise-raunch that rocks with about forty ties more thuggishness than anything else in the neighborhood. Upfull!

37. SWINGSET: This magazine, edited by Steve Lowenthal, is always a good toilet read. Especially notable in this last issue (to us, anyway) was the Magik Markers illustration, which made a truly great tat template.

38. ARTHURFEST: This was one of the funnest such events we've seen in a while. The setting was shockingly nice and the programming could've only been better if they'd asked our advice.

39. ANDY CLAUSEN: One of the world's great poets, way too infrequently seen/published/etc., gave a sweetheart of a reading at the Apollo Grill in Easthampton, MA. I dunno if you were there or not, but you shoulda been.

40. GOOD LABELS: There are a lotta labels that have really evolved to the point where it's ALWAYS a pleasure to open their packages: Eclipse, In the Red, Time-Lag, Revenant, Load, Troubleman Unlimited, De Stijl, Narnack, Not Not Fun, Locust Music, Social Registry, Strange Attractors, etc... They really make going to the post office less of a chore than it might be.

41. NEGATIVE APPROACH *Ready To Fight* 2LP (Reptilian Records): The ur-point of gristle-core. NA remain the blueprint for Michigan psychosis rock n roll from punk to

garage to rap to noise. John Brannon rules, what can you do?

42. CHRISTINE CARTER/GOWN *Christmas* CDR (no label): Although we do not go along with those chuckleheads who insist that Gown is a proposition best served instrumental, there is a beautiful wonk-gravity to the two-acoustic-guitar approach here. Vocals do emerge, but they're always tongue-in-tongue, so even craven detractors should get some kicks here.

43. MV/EE & THE BUMMER ROAD *We Offer You Guru* CDR (Child Of Microtones): This expanding/contracting band of New England huffers herewith offers one of the most insane takes on space blues since Mel Lyman's *America*.

44. DOUBLE LEOPARDS *A Hole Is True* LP (Troubleman): Potentially the most enthusiastically clenched wrestle-with-noise terra this quartet released this year. And that says plenty.

45. JANINE POMMY VEGA *The Green Piano* book (Black Sparrow): First new collection in a few years by this explosively liberated poet of the prisons and mountains. Has a lot of great new work, and the section of road-world stuff is especially superb.

46. WE JAM ECONO documentary film: Not sure yet on the details about the DVD release of this tear-evoking paean to the late, great Minutemen, but it stands up to repeated viewings, even if it is a little Pollyanna-ish about the way the band was generally received during their lifetime.

47. ANNA KLEIN: Her solo set at Northampton MA's TK Gallery made many heads wag and actually start to anticipate the Believers' album in ways that were not previously suspected.

48. LIGHTNING BOLT *Hypermagic Mountain* 2LP (Load): More rock than snock, these two arty bastards still understand the mechanics of disassembling the universe brick by sweaty brick.



Mick Collins, Dirtbombs

TOM HEYMAN - DELIVER ME

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OUT THIS WINTER

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When you pull apart the stuff that makes up the songs -- keyboard flash, squally guitar, uptempo pop backbeats -- it calls up anything from the early B-52's to the goddamn Doors. But when it jells, the Herms' sound is singularly their own. - SF Weekly

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49. MIKE KELLEY *Day is Done* CD (Compound Annex) and art show (Gagosian Gallery NYC): Man oh man oh man Kelley has waaaaa outdone himself with this show at Gagosian which allows him lotsa room with a whole new head of weird art steam and he went for it. Best show of of the year, no contest, with great pieces (like the Shy Satanist) which are all part of a video-charged musical of folk, folly, religion, hazing, american wildscape. The CD is integral to it and acts as a "catalogue" of sorts but if this motherfucker comes near youm GO.

50. DAMION ROMERO *Birth Twin* cs (Heavy Tapes): Damion has been promoting and presenting the heaviest and furthest extremes of noise generation for years now. And is just getting started with new kill action with a constant slew of his P-tape labels 3" CDR series (Astro, Dead Machines, Rick Potts, etc.) as well as upcoming collaborations with Wolf Eyes folkage. Motherfucker's ready to rumble.

51. THE WATTS PROPHETS *Things Gonna Get Greater* CD (Water): This reissue of tracks recorded in the early '70s by a Black Power poetry collective is one of the best spoken word gowks since Rounder's *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me*.

52. 16 BITCH PILE UP *Just Another Point in the Pentagon* CDR (No Label): Ohio's 16 Bitch tightened up in crucial fashion this past year and swept thru the states kicking all and any ass with ultra-zonk drone huzzah. And we mean HUZZAH! Mouths were hanging deep in drool puddled guh when we caught these killers destroying in Brooklyn a few months back.

53. MATT KREFTING (sound slipper; The Believers, Duck; beautician): Whiskey in one hand, shears in the other. A bang up job whether field of straw (thurston) or silky stream (erika elder).

54. MAGIK MARKERS: Elisa Ambrogio (gtr/vx): The only real cool thing to come out of New England hardcore is the juiced mind, the wet mix eyes and the eye-popping death of kicking legs and screaming fists. Leah Quimby (gtr/vx) : howling heartbeats and pluck-delay omniscience. Peter Nolan (drms,electrn,vx) stare into the void. Loosen up hair wire and smoke on for the tribal rhythm love affair. Markers killed in '05 with their legendary jaunt with Sunburned Hand of The Man culminating in crushed testicles at Arthurfest. Vote Quimby.

55. TED BERRIGAN *Collected Poems* (University Of California Press) and **KENNETH KOCH** *Collected Poems* (Knopf) two juggernaut compendiums by the late, great masters of New York School poetry, most notably situated in and around the St. Mark's Poetry Project scene of the 1960s/70s. They brought the music of the word back to the people, the freaks, the geeks, the hippies and the tweeks all with a firm and thoughtful hold on the wondrous

history of the form.

56. JANDEK: the 4tet of Jandek, Chris Corsano, Matt Heyner and Loren Mazzacane Connors at Anthology Film Archives in NYC was supremely surreal and cosmic. Loren's lines of blues-death smoke intermixing with Jandek's lyrics of doubt, suicide, loss and pain pain pain was a distinct and murky brew of way-outside-the-planet genius.

57. DYLAN NYOUKIS & KAREN CONSTANCE (Chocolate Monk label, Blood Stereo, Decaer Pinga, Smack Music 7, Polly Shang Kuan Band): New parents of beautiful bouncing future child. Will the pups of noise parents rise up to liberate the planet from M.A.N.? (see next)

58. M.A.N. Mothers Against Noise: They mean it, they want to stop you the noisician from sending your signals of distress and prurience to the sponge-minds of civilized youth. It's the same goddamn game that Jimmy Carter tried when he came out against punk rock back in '77. Do we stop these turd-turtles or just throw 'em to the legion of M.I.L.F. hunters? Arf arf.

59. DEREK BAILEY: leaves the planet early Christmas morning. A touch of class not lost on this beautiful gent. His wit, down-to-earth wisdom and legacy of living music is a treasure we have had the good fortune to co-exist with. Thank you Derek, you will always be the best.

60. KOJI TANO: noise soul moved off earth sphere early summer. Koji, who recorded under the 'nym MSBR, was a king amongst Japanese noise kings. Kept a modest profile, residing in Tokyo selling harsh tronik glory from his home/office and helped set loose a new wave of late 20th century Nipponoise excellence from Government Alpha to Magmax and beyond. A great dude, who we'll miss. (continued on page 54)

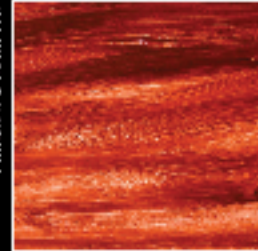
(Koji) Tano Sama, MSBR





The Redneck Manifesto
The Redneck Manifesto
ACG 5

Dubbed "a rare and precious dissenting voice" by the *Los Angeles Times*, these instrumental post-rock compositions are hypnotic and challenging. Dates for South, East and Midwest tours @ www.australiancastegod.com.



Create (I)
A Prospect of Freedom
SAC 1/28

Weird Weeds live at SXSW 2006! A collection of meditative improvisations and electroacoustic free jazz from **Raymond Raposa (Castanets)**, **Lynn Johnson (Red Krayola)** and **Kris Tiner (Empty Cage Quartet)**.



Larkin Grimm
Larkin Grimm
EYE 18

Live at Providence's **Terrastock 6** in April! **Larkin Grimm** gives us Appalachian dulcimer twang, thick Georgia soul, and a voice so big it can drown a grown man, called "surgent with age and meaning" by *Dusted*.



Gorch Fock
Lying and Manipulating
ACG 2

Live at **SXSW 2006!** Melding heavy guitars, rock trombone, brutal rhythms from dual drummers and electronic elements, **Gorch Fock** create pummeling avant-art-metal & noise rock with ferocity second to none.

Get
Wanted



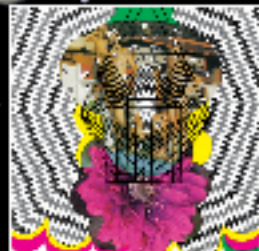
Directing Hand
Jelly For August 14 songs
EYE 19

Free-psychedrone, delicate bubbling noise and traditional UK folk from this **Will Oldham** and **Jandek** collaborator who "effortlessly reconciles avantfreak ecstasies and lonesome folk drift." — **David Keenan**



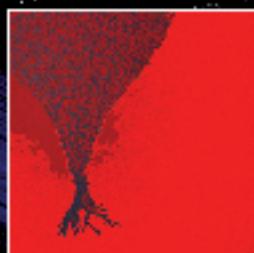
The Danforths
Look Out For The Wolves
SPA 6

"A real sunny-peak album, with melodies playing rock-a-hoo with twerping birds and airplane sound effects. The whole thing plays like a Kierkegaard reading..." — *City Pages*



AIDS Wolf
The Lowers LP
LPL 5

Genghis Tron live 3/17 at **SXSW 2006** for **Panache Booking's** showcase at **Flamingo Candler!** "Leaves little doubt in anyone's mind that their sludgy sonic trauma is going to be a hard act to follow." — *Exclaim*



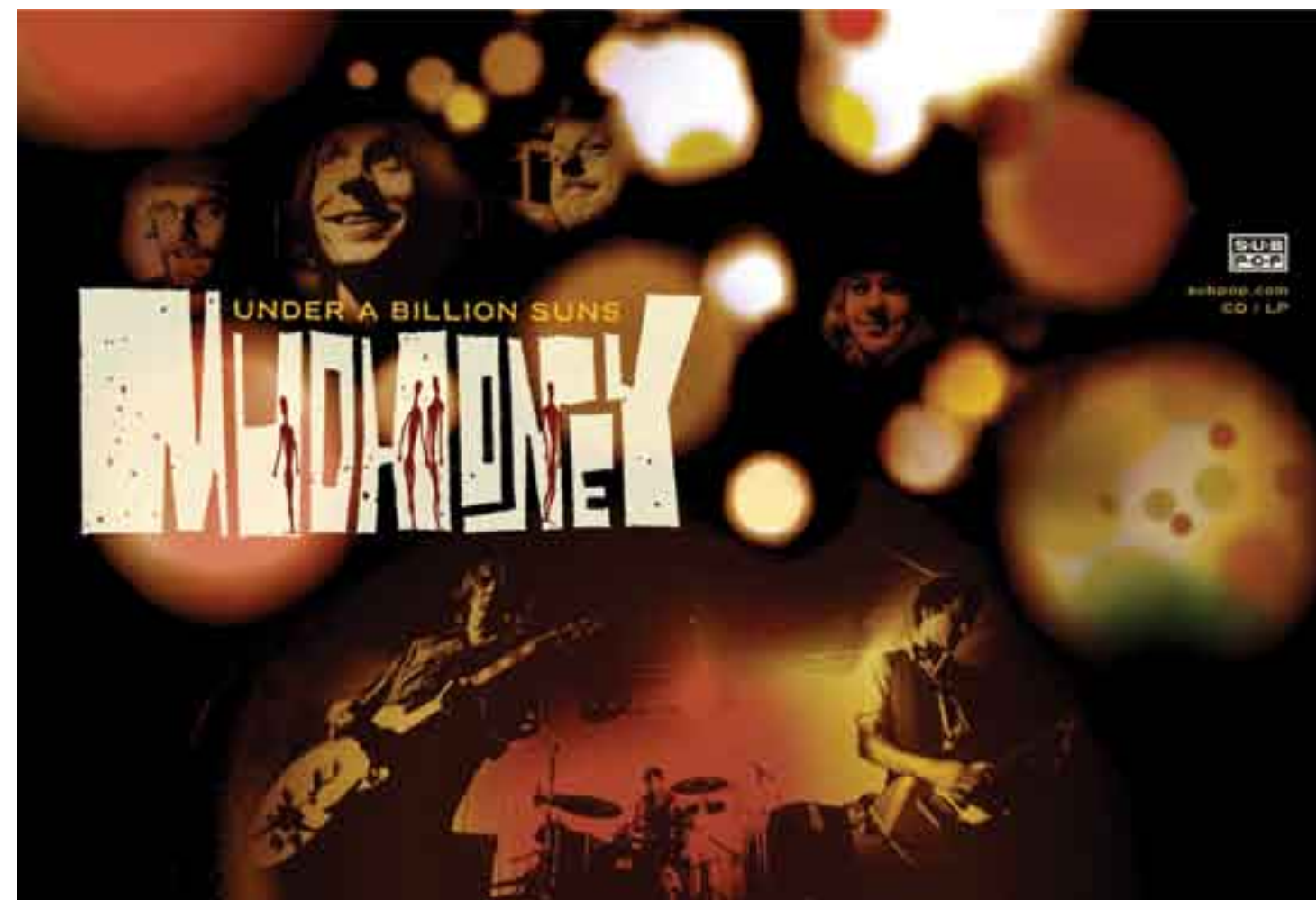
The Seawhores
Forest
SPA 9

"They seem to be everywhere, from music to performance art and back around, but the appearance of variety is a complete illusion. **The Seawhores** do only one thing: beautifully fuck up your mind!" — *Amman Town*



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ex-boyfriends
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TRISTEZA
A Cosmos

Tristeza is a band of three people who play a variety of instruments and write songs that are a mix of rock, folk, and electronic. "A Cosmos" is a song about the universe and the human condition.

BITTER LOOKING RECORDS

CLOGS
Lustern

The spirit of American and European music. Clogs is a band of three people who play a variety of instruments and write songs that are a mix of rock, folk, and electronic. "Lustern" is a song about the universe and the human condition.

BEASLAND



(continued from page 51)

61. FUSETRON and VOLCANIC TONGUE: Fusetron is Chris Freeman's label and distribution house here in USA. Volcanic Tongue is David Keenan and Heather Murray's in the UK. They are both the lists to subscribe to in order to be first in line to consume heavy weird music shit. no shit.

62. SKATERS s/t CDR (American Tapes) Skaters ruled extra hard this year skooting cross country and back again with butts poked high and noses down to the grinding pick-ups and amp waves forming like colored clouds of psycho-fume.

63. CONTEMPORARY JAZZ QUARTET Actions 1966-67 (Atavistic/Unheard Music) Absolutely insane issue of archival material by this Danish group (best remembered for their work with Sonny Murray), kicking out the jams with a guest saw player. One of the true fever spots on the hide of free jazz.

64. CHARLES BURNS *Black Hole* book (Pantheon): Burns finally finished the graphic story of diseased Seattle plague teens of the '70s. All 12 issues wrapped up in one sweet spot.

65. PATTY WATERS: Following '04's great archival release of pre-ESP material (*You Thrill Me*), Patty has released a new live set, *Happiness Is a Thing Called Joe* (DBK Works) that shows her to be as eloquent as ever. Cool.

66. MARK TUCKER *Batstew* LP (De Stijl): Reissue of an astounding outsider Illinois release from '75. Tucker decided to record a tribute to a Cadillac called The Bat by taping its "sounds," then interspersed weird paeons of heartbreak into it and pressed it up in two editions of 100 each. Everyone backed off but now NOW this babe is a golden fleece of exquisite love n' madness. Thanks to Clint at De Stijl for this one.

67. ISALAJA *Palaa Aurinkoon* CD (Fonal): Second solo CD from Finland's wondrous Merja Kokkonen who plays with Avarus and Kemialliset Ystävät (and on the recent US sojourn a duo with her boyfriend which had us melting into the floorboards of the Montague Book Mill). Her voice and tiny instrument prowess are from some mesmer Goddess' breath.

68. FAUX PRESS: Poetry press outta Cambridge, MA that issued a handful of boss titles a coupla years back (Tony Towle, Eileen Myles a.o.). Back in action with two newies from Brandon Downing and David Larsen both exhibiting strong word/thought laced with cut-out imagery and, in Brandon's tome, some weird hook on cinema studies. Crazy.

69. RICHARD HELL: Richie's been howling new wind as of late and we're more than happy to take a snout full particularly when it's writing as weird, personal and funny/not-funny as his novel *Godlike* (Little House on the Bowery (Akashic), his collaborative poetry with obscure '60s NY School poet David Shapiro *Rabbit Duck* (Milwaukee: REPAIR) and his "From The Mouth of Hell" column in the *Toilet Paper* magazine.

70. Neil Campbell *Teasel / Thistle* cs (Heavy Tapes): For years now UK'er Neil has been serving up mind-jabbing sonorifik slices, each one a taste sensation. This cassette is awesome particularly as it's part of the ever fetching Heavy Tapes series.

71. Graveyards *Monument Centers* cs (American Tapes) It's strictly reeds for Wolf Eyes' John Olson when he hits the bandstand with his acoustic bass/drums free jazz-from-Jesus'-anus trio. Amazing hybrid of Michigan noise ethos with ESP devouring devotionals. Best jazz group regardless of genre 2005 hands down.

72. EYES AND ARMS OF SMOKE *Moonburn* cs (Ramparts) *A Religion of Broken Bones* (Cenotaph Audio) and *In 3 Houses* CDR (Rampart/Mountaain) are but just three killer tone comp toots from these midwest lads n' lassies. Members of Hair Police in a whooooo other bag, dad: sweet guitar picking, vocal flower chanting and jamolodik breakdownz.

73. METALUX *Victim of Space* CD/LP (SRC), *Metalux/Evil Moisture* split LP (Veglia): Two distinct documents from the ultra-falling off the edge of the planet femme duo Metalux. When they first strtd out it was just a question mark hovering over the onlookers' heads. Now that question mark shoots beams of righteous boo glory. Head scratching as a good thing.

74. MACRONYPHA *Melting Softly Into Time* LP (Self Abuse/Hospital): Who woulda thought Pensylvania anal torture core noise progenitors Macronympha would return to reap the 2005 legends-of-harsh-noise lifetime achievement award? Whitehouse for the farmboy set in all its leather sack-slapping gooniness. Yes please, more thank you.

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75. BURNING STAR CORE *Mes Soldats Stupides 96-04* 2XCD (Cenotaph Audio): Essential document of C. Spencer Yeh's Burning Star Core music solo violin excursions through noise/sound/auristix. From early bird tweet damage to later period cassette/CDR sexplosions.

76. HIVE MIND *Death Tone* (Hanson): Michigan's golden boy Greh is on a goddamned rampage with Hive Mind recording some of the new century's most spirit-slicing and mind-snapping sessions to date. This baby on Dilloway's Hanson imprint is unforgiving and brilliant.

77. DEVILLOCK *These Graves* CD (PACrec/SNSE): Justin Meyers (who runs the Tone Filth label) has been developing harsh drudge noise explorations with his nom de plume Devillock and here he comes to some kind of new-sick pinnacle.

78. HOTOTOGISU *Ghosts From The Sun* CDR (Heavy Blossom) Matthew Bower and Marcia Bassett and everything they conspire with—Skullflower, Sunroof, Total, Double Leopards, GHQ, Shackamaxxon, Zaimph—make beautiful sun-kiss-moon music with shards of beauty and drops of danger. Believe.

79. BIRCHVILLE CAT MOTEL with LEE RANALDO *30th December 2004* (Celebrate Psi Penomenon): We had heard this duo set between New Zealander Campbell Kneale and Lee is Free was the ultimate tits but we weren't prepared for this momma. Whoa.

80. Various Artists *gold leaf branches* 3CD (Foxy Digitalis) and *Invisible Pyramid: Elegy* 6CD Box (Last Visible Dog) These were the two hand-in-hand compilations of all compilations for the year covering a sweet field of new and timeless music/action from such minstrel punkers as Six Organs of Admittance, Charalambides, Wooden Wand, Keijo, Nick Castro, Lau Nau, Brothers Of The Occult Sisterhood, Hush Arbors, Hala Strana, James Blackshaw, Marissa Nadler, Mike Tamburo, The Juniper Meadows, Maniacs Dream, Black Forest/Black Sea, Birchville Cat Motel, Wolfmangler, Loren Chasse, Bardo Pond, s, Andrea Belfi & Stefano Pilia, Sunken, Kulkija, Tomu Tonttu, UP-TIGHT, Flies Inside the Sun, Uton, mudboy, Steven R. Smith, Keijo, Doktor Kettu, My Cat is an alien, One Inch of Shadow, Fursaxa, Ashtray Navigations, Peter Wright, Geoff Mullen, Urdog, Miminokoto, rea C, Ben Reynolds, Seht, Avarus, Renato Rinaldi, Matt De Gennaro and a few others (it's hard to keep 'em all logged in our heads).

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C and D

TWO GUYS BRO DOWN ABOUT NEW RECORDS

Note: *C & D is a dialogue presented as a series of record reviews, and intended to be read straight through...*

D: I'm looking at the stack of stuff we're going to talk about and I am noticing an absence this time round of certain records, or styles, that I am particularly fond of. I am worried about the lack of brash super-volume riff-monster guitar and backbeat.

C: Well D, the way I look at it is: We certainly can't review everything that we come across—who has the energy for that? And we can't even cover everything that's obviously worthy—there's just not enough space. So it's a bit down to what most interests us at the moment. As Allen Ginsberg pointed out, "Mark Van Doren used to write book reviews for the Herald Tribune and almost every one of the reviews was intelligent and sympathetic; he was always talking about something absolutely marvelous. I said, 'What do you do with a book you don't like?' and he said, 'Why should I waste my time writing about something I'm not interested in?'" And anyways, don't worry. There's some riffs on the way.

Mountains

Sewn

(Apestaartje)

D: [Listening to "Sewn One"] Hmm... Could it be the mighty Growing?

C: Close, but no cigar. This is Mountains, a duo from New York who I only recently became aware of because Mr. Plastic Crimewave selected them to play at his 2 Million Tongues festival. Their second album. A nice electrical nature hum. I've also been hanging out recently in the mountains, so I feel a special affection for them automatically.

D: An orchestral shower with the warm drone reminiscent of Herr Klaus Schulze on the synthesizer.

C: And then, little acoustic guitar lines and horn tones, foregrounded, or deeply backgrounded. It's pretty great isn't it? Total mama nature kids in a low-wattage electronic garden. Reminds me of what

Ginsberg's "great peaceful lovebrain" would sound like, slowly comfortably spinning drifting slowly in eternal wombspace. An alternate soundtrack to *Silent Running's* opening sequence, or a lost instrumental Talk Talk aria...

D: You've been on quite a Ginsberg kick lately.

C: [smiles beatifically] Why bother to paraphrase already perfectly put words of wisdom? I say quote away til we have something new to say... I like to listen to this at Arthur HQ with the windows and front door open, hoping birds will fly by or neighborhood animals will walk in, and we can all be at peace together, for once... Of course, it's also useful to drown out the car alarms and sirens and lawnmowers and leafblowers and helicopters. It's not sentimental flashy hot leftbrain human, not cold technical right-brain robot: strictly ahuman, objective in a naturalist's sense.

Citay

Citay

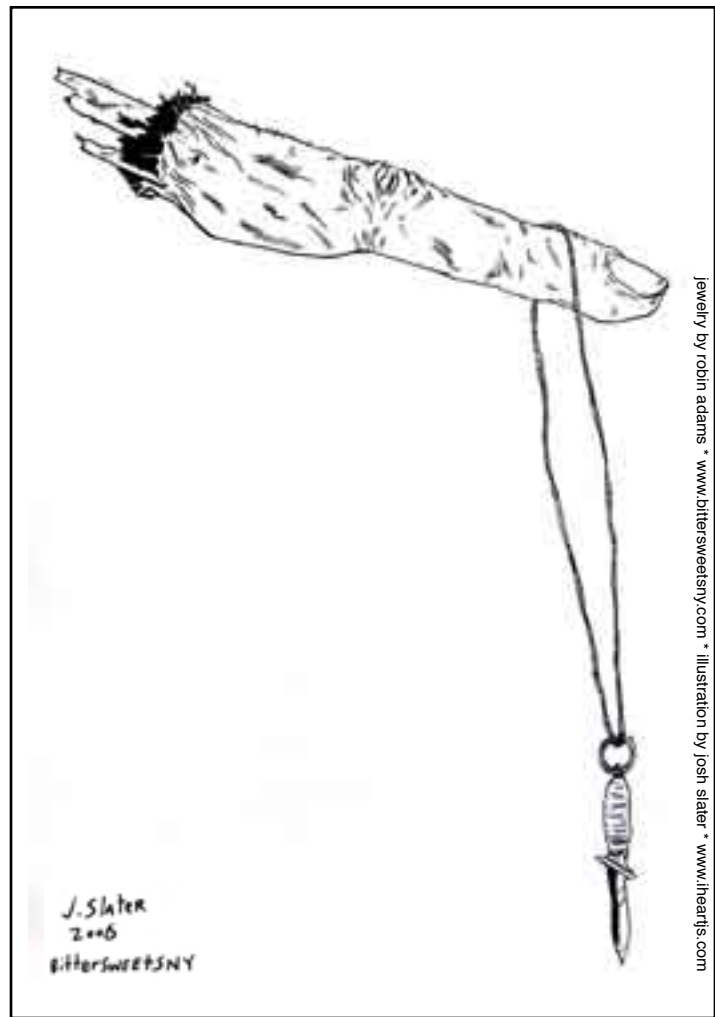
(Important)

C: Continuing in the rural mode...

D: Psychedelic canyon and meadow music such was made in ye olde '70s! [starts air guitaring to closing ascending twin electric guitar line of "Seasons Don't Fear the Year"]

C: They're really nailing that rich acoustic-electric rolling tabla honey harmony sound that all those heavy bands—Sabbath and Zeppelin, especially—used to do, back when all the best musicians were inspired by what the Incredible String Band were doing, and were still able (or willing) to express a feminine side to go with their preening barbarian or depressive wail aspects...

D: [reminisces] When the maidens were fair and wore flowers in their hair instead



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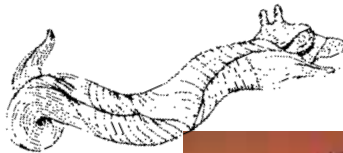
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SKY BURIAL—the new project from FIRE IN THE HEAD's Michael Page, SKY BURIAL creates seething, sonorous dronescapes, equal parts heavenly clouds and speeding steamrollers. Fans of SKULLFLOWER, SUNROOF and VIBRACATHEDRAL ORCHESTRA take note.

of covering themselves in tattoos and piercings. I am awaiting Sandy Denny's entrance at any moment.

C: Total "Battle of Evermore" vibe, especially on "Nice Cuffs."

D: Nice title. I also like this one: "What Never Was and What Should Have Been."

C: More like "What Always Is and Will Ever Be." This is an album without a sell-by date, with a song for every season.

D: [listening to "Shalom of Safed"] Monumental. Like the best parts of Deep Purple and the Moody Blues and Pink Floyd.

C: Making music for horse-drawn sledriders thru the driving snow to the lodge in the distance, where pale ale and a fireplace and friends are...

D: [10 minutes later] Was that all one song?

The Duke Spirit

Cuts Across the Land

(Startime)

D: [listening to "Stubborn Stitches"] Could it be Heartless Bastards?

C: Yeah, a little eh? It's actually the first album from an English band, three blokes with a woman in front who does have a voice not too far from Ms. Bastards, or Ms. The Kills, or Ms. Polly Harvey, or here, on "Darling You're Mean" ...

D: Great title!

C: ...which opens like an old Spacemen 3 or Spiritualized tune, she's got that Hope Sandoval reverbian thing going on, but she doesn't just mope-pout, she howls too. Pretty standard tunes but a great voice and an interest in building to liftoff, repeatedly. The band reminds me a little of their contemporaries and fellow Englishpeople the 22-20s here and there, which of course takes us back to The Gun Club and X. And I also hear, especially on "You Were Born Inside My heart" ...

D: ANOTHER great title!

C: ...the sound of Come, of the great Thalia Zedek, an underappreciated true believer voice of blues trauma/"I'm having an episode" rock & roll darkside... This music says: jeans and threads, fringes and belt buckles, whiskey and sunglasses, late nights and tough mornings.

D: They strike me as... promising.

C: What do they promise?

D: Dirty glares, at first. But later? [smiles] Sex with slapping.

C:

the synthesizer), and a darkness and a '60s country and western duet swirl to it, with an almost inappropriately sexkittenish breathy femme voice—

D: Juliee Cruise. Or, Marilyn Monroe singing to the president—

C: She's a better singer than that, but you get the feeling listening to this—

D: [smiling broadly, with raised eyebrows] I get many feelings listening to this—

C: I have no doubt that you do, but anyways you get the feeling that she's holding back singing, doesn't trust her voice so much as she should. But her reticence doesn't hurt her here because the songs are so accomplished, and she's got Mr. Mark Lanegan, probably our nation's greatest wounded survivor voice, to harmonize and duet with.

D: And they're all HER songs! Interesting...

C: Except for "Revolver," a really spooky nighttime shortness-of-breath anxiety thing written by Lanegan, and a clever reworking of Mr. Cash's "Ramblin' Man."

Yeah, how often do you see women writing for men anymore? It's great. Lullabies and laments, offers and pleas, thoughtfully arranged with appropriate decor: a fiddle here, reverbed tabla there, an instrumental intermission at just the right point.

D: Which could have been a track on the Citay album!

C: And the pop tune here — "Honey Child What Can I Do?" is pure singalong AM radio gold.The album closer—"The Circus Is Leaving Town"—is an all-timer for closing time.

D: This is the kind of heartsong Tom Waits used to write.

C: What a song, what lyrics, what a melody, what a feel. I wish we could run all the lyrics for this: "The party's over now/stop howling at the moon/you need a different beat/you need a different tune/ Remember that old song/we had when we were young/Life was an empty page/the



Isobel
Campbell

Isobel Campbell & Mark Lanegan

Ballad of the Broken Seas

(V2)

D: [listening to "The False Husband"] Well the obvious recent comparison would be that Nick Cave & Kylie Minogue song on *Murder Ballads*. Also Serge Gainsbourg and Ms. Bardot, or Lee Hazelwood songs, or Jimmy Webb, or Johnny Cash...

C: It has a classic vintage feel. There's a real string section (which more artists should do instead of cheaping it out with

world would write upon/Do you recall the meadow grass, we'd sit and watch the hours pass/ You were such a good girl then/Oh Ruby dry your eyes/The circus is leaving town/Oh Ruby, roll your stockings down..." When Lanegan sings, "You could make me think/the sun sets in the east" and then hums at the end? Whew!

D: That's when you know a singer knows how good a song is. When he still wants to sing it even when there's no more words to sing.

C: Obviously, hopefully, this is just the beginning of a beautiful, enduring partnership.

Beth Orton
Comfort of Strangers (astralwerks)

D: Wow. Total laugh-cry masterpiece triumph to the 32nd degree. And I was never a huge fan. What happened?

C: Maybe a weekend at Esalen helped? Who knows. It's a huge creative breakthrough, for sure, on every level. There's more good words in the first minute of the album than most songwriters come up with in their entire career. And the music is tremendous, really dry and warm and thought-out.

D: It's called craft at service to a group of great songs.

C: Maybe it's down to the guys she's working with—Tim Barnes on drums, Jim O'Rourke on other instruments and production—but it seems like they totally gelled creatively in a way where it doesn't really matter how it happened. I mean, O'Rourke was involved with those Judee Sill records finally seeing the light of day last year, and I can hear echoes of her work here—that melancholy, that minor joy, those major choruses in spite of everything, that lovely canyon feel, etc. So it makes sense. Still... Man, every song is a hit. Listen to the breakdown on the chorus of "Rectify." Amazing. Only a live band can do that. Same thing on "Shopping Trolley," which is practically anthemic, with zero cheese content, and "Heart of Soul," which she just BELTS. Amazing. Bare music, bare soul. I'm crying here!

D: Coffeehouse denizens of America

rejoice, we have a new masterpiece to sip our lattes to.

Belle & Sebastian
The Life Pursuit (Matador)

D: [singing along to "Act of the Apostle Part 1] "What would I do in Germany?" I find myself wondering that sometimes.

C: [smugly] I have no doubt that you do.

D: Enough with the sarcasm, you, or there may be damages! [listening to "Another Sunny Day"] Who is this?

C: Belle & Sebastian, from Scotland. Your friend Isobel Campbell used to be in this group.

D: I don't recall them being this fun.

C: Yeah, it's total record store pop, isn't it? Almost like Ween in its variety and craft, when you think about it. Just a ton of styles they didn't have mastered before: 12-string Byrds country-soul, Gary Glitter glam beat with Sweet-style melodies and harmonies, upbeat melodic Creedence chug rock & roll, a stylish Jam dance number, a Stevie Wonder Synclavier summer sunpop hit, all sung in choirboy stylee. Lotsa great music hall stuff, but it's all perfect for a stylish afternoon-into-evening garden party.

D: Rufus Wainwright, eat your heart out.

C: Clever observational storytelling lyrics too, which they've always done well. "Sukie in the Graveyard" is Sly & the Family Stone-style organ riff funk with Kinks kharacter lyrics and long-line melody. "Funny Little Frog" takes me back to Pulp, who I dearly miss.

D: "For the Price of a Cup of Tea" is an undeniable number one hit in the harmony pop heaven of my inner music-lover mind.

C: ...

Sparks
Hello Young Lovers (In the Red)

C: [listening, slackjawed] ...

D: [listening, eyes bulging] ...

C: Talk about genius.

D: Talk about masterpiece.

C: How do you even start to talk about this?

D: I've never heard anything like it.

C: The best I can say is if you ever liked Sparks—any of their many, many startling inventive endlessly idiosyncratic innovator phases during the last 30 (!) years—this will destroy you. And if you never liked Sparks, ever, you need this, just to know that pop music, pop lyrics, pop personae could be so much...MORE.

D: They should be on the cover of *Arthur*.

C: Stop the presses!

D: I gotta say I didn't see this one coming.

C: A surprise knockout in the 20th round! Or, in Sparks' case, the 20th album.

D: [opens window, yells outside to passers-by] C and D are down for the count! [pause] Again!

©

Sparks

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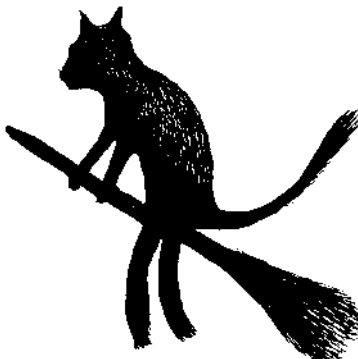
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(continued from page 9)

materials should not be cumbersome, or they should be well-disguised. While some friends are in the act of beautifying, others should be posted on the lookout for "authorities" since they might not have the same sense of aesthetic appreciation as you and your friends. (If they don't like it, they can make their own art!) If you decide to document your actions, it's best to do it at a later time, and be sure that none of your friends' faces are visible.

* This is an exercise in collaborative acts of meditation, willful engagement, and material transformation. You can do this in the daytime too, but nocturnal operations tend to be more mirthful and help induce perceptual shifts (both spatially and experientially).

5) Create a disguise for yourself that allows you to navigate everyday life without drawing much attention. This should be different from your normal attire. Spend the day in disguise performing leisurely or mildly adventuresome activities. Possibilities include:

a) Choose someone at random and follow them from a distance for at least 15 minutes. Then follow someone else. When you grow tired of following people, find someone who looks lost and try leading them to their destination.

b) Visit a factory or place of industry and ask for a tour. Ask lots of provocative questions, and then ask for a job. Tell them you can't do much, but you're interested in something at the executive level.

c) Go to at least three different places of worship. Check out the interior design. Explore a little. If someone is in attendance, strike up a conversation about the "afterlife" or "special religious foods."

d) Go to a bank with your video camera and begin recording the bank interior. When the security guard or branch manager stops you and asks what you think you're doing, explain that you're trying to determine how many security cameras they have installed. If they ask "why?" tell them you're "just doing research" or "conducting a survey of banks" or "interested in security." Then say, "If you really want to be helpful, you can just tell me how many cameras you have and save me and the boys' the trouble of watching this recording later and trying to count 'em all."

* This is an exercise in shape shifting, personal transformation, and casting illusions, as well as observing how "authorities" respond to subtle challenges beyond the status quo. The disguise will help empower you to act "out of character;" besides, if you can't change yourself how do you expect to change the reality around you?

©

APPLIED MAGIC

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

(continued from page 6)

as a near-future sci-fi fable—to people who might never have stumbled across them before.

For others—especially our friends involved in the occult arts—I'd hope they consider using some Bible imagery and characters in their work and rituals. They're just as potent as anything in the Mahabharata, and far more resonant with the Western popular culture in which most of us actually grew up. For those of you looking for an authentic tradition in which to base your art, music or fiction, consider the themes of revolution, universal justice and mind expansion a they're depicted in allegories from Eden to Babel and characters from Joseph to Jesus.

By appropriating these characters and metaphors as our own, we instill them with the power they require to release the stranglehold that true believers have over the myths built to help us face the truth, instead. Their success in making the Bible seem like a sanctimonious tome is just another testament to the deleterious effect of surrendering one of the best books ever written about sacred magick to people whose lives depend on ignoring the possibility of escape from the nightmare of eternal bondage to a vengeful deity.

The more we can make its mythology relevant to our present, the more easily we'll bring those who believe in it out of the past.

- Rushkoff's Favorite Resources for Taking Back the Bible**
- His own:**
Testament (a new comic monthly series published by DC/Vertigo)
Nothing Sacred: The Truth About Judaism
- Other people's:**
History of God and Battle for God, Karen Armstrong
Moses and Monotheism, Sigmund Freud
The Gnostic Gospels, Elaine Pagels
The Duality of Existence (or anything else you can find by David Bakan)
Sacred Fragments, Neil Gillman
Anything by Spinoza on the Bible
The X-Rated Bible: An Irreverent Survey of Sex in the Scriptures, Ben Edward Akerle
Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism, Jan Assmann
Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity, Bruce Bawer

©



TRUST THE GOVERNMENT

I KNOW YOUR CAREER ISN'T GOING SO GOOD RIGHT NOW because it takes a great artist time to get his game together enough to overthrow the dominant bladdy blah...but face it, you're unemployed.

Join the Army. I'm serious. It would totally legitimize you, your art and your tattoos. You love shitty dive bars, "found art" and thrift stores. Army bases have all of that in spades.

If you rank as one of hardened hipsters who are unafraid to waltz the avenue of Echo Park, where at least three gangsters have been gunned down in the last month then, please, for the sake of freedom, get down to the recruiter and join now before the big rush.

With the cost of gas, outsourcing and downsizing, economic conscription isn't just for Mexicans anymore. Our great country has been mismanaging the current "White Man's Burden" event by sending the high school football squad instead of the best of the breed.

Which is why the Iraqis are so pissed off. They were expecting the Americans from the "OC" television show to liberate them. When the real teens of Orange County showed up blaring Pantera and sneaking peeks at the ankles of their women, they felt duped.

It's a sensitivity issue and obviously Oprah is too busy to get involved so, now more than ever, America needs those coffeehouse radicals who were brave enough to gentrify Brooklyn into Williamsburg.

We need graffiti artists to go in and spray a piece so fresh that the enemies of freedom wouldn't want to write any political shit over it. We need hardened art school vets to infiltrate Iraq and drink lattes until Sadr City is a gay neighborhood.

Now more than ever, Iraq needs competent deejays to get in there with gross of ecstasy and a case of glow sticks to rave those squares out of their veils and into the 21st century. Those Hajis still think the "Electric Slide" is just that thing interrogators keep jamming in their ass.

Don't worry about getting killed or anything. Major combat operations have been over for over a year. When we captured Hussein everyone in the insurgency fell over dead, just like how all the Nazis died out when Hitler killed himself.

The bad news is the military piss tests for weed. The good news is there is no test for alcohol, crack and LSD, and military medics are known to hand out speed like candy.

Faced with this career choice the first



THE PIZZ

GET DOWN TO THE
RECRUITER AND JOIN NOW
BEFORE WE COME IN FOR
THE BIG WIN IN IRAQ.

question you need to ask is which armed service has the right slogan for you.

Army—"Good Enough for Government Work."

Navy—"Years and Years of Piers and Beers."

Air Force—"College Without Drugs."

Marines—"First to Go, Last to Know!"

(Inside sources say, "Don't ask and don't tell why the Navy has the best chow of all the armed forces.")

When you are negotiating your deal with the recruiter, be sure to hold out for a post at the front so you can collect the extra 225 dollars a month in combat pay, plus a cool ribbon or pin. Reflect on how a combat veteran like President Kerry commands respect from all true patriots.

Imagine yourself hauling 9,000 gallons of high test gas out of Basra on the Highway of Death where Iraqis hand

out "body mods" for free every day. How much more sexy can suicide get, girls?

The Army understands if you got kids or a job or are a little chickenshit. The least you can do is join the Reserves, because the Reserves are kept in the U. S. for unlikely events such as sports/race riots, terrorist attacks, natural disasters and/or coup attempts.

After you do your six weeks of basic training, the obligation to the Reserves is a just weekend a month for two years, which is literally the least you can do to pay for a room in the fortress of "Enduring Freedom."

Basic training won't be any harder than Advanced Pilates. The food sucks, the coffee is instant and you will have to listen to many a cliché, but at the end you will be an American soldier able to deal infinite justice or freedom from the barrel of your M-4.

Furthermore, upon completing your

obligation to the U.S Army you will be eligible to collect triple pay as a mercenary at one of our Blackwater Securities outposts in places like sunny Fallujah, where contractors bill without oversight. The slogan for the private sector is: "License to Kill, Mintin' Money at Will."

Nowadays duty in Iraq has been reduced to a routine of bomb and feed, listening to Iraqis bitch about if we can put a man on the moon why can't we fix the plumbing or how is it we have enough electricity to shock confessions out of people but not enough to light their homes. Well, the Iraqi people should have thought of all that shit before they bombed the buildings and took the oil.

If you get confused about the mission just remember that Arabs are like American Indians were before they got so heavy into gambling: heathen wife-beaters with crazy names and allegiances that we'll never be able to understand (unless we get some interpreters).

The only thing that could ever unify Arabs would be a common enemy. No country would ever be stupid enough to pick on every Arab country at once, considering that Pakistan has a bomb. The light at the end of the Arab unification tunnel is so bright that those who witness it will be cooked back to atoms. Doubters of this scenario should remember the car bomb is a poor man's nuclear bomb, and this particular poor man gets richer with every gallon of gas burned.

Another benefit of soldiering is that when the Arabs set off the Big Car Boom it will be against "soft" (civilian) targets. Ask any general and he'll tell you that the street value of a civilian life is approximately nothing.

The Military Industrial Duplex is a proven performer, breaking growth records consistently for the last 50 years. I was about to join up myself but once I did the math I realized that the bonus for getting killed is only \$12,000, and I owe twentysomething thousand for college. Chalk it up as another reason it sucks that I have only one life to live for my country.

So, don't be ashamed that you waited until after Mission Accomplished to jump on the bandwagon for the Big Win at the End. There's still precious time to get in on the top floor on the towering twin opportunities of combat and mercenary work because it's bound to be War as Business as Usual for the rest of days.

Last but not least, the Army is the best place to learn to work American weapons, just in case the time comes we have to keep some dictator asshole and his buddies from running this great nation into the ground.



Delia Gonzalez & Gavin Russom The Days Of Mars

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