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# ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

EST. 2004

Vol. 16 - #4 - Issue 94 - June/July 2020



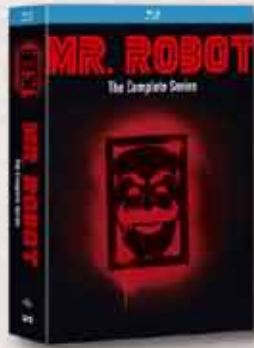
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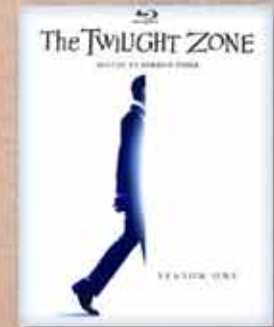
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# **SUPPORT CANADIAN VENUES**



# **SOUTENEZ NOS SCÈNES**



## **Live Music Venues on Ventilators**

How many of us paid any attention to intubation and ventilators in the Before Times? Not many I'd venture a guess. Metaphorically speaking (and maybe this isn't the greatest metaphor), live music venues in Canada are facing an existential crisis that will require heroic measures akin to being put on ventilators.

When COVID-19 hit, live music venues like many other businesses across the country were forced to shut their doors. They were the first to close, and they will be the last to re-open. Unless financial assistance from all levels of governments is made available immediately, a staggering 96% (according to a poll conducted

by the Canadian Live Music Association) of live music venues might not survive a prolonged lockdown.

Smaller independent venues play a crucial role in the development and sustainability of every artist's career. Without the support that smaller venues provide, Canadian musicians, and artists across the globe, whose names and music we have come to know and love would never have made it out of their basements or garages. Unless urgent action is taken, the entire musical economy could be wiped out. This not only includes independent music venues, but also musicians, managers, production crews, bartenders and wait staff, suppliers, tour managers, promoters, booking agents - an entire ecosystem of interdependent stakeholders, not to mention audiences.

Beyond the joy and meaning that these beloved institutions bring to our lives, independent music venues exist within a larger ecosystem. They are economic multipliers and community builders. It is said that every dollar spent at a music venue generates twelve dollars of economic activity in the surrounding neighbourhood — in restaurants, hotels, retail shops, transit... and the list goes on. That level of financial contribution is consistent in cities and towns across Canada. What would our communities look like without them? We must ensure their survival.

Many independent for-profit venues like the Rickshaw find themselves ineligible for federal programs such as the federal government's emergency funds for "Heritage - Arts & Culture" designed to provide financial relief. Venues continue to be hit with fixed costs but with zero revenues, with no end in sight. We urge the federal government to step up to assist Canadian independent venues weather

this crisis, and provide the kind of enduring support that will help sustain them down the long road to economic recovery, as we reimagine new ways to gather. And as we wait this pandemic out, let's plan for the future; this pandemic could be an opportunity to reimagine the live music sector, and to create a more sustainable music economy.

How can you add your voice to support independent venues? The Rickshaw is part of the Canadian Independent Venue Coalition and we have a website ([www.supportcanadianvenues.ca](http://www.supportcanadianvenues.ca)) where you can TAKE ACTION and #supportcanadianvenues!

- Mo Tarmohamed

**[www.supportcanadianvenues.ca](http://www.supportcanadianvenues.ca)**



# Road To Recovery

3

## TODAY

The most urgent issues are retaining staff and preventing the loss of venues.

## MEDIUM TERM

Support to bridge the gap when operations resume with significantly diminished revenues and increased costs.

03

04

## LONG TERM

Programming support to stimulate event activity, offsetting low consumer confidence and economic fallout.

02

## SHORT TERM

Financial support to mitigate the devastating impact from a complete loss of revenues.

[www.canadianlivemusic.ca](http://www.canadianlivemusic.ca)

# Keeping Live Music Alive

4

## Venues

The most critical piece of cultural infrastructure, our venues are at risk.

## Booking Agents

Professionals facilitating live music performance currently experiencing a catastrophic loss of revenue.

## Production Companies

Countless independent contractors whose livelihood comes from live events are currently out of work.

## Presenter / Promoter

Those who connect artists and audiences, assuming the financial risk of presenting concerts have lost all revenue.

## Ticketing Companies

Facilitate the primary commerce of live music, with all revenues currently stalled.

## Support Organizations

The CLMA receives no operating support from federal programs unlike many sister organizations across the broader music industry, yet is a critical resource during this crisis and beyond.

[www.canadianlivemusic.ca](http://www.canadianlivemusic.ca)



# TIME FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

This movement is about accountability. For everyone.

The failure of the system to treat people equally, while under the assumption that it does – cannot be tolerated any longer. Enough.

The idea that people can be videotaped being assaulted, and killed, in the streets by police officers, and it can be denied as truth, by police departments, by local governments, by judicial leaders – it is over. This time has passed. We all have cameras now. We are watching too. It is time to be judged evenly by the rules already in place. It is time for us all to be accountable.

We have seen journalists deliberately targeted: physically attacked, arrested, censored. These are fear tactics to control the narrative, and shape perceptions. The story must get out! And there now exists the ability for us all to tell the story – via social media and our own cameras. We must ensure unbiased information exists, and can be heard.

We must face that the justice system is currently broken, at this time. It is uneven. Certain groups of people can commit crimes and certain people cannot.

Punishments are unequal. Yet, punishments should be equal for all people. Respect, fairness, and due legal process should be equal for all people.

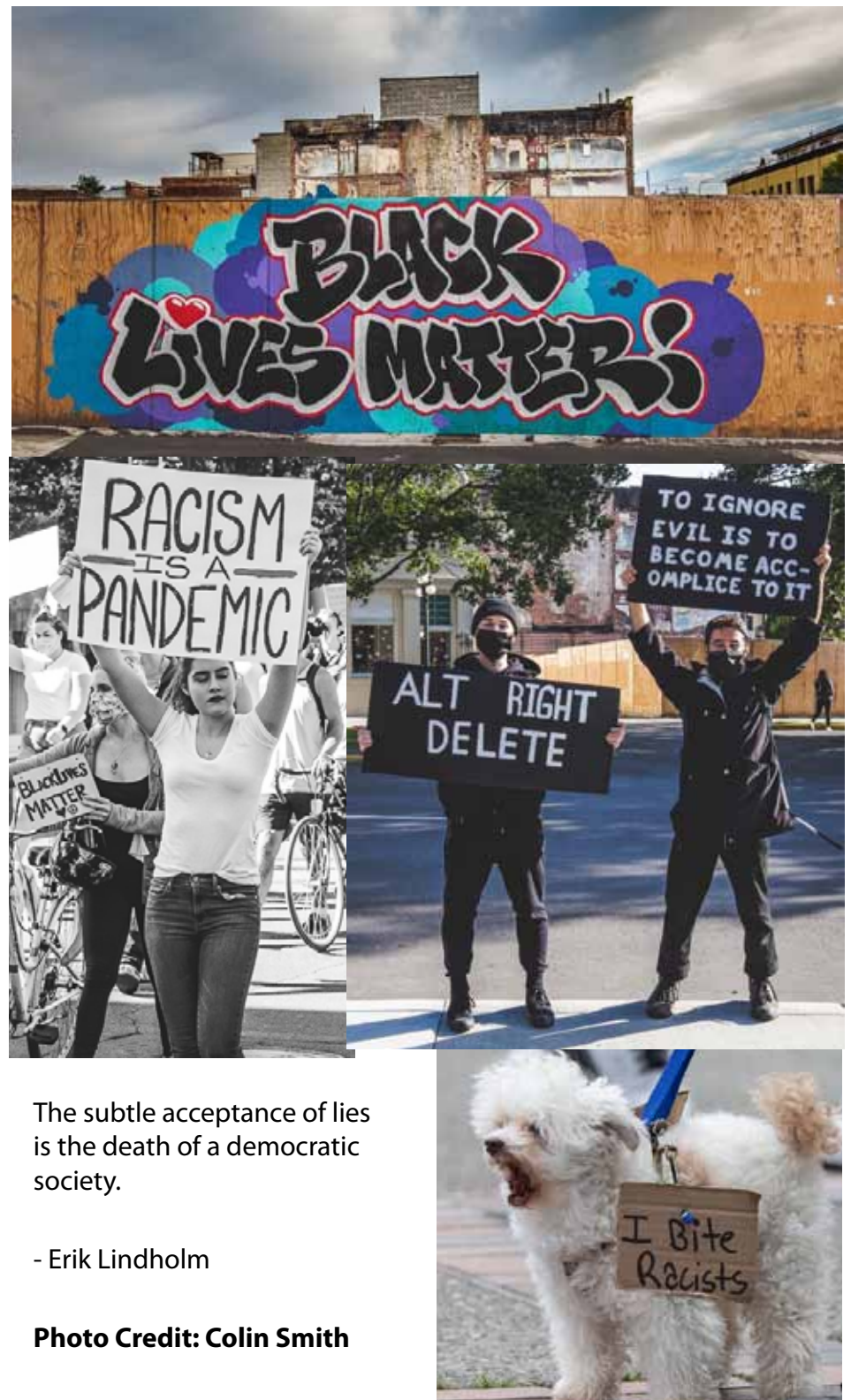
The system can be fixed, through change of the system itself. Systemic change.

Riots, broken glass, and fire will raise awareness to injustice. Alone, it cannot make our society heal.

We need systemic change. Accountability. Leadership. Change of officials. Economic opportunities and equality of employment.

Through self-education, awareness, policies, and voting – we can change the social structure we live in – for the better. Show compassion, respect. Listen to voices you may not have, in the past. We all can change the narrative and society in a more positive way. We all have a role to play.

We must continue to pressure and hold accountable, organizations which wish to distort the truth. We must never relent, or give up!



The subtle acceptance of lies is the death of a democratic society.

- Erik Lindholm

Photo Credit: Colin Smith

## RECOMMENDED READING



### AMERICAN RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

<https://blacklivesmatter.com>

<https://www.naacp.org>

<https://www.aclu.org>

<http://www.cornelwest.com>

<https://instagram.com/senatormyrie>

search: "James Mattis: In union there is strength"

### CANADIAN RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca>

<https://blacklivesmattervancouver.com>

<https://www.nfb.ca/playlist/anti-racism-films>



# PEACE RALLY FOR BLACK LIVES - VICTORIA B.C. - JUNE 7, 2020











@RyanJonesArtwork



# Torrefy

Interview by Roger the Shrubber



## Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

John Ferguson: You're talking to John Ferguson, most well known for being the vocalist of Torrefy and devourer of fried chicken. We are infamous for our massive and rowdy live shows as well as our unique take on the metal genre.

## AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?

JF: Torrefy began after a series of jam sessions with multiple participants boiled down to four core members; Ben Gerencser on rhythm guitar, Adam Henry on lead guitar, Simon Smith on bass and Daniel Laughy on drums. After writing some cohesive tracks in the style of thrash metal they performed some live shows as an instrumental act. I happened to be at one of those shows in a mutual friends living room and I expressed how impressed I was with the band. They asked me to try out for them and I think, eight years later, it's safe to say I made the cut! After that we followed the usual milestones of an up and coming band from basements to pubs, to theaters, and finally to festivals, releasing our first two albums along the way.

## AU: You've just released a lyric video for the track "GFYD," from your upcoming new album

*Life Is Bad*, to be released in July. Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear on the new album? Where can we see the video?

JF: The lyric video for "GFYD" (Go Fuck Yourself and Die) was made by our drummer Dan and we have released it on Youtube and our Facebook page; you can also find the track on our Spotify. The song is essentially a diss-track, so to speak, against the corrupt and archaic-minded leaders and manipulators of the modern world. So long as there are self-centered people holding power, pushing their own doctrine, while simultaneously using trivial social differences

to dichotomize communities and society as a whole, this song will continue to be relevant.

## AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics? Unlike your last release, this will not be a concept album - why this different direction?

JF: The album covers many different aspects on the theme *Life is Bad*, ranging from the political, to the environmental, the existential and the historical.

The new album is not a concept album in that it is not following a linear narrative with the intent of telling a story. The track are connected by the titular theme of "Life is Bad," while still being stand-alone as their own characterizations of different difficulties experienced by us humans and this planet. Songs such as "Arborequiem" and "Outrun by Wolves" represent our impact on the natural world and how it would react if personified by the anger and sorrow it would feel. "Plague of Empires" and "The Thin Line" are more in regard to our fascination with violence as a species, and how we tend to glorify or idolize those most capable of efficient cruelty, depending on which side of history we are standing. Many tracks deal with mortality, futility and the tediousness of day-to-day life. One track "Eye of the Swarm" is about an invasion on

our planet by an uncaring force, its lyrics touching on topics of our significance and our capability of dealing with an outside threat in a theoretical utopian world that is no longer as skilled in the acts of war and destruction.

The writing process was almost refreshing! After working on *The Infinity Complex*, our concept album, it was a nice change of pace to be able to focus on each song as its own snapshot rather than a piece in a puzzle. I would have to often go back through the other songs on *The Infinity Complex* as I wrote to be sure I was still following the plot and themes I was intending to convey.



With *Life is Bad*, each song can have its own attitude, point of view and personality. I honestly believe I have done some of my best work both vocally and lyrically on this album.

## AU: You've mentioned of this new album that it represents a shift in genre direction for you as a band. Can you tell us more about that? How has Torrefy evolved over the past few years?

JF: When we started as a band we simply described ourselves as thrash because it was most fitting to our rapid pace, raw compositions and excitable vocals, however even from the first album there are tracks that would not be considered thrash. As we have progressed, we have added influences from nearly any metal sub-genre you can think of and have used those to turn many of our songs into movements. We strive to transition, in our songs, from style to style in a seamless way. We have had many labels put on us in interviews and reviews, including and not limited to speed metal, black metal, thrash metal, death metal, progressive metal and any combination of those genres. Our songs have become much more complex without losing their charm or capability to get you charged up for a night of moshing, partying and letting yourself go a little crazy, but there's something there for all breeds of metal head in our music. In one song you can hear fast paced thrash metal riffage, dirty and huge death metal moments and multiple takes on black metal, from the most atmospheric to the chainsaw roar of the genre's extremes. You often will find strange moments in the songs that I am not sure how to put a genre title on. All in all we strive to push ourselves with each new album, we want to surprise the listener without losing what makes a song enjoyable.

## AU: Tell us about the experience of releasing an album during the Covid pandemic - what did you do differently, what were some of the challenges you faced?

JF: The hardest part is not being able to promote through live shows. The album will have an online only release on July 1st 2020 with physical copies coming as soon as it possible for us to put together release shows and for music stores to accept and sell new product. We have gotten a lot of listens on the album's first single, "Plague of Empires" and the music video for it has been watched all around the world both on YouTube

# VICTORIA'S LOCALS ONLY

and Facebook. I feel since so many people have been stuck at home that, in a way, Covid helped us reach a larger audience with our releases; both "Plague of Empires" and "GFYD." The hardest part truly has been the lack of shows. We are extremely excited about releasing this album and proud of what we have produced, but first and foremost we are passionate about performing our art in a live setting. Hopefully soon I'll be smelling the stale beer and watching the crowd work itself into a furious mosh again in the near future.

## AU: How will you be promoting the new album? Have you been doing live streams, are you planning any tours for this or next year?

JF: With the tumultuous state of the music industry during this pandemic we have not officially started a plan for a tour, though that is something we of course hope to do at some point in the near future with *Life is Bad*. Due to social distancing regulations and potential risks of contamination we have not been able to perform any live streams as of yet as we haven't been able to practice together until the recent easing on the social distancing requirements. Keep your eyes on our pages for any news regarding a live stream though as that could very well be on its way soon.

## AU: Will you be doing any other music videos or other forms of media promotion?

JF: Absolutely. It is planned over time to have lyric

videos for each track as well as album specific merchandise to be made available online. Not to mention interviews such as this one. We regularly update on our Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, so anyone can check that out to see what future endeavors we have planned

## AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Will there still be a home for heavy metal in the new world order?

JF: Everybody I know in the metal scene is chomping at the bit to get back out in the world and to a show. There is certainly concern of certain venues not being able to maintain their businesses if this continues too long, but at this point I choose to be hopeful it doesn't come to that. In a worst case scenario where the venues go bankrupt and close, well, we started in basement shows and we can always go back to them. As long as there are metal heads there will always be a metal scene. We're resourceful little bastards.

## AU: What should we know about Torrefy and the new album that we don't already?

JF: We were lucky enough to have the album mastered by Joel Grind of Toxic Holocaust, and he definitely brought a sound to the album that really encapsulates what we hear in our heads when we envision our music. Our good friend Gustavo of Electric Flow Studios recorded the album and helped create an atmosphere full of countless in-jokes and ease that I hope translates to a better product from our genuine enjoyment of the recording sessions. The editing from Umbral Studios gave a texture to the recordings that will be truly appreciated through any sound system or headphone. Everyone will get a chance to hear the product of all these people coming together to help us make our album a reality on July 1st!

## AU: Any final words for our readers?

JF: Hold strong, metal heads, this too shall pass. It may be a couple months but eventually I'll see you in the pit!

[facebook.com/Torrefy](https://facebook.com/Torrefy)  
[torrefy.bandcamp.com](https://torrefy.bandcamp.com)

PHOTO SOURCE: ClawhammerPR

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*Interview by AU Editorial*



**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?**

Cam Mesmer: We're SPELL, a hypnotizing heavy metal power trio from Vancouver, BC. Aside from nearly setting ourselves on fire every time we try to do a photo shoot (you'd think we'd have learned after the first time not to pour gasoline directly onto open flames!), we're probably best known for making a lot more noise than three guys should. We sing harmonies, play guitars with our hands and synthesizers with our feet, and write tunes that'll make you want to groove while you're doing the dishes. Why, what did you hear?

**AU: Give us a brief history of SPELL - how did you form and who is in the group?**

CM: We started in 2007 under a different name, then changed to SPELL in 2013. It's been the same three of us the whole time, and we've released three albums as SPELL and toured the world together! Cam Mesmer on bass/vocals, Al Lester on drums/vocals, Graham McVie on guitars/synthesizers. Three brothers, three amigos. We make music for ourselves and we'll do so 'til the day we die.

**AU:** You've just released a new album, *Opulent Decay*, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear on it?

CM: It's our best work, recorded analogue with

Felix Fung at Little Red Sounds. It'll make you dance, it'll make you dream, it'll make you shiver. Everyone we talk to argues about what genre to call it. We call it 'Hypnotizing Heavy Metal' because that's what makes sense to us. We've been obsessed with heavy metal our whole lives, and now it's our turn to take the genre in a new

direction. The album has been hitting hard, so I'm thrilled that people seem to 'get it.'

**AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?**

CM: *Opulent Decay* is about the impotence of excessive wealth and

luxury and the secret meaning that can be found in suffering and decay. Some of the songs take the ultra-rich to task for making accumulation their end goal — how boring and unimaginative! Other songs explore the elegance and power of those who suffer for the sake of others: When nothing else remains, all I have is what I give away. All of the songs come from dreams, after I've woken up in the night, terrified or inspired, and scrambled out of bed to sit with my guitar before the feeling evaporates.

The album is also the process of ruin itself — somewhere between the ‘opulence/decay’ dichotomy — where decaying becomes a new and unintentional aesthetic. A fleeting, transitional identity that is not what it was meant to be, and not what it will eventually be. Like an empty building or an eroding cliff or a decomposing body, this brief state is when a thing is at its MOST extravagant, with the most colours, the biggest sensory features, and when it calls out the loudest! When a place still retains the sense of awe and grandeur that it was originally intended to have, but also the feelings of loss, emptiness and dread that come with its decomposition, and each of these feelings are amplified by one another. This is the romantic allure of ‘opulent decay.’ It’s also perhaps the state of our world at this moment, as we are facing the COVID-19 virus: the systems and structures of

our former ways of life are still in place, but they're all in question and beginning to rot after months of neglect.

**AU: Tell us about the experience**

of releasing an album during the Covid pandemic - what did you do differently, what were some of the challenges?

CM: Well, we had our USA and Europe tours cancelled, which was a real bummer. Going on tour is how we make money (to recoup the costs of making an album), and it's also a great joy that I look forward to more than anything. It's tough to sell records when half the world just lost their jobs, but at the same time, if our new music can bring a few people up during a rough patch, then that's worth it. For me, music has such a strong connection with memory, so whenever I hear these songs years down the line, I'm going to be reminded of this weird time.

**AU: Now that the album is released, how will you be promoting it? Have you been doing live streams, are you planning any tours for next year?**

CM: We haven't been able to do any live streams because we've been split quarantined between Vancouver and Vancouver Island, but we ARE working on some new stuff from our isolation chambers! Can't wait to share these secrets



soon... listen for the anti-kosmik magick...

We are currently booking tours for next year – we'll be returning to Europe, as well as showing up throughout Canada and the USA. Very excited to announce this stuff!

**AU: What are your hopes for *Opulent Decay*? What do you hope listeners will take away from it?**

CM: This album is a kick to the teeth of a music culture that revolves around throwaway singles, computer-generated quantizing and autotune, and pop hooks by teams of corporate producers. Everything on here was written and recorded by hand, just as you hear it. We spent four years fleshing out every riff, every melody, every transition and harmony until it was exactly as we wanted it. No shortcuts were taken, no expenses spared. This music is our whole life, and I hope

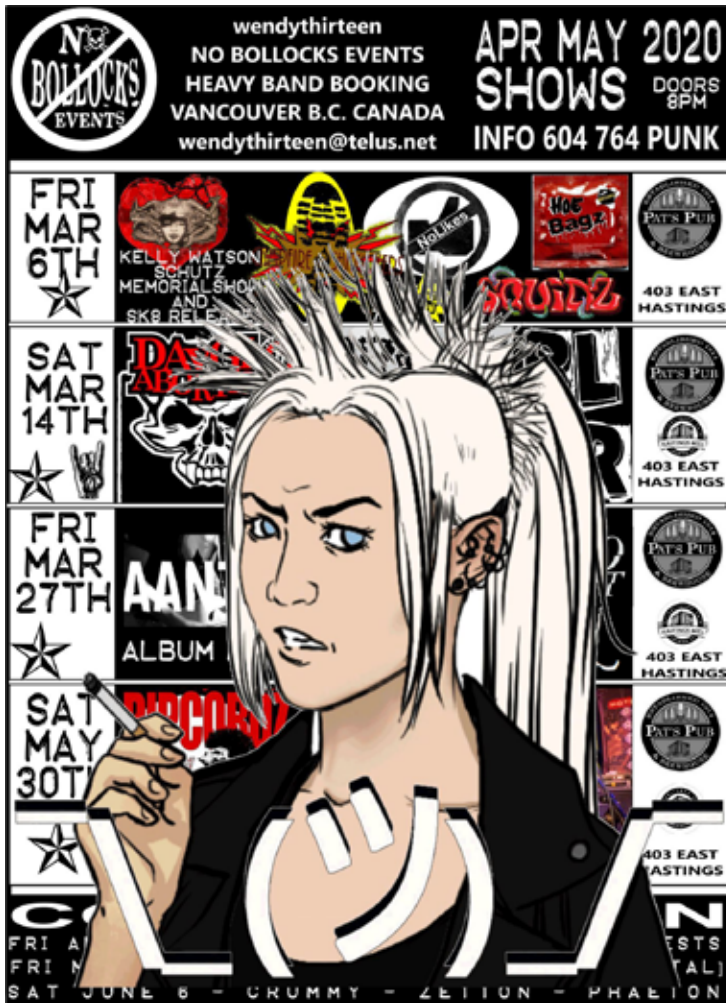
that some people will take the time to sit down and listen to the entire album, both sides, and then listen to it again to let the details sink in.

**AU: Will you be doing any music videos or other forms of media promotion?**

CM: Yes, we've filmed three music videos to go along with the three singles that were released prior to the album: "Psychic Death," "Deceiver," and "Dawn Wanderer." One was filmed in an abandoned church, one in complete darkness, and one in deep wilderness — three elements that influence us.

**AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Do you see it changing for the better or worse in any way?**

CM: That's a tough question... the music scene is always changing, for better and for worse. It's easier than ever today for people to make music from their bedrooms and promote it online, and this was originally hailed as the democratization of music end of the domination by huge corporate record labels — however, now



corporate giants like Spotify have taken their place and it's more challenging than ever to make a living as a musician. Not being able to tour or perform live adds to the challenge. My concern is that a lack of local shows due to the virus could destroy the scenes that we have, but I've also considered that if it were possible for some small shows to continue while huge international tours remained cancelled, there may be even more focus placed on local bands and scenes, which I believe would be wonderful for our community, for new bands, and for young fresh creative circles to emerge around the world!

**AU: What should we know about SPELL and your new album that we don't already?**

Music is magic, in the literal sense: it can alter our reality in ways that cannot otherwise be explained. A beautiful song can change the direction of your life, and writing one is the greatest enigma — there's no formula, it's impossible to cheat or buy your way to writing a great song. We put in the hard work on this, nourishing each bit of inspiration over years, waiting for each song to flourish and bloom. We're proud of *Opulent Decay* and I hope you'll enjoy it.

**AU: Any final words for our readers?**

Our world is beautiful, but filled with horror, despair and injustice as well. To ignore these things is to miss half of all experience. I see so many people focused only on avoiding suffering, hiding from pain. There is opulence hidden within agony just as there is decay hidden within luxury. If you focus only on one or the other, you end up with nothing. If you're not struggling and terrified, you're either too infantile to face yourself or too conceited to notice your own failures.

*spellofficial.bandcamp.com*

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## Benevolent Like Quietus

Interview by Roger the Shrubber



**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?**

Daniel Loudon: Benevolent Like Quietus. Infamous for our dedication, live presence and gothic rock-tinged metal.

**AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?**

DL: BLQ originally started as a product of years of Ryan and Dan writing music together and the desire to create a band in the vein of the late 90s early 00s Scandinavian gothic and melancholic rock/metal era, but with our own spin and other genre influences. The band truly began to take shape in 2015 with the addition of Ty on guitar, followed shortly after with Matt briefly taking up bass before switching to our second guitar player. Our original bass player Montana joined around this time, too. She left the band in 2016 and was succeeded by Killian.

**AU: Can you tell us a bit about the band name, Benevolent Like Quietus - what is the origin story there?**

DL: Originally Ryan and I (Dan) were calling the project BlackEnd but decided to change that up shortly before the full band formed. We came up with BLQ simply from dumbing down our favourite shade, black. Eventually, we landed on 'Benevolent Like Quietus' to fill the acronym. We

felt it had the perfect gloomy, despair-ridden feel to fit with our writing style and vision. A sentiment to the kind-hearted absolution of the end.

**AU: You've just released your debut album, *Kill the Bliss*, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear on it?**

DL: The album is a culmination of the first five years of our band. Everything we have worked hard to achieve in terms of fine-tuning our sound and style. It's dark, gloomy, sorrowful and aggressive but delivered with a lot of energy and melody. Something you can really crank up and enjoy as you slip into the darkness.

**AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?**

DL: There isn't a running theme or concept to the album, but the songs themselves explore everything from coping with death to turbulent romance, heartbreak, detachment from everyday life and even some good old religious criticism.

**AU: Tell us about the experience of releasing an album just before the Covid pandemic - what did you do differently, what were some of the challenges you faced?**

DL: Aside from it being the perfect time to release an album titled 'Kill the Bliss', it kind of ground everything to a halt. We were luckily able to play one of our pre-release shows in Edmonton with some great local bands. Had a big show booked to play with touring bands Insomnium and Omnium Gatherum at the end of March in Calgary but that was cancelled, understandably. The album was released digitally on March 13 pretty much right as the pandemic was getting serious in North America, so it definitely was challenging to draw attention to the release. I still think it went fairly well considering the circumstances. The album has been well received. We just have a butt-load of CDs and merch we can't sell at live shows, for now.

**AU: Now that the album is released, how will you be promoting it? Have you been doing live streams, are you planning any tours for next year?**

DL: For promotion, we've just been reaching out

on social media as well as working with Asher Media Relations. No live streams as aside from two of us, we have all been in separate cities since the pandemic started. For now, we are holding off on planning tours or shows. A lot of work needs to go into planning a tour, so with live events currently not happening and rescheduled tours already being cancelled, we will probably hold



off on any tour plans for a bit.

**AU: What are your hopes for this album, what do you hope audiences take away from it?**

DL: Well, we hope it finds a home in the listener's heart. That they can relate to [it] and enjoy the songs and messages. A mutual understanding that life is struggle, heartbreak, hardship and sorrow but it's all we've got and from the dark comes the light.

**AU: Will you be doing any music videos or other forms of media promotion?**

DL: We had talked about doing a music video for one of the songs but a lot has been put on hold with the pandemic. Now, with restrictions lifting that maybe something we move forward with in the future. We will definitely be releasing more content to promote the album.

**AU: Any other long term plans or goals for the band you can tell us about?**

DL: Continue working on our sound, stage presence and writing for our next release. Hopefully, get a small tour going once things return to some version of normality.

**AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Will there still be a home for heavy metal in the**

**new world order?**

DL: Haha metal will always have its place. The genre is too strong to fall. Guys like us will always be here to fill the void.

The music scene is definitely becoming a lot more digital these days as it needs to, for now. But that will never replace live performances. I think I speak for everyone in the band when I say we just can't wait to be playing live again. There is nothing like hitting the stage and playing our hearts out for a live audience.

**AU: What should we know about Benevolent Like Quietus and the new album that we don't already?**

DL: We are five guys striving to make our mark in the metal scene and bringing a different sound to the local and North American metal community. Our debut album was recorded, mixed and mastered within the band. No studios or outside help. We really wanted to have full control over every aspect of the sound and final product. The album is a testament of our tireless work and dedication to this project and we really hope that is conveyed on the listener.

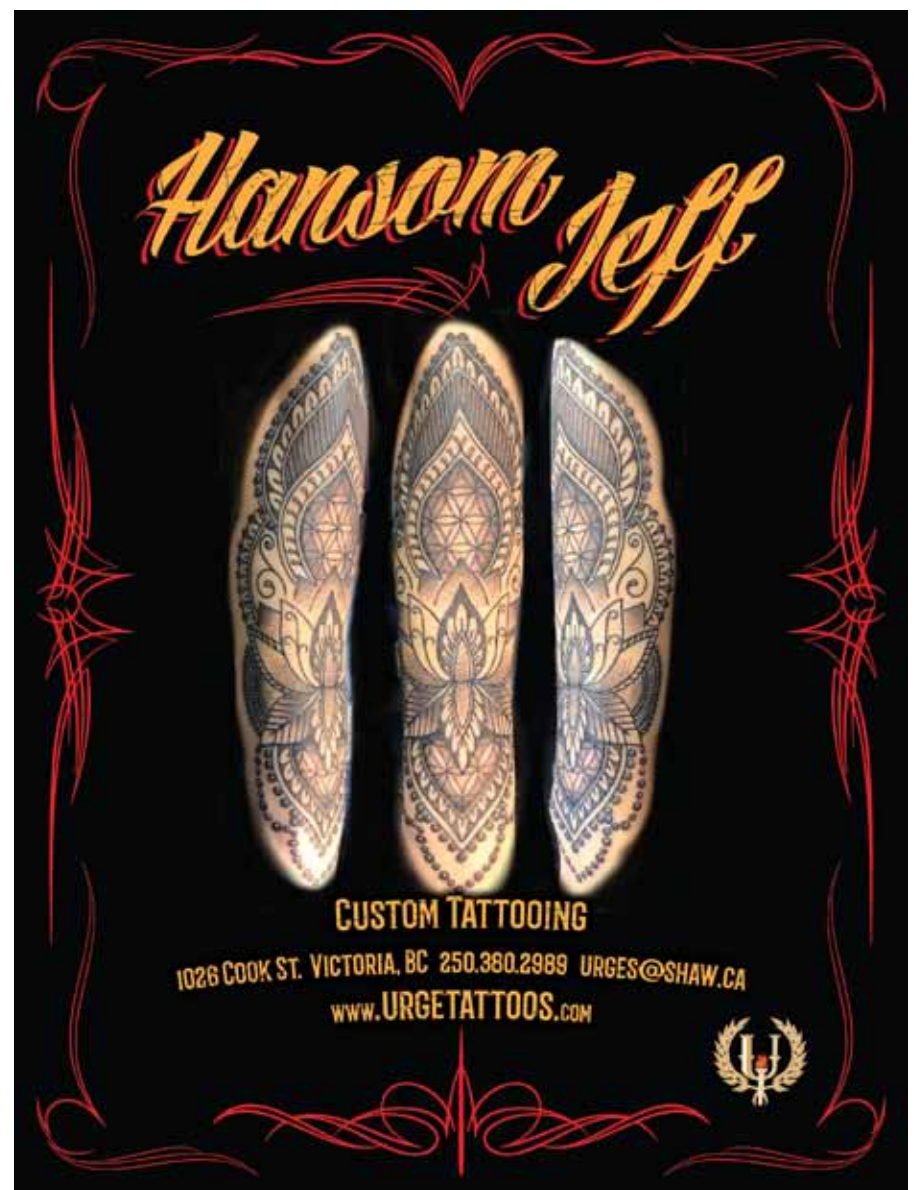
**AU: Any final words for our readers?**

DL: Thanks for taking an interest. Our album *Kill the Bliss* is available now on all streaming platforms, CDs and merch are available at our website, [www.blqband.com](http://www.blqband.com).

Also, just a reminder that right now is a tough time for most of us in the music industry. Please consider supporting your favourite local bands/ musicians through their web stores, digital purchases and/or by sharing their content on social media. We all put a lot of time, dedication and money into what we create and a lot of us are mostly stuck sitting idle on merch, promo and production costs. Any support goes a long way for local artists.

[www.blqband.com](http://www.blqband.com)

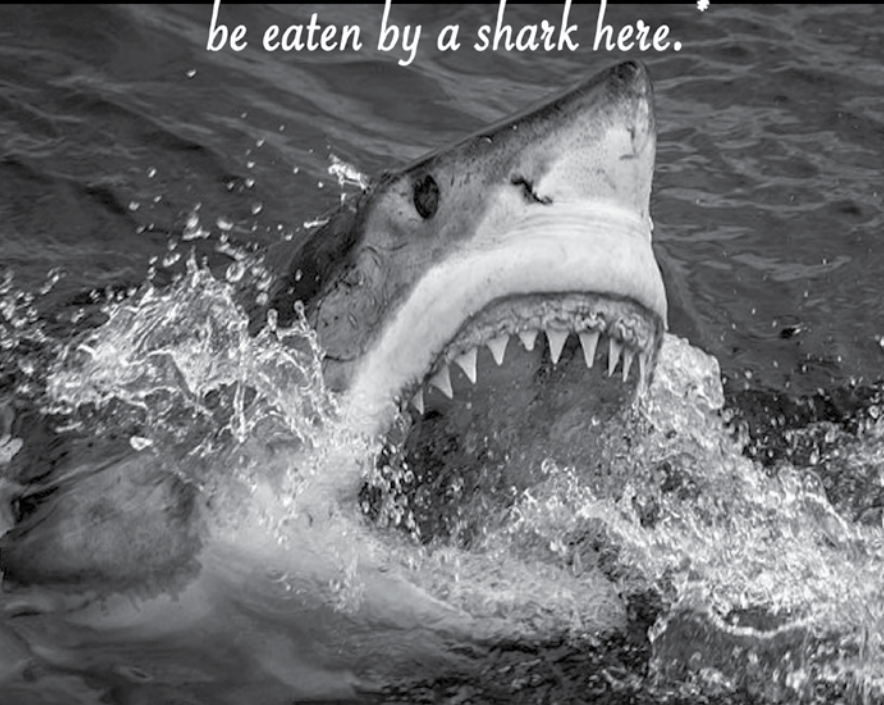
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## Real Sickies

Interview by Roger the Shrubber

### Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

RS: Hey what's up? How are you? We are the Real Sickies. Infamous for? Sure, let me look that word up quick.

Yeah okay, well we used to use a lot of baby powder on stage. We had one show with Chixdiggit where things got a little loose. By "a little," I mean the cap came off and there was baby powder everywhere. The drums that were used that night are stored at this jam space I share and they still give off some white puffs here and there, I'm told... We stopped that a while ago but it comes up when meeting promoters from time to time.

Otherwise we had a similar experience on our last tour in Vancouver that a few people were excited about. We got dubbed, "the worst live band ever." We like to think of it this way, we're the best at being the worst. But that review worked in our favour in the end. The whole thing really came down to a few mics flying into the crowd and an unfortunate incident with a water bottle and fragile nose bones.

We often get questions before shows about how Ben is gonna hurt himself this time, we think his comedy routine hurts him the most. So there's a few things we're infamous for.

### AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?

RS: There was a bunch of people in the group, it started as an online chat group for those who felt they were cursed. Like bad luck stuff. Some of us are hypochondriacs some of us are just hyper. There's been a lot of Sickies over the last few years. Currently it's Rob Lawless, Evan Hughes, Alex Mckie and Ben Disaster a.k.a. Benny Blitz.

### AU: You guys are releasing a new album as a result of some unfortunate Covid-related circumstances, correct? How did this come about?

RS: We left for tour when the pandemic was just hitting Canada in a known way, bad time to go on tour for sure. Day by day it got worse but we weren't able to see the full impact while living in the van. We stopped at home in Edmonton halfway through and saw first hand how people where going nuts for supplies, like a bomb was about to hit. It was messed up. Our show got cancelled that night and we knew the rest of the tour was looking to be that way. Our last show was in Grande Prairie and as we drove on, most of us coming down with the dreaded "Tour Flu™", we knew it wasn't right to continue.

Being at home for a day or two in self isolation and seeing how everyone around us was being affected in one way or another, we wanted to do something to lift people up a little, give them something fun to listen to, and keep ourselves busy during the downtime. So we decided that we would write and record an album.

### AU: Tell us about the album. Is it true you wrote, recorded and released it in seven days without leaving your homes? What was that experience like? What can we expect to hear on the album?

RS: Yeah, so the album is called *Quarantined* and we recorded in our own homes. We didn't have to leave or even put on pants, which was nice. We don't like going out much anyway. But it was seven days of intensity, for sure. We were lucky to have someone drop off a pre-amp from house to house once. Otherwise we where pretty set up at our own homes to record.

It was cool to just be focused on getting it done. It was kind of wild to be writing lyrics about topics and hear them being talked about on the radio. The pandemic was all anyone was talking about. Even in the basement where the vocals where recorded there was some CBC radio interference happening.



For having done it in our own homes, passing tracks back and forth over such a short time, it turned out really well, I think. It's definitely the most political we've gotten as a band. There's a few snippets from the news laced throughout out the record. Some light hearted and heavy-hearted subjects as well. All in all it was pretty emotional.

### AU: This is a benefit album - where are the proceeds going and why is this cause important to you?

RS: The proceeds go to WHO Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund. We had a feeling a certain vile orange peel was gonna cut their funding so we wanted to help.

### AU: Now that the album is released, how will you be promoting it? Have you been doing live streams, are you planning any tours for next year?

RS: We've been lucky to get a lot of people sharing the album and the videos we made for it. There's been talk of a pressing but no promises as of yet.

Touring kind of looks out of the question for anyone until there is a cure that isn't drinking bleach or shoving a flashlight up your butt. There may be a new fetish there, at least.

Live streams perhaps once Ben has his bubble suit patched up (he and Cleaver who featured in the videos where moshing in the living room together and there's a few holes in it now).

### AU: What are your hopes for this album, what do you hope audiences take away from it?

RS: I hope they can read into it. Prepare for the next virus. Actually, wash their hands and be safe. That it's more about others than just yourself. Hopefully that resonates with people and hopefully people take the spirit of unity we saw during the pandemic and turn it toward fighting the disease of hatred and brutality that we've been plagued with for generations and that is flaring up terribly as we speak.

### AU: Will you be doing any music videos or other forms of media promotion?

RS: Yeah there's two music videos. They are up now through Stomp's YouTube page. They were directed and edited by Evan, who also made some fun promo videos that are somewhere back in time on our Instagram and Facebook pages.

### AU: Any other long term plans or goals for the band you can tell us about?

RS: It's kind of hard to plan for the future when you don't know what the future will be. So we plan to try to stick to making our own future. We will be working on another album soon. It's going to be real heavy on the love. The world needs it right now.

### AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Will there still be a home for rock and punk in the new world order?

RS: There will always be room for punk and rock and all music. Maybe more so then ever. How it will be viewed is a good question. Live concerts with a large capacity feel a far way off.

One thing's for sure, when there's a system in place to keep people down, they will eventually find a way to come together. Music has always been one of those ways so I still see a future of sorts. It's kind of hard to think about now though, with so much suffering happening.

### AU: What should we know about Real Sickies and the new album that we don't already?

RS: We've put out a handful of records in the last few years. A bunch of videos, too. There's lot of information out there, and feel free to join the cool club.

### AU: Any final words for our readers?

RS: Respect each others' minds, spaces and bodies. Be good to yourself, as well.

[facebook.com/therealsickies/](https://facebook.com/therealsickies/)

PHOTO SOURCE: Stomp Records

# DREAD PRESENTS



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## subculture

By wendythirteen

I was wrong.

As a privileged pasty, and having withdrawn from interactions with cops for years, I just didn't know how bad it had gotten. My interactions with police and subsequent criminal record for various offenses occurred many years ago when I was a rebellious teen / young adult, and the cops were still slowly morphing off the drug that was Andy Taylor of Mayberry.

I was never beaten for being a law breaker. After my rebellious shitshow, disappointing my parents and the realization that next

time I fucked up the result would be incarceration, I vowed to be more civilized. Brandishing a criminal record, I was now locked into Canada as everyone else was traveling, I resigned myself to staying put, correcting my behavior and making do. I had also saddled myself with the cumbersome task of raising two children as a working single mother.

Two weeks ago, I scoffed at the heatscore, juggalo skateboarders feebly attempting to attack police. I was blown away that they would

charge at cops. I thought that was the stupidest thing I'd seen in a while. I thought they were handled accordingly as they were not bloodied.

I was indoctrinated with a resistance mechanism to not fuck around, around cops. Why is that. I've pretty much been questioning that since some dude on Facebook called me a bootlicker. The 70s raised child was a generation where respect for authority was drilled into your brain. I hadn't questioned that, I avoided most contact to escape confronting it.

I was never one of those ACAB people until now. I snickered whenever I saw it typed or yelled, comfortable in my lengthy and successful avoidance of any interactions with the police. Alas, I was also not terrorized and targeted for my race. If I did attend a protest it was from the sidelines, but always

in solidarity through fundraising and procuring supplies for occupations. I just couldn't shake that fear of being locked up. My avoided experience is white privilege.

A silent cop is complicit, for not standing against any of these lawless, and vicious cops. Police with multiple disciplinary complaints carrying on and never being charged for beating or murdering a country's citizens can't be ignored.

Why should the populace respect authority when this Justice System makes a mockery of it. Seeing the 'above the law' abhorrent behaviors by law enforcement playing out across the world is something that can't be overlooked. Now that camera phones are everywhere, this is fucking eyeopening. How do you perpetrate that level of police brutality against non-violent people that are protesting unjust police brutality.

It's time for personal responsibility, accountability and the reformation of policing policies.

A lot of lines are getting drawn in the sand.

Take No Shit 2020 is worldwide.

As a proud and seasoned 'Take No Shit-ist', I welcome everyone to join the cult of humanity.

Celebrity musicians, along with fellow underground fans are showing their true colors.

The social media blowback of the Black Metal Edgelord Inc. types claiming anti-fascists are in fact, fascists is perhaps the most perplexing statement I've heard in my life.

Xenophobic and conspiracy laden right wingnuts are screaming about free speech while uttering racist and divisive misinformation, then decry being questioned and held accountable.

Yes, you can have your opinion, but when you

chuck that chunk of rancid dialogue into the mainstreet of Facebook or Twitter, expect a shredding, negative reaction by the masses of facepalming humans that disagree with you.

The time is over to be a bystander.

Yes. I'm Anti-Fascist. Most people are. It is just so absurd that the script is being nonsensically flipped.

So how does one go about confronting this bullshit? I realize that every engagement devolves into a flurry of gaslighting and conspiracy theories. It is exhausting but we need to be relentless. Doctor Youtube needs to be eradicated along with all the hateful Kevin and Karens.

People ask why I don't delete these types off Facebook. I guess I hope to electrify that unlit brain bulb, that they see the dangerous damage in their thought processes, when faced with a glimpse of reality, and a healthy dose of debunking. These are teachable moments.

Don't even get me started on that blathering epitome of all seven sins occupying the White House, who is fiddling over the flames of a threatening and hateful rhetoric.

I guess one thing this pandemic has brought to the world is that everyone now has the time to contemplate how you want to live, and how much integrity you want to carry forward as we emerge to less of a turbulent rat race and hopefully more of a humane, caring planet.

I, for one, have concluded that my stand against consumerism was not in vain as others are now waking up to what is really necessary for living.

Stand up.

Speak out.

In solidarity with all humane humans. XO.







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# In Memoriam of Stuart Gordon

## The Modern Champion of Lovecraft

By Vince D'Amato

It was with a truly saddened heart I received the news, this past March, of the passing of what was one of the absolute great artists of independent horror cinema – Stuart Gordon. Stuart Gordon's early films, those ones produced in the 1980s



by Charles Band and his company Empire Productions, were of the most highly influential of my movie-loving life and career, on-par or second only to the works of the late, great George A. Romero. Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond* had deeply profound influences on the the first films I'd ever produced as an indie producer back in 2002-2003. I first discovered Stuart Gordon's films on late-night cable television, where I first saw *Dolls* in 1994 (the film itself being seven years old at the time); and following this, while having a rabid interest in horror cinema, I was able to cross-reference some of his films from the then-annual book publication *Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide*, where in most of Stuart Gordon's and Charles Band's then-up-to-date repertoire had been listed and reviewed. From there, of course I'd developed a nearly obsessive interest in tracking down *Re-Animator*, only to have found that my local video store (Tom's Video) had lost their copy of it, and so it would be that *From Beyond* would then be my entry-movie into the world of modern (and by far still-unparalleled, in my opinion) Lovecraft adaptations fashioned by the team of Stuart Gordon, his producer Brian Yuzna, screenwriter Denis Paoli, and then-executive-producer Charles Band.

I last met Stuart Gordon in June of 2015, five years ago to the month that this article has been published, at the Calgary Horror Con for the then-30th-Anniversary of *Re-Animator*. We were all attending that convention's pre-party, the night before the start of the Horror Con, at a small bar/club in the middle of Calgary, along with *Re-Animator* alums Barbara Crampton, Bruce Abbott, Jeffrey Combs, and Carolyn Purdy-Gordon. I was extremely lucky enough to have been invited by Stuart Gordon to join them at their table where we ended up talking over the course of the entire evening, it was an amazing experience to be able to have a lengthy conversation with him, my hero, and his wife Carolyn Purdy-Gordon. I had met both of them previously (and very briefly) in 2007, during the theatrical market premiere of his last-ever theatrical feature film, *Stuck*, in Santa Monica; but that experience, while very exciting and enjoyable, could not compare to sitting and having casual conversations with them years later in the basement of that dark nightclub in the middle of downtown Calgary in 2015.

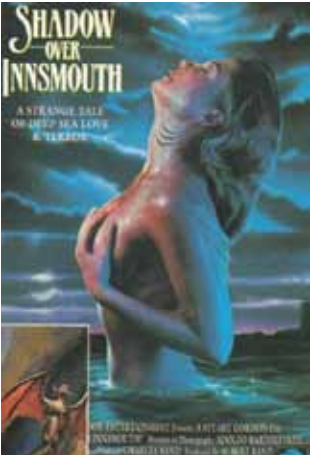


Setting aside these personal experiences for a moment to focus on some academic opinions of Stuart Gordon's involvement and contributions to independent horror cinema in general, these are the ideas that I truly wanted to delve into in the article – like *Re-Animator*, which is one of the few horror films to break ground in the entire genre overall, and its iconic status is more than just deserved. Realistically, all of the modern Lovecraftian pop- and popular-culture can be definitively traced back to Stuart Gordon's 1985



cinematic adaptation of *Re-Animator*. And credit where credit is due, aforementioned screenwriters and producers Denis Paoli and Brian Yuzna were collaboratively responsible, but we can't forget who was at the helm – Stuart Gordon. Case in point, while producer Brian Yuzna would continue his quest for Lovecraft and Lovecraft-inspire film adaptations such as *Society*, *Bride of Re-Animator*, *Return of the Living Dead 3*, and *Necronomicon*, and while Yuzna's self-directed films absolutely showed a definitive flair for the gory-fantastique, none of his own Lovecraftian re-imaginings quite lived up to the achievements of the films that Stuart Gordon was able to put his signature on. Following *From Beyond* and *Dolls*, executive producer Charles Band certainly knew a good thing when he had it. Band would continue to produce films for Stuart Gordon following the collapse of his Empire Pictures at the end of the 80s.

Charles Band would welcome the 1990s by birthing a new brand of genre film entertainment with his new production company, Full Moon, which is still in business to this day. When Band first launched this new company in 1990, it would be the beginning of a new era of direct-to-video releases, facilitated through an output deal Band had managed with Paramount Pictures. Through Paramount, the Full Moon productions would see a



wide release through the North American video store chains, increasing the visibility and awareness of Band's



movies; which, even with their low budgets, were characterized by swift fast-paced action-packed scripts, and shot by professional and talented cinematographers, making his productions appear more expensive than they actually were. During this time, Band's company also employed the then-unknown KNB EFX Group (founded by Greg Nicotero, Howard Berger, and Robert Kurtzman in 1988), adding more behind-the-scenes talent-value to his films.

Near the beginning of the new era, Band would again hire Stuart Gordon to supply his production company with higher quality films, backed by the director's considerable own talents. The first of these new collaborations would not be a Lovecraft adaptation, however, it would be a take on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, which followed two attempts by Band and the Band/Gordon team to revive the magic of their 1980s Lovecraft filmography; films that were the birth of Lovecraft in modern pop-culture...

Following the collapse of Band's late-eighties production of *Pulsepounders* (at the same time his entire company had been collapsing) which was a never-completed anthology that was supposed to be a trio of stories including a Trancers chapter and a stand-alone Lovecraft short reuniting Jeffery Combs and Barbara Crampton from *Re-Animator*, and the never-produced *Shadow Over Innsmouth* (which would have required the budget of ten Full Moon productions to produce, although this remained a pet project of Stuart Gordon's for many years), Charles Band and Stuart



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# Blind Beggar Pub



## Mechanical Separation

### Canadian Prairie Grindcore

Interview by Shannon Putnam



Mechanical Separation has been around since 2003 using their unique brand of death-grind to bludgeon Saskatoon grind fiends into submission. The band consists of Tizdale (Tiz) the drummer, Matt Dantouze (MD) on bass, Svitzerland (Svitz) on guitar and Simon Braun (SB) on vocals.

**Absolute Underground: Where did you get the band name from? How did you come up with it?**

Tizdale: From a package of wieners. It said on the side, "Mechanically Separated Pork," and I thought that's hilarious. Just the idea of meat being run through a big machine, that's really grindcore!

**AU: Were you a musical kid? What instrument(s) did you play as a child?**

MD: My first story of ever having a guitar, I was three years old and my mom bought me an acoustic guitar and the first thing I did with it was smash it on the sidewalk.

Tiz: I remember being this kid having guitar riffs coming into my head but I didn't know how to play guitar. I just knew there was something about these things in my head that I needed to get out. Same with drums, I picked cans along the side of the road for a day and I got enough tins cans from the ditch to buy my first drum set for \$200. My parents allowed me to totally annoy the shit out of them in the basement for months and months, which I am pretty grateful for.

Svitz: My dad and my brother used to play guitar. I never wanted to take lessons, I just tried to make sounds on my guitar for a very long time, and then I got more involved with the technical aspects of it, but I have been playing since I was 12.

SB: I played French horn in elementary school but I never paid attention. I never learned how to read music

or anything, just fluked my way through it. I got kicked out of guitar class in high school because I wasn't playing properly, my fingering wasn't right. I was used to playing however the fuck I wanted to play.

**AU: How did you get into grindcore, because it is such a specific genre?**

MD: A buddy of mine brought over a date of his and she happened to be in the grindcore scene. We ended up hanging out and she invited me to a grindcore show. I went and checked it out and it ended up being a Mechanical Separation show.

SB: I was listening to Locust, their first album in

1999. I lived overseas and moved back to Saskatoon and I checked out a couple of shows and I saw the Mechanical Separation CD Release with Success and thought what the fuck is this? This is what I want to play. I tried to talk to Tizdale and he wouldn't talk to me. Eventually down the line he started to talk to me and we started hanging out and then I joined the band and the rest is history.

Tiz: My dad bought me a Venom record when I was nine. I got into Dead Kennedys and Suicidal Tendencies and was a crazy skateboard kid. For my 14th birthday my dad gave me \$100 and dropped me off in the city and somehow I accidentally found Archibald Arena which was an indoor skateboard park and I heard the most amazing music over the speakers and I was like, "What are you playing?" and they said, "Vio-lence," so I immediately went and bought it and then my friend Jason Mitchell was in a band called Tencount and they showed me grindcore music.

Svitz: I distinctly remember watching the Toy Machine "Welcome to Hell" video and there were the Misfits and Dead Kennedys and that pulled me into punk rock and then I started getting involved in the music scene in Saskatoon and one of the first grindcore shows I saw was Nation of Waste. Then I met Tizdale and he was a part of Rotundi at the time and he walked me through grindcore.

**AU: On March 27th, 2020, Mechanical Separation released your first music video called "Scaphist," what does the word mean?**

SB: I think Svitzerland was looking for the grossest, most horrible forms of torture he could find on the internet. Scaphism is a method of execution. It consists of trapping the victim between two boats, feeding and covering them with milk and honey, and allowing them to fester and be devoured by insects over time. It is about the person who does it, the Scaphist.

**AU: In 2017 you guys released an unsigned eight-track album called *As You Can See*. Can you talk about your new six-song EP, *The***

***Plague Monster*?**

SB: Yeah, it is our best released material. Funny story with this *Plague Monster* EP is we recorded it two years ago but I wasn't happy with my vocals. For these six songs I didn't know what I wanted to do with them. I went back right before we released the "Scaphist" video and smashed out the vocals. Re-did everything and it sounded great and now we can finally release it. I just appreciate the fact these guys let me do that. This is shit that could fuck up a band, sitting on material and not putting it out, but there is a reason it didn't come out, because it was not ready, now it is.

Svitz: You mentioned that the big part of wanting to redo the vocals is because you wanted it to sound like us, like a live performance, not layered or overdubbed.

Tiz: There is no pressure in this band, if someone is having an issue with wanting something a certain way, why rush something that is an art to us? We are pretty picky when we are writing and we allow each other to say "no" to things, so the process isn't limited.

**AU: Tizdale, Aggroculture Underground Music Convergence is a DIY outdoor music festival you started on your own land in 2007 in Crystal Springs, Saskatchewan, would you like to talk about the festival?**

Tiz: I basically started it because I was a promoter for years in Saskatoon. That became a thankless job but I kind of missed doing it and I just decided that I wanted to do one show constantly and I didn't want to make it any particular genre. It is a 4 day festival over August long weekend.

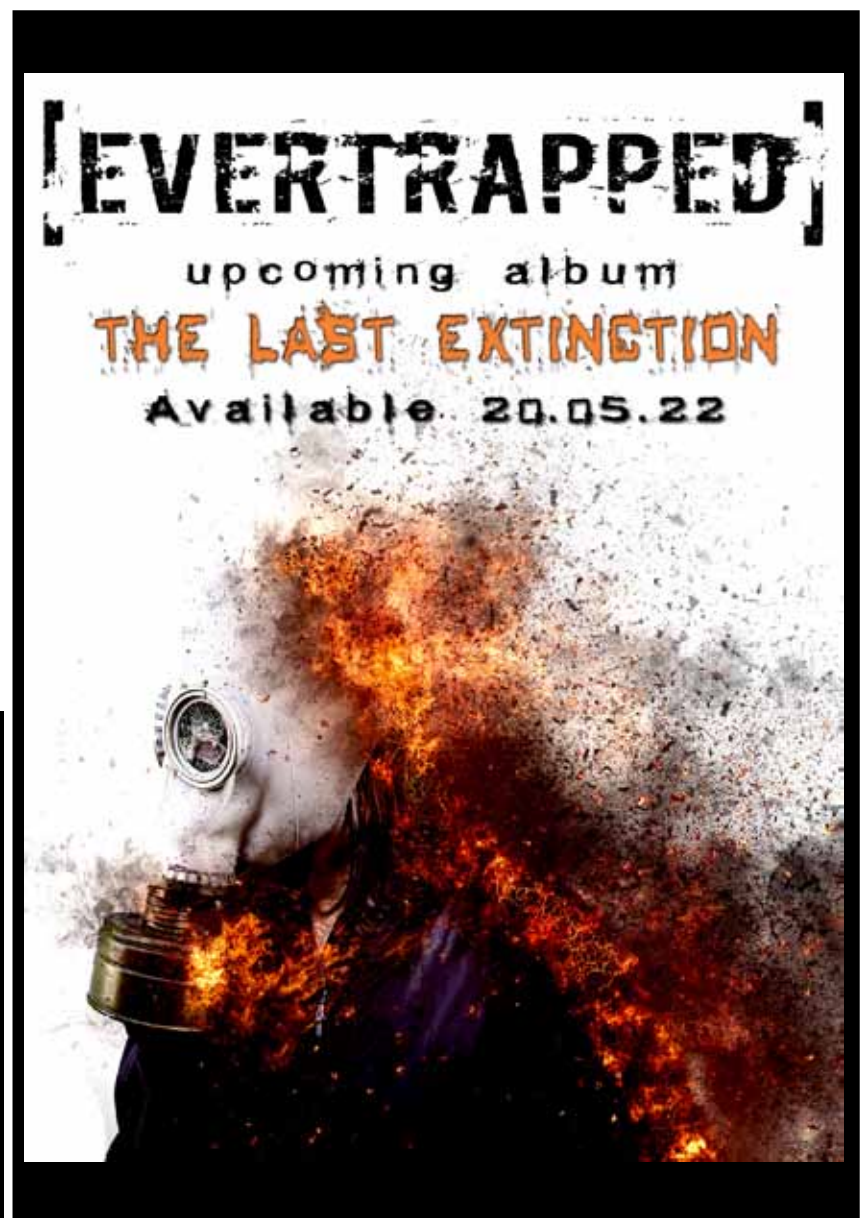
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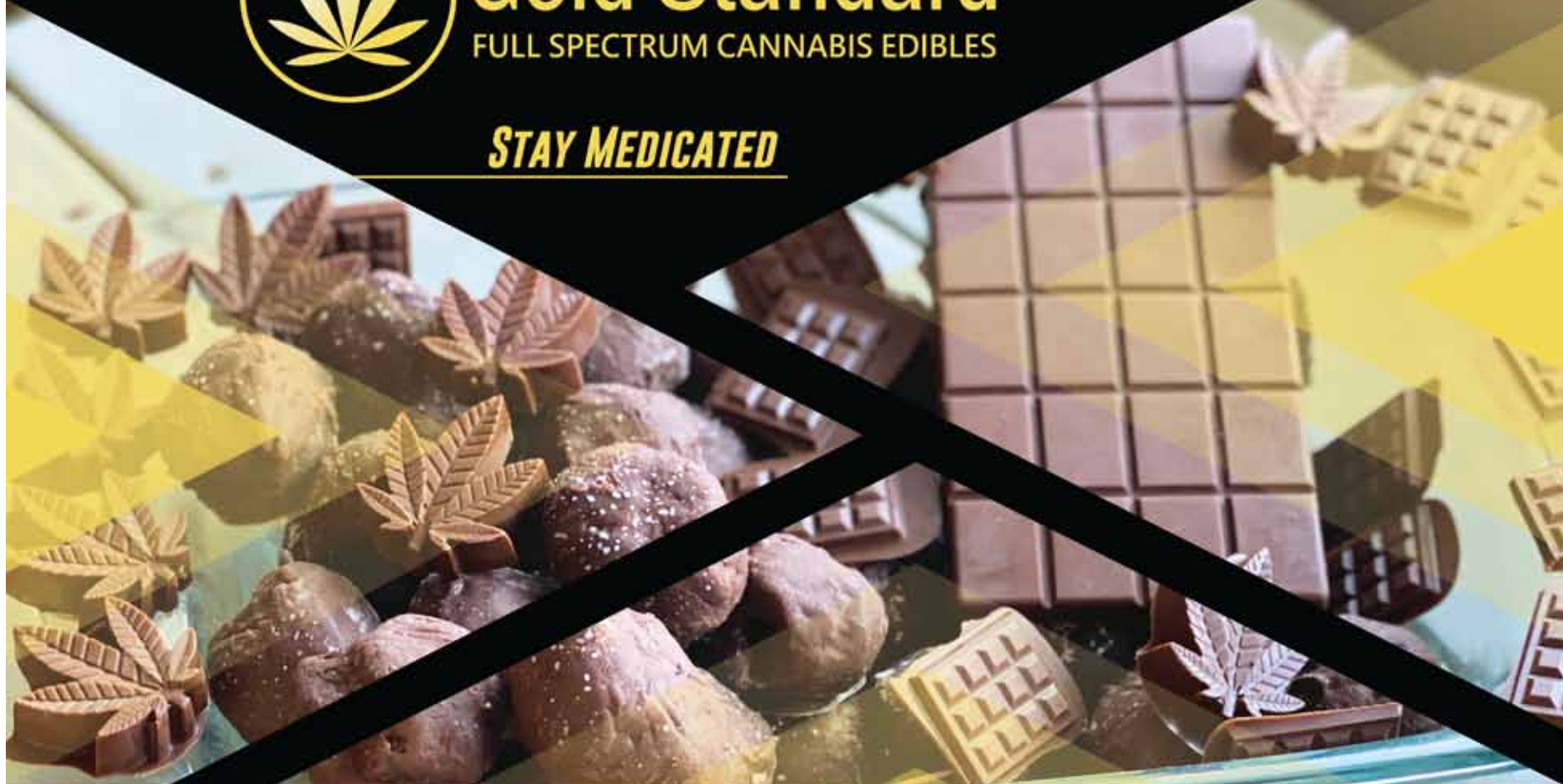




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# Our Year with The Corps

By Trevor Fielding

The Corps is a rising force in the Vancouver punk scene. Playing intricate metal-tinged pop-punk with lyrics culled from the lore of the DC Universe (think Green Lantern Corps), the band features Dan Garrison (guitar/lead vocals), Andrew Pederson (guitar/ vocals), Ronnie Ellis (bass/ vocals), and Dan Stenning (drums/vocals). In our quest to see as much great live music as possible in 2019, my partner Kate and I would end up seeing them a total of eight times at six venues in four cities.

**Thursday, May 11** – Rickshaw Theatre, Vancouver. This was my third time seeing The Corps, and the first since I really knew any of their songs. They were awesome. Biggest crowd I've ever seen them play to, even to this day. Opened with "Bourgeois-Zed." Did "Alan," as I recall. They didn't do "The Island," though (my favourite), which made me worry they were getting sick of it.

Calgary's Belvedere was great (no onstage back injuries this time) and Swedish veterans Satanic Surfers amazing as ever. You could tell it was the first show of the tour, though – a band that incredibly tight, you notice it when they aren't perfectly on. Rodrigo, the singer and ex-drummer, kept bashing himself in the head with the mic. It looked like it hurt.

**Thursday, May 25** – Doc Willoughby's, Kelowna. Doc's is a great venue for a small show – there's no stage. The band is right fucking there. Right in your face. Very intimate. Some bands hate it, and some bands thrive on it. Face to Face played a legendary show here a few years ago. This show was rad. Kamloops' Sound City Hooligans were a pleasant surprise. I had heard the name years ago and thought it was a shitty rap group or something. No, no, awesome punk rock. We liked them a lot.

The Corps were second, I think, and fucking superb. ("I don't know if we have any counters in the audience tonight...") Garrison thanked Colin for bringing them out – he said the band would only do the show if the bar had no less than eight cardboard cutout Guinness logos hanging from the ceiling, and Colin made good. They did do "The Island" this time – their very last song, just like on the album. Fucking fantastic. Last was Modern Terror, who I wish I liked more. Some songs are okay, others – not so much. Not my favourites, I'm afraid. But at least every single person I told about this show ended up going – both Kate and Amy! Great success, as they say!

**Sunday, June 30** – Doc's, Kelowna. Great show. Shockload (Vancouver) were lots of fun. Loved their scrawny drummer dude. He totally ruled. Sound City was great again. Doc's, as I say, has no stage, so people can wander up to the band and do things like take selfies (or, say, demand high-fives mid-song) whenever they like. Sound City was very patient in one such case, except for the broody bass player, who pointedly ignored this one three-sheets-to-the-wind rocker chick in



his face, demanding and not getting his attention. She was furious. It was phenomenal. The Corps played last. Another triumph. The Sound City guitarist fed the band shots onstage. He left Garrison for last, wavering with uncertainty, until Dan G finished the verse he was singing and serenely nodded him over to have booze poured down his gullet mid-solo like he was a baby bird.

**Thursday, July 25** – Doc's, Kelowna. Like suckers, we turned up when it said the doors opened, hours early. Shockload was very good once again. Something seemed a little off about The Corps, though. Dan G seemed a little bummed. He wasn't even in uniform at first – we worried that his Corps vest had rotted right off his back. He changed in time for the set, though. They started playing, a little less than great. I knew more of the words this time. I listened to the *Tales From 2814* CD a lot this year. Made my own lyric sheet. Partway through, the band was doing "Greed," and when they got to the chorus, Garrison noticed me five feet in front of his face, screaming along with him, "ALL we have is GREED!" He was visibly stoked, and totally seemed to start enjoying himself more. It was fucking awesome.

Much better turnout this time, the legendary Ten Foot Pole still having some cachet after all these years. They were okay. At the very start, singer Dennis came boogieing out until he was almost nose to nose with me, then retreated, underlining the fact that there was no separation whatsoever. They weren't all that happy about it, especially when people tromped all over their intricate effects pedal array. They did "My Wall" from Rev, which I love, and "A.D.D." from Unleashed, which I hate. Honestly, the band was never the same for me after Radinsky split and formed Pulley.

**Sunday, July 31** – WISE Hall, Vancouver. We came down to the coast again for the last two days of Rocket From Russia Fest. Absolute blast. We loved Balkan Schmalkan (raddest tuba player of all time!), Greatest Sons, Contra Code, Stranded Hikers, and our first time seeing Tim and the Pavels at a bigger place. So amazing. Fucking great. The Corps played second to last on Sunday night. Wicked as ever. Tight as hell. They closed

with "Spell It Out"/"Bourgeois-Zed" and we booked it out of there. Missed You Big idiot (still never seen them) and the big onstage scene-wide "Linoleum" love fest. We left about 10 PM, drove like hell up the #1, over the Connector, and got to bed in Kelowna sometime around 3:30 AM. Worked the next morning too. So fucking worth it.

**Friday, September 27** – SBC, Vancouver. Kate and I actually came out for Lagwagon/Face to Face, but of course had to drive down one night early for this. Kate's first time at SBC – she loved it, sliding around the ramps on Chuck Taylors. Apparently Andrew WK was playing somewhere else that same night, which is apparently something we should care about.

Contra Code was searingly great – so fucking tight. They did a Slayer intro instead of the Iron Maiden one they did at RFRF. The Corps played second. I bought them shots before they went on. I don't care if that's ass-kissing. Since Kate and I never drink, it's a way for me to spend money supporting a venue that's putting on a sweet show. Also the band is a bunch of drunks, so they were fine with it. The Corps' sound at this show was about as good as I ever heard it all year. Well done Cecil, I guess. Stenning kept looking over at me so I couldn't stare at him like I usually do, and I kept forgetting words so I just grinned like an idiot. They were excellent.

Calgary's Downway played third, sounding as good as they ever did in the 90s. The singer still looks like a male model. They have a new album which sounds pretty good too. Just like at Satanic Surfers (and No Fun At All as well, in fact), I ended up in the pit right beside the world's #1 fan of Downway, who threw his arm around me and screamed every joyful exultation into my ringing ear. It kicked ass. I don't know why that keeps happening.

**Wednesday, November 6** – The Royal, Nelson. At the last minute, we made the five hour drive to Nelson. This was the first show at the newly refurbished Royal. Not a terribly punk crowd, but a great sound, once they got it dialed in after a couple songs. Garrison announced that it was Stenning's birthday, and they were going to let him sing one – "Black Autumn," I think it was. Stenning was having no luck with the kit he was using – kept dropping sticks, tom fell over a couple times. Some birthday! (Which it totally wasn't, of course – just Dan G being a troll.) Garrison later revoked Stenning's microphone privileges, and had the soundman turn him off. I brought a Supergirl pennant that I tied to a drumstick and waved around during "Supergirl." Ronnie was stoked on that.

Then they did a new song, "Hazardous," and it kicked ass. It was so catchy I could sing along by the end of it. "Sayin' it will be okay...sayin' it will be okay..." That seemed to alarm them a little, as they wondered how the fuck I'd heard it before. I hadn't. Just catchy, is all. This was maybe the

loosest I'd ever seen the band – like Satanic Surfers, they're usually so tight every time that the two or three spots where they weren't perfect stood out. I did buy them shots again, so partly my bad. Still, they fucking ruled. Andrew went for a walkabout in the pit and missed his backups at the end of "Bourgeois-Zed." I managed not to bolt onto the stage and scream along into the mic. It wasn't easy.

**Saturday, November 30** – Traverse, Revelstoke. Kate and I made the two and a half hour drive and got in well before the band did. They rolled in about 10 looking tired and cranky, some of them having been on the road since 8:30 AM. They did seem pleasantly surprised to see us, though.

This was a snowboarding film premiere by the guys at Society. They got on stage and roared incoherently into the mics for awhile, then played the movie – with surprisingly pedestrian tricks for the most part, except for one dude at the end – at ear-splitting volume. Pretty good. No punk rock on the soundtrack at all. Then they got onstage on screamed some more. Pretty much just drunken chaos.

The Corps kicked things off after the movie. The sound was not great – the vocalists seemed like they couldn't really hear themselves. Pederson was a little too loud and Ronnie a little too quiet. More Jason, less Grayson! Stenning was having problems with another kit not his own, with that fucking tom falling over yet again. Then he lost the clutch thingie on his hi-hat two seconds after Garrison started "Supergirl" (dedicating it to me and Kate). Not the best I've ever seen the band play, but great fun nonetheless. They did "Hazardous" again, tweaked a little I think, sounding even better. Ronnie saw me singing along at the end, and nodded sagely. Then they announced they were going to do a cover – NOFX's "The Decline" – and went into the Spice Girls' "Viva Forever"! It was hilariously awesome.

The crowd, like I say, was nuts. They kept spilling beer on the dance floor, slipping and sliding everywhere, crashing head first into the stage and stuff. Kate got kicked and pummelled a bunch. Crazy violent pit, but still having fun. They kept smashing their glasses as well, so that the whole floor became covered in tiny bits of glass and ice. They just kept flailing about, rolling around in it, oblivious. I don't know how they weren't all cut to ribbons.

Blacked Out played second, and got a fine reaction from the audience, until they'd finish a song. Then, no clapping or cheering really, just talking and drinking their drinks. Then back to intensely slamming during the next tune. It was like they were used to moshing to a Spotify playlist in Revelstoke and forgot there was a band on stage. Also from Vancouver, Blacked Out are a great band themselves (love that "I Don't Know" number), but seemed to have the same monitor problems The Corps did. Harmonies weren't perfect. I was violently groped from behind during their set, but it was just Ronnie shambling past. They finished up with "Skulls" (never not a fun song to play) and bellowed, "Let's get drunk!" For once, though, The Corps seemed like they shared me and Kate's post-show mindset – like they just wanted an early fucking night after a long fucking day.





# Raider

By Jon Asher

Originally published in Kanlı Teneke Metal Magazine

**Absolute Underground: Please tell us who you are from the band and what instrument you play?**

Angelo Bonaccorso: My name is Angelo Bonaccorso, I am the vocalist of Raider.

**AU: This March 2020, Raider released the album *Guardian of The Fire*, for those who haven't heard it yet, how would you describe Raider's sound?**

AB: Raider is a blend of death-thrash with a definitive twist. I think the beauty of what makes our sound unique is that it has to be heard to understand exactly what makes it so different!

**AU: We hear you are maniacs playing death thrash in the unconventional E standard? Why has the band chosen this route for its sound?**

AB: The reason behind this choice is that it just sounds tighter and brighter in the mix, it really allows the riffs to speak their voice and not get lost in the mix. You don't need to be tuned down to be heavy - the songwriting is what makes the sound heavy - tuning simply gives the music a certain character that we think fits our style.

**AU: We read you had your album mastered by the guru Jamie King, with so many big names experienced under his aural guidance, how did that come to be?**

AB: Like most relationships in the metal network, we came by Jamie through the recommendation of his work. The guy is an absolute mastering machine and his work is all of such high quality that it was a no brainer to reach out and see if he wanted to work with us.

**AU: With Covid 19 disrupting the world, how has that affected the band and future touring plans? Do you think it's time to have a real**

**Guardian of The Fire take over the world instead?**

AB: We are marching forward like all other artists. Obviously it sucks not being able to play shows at the moment but the health and safety of everyone comes first. This is simply a delay, we know that once things go back to normal the ability for us to finally play shows and for people to come out to them will be so much sweeter.

**AU: As the world begins its Covid apocalypse, what five albums, foods, anything else would you like to be stuck in a closet with?**

AB: I would hope that even with all the limitations

I wouldn't end up in a closet! But if it were so: *Ascension* by Paladin, *Sons of Northern Darkness* by Immortal, *Epidemic of Violence* by Demolition Hammer.... God this is hard... food, would definitely need a hearty supply of meat and some dried mangoes.

**AU: What's the one Raider song, during Covid 19 world apocalypse, that should be on 24hrs repeat?**

AB: The obvious one for some would be "No Sign of the Dawn." But I would argue that this song is not the one we need right now, the period of warning is over. "Guardian of the Fire" would be the track for right now, because what we need is

hope. Hope to guard all the things we hold true and right and to overcome this battle together with that might.

**AU: If there was only one chance left to tour the world because Covid will kill us all, what one band would it be with, and why?**

AB: It would be a coin toss between our brothers in Invicta and Cathartic Demise. If we were to only get one tour, I wouldn't have it be with anyone but our closest brothers in metal from right here in Waterloo, ON.

**AU: What is the band's plan for new metal songs? EP or album?**

AB: We are already working on our next project, we haven't decided if it will be a full album or just an EP yet but it is already in the works. First and foremost we are trying our best to promote THIS record and bring the music we have created to as many people as possible.

**AU: Anything else you like to tell our readers about the band and your metal?**

AB: Thanks for reading and give our social media a follow to keep up with our news. Hopefully we will be playing a show soon somewhere near YOU!

[raiderofficial.bandcamp.com/](http://raiderofficial.bandcamp.com/)

[www.facebook.com/raidermetal](https://www.facebook.com/raidermetal)

PHOTO SOURCE: Asher Media Relations







## ATD

Interview by AU Editorial

### Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

BVD: Ben VonDubya, vox for ATD. Most infamous for still occasionally wetting the bed in my forties... oh wait, I don't think anyone knows about that... shit.

### AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?

BVD: We formed in 2015-ish. Our guitar player Joe, bass player Dave and myself had all moved at staggered times to Van from Calgary and decided we needed to start a new punk band. We didn't know any drummers, though. One fateful evening I was slinging merch for the Real McKenzies at a show and some skidly, homeless looking dude came up and said "nice shirt" referring to the Dreadnoughts tee I was wearing. Turns out that skid was Marco, the Dreadnoughts drummer, and after chit-chattin' learned they were slowing down a little and he was looking to start something new. Perfect.

So we cooked along as four-piece for a few years. We picked up our pal KG as a second guitarist for a while, then had Dan Garrison from The Corps



replace him, for a handful of mini-tours and recording the new record. We now have Morgan Farrell shredding with ATD, and he's an absolute beast, a tremendous fit for us. He ain't going anywhere.

### AU: You released a new album, *A Total Disappointment*, on May 29, congratulations! Tell us about the new album, what can we expect to hear on it?

BVD: Hey thanks! We are pretty proud of this one. It's our first full-length LP, 12 songs, 17 minutes of full-on punk rock energy. It cooks. We like to think there's no filler, but I guess that's up to you to decide.

### AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

BVD: Mental health, paranoia, conspiracies and some social issues. Nothing too deep... haha!

### AU: Tell us about the experience of releasing an album during the Covid pandemic - what did you do differently, what were some of the challenges you faced?

BVD: We joined up with Kinda Cool Records, an

indie label out of East Van, for this album, and it's been an absolute dream working with them. There have been zero challenges on our end, KCR have put in a load of time and work for us and have made the entire process really smooth. Doing this during the whole Covid thing has potentially been a bonus, as there are no live shows happening people

are craving new music to sink their teeth into, so putting this out now feels like pretty good timing. And again, big ups to Kinda Cool Records. We are stoked to have signed with them. Good ol' lads.

### AU: Now that the album is released, how will you be promoting it? Have you been doing live streams, are you planning any tours for next year?

BVD: We were supposed to be doing a mini Western Canadian tour in July to promote the release, but obviously it doesn't seem that'll be happening. The majority of it was going to be with our pals Julius Sumner Miller from Calgary, so we're hoping we can reschedule it and keep them on board with us, would have been a good ol' time. Either way, once the shit settles, we will definitely be doing a tour to push this album, with a big release party show in Van to kick it off.

### AU: What are your hopes for this album, what do you hope audiences take away from it?

BVD: We're hoping the audience takes the record away from it. Go to [www.kindacoolrecords.com](http://www.kindacoolrecords.com) to pick one up for yourself! Haha. We just hope people dig it and want to come see us play.

### AU: Will you be doing any music videos or

# PURE PUNK

### other forms of media promotion?

BVD: We put a video together with some old live footage for our first single "Boomerang Kids." Once Covid allows us to, we'll likely do one or two more vids. For now we'll just whorishly keep doing any form of media promotion that comes our way! Thanks AU!

### AU: Any other long term plans or goals for the band you can tell us about?

BVD: Starting to work on our next record. How many 30 second songs can you fit on one 7"?

### AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Will there still be a home for punk rock in the new world order?

BVD: I try not to get too wrapped up into how things MIGHT turn out, but I don't think punk rock is going anywhere. I'm hoping live music eventually goes back to normal and the kids can get back slamming around. But who knows? I know we're itching to hit the stage again and will get back on the horse as soon as we can.

### AU: What should we know about ATD and the new album that we don't already?

BVD: There's plenty you probably don't know, but I think we'll keep it that way for now....

### AU: Any final words for our readers?

BVD: Support local music. Support local record shops. Support local businesses. Support local everything. Eat your vegetables. Respect your elders. Mind your P's and Q's.

Whatever the fuck that means.

[facebook.com/atdvan/](https://facebook.com/atdvan/)

PHOTO CREDIT: Kitt Woodland



# Vile Creature

## Experimental Doom Duo Vile Creature Mount a Crushing Crusade Against Moral Nihilism with Glory, Glory! Apathy Took Helm!



Interview by Claire K. for Invisible Orange

Vile Creature (Hamilton, ON) has entered their sixth year as a band, and is on the brink of releasing their third full-length album, *Glory, Glory! Apathy Took Helm!* From the agonizing cries of *A Steady Descent Into the Soil* (2015) to the soaring cleans of guest vocalist Laurel Minnes on *A Pessimistic Doomsayer* (2016), Vile Creature has explored challenging subjects through diverse musical languages. On their newest release, Vic (drums and vocals) and KW (guitar and vocals) continue their evolution with an ambitious foray into new territory, both musically and thematically.

**Absolute Underground: I was very excited to hear the new track—love the *Suspiria* vibes of the video. How would you situate *Glory, Glory! Apathy Took Helm!* in relation to the rest of your discography?**

Vic: In a lot of our work, we've been able to collaborate with some wicked people. We're a two-piece so we're trying to figure out ways to keep it interesting for us sonically with drums and guitar. KW's a gear nerd, so he's always fiddling around with different pedal combinations. He prides himself on new depths of gross.

KW: Thank you!

Vic: It's not like we know where we want to go with whatever we're writing. I just feel like we like to write long, emotional pieces, so we don't really have a theme when we're like figuring out what we're going to write about. We have these pieces of music that we're putting together that are

really long, and it's like putting together a jigsaw puzzle.

KW: Going into writing the first record, we knew we were going to talk about personal experiences. Going into our first EP, we knew we were going to write about escapism as a whole. With the last record, *A Cast of Static and Smoke*, we knew from the get-go that we were writing a short story and we wanted the record to be a companion to the story. Every time, we would always have the frame of the house, and then we would build the walls and adorn it. I feel like this time we actually blew up the plot of land and fully started from the beginning with it. We kind of came in and just started writing music and working on it, and once the music was done we really honed in on what we wanted it to be about. I feel like this is the first time where the lyrical and emotional content was derived from the music as opposed to being two things that were parallel and then kind of intersected at the end.

Vic: For the lyrics, we ended up going to like a treehouse in January which was really nice. We had all the music so we were like, "We have like an hour's worth of music to write lyrics for so we really need to just like lock ourselves in a fucking treehouse and do this," and I think it was a good setting.

KW: The title track of the album is the most out of our station thing we've ever done, and it's also the thing that I'm musically most proud of that I've ever done period. I am a big musical theatre nerd, so it was very huge for me.

Vic: I'm very proud of you for writing that. When you were working on it with just guitar, it was cool to see that you had a very solidified idea, and then with working with Laurel, it came together. You had this vision, and it's a reality now. That's what's cool about being a two-piece: not feeling like too limited by being a doom metal, stoner, or weird sludge metal band. Being in a certain genre has never really meant a lot to us. I guess we're experimental doom now? I'm into that because it leaves the door open.

KW: We're generally heavy and slow. That's the launching pad, and everything else is within reach.

**AU: In terms of the concept behind the album, I was really interested in this crusade against nihilism. Could you speak to that?**

KW: Vic's going to be way more eloquent than I am, so I'm going to give the blunt force trauma and then Vic's going to nurse it back to health. I think nihilism is fucking boring, and if it's the thing that you identify most with as a person, your personality is a wet mop. It's dumb not caring about things—it isn't cool. Thinking that the world is the worst and it would be better if everyone was dead is selfish and stupid. It's the

lowest thought process that you can have in my opinion.

Vic: It's pretty easy to fall into a lot of dark thoughts, and the only experience we have to understand the world is through our own self, so it's hard to get out of that. I feel like apathy and nihilism —

KW: They go hand in hand.

Vic: Yeah, they do. It makes you not have any imagination for the wonders of the universe outside of the self. Death and dying and nothingness are fucking scary, but we need to figure out ways to look outside ourselves and see the beauty in it. What do you have to lose in being a decent human being?

KW: And to fucking care.

Vic: Yeah. It's hard sometimes, and battling that is maybe a lifelong thing, but I feel like it's a lot more rewarding to do that instead of falling into this individualistic bubble of not caring.

KW: You don't have to turn in your battle vest the second you start caring. You're allowed to keep it you know.

Vic: Yeah. I do think that in metal, visually maybe it's appealing to people. Like, aesthetically, nihilism is a theme that goes hand in hand with genres like black metal. I don't know, I'm talking out my ass. Metal purists are going to come for me, but I don't know, it's cool to care.

KW: And I think that there's an important distinction to make: having depressive thoughts, being depressed, and having those types of "the world is not worth it" feelings is not what we're talking about. It's about moral nihilism, and, to me, people opting into and making a conscious decision to preach nihilistic tendencies is complete bullshit. As far as apathy goes, which is the thing we are specifically talking about, it's so easy to fall into negative headspace, and it takes real fucking effort to combat it, but it's effort that's worth putting forth. That specific thing is kind of a thesis for what we were talking about. The title of the record is super tongue in cheek.

**AU: It's cool to see that perspective in your work, especially when we see how the romanticizing of moral nihilism can create a faux apolitical attitude in the scene.**

Vic: Yeah, that's a good point. It just gives people the excuse to not care about everything, whereas we are just like, "Let's not do that."

**AU: I've noticed that you both centre your queerness in how you present Vile Creature (for example, the "angry queer gloom cult" descriptor, which is great). Could you speak to this choice?**

KW: We are who we are, and while our queerness doesn't define us, it's definitely a guiding lens to how we see the world.

Vic: I think it's still important as ever for us to identify as a queer metal band, because I want

to be part of that community, and I hope it encourages other folks to find each other.

KW: I was just reading the first interview we ever did yesterday with our friend Ed for the zine *Black Metal of the Americas*, and it was a few months after we started being in a band around six years ago. We had played about five shows at that point, and all the shows that we had played had been with queercore or noise acts because there were no queer metal bands to play with, or like really out-there political-leaning bands. When we started, we were just like, "Fuck yeah, we are political as people, we are proud of who we are," so we were like, "Let's build a lighthouse on this island and see who comes." It's cool to be at a point six years later where it's not weird to see like anti-fascist or anti-oppressive or queer bands in the metal genre.

Vic: We still identify as queer metal and whatnot because we want to be part of that community.

KW: Angry queer gloom cult was something that we came up with I think in our first year as a band, and we were both just like, "Yeah that's a fun statement." It's really stuck, and we stand behind it. We're not very angry as people, we're not very good cult leaders, we do like metal, and we are queer, so I think, like, batting 500 gets you in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

**AU: I also play in a doom band that's pretty queer (Tribunal), so it was great to see that descriptor. We were actually offered to play with you in a couple weeks in Vancouver, but of course, that's not happening.**

KW: Right! Right after Northwest Terrorfest, we were supposed to play a midnight show at Pub 340.

Vic: Yeah, that would've been fun!

KW: But instead we will sit here covered in blankets.

**AU: Well I hope to see you on the west coast someday in the future! Thank you for the chats, and all the best to your cats and dog.**

*Glory, Glory! Apathy Took Helm!* will be released by Prosthetic Records on June 19th, 2020. Watch the video for the single "You Who Has Never Slept" on Kerrang: <https://www.kerrang.com/the-news/vile-creature-release-new-song-you-who-has-never-slept/>

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

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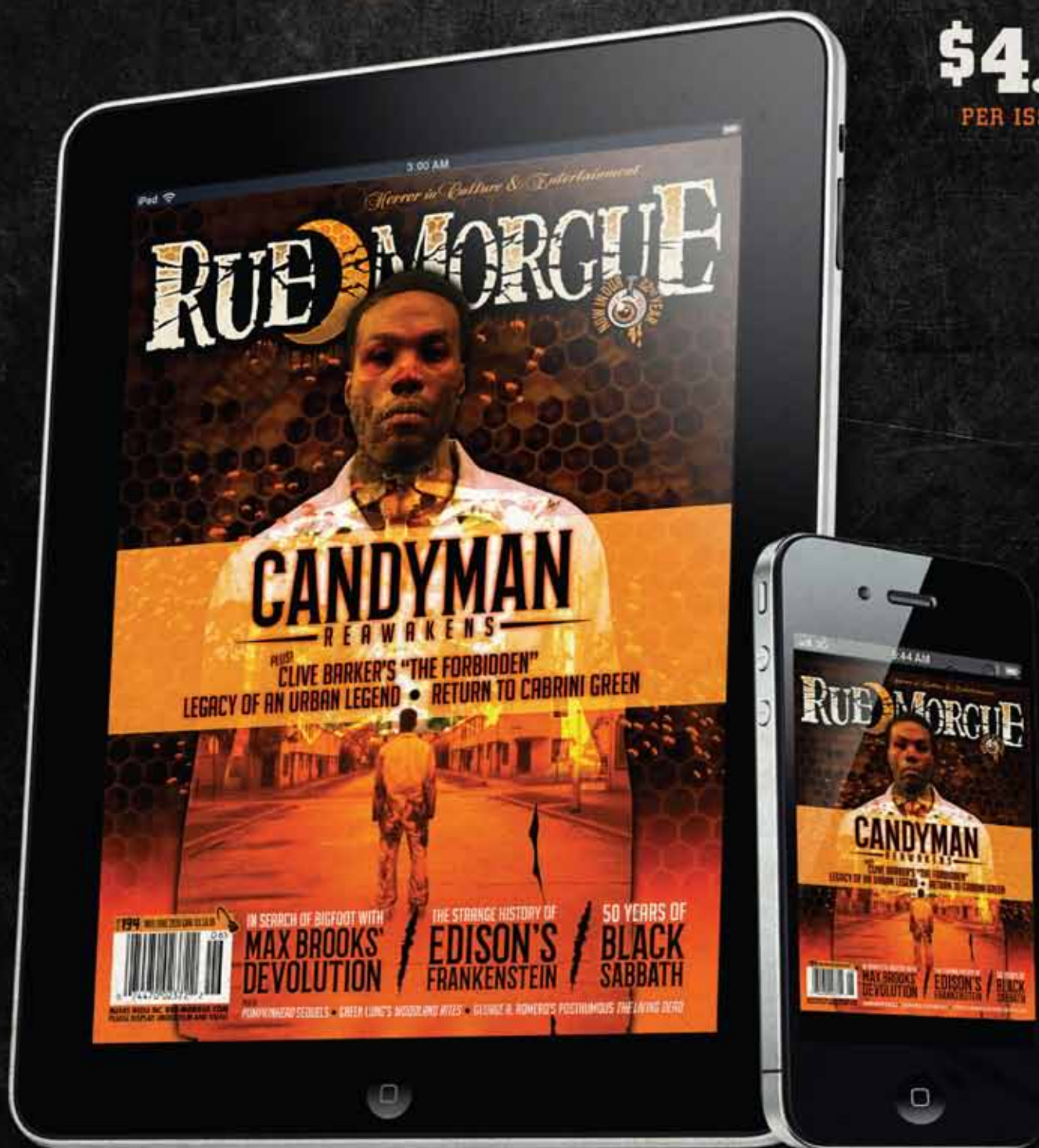
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## Social Strife

Interview by Roger the Shrubber

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?**

SS: Sean Strife, singer-songwriter of Social Strife. [Infamous for] my social media posts... We're known for being real! We write about social issues that affect the world around us and don't buy into the PC culture! We try to empower people with the truth! We're also known for our crazy energetic live shows, pure Strife!

**AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?**

SS: The formation of Social Strife was basically my frustrations with the music community and the world! Nobody was speaking out or saying anything! Everybody was doing all the same mundane stuff. Everybody seemed to be stuck in an echo chamber and I knew that I needed to do something different! The name of the band came very easy, I just woke up one afternoon and I had "this is Social Strife" in my head. The band is:

The Unicorn, Sean Strife - Singer/Songwriter  
 Anthony "Gorgeous" Caetano - Lead Guitar/  
 backing vox

"Drop D" Dylan Young Letters - Bass/Backing vox  
 Lex "Divine" - Drums/Perussion/Backing vox

**AU: You've just released a new song, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?**

SS: The new tune is called "Covid-19," you're gonna hear social angst and strife over this new Covid world we now live in! It's a crazy world and people are scared and frustrated! I felt that I needed to address my own frustration with everything that I'm seeing, and how people are feeling!

**AU: What are your hopes for this new song, what do you hope audiences take away from it?**

SS: I hope that enough people hear it to understand that it's okay to be scared, it's okay



to be frustrated, and it's okay to question what's going on!

**AU: Since the song is about Covid - tell us how this pandemic has affected/inspired you as a band? How do you see the face of the music industry changing as a result?**

SS: I think that we as a band have been on track as far as where we need to take this with live streaming. But I do believe that the live show will be back! You just can't beat that live Strife experience! A lot of it is uncertain at this point though. We're a band that embraces change, so we're constantly exploring new options to connect with the audience.

**AU: You already have a music video out, correct? What can you tell us about it? Where can we see it?**

SS: We have an official video out for "Misunderstood" as well as for the new song "Covid-19" you can get them on the Social Strife YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/D0mcUfh5sI0>

**AU: Any plans to release more music in the near future, Covid-related or otherwise?**

SS: We are currently recording our new CD, *What Doesn't Kill You...*

We just released "Covid-19," and we're also going

to be releasing our Strifed version of "Oh Canada" before July 1st, Canada Day. We'll have another new song released before fall 2020. We're expecting to release the full CD mid-winter 2020. You can order our first CD, *With Friends Like These...* on CD Baby/Spotify, wherever you do your music shopping.

**AU: What's next for you as a band? Will you be touring, recording, etc once the world opens up?**

SS: Before this all happened we were booked for a bunch of outdoor festivals though spring and late summer. Then a short European tour that was just starting to get booked, so we're hoping to rekindle that as soon as everything calms down.

## TORONTO TRASH

**AU: What should we know about Social Strife that we don't already?**

SS: That Social Strife has brought the truth, social angst and Strife back to rock and roll!

**AU: Any final words for our readers?**

SS: Always be you and always be real, even when it's not popular! And get the Strife!

[facebook.com/socialstrife/](https://facebook.com/socialstrife/)

PHOTO SOURCE: Social Strife





# Daughters of Darkness

Interview by AU Editorial



**Absolute Underground: Tell us about the book you're releasing! How did the project come about?**

Jeremy Saffer: I grew up a fan of black metal, doom metal, all that kind of stuff. When I was younger, like 12-14, I would go to my local music store in Connecticut, and I'd flip through CDs and records, and anytime I saw a cover that I thought was really cool, even if I didn't know the band, I'd just buy it based on the cover. There'd be like these nude women in these amazing landscapes for artwork, or like an Immortal record where you have these dudes in corpse paint and those are the things that would make me buy records... 9 times out of 10 I'd like the record. That's part of it. Then I did a photoshoot around 2008 for a [black metal] clothing line, and the idea was to re-create a very famous album cover called *This is Hardcore*

and it's a blonde woman with her face down and a red sheet or a red pillow beneath her. The idea was to re-create that but with corpse paint and it would say, *This Is Black Metal*. So the model came in, her name was Lydia, and we did that shot first, but then we were both fans of black metal so we decided to go beyond that. She was nude for that shot, so we kept on just doing fine art nude shots of her in corpse paint and from there, I was like this is really cool, I should do some kind of project with this, maybe a calendar and then it just kept going, like maybe I should do a book. About 12 years and 400 models later, here we are.

**AU: So this is a coffee table book of fine art/black metal photography.**

JS: The two big things I do, well I photograph bands, that's my thing. I've been a music photographer since I was 15, and I've also been shooting fine art nude stuff for galleries and art books for well over 15 years, so this kind of combines the two genres I shoot the most into a single project. It's a coffee table book that's coming out in October. It's currently available for pre-order on the publisher's website.

**AU: What does it feel like to have all these years of work combined into this physical product?**

JS: I can't even put it into words, I'm elated, but it's not just me. There are so many models who shot ten years ago for this project, and they've been waiting for it to come out as well, so there's hundreds of models that are like, "Oh my god, this is finally coming out, this is awesome." So it's kind of a victory for all of them, because they all put a lot of hard work into this, I put a lot of hard work into this, so it's kind of a big win for all of us. And it's really cool that the world will finally get to see all of these photoshoots. Seeing how excited everyone is for this book, it's a great feeling, it's awesome.

**AU: Do you think this book will maybe reach some new audiences and maybe chance some opinions about the black metal scene?**

JS: It's definitely a very, very niche market, for sure. It's a very specific thing. Nudity in art is so universal, and nudity in metal has been there

since the beginning, for various reasons, sometimes to shock, sometimes to make something beautiful. You've seen Cradle of Filth merch that's been there since they started... I have a feeling it's going to have different reactions depending on who's looking at it. I know that there is going to be the elitist black metal scene, which I definitely came from, that are going look at this like, oh this is someone trying to capitalize on corpse paint and black metal, like that *Lords of Chaos* movie or something like that, which that's not the case, I've been listening to black metal since I was 12. But I can see that knee-jerk reaction before knowing who's involved with the book, knowing who backed the book, and not knowing anything about me. I think a lot of people who are into fine art might be into it, they might not, but the cool thing is that most of the models who shot for this are fans of black metal. 99% of them at least knew Dimmu Borgir, Behemoth, higher up stuff like that, and then some of them came in with like Dunkelheit tattooed on them, or Darkthrone tattooed on them, people who know what's happening.

**AU: What would you say to people who are unfamiliar or uneasy about the concept?**

JS: I don't think it's my job to convince them of it. They can look at it for what it is, they can read my intro... but I think it's up to every viewer to decide what it is to them. Just like I think art is subjective; it's something the viewers put on it, rather than the creators.

**AU: Any favourite shots in the book you'd like to tell us about?**

JS: So many! There is a model who travelled from Norway called Krista who is going to be the centre shot of the book, that's one of my favourite ones... it's a shot we did in the dead of winter when there were no leaves on the trees so it's just her surrounded by branches and thorns, and it looks really cool, that's one of my favourites. The first shoot I did with Lydia definitely has a big place, that was the foundation of what I built this work off of. And just getting to work with so many incredible friends and having so many people involved. The models aren't just models; there are a lot of professional models in there, there's a

## ARTIST PROFILE

lot of known celebrities who are in there because their face is painted. People who were like, "Hey I'm a fan of your work, I'm a fan of black metal, I wouldn't normally model in this way, but because it's you and because it's black metal, I'm in, just make me anonymous." So that was really cool. And a lot of friends I've had for years who are not necessarily models, modelled for this book, which is awesome.

**AU: Anything else you'd like to tell us about you or the book?**

JS: I hope you enjoy it! I hope you get to see it and dig it!

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PHOTO CREDIT: Jeremy Saffer



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# Rabid Flesh Eaters

Interview by Ira Hunter

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?**

Mike Taylor: I'm Mike Taylor and I play guitar in Rabid Flesh Eaters

Ricky Wilson: This is Ricky Wilson, vocals.

**AU: Can you give me a brief origin of the band?**

MT: I got together with the bass player, John Hill, in the mid to late 80s and we've been rocking ever since. We've gone through quite a few drummers, *Spinal Tap*-style, and it wasn't until maybe 2010 or so that we hooked up with Ricky, and things have been going really well since then.

**AU: Where did it all start off and what was the scene like there?**

MT: In the 80s the scene was just exploding, clubs were starting to let bands play original music

RW: Every band was original back then, too.

**AU: What bands were around?**

RW: Rigor Mortis, Pantera, Morbid Strain, Sedition, Dead Horse...



**AU: This is all around the Texas area, right? I just watched a Rigor Mortis documentary, so this is all tying together. I didn't know much about it, I guess they didn't like Pantera originally because they were wearing spandex and stuff?**

MT: I guess Pantera were originally a little more glam than not, but they ended up leaning in the harder, heavier faster direction and thank god for Pantera for keeping metal alive in the 90s!

RW: Actually Phil Anselmo from Pantera tried out for Rigor Mortis, he wanted to play for them back in the day.

**AU: Yeah he was a big fan of the demo. So what was RFE doing at the time, were you playing shows?**

MT: We were actually playing all instrumental material at the time, we would play every little

dive and club possible. We were actually on call at Joe's Garage, if they ever had a band cancel, they'd call us and we'd come fill the slot.

**AU: And with the name of the band, was it just the time, or was it horror movie inspired?**

MT: It was definitely horror movie-inspired, John and our original drummer were watching the movie *Rabid* and at the same time listening to the Rigor Mortis song "Foaming at the Mouth," and somehow they merged into a horror concept and John came up with the name Rabid Flesh Eaters and we all agreed that was perfect.

**AU: So you've been going for 30 years, how many albums do you have and can you tell us about the new one in the works?**

MT: We do have quite a few albums in the can that were never released. The ones that were released were *Reign of Terror* in 2016, and the new album, self-titled *RFE*, it's basically an homage or a tribute to the guys that influenced us, the guys in Rigor Mortis. We even had Bruce Corbitt, the singer from Rigor Mortis and Warbeast, sing on the title track with Ricky and did an incredible job.

**AU: Another one of the Rigor Mortis guys helped produce one of your albums?**

MT: The previous album, *Reign of Terror*, Mike Scaccia helped produce and also played on one of the songs on that album.

RW: Which was his last recording, as well.

**AU: What about this "Lycanthrope" video?**

MT: Well the guys at Cyclonus Video were talking to us about doing another video and it happened to be around Mike Scaccia's birthday, we were missing him and thinking about him, and the song that we had in the can was "Lycanthrope," and he produced it and played on it, so they went for the whole werewolf theme in the video short, and that's how that came about, they did a great job on that.

**AU: What do you think about so many concerts and festivals being cancelled, did you have big plans for the summer?**

MT: Yeah it's definitely a bummer. Seems like everybody is being affected and we're really concerned about a lot of clubs and venues that might go out of business as a result. We definitely had big plans with the first album launch show being a tribute and a benefit for Bruce Corbitt's family. Hopefully everything will be rescheduled and we'll get back on track. Hopefully start with a regional Texas tour and then maybe take it up north! Hopefully we'll come visit.



cover those.

**AU: Are you guys still independent or are you on a label now?**

MT: No we're definitely independent.

RW: We've had offers, but we're waiting.

**AU: When I watched the Rigor Mortis documentary, there were lots of bands doing it, but they got the lucky break and got signed.**

MT: They had the world record for putting a demo out and within six months of putting the demo out, they got signed to a major record label.

**AU: Did that inspire all the other bands around them?**

MT: Freaked them out, opened everybody's eyes to what's possible.

AU:



**What's the Texas metal scene like these days?**

MT: It's still alive and well, got a lot of local talent and a lot of cool bands, still a few venues. But we're worried, and my message is, support your local bars and venues and places to play, because it would suck if all that went away.

RW: We'll have to find peoples' houses to throw parties at.

**AU: Are you guys still at the Arlington area, or what are the other good places around there for the scene?**

RW: Houston has a great scene.

MT: San Antonio.

**AU: So it's kind of like a Texas circuit, and all the metal bands are kind of a unit in a way.. Do you think someone's going to do a Covid death metal song?**

MT: Yeah I'm sure there already is... I heard there's already a band called Covid-19.

**AU: Did you guys hang out with Pantera, too?**

MT: I did know Dime, ran into Vinny a few times too, but mainly we were in the Rigor Mortis camp and back then it was kind of Rigor Mortis vs. Pantera, I don't know why.

RW: Our last show, Phil Anselmo came up and sang with us, which was pretty cool.

**AU: Rigor Mortis was known for some shenanigans. Do you have a story you can share?**

MT: Sure yeah, Rigor Mortis was so hardcore that they beat each other up.

**AU: What about you guys? Are you continuing on the tradition?**

MT: Of hard, heavy, fast music, yeah... not necessarily beating each other up, though.

RW: We're still the same, though.

**AU: Do you guys have a guilty pleasure that might surprise people?**

MT: My favourite thing is to create new musical compositions, whatever they may be in the home studio. Ricky has some interesting ones...

RW: I write songs, I have my little show I'll do called Bobby Demon, I'll do a lot of wild songs, acoustic, which I'm trying to promote to the world.

**AU: Even though everyone's on lockdown, have you been able to keep writing music via the internet?**

MT: Yeah we definitely trade ideas on how to put things together.

**AU: What are some of the other new songs you have and what are they about?**

RW: "Vengeance" is about the typical poser guy that thinks he's on top of everything, there's always that person you can't stand and you watch him across the room like man, you have no idea... hah!

MT: And then there's "The Fall," I don't know if you've seen that video, it's about a guy who happens to be doing drugs and he thinks he's seeing monsters and zombies and he has to kill all these creatures, but when he comes to, he realizes that he was killing innocent people, so I guess it's like a public service announcement, don't do drugs because you never know when you're going to lose your mind.

**AU: How would you describe your sound, is it straight-up speed metal?**

RW: Speed metal, yeah.

**AU: Anything else you'd like to promote?**

MT: Stay safe and hopefully we'll make it through, hopefully we'll all be able to celebrate on the other side, stay positive!

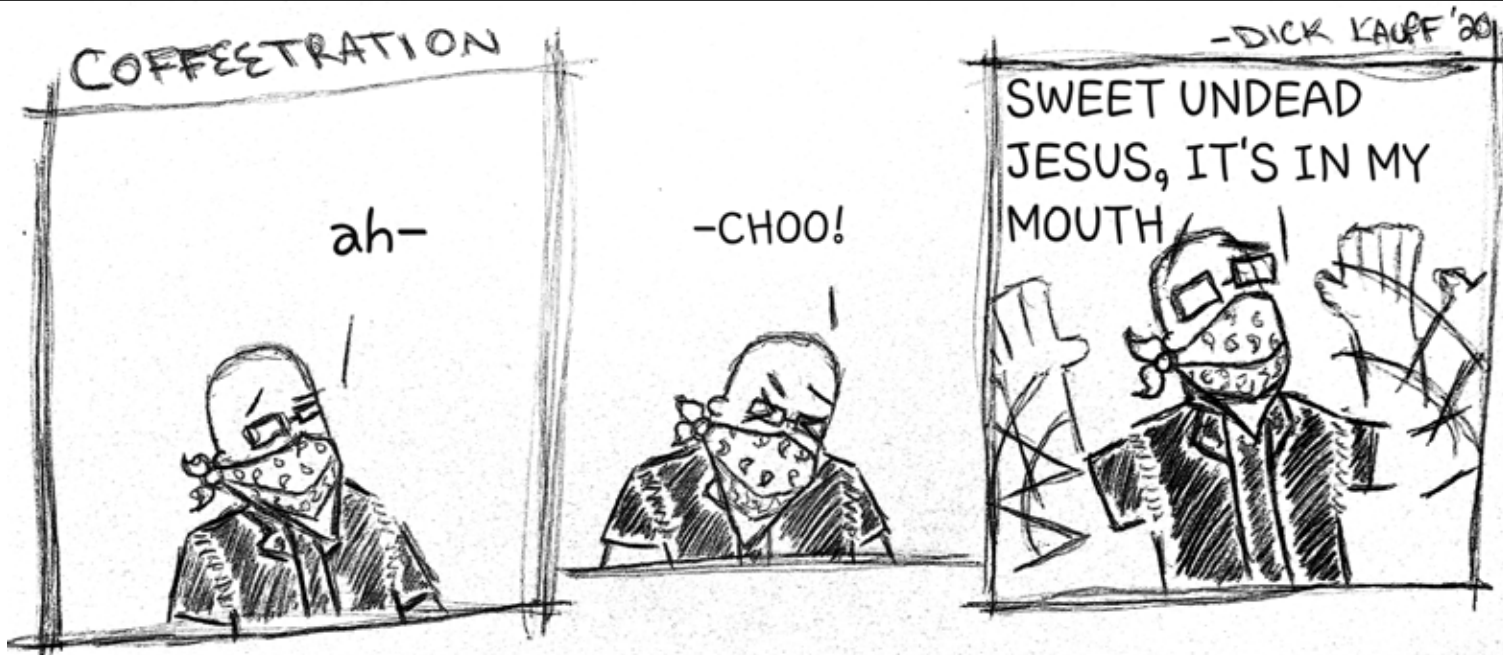
RW: Check our music out... we have a lot of new songs up our sleeves and I think they're really catchy... coming out in the future.

**AU: Final message for people reading this in Canada?**

MT: Thank you, it's been an honour!

RW: Canada rules!

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## The Cake Sale in the Sin Bin

By Ed Sum

*The Cake Sale in the Sin Bin* is a sports rock compilation of four of British Columbia's punk rock bands coming together to celebrate just that. There's nothing better than rocking out to these tunes while playing soccer or b-ball. Well, whatever your favourite sport is—in this album's case, Roller Derby—I'm sure the tunes can be appropriated for use in other games.

Over at our self-isolating personal offices, we can't really socially distance while playing hockey. Our illustrious editor-in-

chief Ira Hunter loves this sport, but until all is considered safe, we'll be putting this album to the test elsewhere. Hockey has its specific songs, like Zombie Nation's "Kernkraft 400," but how can we not want to head bang to The Poor Choices, The Tower of Dudes, The Daisy Stranglers and The Hex?

Yes, Roller Derby is a unique world. The music we hear brings out the animal, not the man-imal in us. With different playing styles ranging from good ol' garage to accordion to "trunk," and death, it's tough to say which

one of the four songs offered stands out. It's not fair as each band offered a tune each. They all celebrate the Skate-O-Rama theme (respectively) "Roller Girl," "Derby Darling," "Don't Hate," and "Upsey-Crazy."

If I had to choose, I'm leaning on the Tower of Dudes lest they topple. Okay, terrible joke—but The Hex can certainly smash it and their song closes off this maxi-mini single release well.

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# Punk Rock Bowling: Fuck Cancer

## Remembering Colleen Grunewald Davis

By Ramiro Marquez Jr



"Being punk rock isn't how many studs you have on your vest, it's how you carry yourself and the attitude you have towards life."

Colleen always carried herself with a punk rock attitude throughout her life. She worked as a property manager and eventually opened her own restaurant and she did so while wearing Chucks for every occasion, sleeved up with Alice in Wonderland tattoos and always speaking her mind.

Colleen started attending PRB in the early years and when I met her in 2013, we went to our first PRB together in 2014. We both realized we needed to join the bowling tournament and so we formed the Misfits with some friends. That year was so monumental for us that we immediately counted the days until the next PRB. The next year, Colleen's daughter, my brother and sister formed their own Misfits team. Every year we brought more and more friends and family from Yuma, Arizona. PRB became our yearly family trip and we all look forward to it every year! In April of 2019, Colleen was diagnosed with stage four cancer and her response was, "Fuck Cancer!" "We are going to beat this," she would repeat to herself, "I am going to be around to see the PRB 40th anniversary." Her strength and faith was like no other and she lived every day with joy and love. She fought hard and loved even harder, not letting the sickness stagnate her life's routine. We followed our dreams and opened Red Moon Ale House which is a restaurant, bar, arcade and

venue in June of 2019. It was a dream of ours that we started talking about while in Vegas attending PRB. We put everything on the line to make this dream come true and Colleen worked hard every day making sure we got up and running. She got to see the success of the business and the joy it brought to our hometown. We missed PRB 2019 because we were in the middle of opening to the public, we promised ourselves we would go the following year. We reserved rooms at the Nugget, got our festival tickets, club tickets, and registered our bowling teams. We have made great friends over the years and all the great memories we made at PRB we cherished and will continue to cherish. It has and will always be our yearly Family Vacation, and more than ever a tradition to honour our beloved Colleen. In February of 2020, the fight had started to get the better of Colleen physically.

On March 12, 2020, Colleen passed peacefully and she was surrounded by family, smiling and laughing until her last breath. She knew she was heavily loved and that her love heavily impacted

the lives of many. Our loss has been catastrophic and weighs heavy on our family, the business, and with the Covid-19 pandemic being the agonizing cherry on top. We hope things get back to normal so that we can attend PRB 2021 to honor our beautiful Colleen.

She is truly inspiring; she lived her life with no regrets, overcame so many obstacles and endured more than anyone should be asked to handle. All while keeping a Positive Mental Attitude and continuing to smile and look to the future. She was small in stature, but her heart was enormous, and she fought for what she believed in and did anything to protect her family. Never biting her tongue and standing up for what she believed in, achieving her goals with hard work and dedication.

Colleen Grunewald Davis Marquez is the love of my life and will always have a place in my heart and forever be part of my family. We love you with all our hearts.

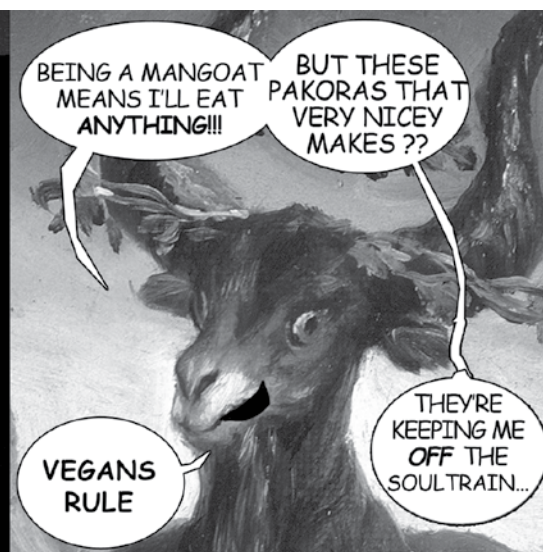
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## Trying edibles for the first time? Read this first!

by Julia Veintrop



Trying edibles for the first time can be intimidating but it doesn't have to be. Everyone is different... thus, there are no blanket rules, only guidelines. In my professional career, I have had the privilege of working for the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club, a 24-year-old, medical cannabis compassion club.

Every day, the staff at the VCBC provides cannabis edibles to those suffering from incurable conditions, teaching them how to use them and what they may expect; they won the right to do so in the Supreme Court of Canada. Their experience and advice have been passed on to thousands of people, helping provide relief and encouraging the proper use of cannabis. For those of you who are about to try a cannabis edible, here is what I learned about using them and what you need



to know.

### What to know about edibles before you begin...

#### Your rights - R. v. Smith

Owen Smith used to work at the bakery for the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club. In 2009, he was arrested for it. At the time, the marijuana medical access Regulations would only recognize dried cannabis as a lawful medicine. Extracted cannabis and the products made from it we're still considered illegal, limiting access for those most in need. For example, a patient with lung cancer could smoke a joint but eating a pot cookie was against the law.

Seeing the obvious injustice, the VCBC decided to fight the charges. In 2015, the Supreme court agreed, stating that "the prohibition on non-dried forms of medical marihuana unjustifiably infringes on The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

So, what does all of this mean to you? If you are using cannabis edibles for a medical reason, you have the right to do so. If you need a high dose edible to deal with your pain, you have the right to have it as medicine.

#### Pain relief and opiate interaction

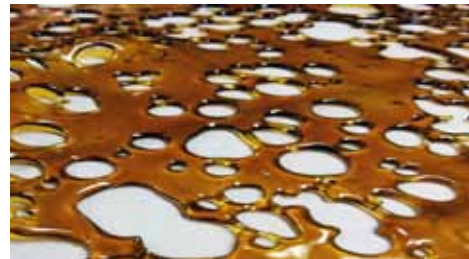
CB1 and 2 receptors play a huge role in how we regulate pain and there is an enormous amount of them within our GI tract. Opiates will trigger them, sometimes to the point of overstimulation, resulting in withdrawal.

However, THC works on them differently. It relaxes an overactive receptor by binding to it and blocking its effect, basically, chilling it out. The result is an effect that spreads throughout the body, physically and emotionally. For those who deal with chronic pain, eating THC puts pain-relieving medicine directly where it is needed most. For some, the effect can be life-changing.

**Note - If you take medication for pain, be aware that using cannabis edibles may increase its effect; this is especially common with opiate medication.**

Don't be fooled by the Mgs

When it comes to edibles, there is a reason that they say to start low and go slow. It's all because of bioavailability, meaning the amount of a substance absorbed in the body.



When THC enters the bloodstream by way of the digestive system, the amount used is significantly higher than through lung tissue. When choosing an edible, start off with a lower amount of THC because you never know how much your body will need.

### What to know to make your choice...

#### What kind of infusion is in the edible?

Cannabinoids can be extracted in so many different ways, resulting in unique blends cannabinoids and terpenes. The type of cannabis infusion used in an edible will make an impact on the end result. Ask what's in it: Made with butter - Dried bud is cooked in melted butter, extracting a broad spectrum of cannabinoids and terpenes.

Medicinally, edibles made with butter are often the most therapeutically effective when treating any variety of conditions. When you don't know what will work for an illness, using a broad spectrum covers more bases; Think of trying to hit a moving target using a large



sprinkler, versus a single stream.

To some degree, you will be able to taste the cannabis within the food you are eating.

Made with a Concentrate - Through various methods, cannabinoids and terpenes are extracted from the cannabis flower. These concentrated compounds are melted with oil or butter, to be made into food.

Edibles made with concentrates aim to produce a specific effect based on the cannabis used. A distillate made from a sativa strain of cannabis will have a totally different effect than one made with an indica shatter.

Any baked goods or food made with concentrate will likely be tasteless. This can be a benefit for anyone who doesn't like the taste

of pot. But, it's easy to forget that concentrate cookie has more than chocolate chips.

### Candies versus cookies

These days, cannabis is going into everything. You can get beef jerky, hard candies, gummies, cookies, brownies, and everything in between. But, not all edibles work the same way and what you choose can affect your experience. When choosing what to buy, think of the food as a cannabis carrier. Candy takes a lot less time to digest than an oatmeal raisin cookie and you need to keep this in mind. A long digestive process means that THC will absorb slowly, creating a longer-lasting effect.

The rule - An edible that hits quickly, wears off quickly.

### Tips for success...

Try it at night

For your first time, the best time to eat cannabis edibles is at night. Aim to ingest roughly two hours before bed.

That way, you can experience the effect and go to bed when you're tired of it.

Pay attention to how much is in your stomach before trying edibles

The quantity of food already in your stomach will play a role when using edibles; specifically, how quickly you'll feel the onset of effects. If you eat a pot cookie on an empty stomach, expect it to kick in faster than it may otherwise. Put that same cookie on top of a pant-splitting turkey

dinner, and it might not kick in for hours.

Have plain munchies on hand

Cannabis can stimulate your appetite and turn your tummy into a bottomless pit. For some, that can be appealing. One would think that eating pot would cause a serious case of the munchies but boy can it ever. Do not underestimate the importance of having tasty treats because edible munchies can hit like a truck. If that happens and the fridge is bare except for more edibles, you are in real trouble. The temptation is real and many a stoner has succumbed to it. Sidestep this scenario and stock up on snacks!

### Most Important Tip before trying edibles - Have CBD close by

If the effect of an edible starts to feel uncomfortable, take CBD to come down and relax. CBD counteracts the effects of THC by promoting different neuroactivity. Think of CBD as a brake if you feel like you want to slow down the ride.



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## 6 Creative stoner hacks to survive quarantine during COVID-19

by Julia Veintrop

Thanks to COVID-19, we all have had to get pretty creative and the cannabis community is no exception. When you're a pothead stuck in quarantine, all sorts of challenges can come up. From supply scarcity to daily monotony, the stoner struggle is real. But, don't let that kill your buzz! Check out these creative hacks to help you go from surviving to thriving.



### Spice up your edibles

With so much time at home, a lot of us are spending it by getting as baked as possible. A noble endeavor for any stoner but after a while, it gets pretty monotonous. After all, there are only so many options available these days. Nothing reminds you of that like eating the same cookie each day. If you can't switch it up, mix it up instead. Think of your edibles as an ingredient, not a feature. Crumble baked edibles into yogurt. Use cannabis cookies to make your own ice cream sandwiches. Mix cannabis edibles into smoothies, especially if you struggle with the taste of them. Note - Avoid reheating an already made edible. The last thing you want to do is overcook it and burn off THC.



### Freeze capsules and cut them up

If you have an oil-based capsule with too high a dose and you want to split it up, use this trick:

Freeze the capsule for several hours or until it's frozen solid

When you want to take a dose, Use a sharp knife to cut the capsule up into two or three pieces

Place the remaining frozen piece or pieces on separate spoons

Cover the spoon with a plastic bag and rest it on a plate or place it in a Tupperware container and cover it with a lid

Put the covered spoons and capsule pieces back into the freezer



### Put colloidal silver in your bong

Colloidal silver is a suspension of silver particles in a liquid. It has been hailed for its antimicrobial, antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties yet is mild, gentle, odorless, and tasteless. Safe enough to use in a newborn baby's eyes yet strong enough to attack the HIV virus, colloidal silver is versatile and effective. A cheap option you can find at the health food store, it can be added to bong water and used to disinfect surfaces, tools, hands, and mouths.

### Dab with an ash bed

It has happened to us all; you have plenty of delicious dabs but nothing to smoke it with. Breaking your last banger, running out of butane, or an e-nail malfunction, there are so many ways that dabbing can go sideways. If that ever happens, remember this method for smoking hash oil, using an ash bed.



Fill a spoon pipes bowl full of ash from previously smoked cannabis and pack it down gently

Place a dab in the center of the 'ash bed'

While inhaling, touch the flame to the ash bed but aim to light the area below the dab, not the dab itself. The area below the dab should turn red, creating a small element to heat the dab.

\*Do not hold the flame to the dab for longer than a moment; it will cause it to melt into the ash.

### Use limonene to clean



Limonene is a terpene found in many different plants including cannabis and citrus fruits. Often added to our food for taste or cleaning products for smell, limonene has a variety of uses. Currently, this terpene is being tested for its possible anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, heart disease, and cancer-fighting properties; most importantly, limonene has been shown to have anti-viral properties. Use limonene to clean your bongs, dab rigs, and disinfect your surfaces; it's highly effective, natural, and smells amazing.

### Don't make edibles, make your own suppositories



Because this is serious advice, let's get straight to the point. Making cannabis suppositories is easier and safer than making and dosing your own edibles. Anything absorbed through the lower rectal cavity will be absorbed into the bloodstream, without being metabolized by the liver. Meaning, any psychoactive effect will be drastically reduced, even if you ingest a high dose.

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# Searching for insight into Canada's minimal big-transition terrain

By Jimmy Miller

Have you ever wondered why most Canadian skateparks max out at a certain height? I have. Don't get me wrong, we're blessed to have as many public access facilities as we do, but for a specific breed of skater this scattering of aggressive domain isn't enough. I asked around the industry, ruffled some feathers, dwelled upon matters, and came up with some info worth sharing.

Before I lead into my main topic, I'd like to throw a bone to street skating. Flow issues aside, huge gaps and spacious amounts of flat are cut from park designs just like vert. As a result, street skaters grow beyond parks to take over open concept slab spots and tennis courts to match their desire. Beyond skating, even mountain bikers dig secret trail jumps so their needs get met. In this regard, many aspects of recreation are being inadequately represented nowadays, so the lack of vert is just the tip of the iceberg.

The truth: vert skating is raw, it tests your willingness, and while it's intimidating, it remains inspiring. For many, it remains the pinnacle of rad and it has withstood time and decades of underdevelopment.

For some, the answer to any park-related problem is simple: blame New Line. My initial instinct was to avoid naming names, but it seems impossible not to mention Canada's largest skatepark company. Hey, in some respects I get it: much of their older work lacks dynamic gnar. So, in a sense, the use of this generally-subdued style has alienated the more radical demographic. A reminder: this article is about tracing and detailing the absence of vert. If you came for a tabloid smear story, or some sort of tar and feathering, you're in the wrong place.

Let's refocus. Since tempers flare with this topic, and I'm already on thin ice, I want to better define this vertical crave. Big bold tranny isn't merely a singular obstacle that reaches 8+ feet. We need true vert, 10+ feet in height (minimum) with generous bonkable coping and a smooth enough surface that permits speed to blast. Riders shouldn't have to fight physics for their flow. Additionally, a variety of ascending obstacle sizes would allow aspiring rippers the ability to grow tricks from one height to the next.

Beyond sponsored riders looking to hone their skill, the variety of skaters wanting big transition is more diverse than you might think. From nostalgic 70s era carvers, to 80s wooden ramp shralpers, to new breed skaters ATV youth. I imagine that once the Olympics hit, even the most discerning parents may want their aspiring gold medalists to join the party, too.

So let's air this out, why aren't big-transition skateparks getting built more often?

**Cost.** Simply put; regardless of which skatepark firm you work with, larger scale skateparks cost more money. For most municipalities, basic slow-flow, tame parks already cost too much to easily fund. Also, you better hope your project has a rock solid timeline since inflation and global economies influence the cost of materials needed to build.

**Site restrictions.** Land acquisition remains a battle during the best of times, so if we're talking up-scaling dimensions and/or digging deeper into the ground, this demands a certain location. The importance of proper drainage in wet/snowy Canada remains vital as well, so properly dug pipes need to factor in, too. Landscape architects and skatepark designers are clever folk, but now

the pressure is on them to fit and create obstacles without making visual monstrosities ...because municipal stakeholders want skateparks to be pretty, as well.

**C.P.T.E.D.** (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). For better or for worse, the majority of public parks have been built around this guiding principal since the 1960s. For the jaded skater, this means a cop can harass them from their air conditioned cruiser better, but from a more educated perspective this is a city's attempt to enhance natural surveillance in the spirit of social order.\*

\*This one does rub me the wrong way, because as skaters I feel that we're so often viewed negatively and prejudice most certainly applies more heavily to us than others. Personal offense aside, C.P.T.E.D. remains a variable to be factored in.

**Safety and liability.** There will always be fears that people will get hurt. For some people, big means scary, so wary skaters and the general public tremble regardless of big tranny often being easier to fall into and catch you. Also, from a layman standpoint, bigger public terrain may dictate the need for safety equipment. Generally, we get away with our polite "use at your own risk" signs in Canada, but how far can we push this threshold? So, how willing are you to swear by your convictions? Are you too cool to wear a helmet and pads to get what you want? If any funding trickles down from the Olympics hype, you better believe it could come with safety-gear requirements.

**Democracy and supply/demand.** I guarantee the loudest voices at most skatepark meetings (and online forums) are the diehard vert dawgs or the jaded cynics. Gotta love their tenacity! This stated, when a skatepark is funded by all for all, the powers must consider all the voices in the room equally. For many, this is the hardest pill to swallow: your forty years of skateboard wisdom counts for as much as a ten year old scooter kid's opinion (ouch). No one is immune to this, me included. Depending on your stance, and basic grasp of our political system, the reality is: the majority voice rules. Unless you start a recruitment drive to tip the scales in your favour, you best suck it up. Here's a hint: vitriol and hate will not convince people to join this cause.

So, with the stacked variables of public parks exposed, and the hesh bros ready for anarchy, what other options do we have?

Let's start with the Pacific Northwest and what was accomplished in the United States at Portland's Burnside. There is no doubt that Grindline and Dreamland stayed true to their narratives and broke the global skatepark mold in the process. They showed us a radically different way to shape concrete and they totally deserve praise. As a result, Burnside is now held as the gold standard for rebirthing gnar at a time when North American skateboarding needed such a boost. Amazing parks like Lincoln City got built due to this unconventional momentum and cities found the reasoning to better support new styles of youth facilitation. But does this mean that tech skaters in that region got their style of skateparks built also? While it may be impossible to please everyone, the Pacific Northwest's bold fearlessness stands as an inspirational example of what can get accomplished in challenging situations.

On this side of the border, many core skaters see

Transition Construction as hope for change in the Canadian skatepark landscape. No more "mega-corp" pancake trannies right? Key players within this company also played a large role in securing Leeside's final vision, so this lends credibility to their credo. Their public work in New Westminster, Creston and Nova Scotia scream validating radness also. The fact remains that this company is young compared to others, so it will be interesting how long their virtuous plight will stay the tide as they grow beyond subcontractor into full-fledged firm.

Although still a public skatepark, Hastings comes to mind as a hailed location with a different origin story. This park owes its success to the City of Vancouver's urge to finalize the PNE parcel of land as fast as possible. Keep in mind the skatepark development process was in its infancy back in



Artwork by Ruben De Kievith www.kifarts.com

the early 2000 era, so there was more freedom to push wild design ideas through to fruition. In retrospect, this may be the west coast's only large scale park to slip under the radar of exhaustive consultation meetings.

But what of the fabled tales of Richmond Skate Ranch, RDS Indoor, Taj Mahal, CJ's, or beyond? There is no doubt in my mind that these fine facilities (and others that I have surely forgotten) have helped pushed Canadian skating further. Many of today's professionals owe part of their skill development to these facilities. Unfortunately, I can say from personal experience these establishments demand significant revenue to stay afloat. As a result, vert ramps get decommissioned to make room for more heavily-used money making street courses. In the end they either fold, or reach out to civic streams to balance budgets -which can lead to stressful logistical issues of their own.

Stepping away from the limelight, I see the shadowed creatures that Covid-19 has helped to incubate. If nothing else, skateboarders are ingenious, industrious and love to build. Fuck yeah. From rickety rad to dramatic Driftopia, perhaps this is our secret path to

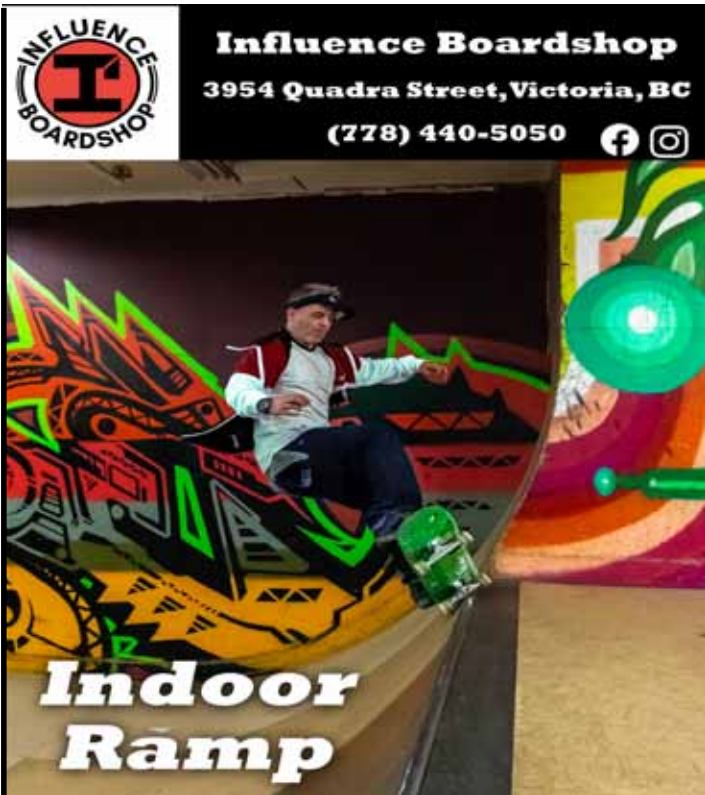
# SHRED SESSION

enlightenment. While these special places remain exclusive, any private terrain owner bears the burden of management and that gets handled in a visitor-by-visitor basis. Be cautious here.

Finally, it would be diminishing to not speak to Canadian concrete D.I.Y. spots in their own paragraph. Do It Yourself was saved for last, because in a sense they've become a symbolic last hope for the jaded. As proactive as this culture is felt, the origin is based in reactivity. Skaters feel let down and jilted by the system so they make change themselves. In certain instances, D.I.Y. is the only alternative. As a result scene builders are not seen, as they labor away, hidden from the public eye. For the majority of creations, the threat of discovery by some form of government or lame nimby always lingers. This is the cost of the heart and soul that gets poured without thought of profit margins. Just like backyard beasts, when bypassing bureaucracy a special amount of fragility gets added into every bag of concrete that gets mixed. Just like hopping a fence to skate an empty swimming pool, this risk reward ratio is an undeniable gamble.

Given the facts provided, regardless of public vs. private, all successful options have these similarities: fortunate circumstance, a legit location, opportune timing and the backing of solid supporters. There are no bribes taking place behind closed doors or dark agendas at work, people. Political process is and will always play a huge role of this equation. Sadly, there always will be a portion of skaters that will throw away common sensibilities like a crushed can of cheap brew. Resist this urge. If we truly want skateboarding to progress, we must remember that our capacity to grow terrain depends heavily on our capacity to grow our mindset.

So, since the remaining part of this equation seems bound by the alignment of stars, maybe we are all stuck rolling the dice with each new public build. Maybe refined tastes will always lose out to Happy Meal appetites. As we're now on the threshold where old parks are maturing, I look forward to seeing how past inadequacies get addressed. Early 2000 X-Games crossover designs have lost luster and gritty cracking surfaces are becoming genuine hazards. Hopefully redesigning, reshaping and re-pouring of parks will address past issues and offer new hope for vert enthusiasts. In the end, these are just my semi-objective words shared for the sake of sparking constructive dialog. Skateboarding is and will always be a subjective pursuit with a colourful cast of characters, with ever-evolving preferences, and opinions, and thank goodness for that.





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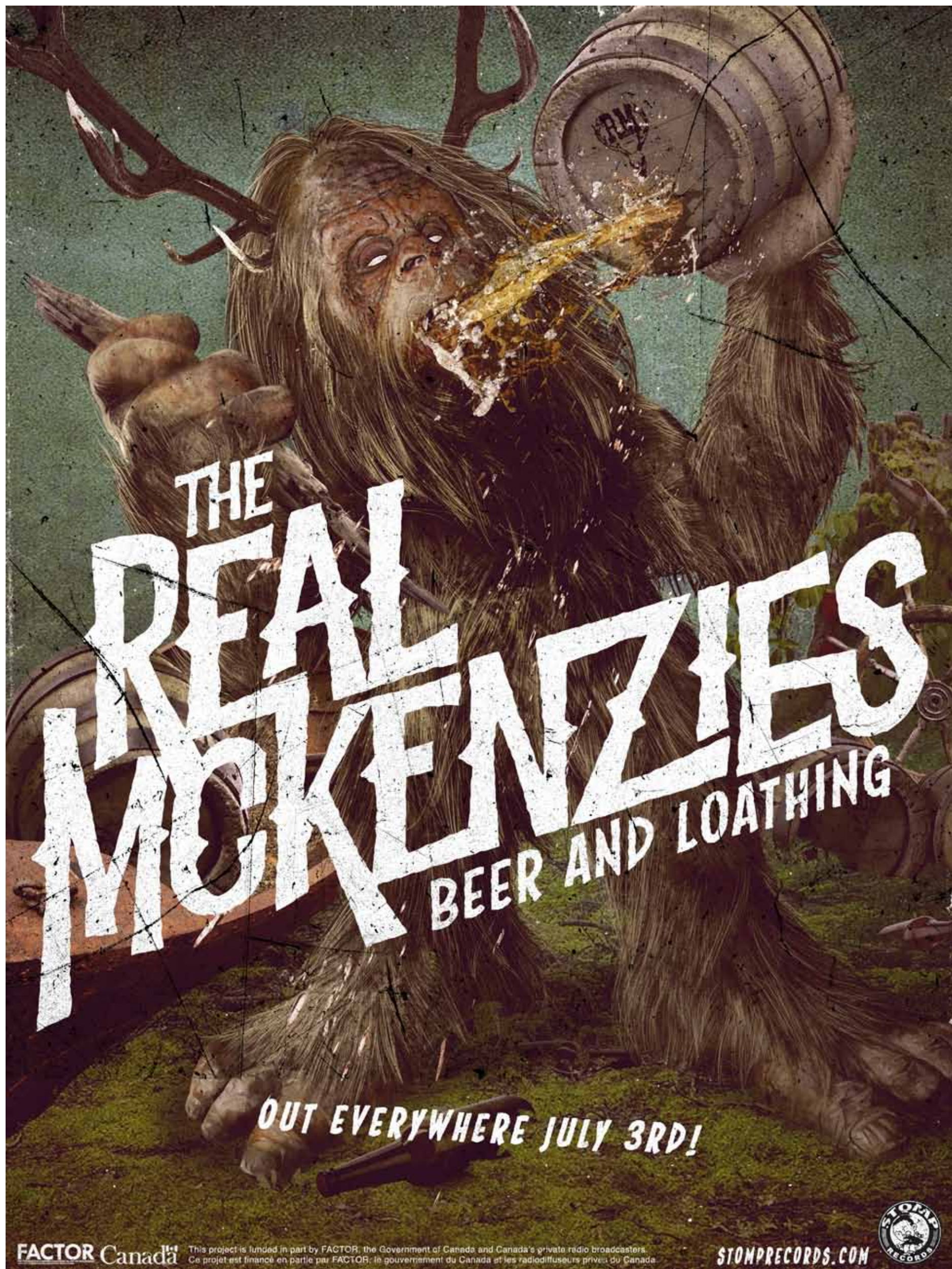
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## SCOTT SHAW - Part 1

interviewed on May 26th, 2020 by Ira Hunter



**AU: Hi Scott. Where are we talking to you from today?**

Scott Shaw: I live in Reseda, which is in the San Fernando Valley part of LA.

**AU: I hope you are staying safe and sane and these crazy times.**

Shaw: I think most cartoonists are. I think we're so used to being inside all the time anyway. If we don't have an assignment, I'm sure people are coming up with ideas to start pitching when things calm down. I mean no sane cartoonist just goofs off, if they want to have a career. I know a lot of horrible things are going on out there and I'm afraid even worst things are gonna happen but so far we're handling it Okay.

**AU: We're doing pretty good up here in Canada.**

Shaw: It's funny, I was just thinking about the draft back in the early 70s and how if my number had come up I would have moved to Canada. Now you guys don't want any more Americans, trying to get away from the craziest American of all.

You know, I was a guest at the Calgary Comic Expo about 10 years ago and I've got to tell you Canadians are some of the sanest people I've ever been around. I'm so glad to have had that experience to know that, there's a place to go. In fact, when I was there, they took me to one of the most obscurely weird places, probably in Canada. They drove me out into the tundra to this little tiny town called Vulcan. That's all dedicated to Star Trek. Have you ever heard of that?

**AU: Yeah, my mom used to live right by there. I've been there.**

Shaw: It's in Alberta. I wanted to go to the big Tyrrell Dinosaur Museum and it was closed that Monday. So the fans I met said, well we know you like weird stuff. So we'll take you out here instead. And I thought it was so great that fandom could pop out in the middle of nowhere like that. I'm not a big Star Trek fan in terms of the whole universe, but I love the original series. It just please the hell out of me to see something like that. It's like seeing a flower growing in a lava bed.

**AU: Who are we talking with officially and what are you best known for?**

Shaw: Hi, my name is Scott Shaw. I'm a cartoonist. I write and draw funny comic books and cartoons and advertising. I'm probably most famous for working on, depending on your age, either Sonic the Hedgehog I drew the very first American comic of Sonic or Captain Carrot and his Amazing Zoo Crew which I co-created with Roy Thomas for DC or possibly the Flintstones which I've worked on, on and off since the 1970s. So those are probably the three highest profile things.

**AU: When did you first become interested in art and comic books?**

Shaw: I was interested in art from the time I could

watch my father draw for me. So that would be less than a year old. By the time I was five or so I knew I wanted to be either a cartoonist or a paleontologist. Then when I was nine in 1960, The Flintstones came out. Hanna Barbera and Jay Ward were just doing like the greatest thing ever as far as TV cartoons because it was all old stuff up till then. So the Flintstones just hit me between the eyes and I said, Yeah, I'm going to be a cartoonist. Especially after one of my teachers informed me that if I studied paleontology, I would probably most likely wind up working for a Petroleum Company. And I thought, no, I want to be out in the Gobi Desert digging up fossils with Roy Chapman Andrews. So that went off my list immediately. So I instead I wound up choosing a profession that's just mildly unattainable.

**AU: Who were some of your favorite artists that influenced you early on?**

Shaw: Well, very early on I would say Carl Barks and his Duck Stories. Sheldon Mayer's Three Mouseketeers comics. Little Archie by Bob Bolling. Bats a comic for Archie that Orlando Busino co-created with George Gladir. The Flintstones comics by Harvey Eisenberg. Then I started reading other types of comics and I was particularly impressed by the Bizarro comics that DC published back around 1961 or so. Then I found Marvel Comics and Jack Kirby and suddenly that changed everything. That was a really big deal, Jack is one of my two biggest influences. Then a couple years later, actually, before I met him in the late 60s, I started reading underground comics. I was already familiar with Gilbert Shelton's work on Wonder Wart-Hog. But the Freak Brothers was his new project, and he's my second big influence and Orlando Busino, who I mentioned earlier is probably the third. Dr. Seuss, and Big Daddy Roth, the Hot Rod guy, they're also big deals for me. I've had a lot of unusual influences.

**AU: How would you describe your art style?**

Shaw: Well, it's funny. It's dramatic when I want it to be but it's still funny. It's kind of like what if Jack Kirby did an underground comic for children?

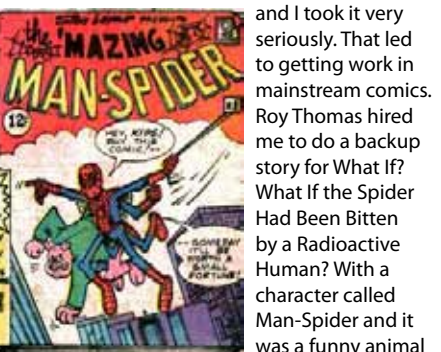
**AU: How and when did you first get involved in the comic industry? Was it working on underground comix originally?**

Shaw: Yeah, that was the first stuff I got paid for. In 1972, Ken Krueger, who at the time was already a longtime retailer and publisher and he's one of the three co-creators of San Diego Comic-Con. He decided to put on an underground comic called Gory Stories Quarterly and hired me and my high



school friend John Pound, who was one of the big shots on the Garbage Pail Kids for years, the trading cards, and it was our first job.

So from there on, I wanted to do underground comix and I started doing a lot of them. I was kind of the second wave of cartoonists doing them



story. And then Mark Evanier pointed me towards the fact that Hanna-Barbera was taking over the packaging of books for Marvel that featured all the classic Hanna-Barbera characters. So I started working on those too. So it really went from Underground's to Marvel and not too long after that DC.

**AU: How did you come up with the concept for Captain Carrot and his Amazing Zoo Crew?**



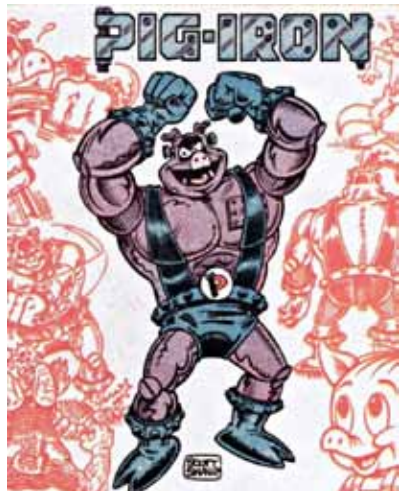
Shaw: Roy Thomas had come up with the idea for a Captain character back in the 60s. It was always kind of a Mighty Mouse character. And Sam Grainger, who was an excellent cartoonist, he drew the Sentinels for Charlton, in a very cartoony style. I always loved his stuff. He and Roy worked on The idea but I think all that ever came of it was a sketch by Sam that I had never even seen until a few years ago.

Anyway, Roy's been talking about it for years and I met Roy when I worked in a comic book store in Studio City. That led to getting this assignment because I think Roy was eager to fill up the book with backup stories and I seemed remotely capable. That led to doing Captain Carrot, because DC was offering a creator participation plan and Roy was eager to create new things for DC. So we decided to work together on it.

By that time, once I was part of the recipe, we had decided it's not enough just to do a parody of Mighty Mouse because most kids don't even know who Mighty Mouse is. This proceeded the Ninja Turtles and all that stuff, but there had already been a whole genre of funny animal superheroes other than Mighty Mouse starting in the 40s. Marvel had a character with a super rabbit named Super Rabbit. Anyway, we had the thought, what if my Mighty Mouse looked like it was drawn by Jack Kirby because Jack was a big hero of mine. Then we thought, well, what if it was a team, that way we're creating more characters, but initially, it wasn't Captain Carrot. It was called the Super Squirrel and the Just'a Lotta Animals which we ultimately incorporated into Captain Carrot. But they were all based on specific DC characters. I even drew some sample pages were they're fighting a giant carrot that looked like Galactus. DC came to us and said, we've decided that we want characters that aren't based on existing brands. We need something that creates its own brand and its own IP. That isn't dependent on the Superman and Batman emblem. So that's when we came up with all these characters.

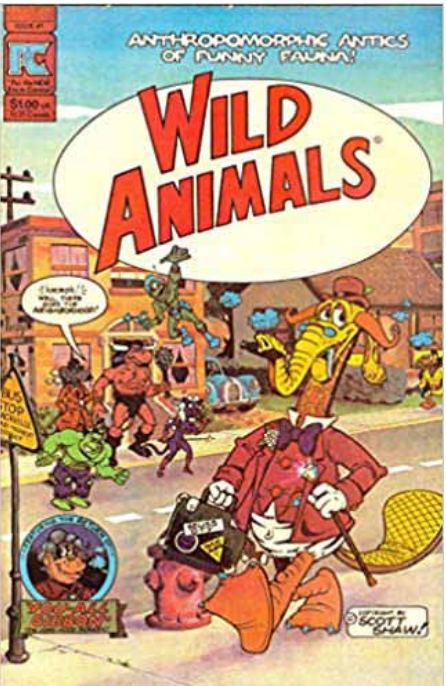


The one that I came up with on my own was Pig Iron, because I thought this team is missing a big backdrop guy. In every superhero shop, the big guy is the guy taking up the rear so that way you don't have to draw as much background. We came up with the stuff together pretty much.



**AU: You're known for drawing funny animals and there was stuff like that in the Underground's, but what about this whole movement of the Furies, the people that dress up like fuzzy animals?**

Shaw: Well I once wore a gorilla suit. That's kind of fun. I am not gonna judge anybody. I've been obsessed with comics my entire life. But I was a special guest at AnthroCon in Pittsburgh in 2007 and I was treated better there than I've ever been at any convention other than at Comic-Con. The people were really interested in what I was doing even the people who didn't know my work. But as far as the whole anthropomorphic ways, people concentrate on the creepy stuff. But now there's plenty of creepy regular comic books out there that are for all kinds of fetishes and stuff. There's a dark side to everything. It was interesting, that show was mostly G-Rated funny animal stuff. But they had an art show that was nothing but funny animal porn and they wanted me to be a judge both shows. So it was it was quite an experience.









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# Aliens, UFOs & Proximity with Eric Demeusy

By Ed Sum

DVD Release - July 7, 2020



Eric Demeusy is a Los Angeles-based filmmaker making his directorial debut with the sci-fi drama *Proximity*. Instead of focusing on getting people to believe in UFOs, this movie explores the lasting effects of those who have been abducted and experimented upon for unknown reasons. In this modern tale, this creator does not rewrite *Fire in the Sky* but instead considers the ramifications of being taken. Issac (Ryan Masson) wants to understand what's happened to him, but when the government wants him for their own reasons, the chase is on! Fortunately and instead of this character, I caught up with Demusey and asked about how this movie came about.

Eric Demeusy: It came from ideas with me and Jason Mitchell, my Director of Photography. I had the idea of a guy simply documenting himself exploring the woods and talking to the camera (He lost his dad a while ago and is undergoing therapy) when a meteor suddenly drops nearby. We filmed a short version of this over the course of two days and then started talking about where the story could go.

From there, it became a tale on how that would affect him and how would it change the way people knew him.

**Absolute Underground: Where did all the ideas with the UFO folklore come in?**

ED: I was looking into a lot of scenarios of all the things that people experienced when they made contact—or claimed to. I was showing as much info as reports had and even incorporated that into the design of our creatures and the spaceship. I wanted all these elements to be as familiar as possible.

Whether you think that stuff is real, it's fascinating to think about the idea or the possibilities and theorize about [what these alien encounters mean.] Because it happened long ago, nobody really knows for sure.

**AU: Your film also suggests a simple**

**future for Issac and his new girlfriend, then goes all out, unlike a certain blockbuster film by Spielberg. What can you say about that?**

ED: That's something that I'm fascinated with telling in science fiction movies. It really allows you to look into bigger themes and ask bigger questions.

The thing with Isaac and Sarah is that being abducted happened to him and he can't let it go. He's constantly searching. The fact that nobody will believe him when he tells people drives him crazy. If he was able to prove what happened at the very end of the movie, that he's actually had like a fifth time experience with these extraterrestrials, nobody would probably even believe him then.

No matter what he could do, it'll never be enough proof. That's the whole arc and what he wanted to achieve. The story is more about connections. There was never a desire to explore space or go with the aliens.

**AU: What advice would you give to filmmakers right now?**

ED: Right now is a good time to get your projects written. I think there's many people probably intimidated to write a script. It's just a matter of doing it. Right now, it's difficult to think about moving into production or even into pre-production, shoot dates are really hard to plan out, or it's going to be hard to set any kind of release date.

As for getting your film made, my advice would be to use the resources that are available to you. I think the one thing that kind of ends up being a crutch, and this happened for me before, in *Proximity*, was trying to build for a set budget and you're really relying on other people to give you permission—to give you the keys to go make whatever you want to make. And I think if you can just pair it down, scale it down, use what you're superb at and use the resources that are available to you, then I think you can make a film with relatively minimal resources.

[ericdemeusy.com](http://ericdemeusy.com)





## 10 Chinese Metal Bands You Should Know About

By Ryan Dyer

Living in China for several years, I have become familiar with the small but strong music scene in the country. Lately I have been watching a lot of those “Lock Horns” episodes on Banger TV, and noticeably, but not surprisingly, most Asian bands are dismissed. This isn’t surprising, as they haven’t had much of an impact on anyone not living in the far East. But for me and many people living in Asia, and China especially – these are the bands to choose from if you want to go to a live gig. It is rare that big Western acts will come to the country. On the flip-side, it is rare that any of these bands will leave China to tour, so the scene is extremely domestic, albeit influenced by outside resources, while sometimes adding an eastern flair. The scene is relatively new, still, so there is a lot of growth and evolution which has to be done. The current crop of bands is decent enough, though. Here are 10 that are worth your ear’s attention, all from different metal genres.

### Tang Dynasty

The Black Sabbath or Priest of Chinese metal. This band has a more epic/classic rock style with banshee-like vocals and traditional oriental musical passages. Their story was shown in *Global Metal*, so as a starting point for Chinese metal, look here.

### Suffocated

Tectonic, Testament-like thrash metal from this veteran band of over 20 years. Not to be confused with Suffocation, Suffocated are meat, potatoes and gravy-style thrash whose riffing has caused concertgoers in China to do something I haven’t seen at a Western concert – a chain-linked, multi-person windmill headbang.

### Voodoo Kungfu

I have heard different opinions on what type of

music to classify Voodoo Kungfu as. Some say nu metal, others avant garde metal. I think they are quite influenced by the Mike Patton book of metal, with a touch of Tibet to spice it up. The ending bit of “Goodbye Sober Day” is a similar sounding vocal practice in much the music of Voodoo Kungfu. They do bring thrash elements too, with a cover of Slayer’s “Raining Blood” on their newest album. in concert.

### Frozen Moon

Modern day black metal band Frozen Moon started in 2001 though has a resurgence in 2018 after some time in the abyss. They combine many folk elements into their music and stage show. Their vocalist reeks of theatricality, donning a large animal skull with horns which reach to the stars while his screeches could create icicles even



in a sweaty concert hall. As their Mayhem-inspired name implies, the band sits comfortably in that second wave of black metal style and should be sought after by purists.



### Never Before

Marijuana is totally illegal in China, which has stunted the growth of the stoner metal genre to some extent. These guys seemed to have smuggled in some pot and shrooms and subsequently sing about it on their albums. Great stoner rock (not as slow and doomy as Sleep or Electric Wizard, but close in tempo to Clutch or Monster Magnet) which shows there is hope for this genre in China.

### Ritual Day



One of China’s first black metal bands, Ritual Day has a lot of similarities to Emperor on their first few albums, but has transformed into something more symphonic on later ones. They have adopted theatrical corpse paint for their live shows and remain a wrecking crew on album and

### The Dark Prison Massacre

Slamming, brutal death/grind with monstrous vocals by dual singers is The Dark Prison Massacre’s forte. Their themes go from the oppression and brutality of the government and prison system to animal cruelty. By far the heaviest band I have seen in China, nobody gets the pits going like these maniacs.

### Nine Treasures

Mongolian throat singing is a cultural highlight if

## ABSOLUTE ASIA

you’re going to the country. This inner Mongolian folk metal band blends this style of singing in a metallic atmosphere to create something quite unique. The addition of the Er Hu on songs makes for an introspective breather from their usual groovy, chuggy metal offering.

### Hell City

The huge mohawks on the members of Hell City have always interested me. China is so conservative, so I imagine they get stared at and ridiculed a lot when doing their daily routines. Musically, they are a mix of hardcore punk and thrash. Their songs are brazenly anti government, with song titles like “Chaos PRC.” Good thing they are underground, or the authorities may come knocking on their doors.

### Ancestor

Neo-thrash hasn’t only corrupted the US and Canada. Ancestor is a relatively young band with young longhairs who play a highly aggressive Sodom/Kreator style of thrash which is the among the heaviest found in the country. The thrash scene is thriving in China - with other bands to look out for in the genre being Punisher and Tumour Boy.



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## SCRAPE Records Releases “The Label” Vinyl + CD Sampler

By AU Editorial

SCRAPE Records is pleased to announce *The Label Vinyl + CD Sampler Vol.II*, which hit the streets on May 29, 2020.

*Vol.II*, like SCRAPE Records' *The Label Vinyl + CD Sampler Vol.I* (released in the summer of 2018), is designed primarily for use as a promotional press-kit to be sent to webzines, print/digital media, internet/college radio and distribution houses worldwide in an effort to gain reviews, interviews, airplay and general overall awareness for the variety of the artists involved with the sampler and for SCRAPE Records.

independent traditional hard rock / heavy metal ranging from progressive, doom, symphonic, death, ambient, and power to trash 'n roll – very reminiscent of what SCRAPE Records “The Store” was from 1997-2016.

SCRAPE Records' *The Label* Vinyl + CD Sampler *Vol.I* was filled with bands entirely from British Columbia, Canada featuring Zimmers Hole, Assault, Touch The Sun, Aviator Shades, Hellchamber, Infernal Majesty and much more.

*Vol.II* features SCRAPE Records' own Empyria and Rebel Priest, alongside Gross Misconduct, Hunting Giants, Ophelia Falling, Bog and The Mighty One, while branching outside of British Columbia, Canada this time around bringing you two bands from Manitoba, Canada (Entity and Crown The Broken) and two from Washington State (Locistellar and Greyhawk).

The CD features bonus bands Arkenfire, Hellchamber, Crown The Broken, and Kanashibari, plus exclusive bonus tracks from Locistellar and Empyria.



They will hold back approximately 50 Vinyl (CD with bonus bands and bonus tracks) – available separately or together – for sale to the public, and the loyal “SCRAPE Disciple.” The proceeds of these sales help assist in manufacturing, advertising, production and mail-out costs of the sampler.

This is an exciting opportunity for SCRAPE to showcase bands they have been working with while providing the listener a wide-range of

*The Label Vinyl + CD Sampler Vol.II* is available through the links below:

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Future releases: Pink Steel, Deranged, Sudden Impact, Culture Shock, Bludgeoned Pigs, Sikphukxz, Odds Crypt, Armoros, Stick Farm.

www.supremeecho.com



# THE VICIOUS CYCLES

Interview by Roger the Shrubber

## Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Norman: This is Norman, the moral compass and guiding force behind the VCMC. If not for me... this band would be much more talented and playing songs about girls, drugs and debauchery instead of motorcycles, minibikes and leather jackets. Unfortunately, for some reason, they won't let me leave!

I'm probably most infamous for either the time I booed the Clash on their first North American tour back in 79 (I was there for Bo Diddley) or the time I almost burned down the Palomino in Calgary with my flaming Theremin.

## AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?

Beardo: Beardo here with the history. Around 12 years ago Billy, Skinny Tim and J-Rats's old band Raised By Wolves had broken up, and it was time for something new.

A good excuse was found for Norman Motorcycho to join the band since these guys were all hanging around together anyway. He had recently acquired a theremin ... so guess who has a theremin in their band now!

New to town, I (Beardo) had been bugging Billy to play in a band together for awhile, and since some other guy wasn't showing up to band practice, I got the role of bass player.

Fast forward a couple records, and Tim and J-Rat both skipped out to pursue kids and jobs and stuff. Nick was recruited (from the Tranzmitters, Smugglers, Evaporators) and dubbed Nick The Knife™, for his surgical skills on guitar.

The mighty Ben joined on drums shortly after, having played with Thee Manipulators, THOR, and more!

## AU: You guys are releasing a new song about Covid quarantine, tell us about it!

Billy: I try to only write about what I know. What's going on around me. That way when we play, I can sing it like I mean it, because I do. We all bleed the same. I wanted to write something with a focus on these common experiences and how they unite us, during this era where we live underneath the oppressive politics of division. Especially at the start of this pandemic, my hands felt like sandpaper from washing them over and over, and I thought it might be something that people could relate to. Of course, my hands being a little chapped, or not getting to go to shows, or having to stay home right now is a small price for our communal health. I'm not meaning to complain about the situation so much as document it, so that I remember this time.

## AU: You recorded the track separately from



## your own homes, is that correct? Tell us about the experience?

Ben: It was weird and cool all at the same time! Billy came up with the idea for the song and the idea of recording it. He sent out a demo to see if we could do anything with it. I came up with an idea pretty quick, and then had him to rerecord his scratch tracks to a click so I could play along with it. I HATE using a click for anything, and haven't done it in years and years, but in this case it was really the only way for it to work since we've literally never (and still haven't) played this song together, let alone heard each other's parts. I didn't have any kind of recording setup at home, and my kit is setup with silence pads and quiet practice cymbals. I ended up recording my tracks with a GoPro. The footage you see of me drumming in the video is literally the source of my drums tracks. This was the second take, and I'm absolutely shocked how well it turned out! Props to Jesse Gander for working his usual wizardry!

Nick: It was different than the way we usually develop songs to begin with. We usually hash out an arrangement together as a band once someone brings in an idea. In this case Billy sent out a rough guitar track for Ben to add drums to (on a Go-Pro!) and I added my guitar to those parts. Without the in-person connection and lack of communication some issues arose. When I heard the first mix with everyone else now in place I could hear something was out. Someone was zagging while everyone was zigging. Well, after a short chat about the actual chords of the song it turned out to be me so I had to re-record my parts. By this time the song was basically all there so it was easier to know when NOT to play. Often my greatest gift to a song. Shutting up.

## AU: Where can we hear or download this track?

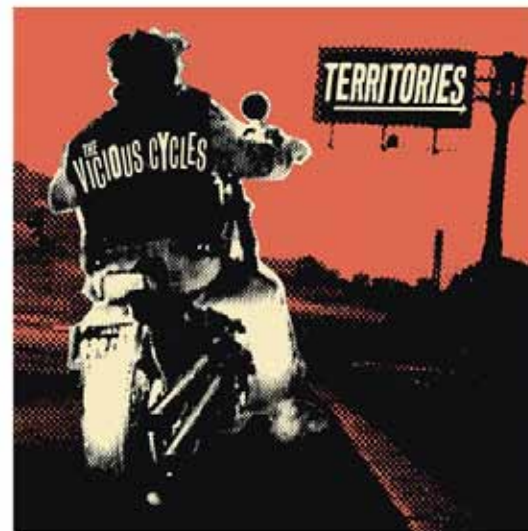
Norman: Well we made a super fun vid featuring a bunch of pals (also all recorded in quarantine), that you can see on Youtube.

You can also download it for FREE on our bandcamp! Or stream online from all the usual bloodsucking vampiric music streaming services. Just kidding, we love you Jeff Bezos!

## AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Will there still be a place for punk rock in the new world order?

Nick: It has been an interesting time for the

music scene. With every massive 'moving of the goal posts' in the music industry there is often a pregnant pause while these highly adaptable DIY brains try to perceive where things will go.



While we were thinking we were on top of the new world order of musical creation a power pop band from Edmonton that we're fans of (The Real Sickness) dropped an entire album (!!) inspired by the quarantine, and it sounded great!! Amazing. Slightly deflating as we worked on our ONE song!, but amazing nonetheless.

I also have been supporting some musician friends through Side Door. Initially created to help trim some of the fat off the middle man in the music industry, reduce ticket prices AND give more money to the artists. Post pandemic it's become a Zoom based online venue and has done really well as its one of very few ways for musicians to support themselves during this crisis without touring.

## AU: Will there still be a place for punk rock in the new world order?

Nick: There will always be a place for punk rock I believe, no matter the direction of the world. Punk is reactive and unafraid to stand up and it doesn't have to take one or two musical forms anymore. Punk to me is anything that says "fuck you" artistically with good reason. I suppose as long as the word 'order' is used, there will always be punk.

## AU: What's next for the Vicious Cycles? Will you be doing more recording? Touring in the future?

Ben: We have another single in the can right now that will come out eventually. We even have test pressings and everything, we just have no idea when or how we are getting it out. I'm hoping we can throw some demos together of stuff we were working on before all this. I have a full kit in my basement at work and should have it mic'd up properly next week, so hopefully I can bang some stuff out so we can keep progress moving. I can't imagine much touring anytime in the next twelve months. I wouldn't rule out the possibility of some

stuff within BC or MAYBE Alberta down the line, but at this time I think it would really have to be very specific and special circumstances to even do a show... we have some ideas though...

## AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

Norman: We are for equal rights and justice. We are for people of all backgrounds, genders, ethnicities, pigmentation and orientation. We belong with you and you belong with us. Also, we strongly believe that Huey Piano Smith got the short end of the stick and should be widely revered as one of the founding fathers of party rock and roll, alongside Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the founding mother of rock 'n roll.

## AU: Any final words for our readers?

VC: Viva Knieee!

[facebook.com/TheViciousCycles/](https://facebook.com/TheViciousCycles/)

PHOTO CREDIT: Timothy McLeod







## LONG LIVE ROCK N ROLL

by Nevin Arnold

Ronnie James Dio requires no introduction in the realms of rock'n roll and metal, but if he did, it would be as one of the most influential and revered singer/songwriters in heavy metal history.

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of his most unfortunate passing, BMG Records have reissued and remastered DIO's long out-of-print 1996-2004 studio albums – 1996's "Angry Machines", 2000's "Magica", 2002's "Killing the Dragon" and 2004's "Master of the Moon".

To sum up Ronnie James Dio's musical legacy with any brevity is not a simple task, but I'll attempt a "coles notes" version.

In 1975 Dio, along with guitarist/songwriter, Ritchie Blackmore (formerly of Deep Purple), forged the legendary British rock group, "Rainbow". Don't let the name fool you, they rocked to high heaven. Combining hard rocking and atmospheric compositions with Dio's powerful and versatile vocals, belting out songs of fantasy and medieval lore, they became very successful, very quickly. But it was not to last, and in 1979 Dio would go on to more than fill the shoes of Ozzy Osbourne as the new singer of Black Sabbath.

Sabbath was revitalized by Dio's contributions musically and lyrically and quickly achieved a second wave of success. But it too was not to last, (but would continue later in reunions), and in 1982 Dio moved on to form the DIO band. In 1983 they would go on to release the critically acclaimed album "Holy Diver". From there, with endless ripping guitars, soaring vocals, and Dio's trademark sword and sorcery infused lyrics, DIO went on to dominate the 1980's with chart-topping albums and hit singles.



Photo Credit: Chadsolute

These early releases, from Rainbow, to Sabbath, to 80's DIO often overshadow Dio's later albums and collaborations. These reissues, featuring DIO's final four albums are nothing if not a reminder of the consistency of Dio's stand the test of time craftsmanship. And as a collector and huge fan myself, the rare and live bonus tracks are a real treat. Each deluxe remaster features a bonus disc of rare and previously unreleased live tracks from the accompanying tour for each album. The 180-gram black vinyl editions include the original track-listings and are available as a limited edition first run with an LP-sized Lenticular album art print. Each release also features updated artwork from frequent DIO art director Marc Sasso.

1996's "Angry Machines" concludes a trilogy I like to call "Dio Dark", which consisted of 1992's "Dehumanizer" (from Dio's second run with Black Sabbath), 1993's "Strange Highways" and "Angry Machines". This album showcases a much doomier, angrier musical approach which was consistent with a lot of classic bands at that time scrambling to find their footing in an uncertain decade for metal. The album is not without its

gems, "Hunter Of The Heart" is very memorable, and the delicate album closer "This Is Your Life" shines very brightly at the end of this gritty musical journey.

DIO kicked the fantasy overtones into overdrive for 2000's "Magica", a brilliant return to form after his darker 90's releases. The new millennium introduced a whole new generation of metalheads to DIO's unique brand of old school metal with stand out tracks like "Fever Dreams" and "Losing My Sanity". This epic concept album was originally planned to be the first part of a trilogy, unfortunately, Ronnie passed away before he could complete the project. This reissue includes the thundering track, "Electra", DIO's final recording, and only known song from the sessions that would have come to be Magica II and III.

2002's "Killing The Dragon" really shines in the DIO discography, its chock full of memorable tracks that boast a current sound while still rooted in the classic greatness that they won fans over with in the 80's. The galloping title track kicks off

the album and after a few seconds, if you didn't know already, there is no denying that DIO is back! "Along Came A Spider", "Better In The Dark", "Push" and countless other all-killer-no-filler tracks round out an excellent album that will have you returning to listen time and time again.

Before Dio's triumphant third return to Black Sabbath, he released what would be the final DIO album, 2004's "Master Of The Moon". This album is a continuation of the greatness achieved on "Killing The Dragon", if not quite as consistent or hard-hitting, it still packs many powerful punches. The title track, "One More For The Road" and "End Of The World" among others once again capture that classic DIO magic while steering you into new territory at the same time. This reissue features a really great live version of "Heaven And Hell", as well as the classic "Rainbow In The Dark" and the rare studio track "Prisoner In Paradise".

Not everyone will like a musical artist, you simply can't please everyone all of the time. I'm sure there were countless parents and religious figureheads that disproved of Dio's music, lyrics, and themes, but you would be very hard-pressed to find metal musicians, enthusiasts, and music industry professionals that have anything poor to say about Ronnie James Dio and his craft. Arguably the greatest metal vocalist of all time, his lyrics empowered, inspired, and opened one's eyes to the wonders that surround us, the truths we should always question, and the dreams we should never let the world take from us.

I can't tell you how many times I've listened to "Holy Diver", "Sacred Heart" or any of DIO's albums, countless times I'm sure. But I can tell you that they still move me to this day. All any of us can hope to achieve is a lasting legacy of positive influence after we're gone, and as selfish as it may sound, a hole that cannot be filled. Ronnie achieved all of the above and much much more. It's hard to believe he's been gone ten years, but it's easy to believe he'll live on for a hundred more.

DIO online:  
[www.ronniejamesdio.com](http://www.ronniejamesdio.com)

Nevin is a comic book artist and writer from Vancouver Island. His son's middle name is Dio, but only because his wife wouldn't agree to it being his first name.

## Dio's Studio Album Collection

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the passing and honor the legacy of iconic vocalist Ronnie James Dio, BMG Records reissued Dio's long out-of-print 1996-2004 studio albums – 1996's *Angry Machines*, 2000's *Magica*, 2002's *Killing the Dragon* and 2004's *Master of the Moon* – on March 20.

To satisfy fans' cravings for music, BMG has made four tracks available for streaming:

- "Rainbow In The Dark" (Live On The *Master Of The Moon* Tour) - <https://RJDIO.lnk.to/mastermoon>
- "Stand Up And Shout" (Live On The *Killing The Dragon* Tour) - <https://RJDIO.lnk.to/killingdragon>
- "Hunter Of The Heart" (Live On The *Angry Machines* Tour) <https://RJDIO.lnk.to/angrymachines>
- "Fever Dreams" (Live On The *Magica* Tour) <https://RJDIO.lnk.to/magica>

The entire collection has been remastered by longtime Dio

collaborator Wyn Davis with updated artwork from frequent Dio art director Marc Sasso.

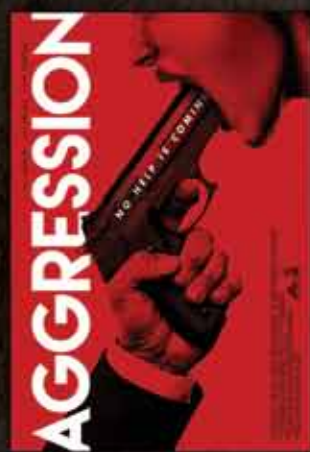
The 180-gram black vinyl includes the original tracklistings and is available as a Limited Edition first run with an LP-sized Lenticular album art print. As a special bonus, the *Magica* double LP also contains a 7" single featuring "Electra," the only known completed track from the planned *Magica 2* album.

The newly remastered deluxe CD versions are showcased in mediabook packaging along with a second disc featuring rare and unreleased bonus material. In addition to rare studio tracks "Electra" (included on *Magica*) and "Prisoner of Paradise" (included on *Master of the Moon*), each bonus disc includes a selection of both rare or never before released live tracks from the accompanying tour for each studio release.

[www.ronniejamesdio.com](http://www.ronniejamesdio.com)

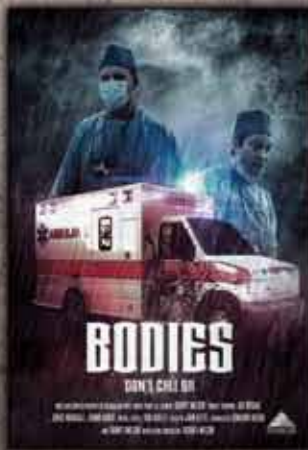






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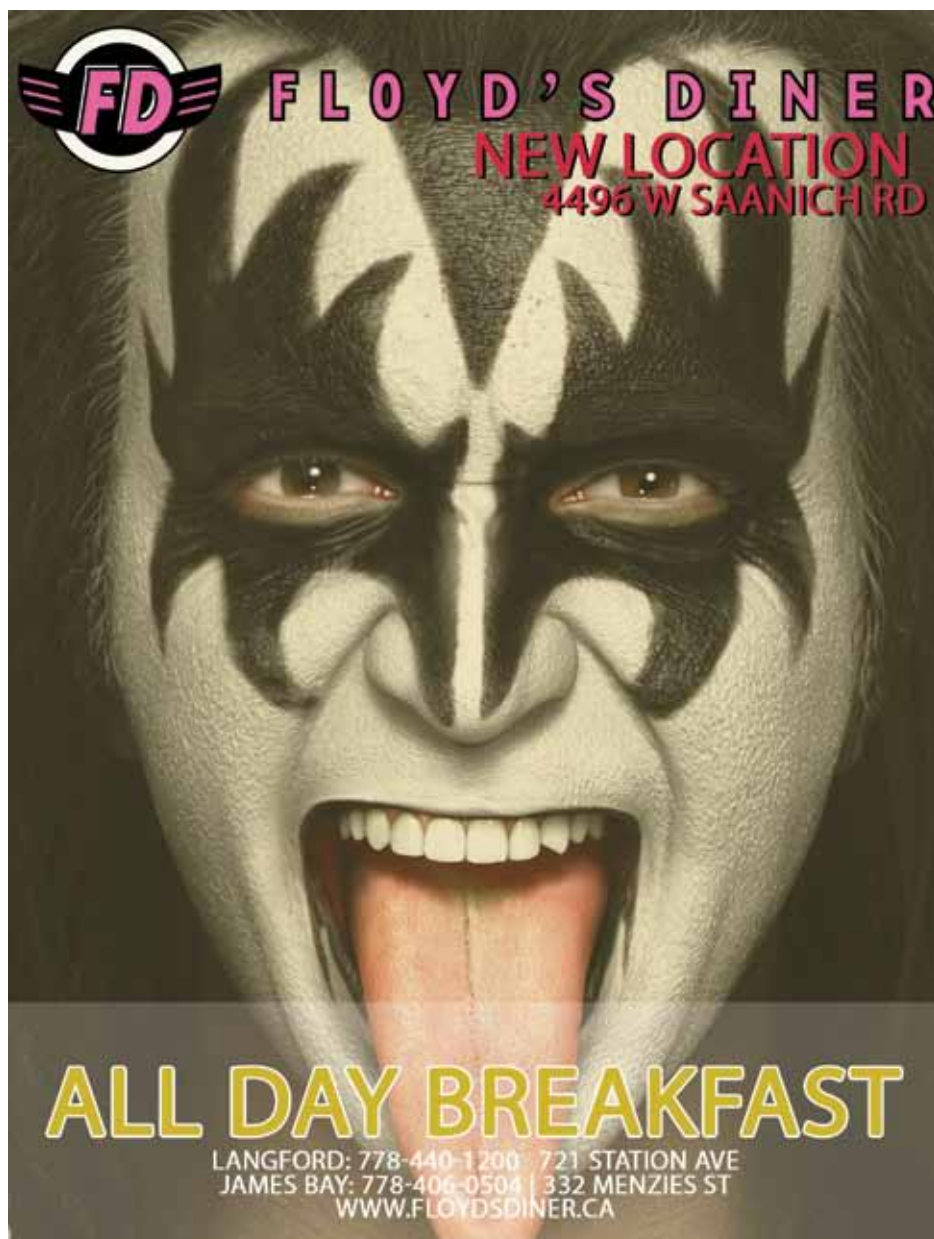
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## Jeff Pinkus of The Butthole Surfers interview by Jason Lamb

**Jason Lamb: The Butthole Surfers book “What Does Regret Mean”, just came out.**

Jeff Pinkus: It's a really cool layout. We started out trying to make an album and somehow ended up with a book. It's not exactly the way I was hoping it would end up. But it's pretty cool.

**JL: From what I've seen it looks amazing. Like a really good coffee table book. Lots of people contributing their thoughts about the band and stuff. Were you guys involved in the making of the book?**

JP: No, not really. We kind of stepped back. It was kind of funny because all of us have a bunch of stuff at our house but everybody that contributed was pretty much outside of the band. Someone must have somewhere, Paul probably did maybe a little bit, I don't think Gibby did. I was touring that whole time while that was going on so I wasn't anywhere where I could look through and see what kind of stupid things I had laying round that people might want to look at. Paul might have, he was a little bit more hands on with the initial happening. We'd been working on music and stuff, then that kind of took a pause and then this guy spent a year of his life to put this together. Some of the quotes are pretty cool in there. I looked through it, I was happy there's like a solo shot of me when Daniel Johnson said that we were all Satanists and stuff. There's one too where Dale says he got physically ill at our show, and there's a picture of me.

**JL: About a year and a half ago there was word floating around that The Butthole Surfers are back in the studio, I was very excited about that, as we're a lot of people, so what happened?**

JP: Well, Paul (Leary) made the announcement and released information because he went into the studio with King (Coffey) for a couple of days and did get some drum tracks down for some of the stuff he wanted. I've been working at my house on songs to get together with the fellas. I guess there were differences of opinions at first about what direction it was going to go into. Then after that, Gibby (Haynes) has been working on a book for a long time that I thought was done, but I guess it's not done yet. He's been trying to finish that for quite a while. It's been past due from what I know of it. So that's kind of where his head's been at, working on his book. So we just continued working on all of our own stuff and Paul actually did a release saying that it was not going to be an album anymore. Someone sent it to me cause I'm not on The Butthole Surfers forum, cause the people on there are really weird \*laughing\*, and so that was basically a release saying that there were no plans for an album anymore. Who knows what the future holds? I love all the guys and we have fun together and we talk to each other. It's just a matter of the right time, right place, right situation. You know? Are we going for an album where everything sounds different. I wasn't on the album that had "Pepper" on it, that's not really my kind of stuff and you know, so if that's what they're going for. I don't know really where I fit in on it. I love the album's where we all wrote different stuff. I did a lot on "Hairway", because it was live and a lot of it was written on the road, in practice places and stuff. It was a lot different than some of the other recordings that we had done, which were put together. We actually went in the studio and recorded it when it was all done.

**JL: For me personally Independent Worm Saloon is probably my favorite studio album,**  
JP: The rock record.

**JL: It is the rock record, I guess, maybe that's why, because it's more digestible if you want to say it that way, you know**



**what I mean?**

JP: Yeah, that had to do with John Paul Jones.

**JL: That's what I was gonna get to, I'm sure you've been asked this 1000 times. But how did that all come about?**

JP: It was a good story. We didn't know he got our demo, which actually had a version of us doing "Communication Breakdown", because we were joking around with it. We were talking to Joe Chiccarelli, who I really liked a lot to do it, and Pete Anderson, who we weren't going to use because of the Meat Puppets story. We met with all these folks and then also we have a British A&R guy and we had a certain budget... then all of a sudden there is John Paul Jones expressing interest in working with the Butthole Surfers. He'd heard our demo and he didn't like working with bands that sounded like they wanted to get the "When the Levee Breaks" drum sound, that's his number one turn off of doing production work. So he wanted to do this because it's way different. He told us he couldn't wait to tell Jimmy Page that he was working with the Butthole Surfers, to him I think it was a novelty. We got on the phone with him, he was more expensive than the other ones but our British A&R guy was okay with that. So we went over budget, \$5,000 over budget on whiskey alone, which they weren't very happy with.



In fact, I went to see John Paul Jones when he played with Diamanda Galás. We went back to the Four Seasons Hotel and went to the bar. He was in the scotch drinkers society and would

drink Lagavulin and expensive scotches. So I asked him, "What do you want a Lagavulin?" And he says "a Shirley Temple". I was like, "No Really? What do you want?" He says "No really, a Shirley Temple, y'all drove me to quit drinking."

We did not drink until after we were done with work, we smoked a shitload of herbs and whatever else we did but no drinking. That was all after hours, we had pretty set hours with it. We went off to a beautiful place in Marin County away from everything, like million dollar an acre property. Right before us was The X-Pensive Winos and right before that was Linda Ronstadt and Flaco Jimenez and a bunch of people. So it was a really cool, nice studio with a good vibe. The old machines that Fleetwood Mac used out there.

We worked with John Paul Jones in Austin before we got there for about two weeks. It was kind of funny, he first comes into our studio and he sets up his little Casio keyboard in there and we have like electronic drum kit and Eclipse speakers that are kind of big, and the couple amps, and we're just going to jam the songs and he's going to take notes. So we plug in his Casio and wouldn't you know he starts playing "Kashmir" on the Casio. So we're just sitting there staring at each other, we don't really know what to do like, does he expect us to come in on the song now? \*laughing\* We had a really good time with him. He really let loose at first, he was smoking weed with us. You know, having drinks with us and he even got involved in a drum circle after we got him all stoned. He pulled like some instruments out of this backpack and this guy came over and started screaming at him and then someone's like, "Hey! That's John Paul Jones! You can play whatever you want, man." But, he had a really good time and he was super cool.

**JL: I only ever saw The Butthole Surferse once and that was, I think it was the last time you guys kind of did any kind of touring which was I think 2011. You played Vancouver at a place called the Rickshaw Theatre. Were you on that tour? I just remember the video loops of horrible horror movies.**

JP: Yeah, that was really weird. I feel bad for people that only experienced us later, because we were a totally different band back in the day. We were a lot more in control of what the video images were, which weren't on video back then we had three projectors. And yeah, we'd focus the projectors on strobes, smoke and fire symbols and what have you. But things got mellower and things got delegated to other people, and those people kind of got what we used to be about wrong. We'd actually show really pretty stuff in there, too. We have aquariums and then have a penis reconstruction movie played backwards, you know, so it'd be all different kinds of messages. And when you get other people doing it, they just do a bunch of blow and then they think they're gonna just shock everybody. It's just not the same thing. Are songs aren't all about you know, mutilation and fucking heads blowing up. There are pretty moments and there's different things and the juxtaposition of the images that should be included.

**JL: I assume that you're a marijuana enthusiast.**  
JP: Yeah, very much.

**JL: We legalized up here in Canada back in October and it's actually harder to buy weed now than it was before because the**

**government's taking so long to get around to these fucking permits.**

JP: The government can ruin everything there is! I would rather it be on the black market in general and be tolerated and understood as it's a plant than what we now have. We have a Christian republican senator from, I think El Paso and he introduced a bill saying that he didn't believe God made mistakes. He didn't smoke any of that stuff, but he did not think a plant should be illegal and that was like the first time it was going to be talked about because it came out with that angle. Same thing with mushrooms, or that they talk about legalizing mushrooms. Okay, so because I don't have depression. I don't have anxiety. I'm not bipolar. I just like taking mushrooms. So why do I have to get a doctor to write down something that says I'm depressed? Have anxiety? That's going to be like on my medical record for the rest of my life. Same with weed. You know, why can't you just smoke it because you like it, because it helps you out. It makes you feel good. It helps you operate and get through the day.

**JL: Maybe the reason you don't have anxiety and depression is because you smoke weed or do mushrooms.**

JP: Well, you know, all the drugs that the government legalizes, are the ones that I try and stay away from, are the ones that cover up pain. The ones I like to take are the ones that make you deal with it. I think that the government is always going to prefer that everyone is medicated and not working on themselves. If you actually discover yourself and realize what's important in life and step away from society a little bit. I think that the government likes us to be covering up our issues and always needing their help, how else can they take care of us?

**JL: Are you officially a member of the Melvins now? I guess there's always a kind of rotation.**

JP: Yeah, I'm in the family. They definitely wore my name out for the past two years, by doing an album that Buzz wanted to call "Pinkus Abortion Technician". It was the first album that he didn't write any songs on. I asked him to do lyrics on a song, but me and Dale and Steven actually wrote the stuff that wasn't cover songs on there. So yeah I got to do a bunch of shows, I got my name out there for a while. Buzz says he wants to do some recording next year, so I feel like I'm in the family. I know I'm the first chair banjo, probably second chair bass at this point, but Trevor Dunn is in there too.

**JL: Any thing else on the horizon?**

JP: There's still some exciting and fun stuff coming out from our camp. From all of us. From the Butts. King does USA/Mexico with the Shit and Shine guys and that's really good stuff. I like it live, it plows you over.

**JL: Yeah that's awesome and it's good to hear that you're all doing stuff and you mentioned at the beginning that Gibby sent you some stuff, so maybe all hope is not lost that there'll be something under the Butthole Surfers umbrella at some point in the future.**

JP: Yeah, I don't want to give false hope. But I do see a glimmer of something in there but I don't think it's gonna happen soon. Yeah, maybe.

**JL: Fair enough. Well, that's good enough for me as long as it's not completely dead in the water.**

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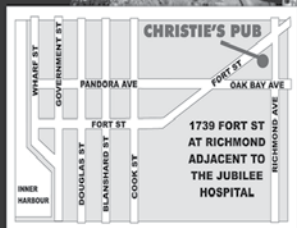
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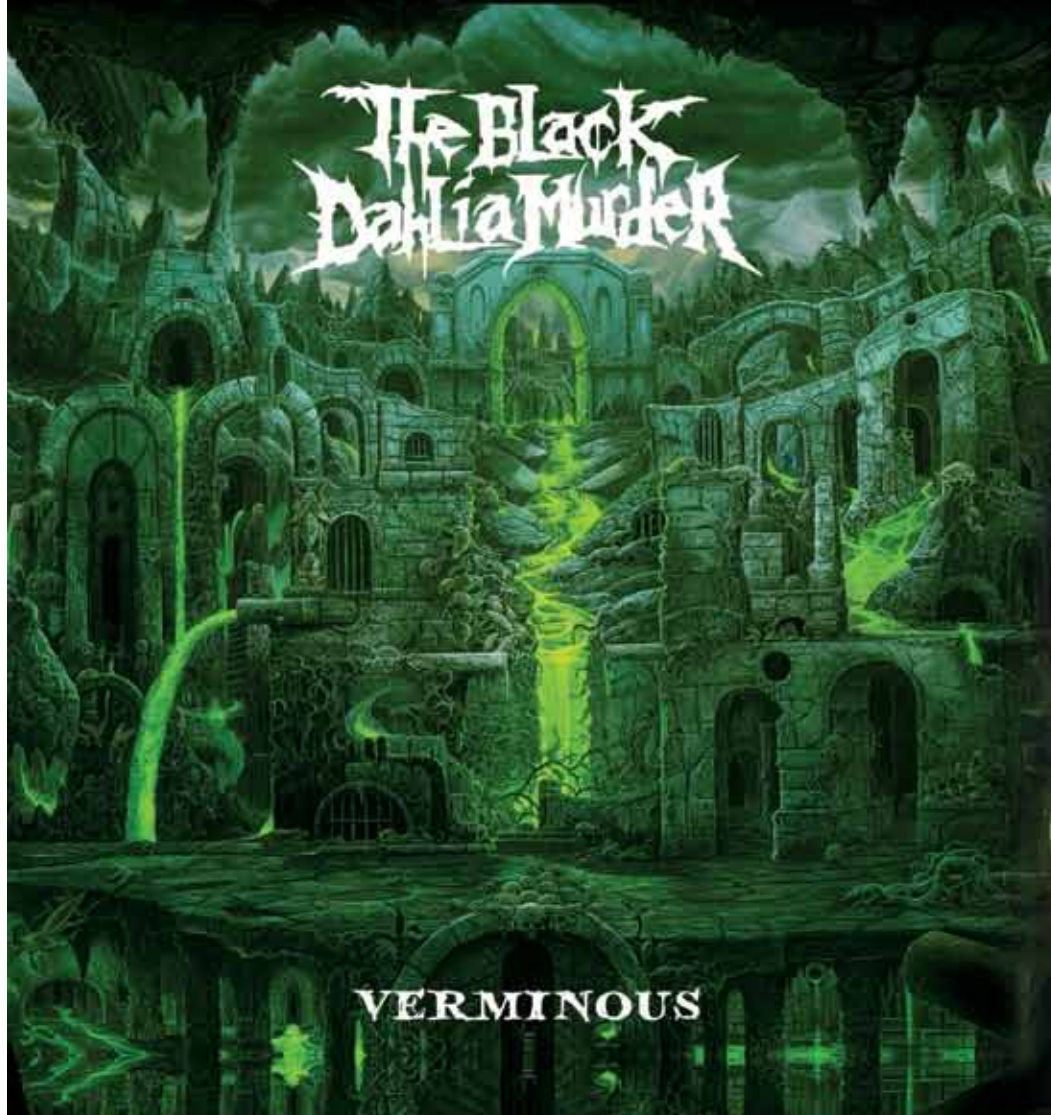
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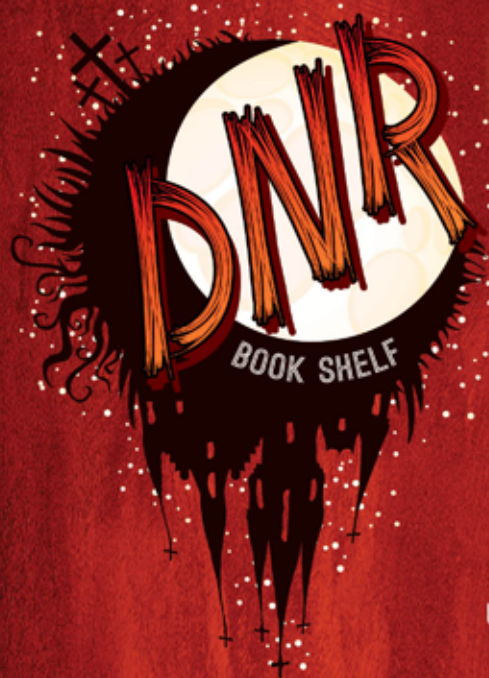


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#### BLACK AMBROSIA



**Elizabeth Engstrom**  
Valancourt Books, Oct. 1, 2019

This book was a reprint of a novel released during the 1980s, as part of Grady Hendrix's "PaperBacks from Hell" Collection. It's an incredibly dark twist on the vampire genre that was prevalent during this time. Personally, I think this has to be one of the most powerful vampire novels that I've ever read.

The story focuses on Angelica Watson. She starts off as a 15-year-old girl whose mother died, and rather than try living the rest of her teenaged years with her stepfather, she receives her half of the selling price of their home and takes off on the road. Early on she runs into a hillbilly who attempts to rape her, and she winds up killing him by tearing his throat out with her teeth and sucking all the blood out of his body.

This is where the twist on the genre comes in, and I don't feel I'm spoiling anything as it's included in the foreword to this edition. The question that you continually ask yourself, even after the story is finished, is whether Angelica is truly a vampire, or is she just a young girl that has gone insane and is killing for the pleasure of it?

Michael Cushing

#### MONSTER, SHE WROTE :



**THE WOMEN WHO  
PIONEERED HORROR AND  
SPECULATIVE FICTION**  
Lisa Kröger & Melanie R.  
Anderson  
Quirk Books,  
September 17th 2019

An absolutely stunning educational non-fiction book, in both content and visuals. Bright slime green and trimmed in blue, beautifully illustrated by Natalya Balnova, this hardcover is one you will want to gift to all the women you know who are horror fans. 'Satisfy your hunger for exceptional writers and extraordinary fiction! Meet women who defied convention to create some of literature's strangest tales', is the title on the back cover, and satisfy it does. Both witty and informative all the way from part one in 'The founding mothers', starting in the 1500s to today's top ladies. This book is missing

nothing, from tons of illustrations, infamous quotes, little tid-bits in each chapter such as 'Horror Vs Terror,' 'Ugly Endings,' 'Dynamic Duos,' and extensive recommended reading lists. I can't say enough about how well organized and researched this book was while keeping fresh and not dry at all as some educational literature can be. It delves into details even fans of each particular author may not have known. No matter what sub-genre of horror fan you are, there is something for everyone within its beautifully laid-out pages. But most of all what pleased me was that this was a special collection of women who have paved the way in this male-dominated genre of writing. Certainly worth adding to your horror collection!

Demonika

#### RECEPTION



**Kenzie Jennings**  
Death's Head Press LLC,  
March 11, 2019

You know that feeling when you just finished reading a novel that was so powerful that it's made you numb... and then you just have to run out and tell everybody to check it out? This is one of those.

This is a novel that features three different acts, and each act completely changes the story.

Act One introduces Ansley Boone. Ansley is just being released from a psychiatric facility after she's suffered a breakdown. She's on her way out to a country resort in order to serve as a bridesmaid for her sister Shay's wedding. The first half of the book centers around the activities that go into setting up a wedding and really anchors you to the characters of the two sisters.

Act Two starts off at the reception, when the sisters realize what exactly is being served for dessert. From here on out, it's complete balls-to-the-wall insanity. This reads like an "Off Season" for the Prozac Nation. It also proceeds at such a breakneck speed that you had better clear your schedule 'til you finish the story.

Kenzie Jennings is an author that you're going to want to pay attention to. To produce a work of splatterpunk fiction this powerful as her debut novel... I mean... how the hell do you follow that up?

Michael Cushing

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## Absolute Film Reviews

#### Blood Quantum

##### Prospector Films

*Blood Quantum* is a Canadian-shot feature from a Canadian director, Jeff Barnaby (*Rhymes with Ghoul*). The film was shot in the province of Quebec, with help from Telefilm Canada. A film that focuses on Canadian Native issues, *Blood Quantum* has a unique tale to tell. Told partially with aid from Barnaby and Joe Barrucco's musical score, this feature also offers up a bit of gore, for horror fans. A chainsaw is always handy in a zombie apocalypse. As well, the story focuses on two brothers: Joseph (Forrest Goodluck) and Lysol (Kiowa Gordon), in relationship to their father. One turns into the bad son, while the other struggles to handle his growing family. As the credits roll, most horror fans will find something that resonates with them in Barnaby's latest release.

The film's music is never overwhelming. Barnaby and Barrucco work together to bring new sounds to the screen, in different scenarios. The opening title sequence is well done as a drone moves back and forth over water. The music sounds as confused as the lens and introduces the viewer to the incoming chaos. Another scene transition also offers a bit of bluegrass music and ups the tempo of the film. The music is consistently changing tempos, along with the action on-screen. The final song is memorable and likely direct from the Mi'kmaq tribe. In English, this song closes out the film with a bit of hope and a bit of sadness. The musical notes are consistently on track and anchor the film.

Being a horror fan, this viewer also enjoyed the special effects and gore. All of the makeup or post-production effects look top notch and add to the film's dire situation. In one scene, a nurse is dispatched with a chainsaw to the face; the scene is a gruesome one. At the mid-point, a character is using a tilling machine to take out hordes of the undead. And, the gore will come at viewers on both the small and big scale. An intimate scene between one of the brothers and an infected woman is a bit hard to watch, but also signals an amping up in the film's action. All of makeup effects help with the film's reality, rather than distracting from it.

The story itself is a good one and focuses on issues in the Mi'kmaq tribe. As an aside, the Mi'kmaq tribe has a long history with the French within Quebec, both in culture and warfare, over hundreds of years. In the film,

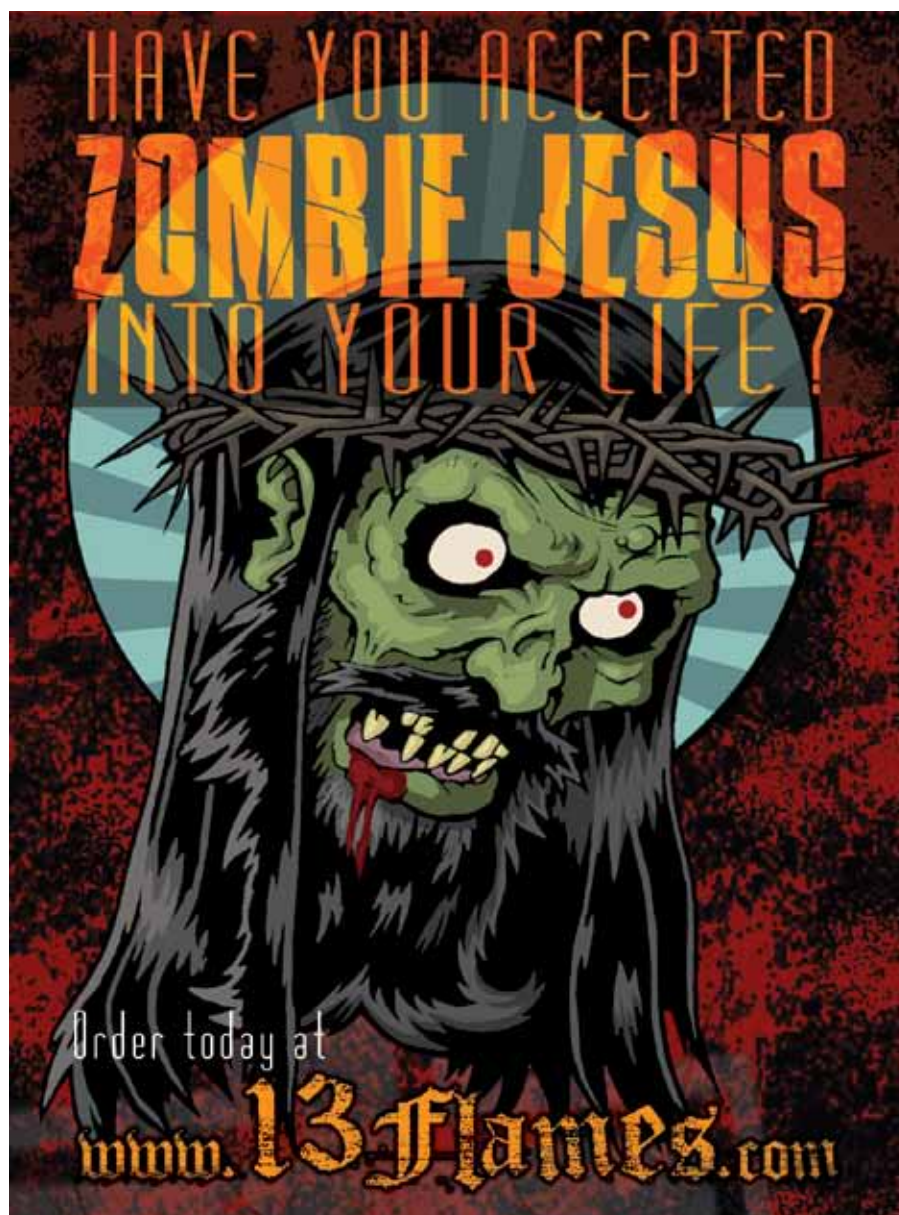
the Mi'kmaq are immune to a rapidly spreading virus. Their immunity allows them to survive in an environment that is becoming increasingly more dangerous. Only the townies, those not on the reservation, are infected. Meanwhile, the brothers Joseph and Lysol are dealing with events, differently. Lysol turns to drugs for distraction, while Joseph leans on his pregnant girlfriend, Charlie (Olivia Scriven). Their paths cross again and again, in increasingly more violent ways. A Native story, focusing on Native issues, *Blood Quantum* brings something unique to the usual zombie apocalypse tale.

Though, the zombies are not really what matters to the plot; it is the characters and how they relate to each other that is really important. Traylor (Michael Greyeyes), initially the protagonist, is the initial lynch pin - which holds his tribe together. He is the one who begins the film's interaction with the virus. As the virus grows stronger, Traylor must deal with more and more difficult situations. As an intertitle "Six Months Later" fills the screen, it now becomes clear that the "zeds" will not be going away anytime soon. During the interim, the surviving characters bring their own issues to the screen, with many of the characters having long histories with each other. This makes the characters complex and only the zombies are one-sided. And, the zombies can represent: colonialism, fading European domination, a degrading environment, or just blood splatter. Each possibility will be amplified based on what the viewer brings with them to the film.

*Blood Quantum* just received a recent release on Shudder, across the United Kingdom and the U.S. As well, this title is now available on most Canadian, digital services - according to the director himself. A great Canadian horror film, in a country that does not produce many, *Blood Quantum* brings a compelling story about both brotherhood and fatherhood to viewers this month. Not shying away from violence nor bloodshed, this title also introduces a fluid soundtrack that keeps the film sounding great. Never dull, *Blood Quantum* offers a lot in its 100 minute runtime. Finally, here is one vote in favour of more horror fans seeing this uniquely Mi'kmaq zombie tale.

-Michael Allen

28DLA.com





# The Storyteller: Ghosts

By Ed Sum

Jim Henson's *The Storyteller: Ghosts* anthology is the spiritual successor to Anthony Bourdain's *Hungry Ghosts* from two years ago. Both series involve dealings with the occult world; while some teach a moral and others are for pure fright, what makes both titles a delight is that they're not limited to a specific culture. We are treated to fantastic reinterpretations of nearly forgotten lore from other countries, offered to readers more acquainted with Western European tales of terror.

Although the televised series only lasted a year (1987), I'm glad Archaia Entertainment is continuing the tradition. The fact that their latest series is all about ghosts was all I need to say, "I don't dare try to bust these lost

souls."

The tales from the first two issues (of four) delves into the lore of Sweden and Cambodia. The Myling (a ghost of an abandoned child) and Krasue (a floating head of a woman making the wrong Faustian pact) are not without pity. The terror they can cause is briefly exorcised, if not deftly examined by the series writers and artists. Márk László's work in Issue #1 stands out as more haunting in its delivery than the second. Jennifer Rostowsky gives a very flighty treatment concerning same sex romances. The era her tale takes place is ambiguous; acceptance is close to 20 years old. Although her ideas are perfect to advance LGBT rights in countries dealing with this new norm, a one-shot is not enough.

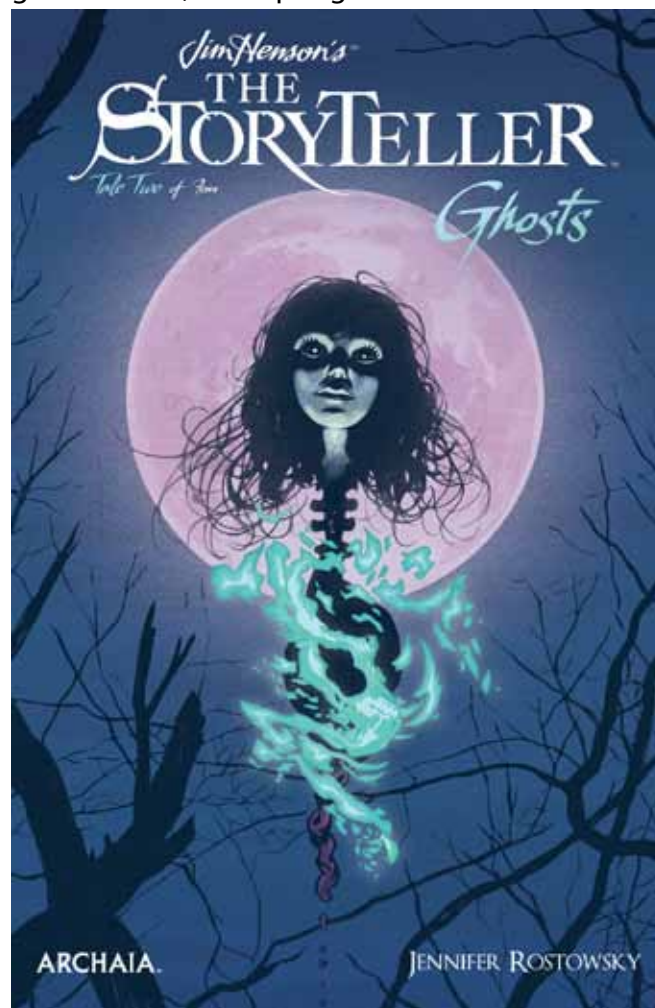
Sadly, only two issues remain. One will see the legend of the Banshee fully explored. Everyone knows about how hearing her wail will bring about death, but not everyone knows how

capturing one can have one's fondest wish fulfilled. The final issue will bring Weles, the Slavic god of death, attempting to

## COMIC-GEDDON

prevent a ghost from coming back to life. If only this series was ongoing, there are plenty more legends to select from. I'd love to see a tale from African traditions.

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# TERRITORIES



## Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Matt: Hey -- I'm Matt, I play Bass in Territories... probably most infamous for playing bass for over 25 years but never learning the notes on the bass; it's ridiculous, embarrassing and it's become a total mental block. I cringe whenever I think about it.

## AU: Give us a brief history of the band - how did you form and who is in the group?

M: The four of us that started Territories had been playing together (along with one other member) in a previous band called Knucklehead for over 15 years. When we put that band on the shelf in 2014 we weren't ready to stop making music so it was a natural progression to form Territories. We started writing new music right away, but took our time to get a strong set together before we started playing shows. Territories started with Kyle (vocals & rhythm guitar), Matt (bass), Eric (drums) and Jimmy (lead guitar). Recently Jimmy had to take a step back from the band so we've brought in an old friend and staple from the Calgary punk scene, Mike Longfield (from the band Rum Runner) to fill the void.

## AU: You're releasing a new EP this month, correct? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

M: We're really excited to release "When the Day is Done" as a 10" record and digital EP. Just like on our first record, we've tried a few new things as we continue to find and evolve our sound. We really took our time writing these songs

and I think they came out very strong; the sound is unmistakably Territories but I feel we were able to add a little more depth to the songs. Jesse Gander at Rain City Recorders in Vancouver BC, absolutely killed it with the sound and production on the record; some of the guitar tones Jesse and Jimmy dialed in are just unreal!

## AU: Does the new music explore any particular themes or topics?

M: This record covers a lot of ground. We've got some personal songs, and we've got some more political songs. "The Lockdown" was released previously as a single. It's essentially a description

of a day in the life of a school kid during a lockdown drill. Our hope for the next generation of school kids is that the causes of gun violence in schools are addressed up front, so that these lockdowns become a thing of the past. "Welcome Home" is a song for our veterans; we wrote this one after watching yet another news story about veterans in Canada having to struggle for fair treatment from our own government.

## AU: Tell us about the experience of releasing an EP during the Covid pandemic - what did you do differently, what were some of the challenges you faced?

M: Well the timing wasn't great - but in reality none of that matters when we consider the pain and suffering that has been happening globally. We're thankful that our circles of family, friends and loved ones are healthy. For the actual release it has been interesting trying to navigate through this. Everything with the recording and layout etc. was essentially done before the shutdown so luckily other than a bit of a delay nothing was impacted too drastically on that front. Working with Pirates Press Records has made the process a lot smoother because they have continued to churn throughout this downtime. We all agreed that putting out some new material might help to entertain/distract people to help them get through this crisis.

## AU: Once the EP is released, how will you be promoting it? Have you been doing live streams, are you planning any tours for next year?

M: We have a few ideas we're working on for promoting the EP. We haven't always been the most tech savvy band, but we're trying to step it up; without shows to connect with fans, social media is just about the only avenue. We're hoping to try and live stream a show (played to an empty room and we'll make sure we're spread out on the stage!), but as you can imagine there are a lot of moving parts and health regulations to try and navigate to make that happen. We're hopeful, but ultimately it might be out of our control. Also we're kicking around the idea of partnering up with some of the local craft brewers in the city - when our first record came out we teamed up with Annex Ale Project, they made a Territories Black Ale for the event, it was a really cool concept. Again, a lot of moving parts, but we're working on them! We did actually have several release shows booked before the Covid pandemic shutdown, including a show with The Vicious Cycles out in Vancouver for the split 7" we just released with them. Our flights were booked and we were super excited - these were going to be our first shows with Mike on guitar... then everything was put on hold. It's tough to plan ahead right now, no one knows when live shows will start happening again.

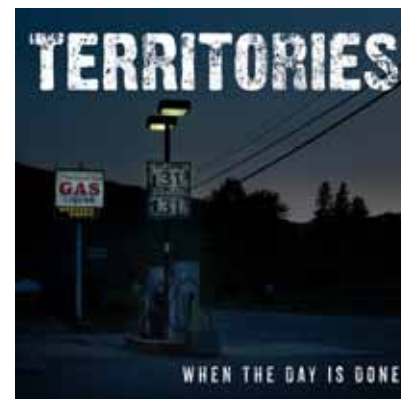
## AU: What are your hopes for this music, what do you hope audiences take away from it?

M: Well, musically we hope these songs grab your attention, and maybe stick around in your head for a while. I love music that drives and conjures an emotional response. Lyrically, we just try to write about things we're thinking about right now, and hopefully people will see some of their own thoughts expressed in these songs. That's how we want to connect with people - find common ground.

## AU: Will you be doing any music videos or other forms of media promotion?

M: We just released a music video for "Quit this City," it was a fun process and I think it turned out really well. Also, Chris Curtis did a very moving video for "The Lockdown," that came out with that single last year. Both videos are up on the Pirates Press Records Youtube channel - check them out! For other media, well, you can expect to see my smiling face along with Eric's for some live stream chats and interviews over the coming weeks.

## AU: Any other long term plans or goals for the band you can tell us about?



M: Well, honestly it's tough to plan ahead until we know what the future is going to look like. We were able to navigate the paperwork and procedure to get visas to come play in the USA for Rock the Ship last fall in California -- now that we know the steps I know we're really hoping to try and get back down to the Bay Area to do some more shows...maybe 2021? As always, we will continue to focus on songwriting. When we formed the band, we made that the number one priority... quality over quantity. We're hoping to hit the studio in the fall and get a few songs recorded. It's been tough through this shutdown as we haven't been able to get together to practice/write -- Eric is a doctor, so with him working in a hospital we need to be especially diligent. Our goal for the next two weeks is actually to try and finish off a new song by passing files around digitally -- that was Mike's idea, three cheers for the new guy!

## AU: What are your thoughts on the evolution of the music scene in light of the pandemic? Will there still be a home for punk in the new world order?

M: I don't know what the future of live music is going to look like -- the tough thing is that the best place to see punk bands is in a small, dark, dingy club... not very conducive to social distancing. The one thing I can say for certain, Punk Rock isn't going anywhere, it's too good.

## AU: Any final words for our readers?

M: Thanks for for reading and hopefully we'll see you at a show down the road...

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# Destruction

Interview with bassist/vocalist Schmier  
By Erik Lindholm

*...from the south of Germany, amidst the plague and social unrest, a familiar voice speaks...*

**Absolute Underground: Good day, sir. How are you? Where are you right now?**

Schmier: I'm calling from Germany. At the border, Germany, France and Switzerland. That's south west Germany, maybe most known for the Black Forest region.

**AU: Sounds like a lovely picturesque spot!**

S: Yeah, it's nice. It's now looking at the lockdowns, living in the three country corner, that's kind of weird. Because all the borders are closed and this region, from the internationality, that people can move over the borders and do their work in different countries, and we have all of that also, we do our studio albums in Switzerland. So we couldn't enter. So it's kind of weird.

**AU: Absolutely. This is sort of the theme of the world at the moment, the lockdown, and the social changes being implemented.**

S: Yeah, I guess you know, every country handles it differently, but luckily Germany had a big impact at the beginning, but also, they kind of know the right measurements and, accounting was prepared by hospitals and everything. So, essentially under control. And a couple of weeks since, everything is opening again or basically lights back on. But so far, still no concerts. Concerts are going to happen again. Starting with small shows, hundred people capacity first, and then will go up and up. Yeah, it's taking time. It's what it is. And luckily Germany, the government gave help, and jobs to companies and stuff so people can survive. It's a good thing that they care for the people. In the end, it could have been a lot worse.

Some other countries, have been more high impact, and with the government not giving a fuck, you're really in trouble.

**AU: Absolutely. And we're kind of America's hat up here. We're watching what's going on down below. And it's something else right now, what we're seeing with government...**

S: Oh yeah! On top of the Corona crisis, Trump and then this incident. It is tragic. And it's sad what happened to America. But on the other side, I guess it's not a miracle that it happens, I guess it's been boiling for many years. When President Trump stuff comes close to one point, of course, it seems Trump really wants to divide the country. So he's playing on everything he can to to make people freak out. It's kind of crazy to see.

**AU: It is, and we are seeing an element of dividing the populace, and people forced to take sides. And sort of battle each other, and lose perspective on what is going on right in front of them.**

S: Yeah, you know, we live in Europe. It's a different background. All different history. America's history is based on racism. Of course, it's a hard topic. And I cannot really comment on this as a European because everything is going to happen that, I am gonna get bashed, because Europeans don't have the same background as Americans. So, I made it past schoolyard politics of other countries and don't love the bullshit. So, I keep my mouth shut and see what that happens in America right now.

**AU: Absolutely. Let's talk about your new record that's come out, *Born to Thrash: Live in Germany*, which you guys have done at Party San festival most recently, understanding that was kind of like an off-the-cuff recording. Can you tell us a bit about what made that show a special spot for you, why you want to record the live event there and why you want to kind of put that forward as a release?**

S: Actually, everything about this album is basically an accident. So, we never wanted to record this album. Because we never planned the live album. It was supposed to be on tour now with our last album, and then then COVID-19 came, it made everything shut down. We lost all our shows all our festivals, about 150 concerts that are gone - postponed. And we'll see you, we'll play them at the end of this year or next year. But yeah, we've gotten in trouble. But luckily, last summer we had one show recorded by a friend. That was his professional job, and he's like, specialized on live recording of bands. So was at the festival was recording some other bands, but he used to work for us as a sound engineer. And he did record our show without our permission. And he came to our dressing room afterwards and said, "Hey guys, I recorded your show and I want to give it to you as a gift to check out as a joke." And we were laughing about it, but he seriously recorded the gig and gave us the tapes basically, and then we get him hammered and have a good time and we put the show back in our pockets because never planned to do a live album.

And it was a great night, it was a great show, the band was tight, the crowd wild! And then COVID came and we said, "We are fucked! We have no income, no shows, what are we going to do?"

And then I kind of put this idea here, of the live album. But the decision to do a live album, is of course, normally more planned and you choose the set list right and everything like this didn't obviously happen. This is spontaneous as fuck! It was a great night, sounds good. You know, so we said, "Let's release it then." Also, the fans have no shows, you know, when something that just comes out so quick, basically mixes the album and kicks it out the door of streaming release right away - this is Corona time. We have to just think outside the box, at the label, and do it! Now the album comes out in July as a physical product, but now also streaming. It is this album that has basically made my last six, seven weeks very comfortable because that's given me something to do.

**AU: It's cool that you've had the ability to adapt in this environment and still keep rocking with your band.**

S: Yeah, of course it cannot replace the live show. Of course, it's just a record, but gave us a chance to connect with the fans and give us a little bit of a live kick. And for us, that was big and important because when you lose all the shows you have, you lose your income. It puts it all in perspective. It's kind of very frustrating. So, the live album kind of kept the frustration level away from us because we had productive things to do, we had stuff to do cover and everything. It was kind of a busy month.

Now the last weeks, we had a field team there that recorded our backstage environment for a



movie about the bands, that talk about the band. And that song team actually filmed the beginning of the show. First few songs. That's why we have only five cameras, but better than nothing else.

**AU: We were very happy to get the interview with you today. I think everyone has much time and respect for yourselves, Destruction, Kreator, the bands that came up in Germany, when Germany was divided. You were very much living it in this time. Do you feel like a there's a possible return to that feeling of the mid 80s to late 80s - do you do you feel the current world is kind of pushing us in this direction like... unrest?**

S: Definitely. Something's happening. I don't think it's in the right direction. People like UK have been leaving the European Union. And for me as a musician, European Union is a great thing. Because when I travel here, when a tour here, everything's open. It's basically like North America is almost no borders. And back in the day, we started touring and playing it was very difficult to got to all these countries, especially East Europe was taboo to go here, and even by going to Berlin back in the day. It's a big effort, because it is East Germany. And it was kind of weird times, the Cold War was knocking at the door all the time. And I knew Russia was doing a lot of threatening. We were kids. And now as I see it, we're falling apart again. We have some crazy leaders around the world that are not even thinking about the people, that are just thinking about themselves?

It is sad to see of course, at the end to me that's the cause of depression. So, there might filter down into music and lyrics again, those topics we've lived the last 30 years. So, I write about stuff like this, because we also have this punkish background since the 1980s.

**AU: And on that note, if you might have some advice to people that are motivated or inspired in the current world climate to make music?**

S: I think music should always be something that you do because you want it, not because you want to get famous and stuff. You know, I see this nowadays. Bands starting to play because you wanna get famous. But when we started, it was all about having fun, having a good time, and

making money with it would be something that we never expected to happen.

It happened because we were lucky, we were early, and heavy metal was just exploding at one point and with our new fans coming in. But I think music should always be passion. So, when you play music, don't make it for the fame - make it for the passion, make it for the fun you have, because music opens a lot of gates and music is kind of a saviour for many people. I won't be who I am without my music. I wouldn't be here. I guess I would have been insane or I don't know where I would be at. But yeah, music is a great gift to humanity. And I think it shows in time like this one. When you all were in lockdown, you know, music was a very important thing to keep the spirit. So, the advice I can give to young bands is, do your own thing and do it for the love of music and for the dedication you have. Don't do it for the money. That's the most important thing because then you also don't get disappointed if you don't make it up because we're living in a society where everybody wants to be bigger and better than the other one. But that shouldn't be the case in music.

**AU: That's an amazing sentiment and thank you for sharing that. Thank you so much for taking time to talk to Canada and your voice is going out to Canadians thrashers... any final words?**

S: Yeah, I mean, it's been a while since we played Victoria, it's time to come back there! Hopefully, we're actually planning a tour with the Canadian band called Voivod that you might know. And so hopefully we can come back with Voivod February next year for some shows in Canada also. Also Victoria, because we didn't play last year. I remember last time was great actually. But been some years! Hopefully, we will have Canadian band with us and it can be easier to come back to Victoria and see you all. Thanks for supporting metal and stay safe in those weird times!

[www.destruction.de](http://www.destruction.de)





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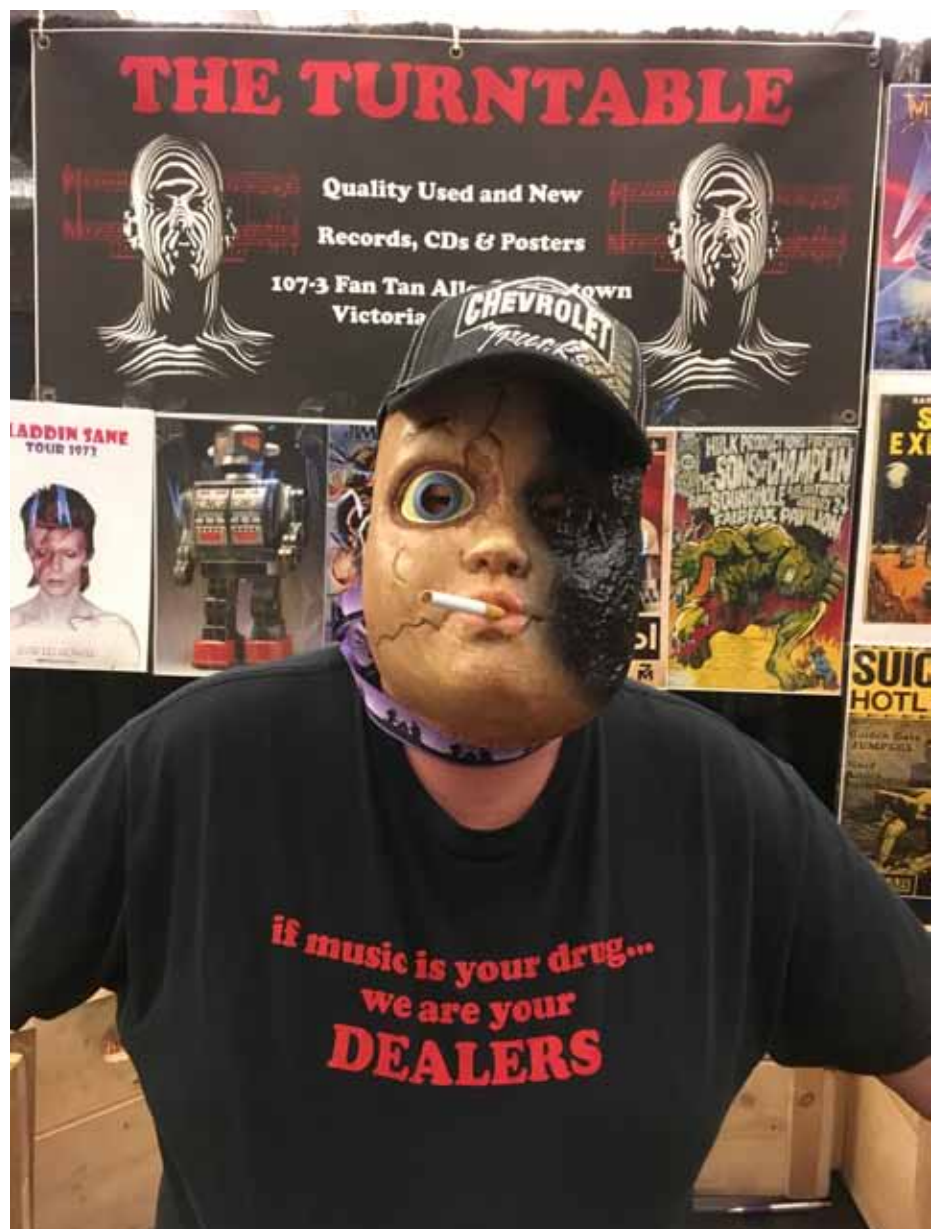


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## Black Pestilence

By Jon Asher

Originally published in Kanlı Teneke Metal Magazine

**Absolute Underground: Please tell us who you are from the band and what instrument you play?**

V: Valax: Bass and lead vocals.

**AU: Your sixth studio album *Hail The Flesh* was released on May 1st, for those who haven't heard it yet, how would you describe Black Pestilence's sound?**

V: A combination of black metal, thrash, punk rock, and noise.

**AU: How would you describe this new release compared to your previous ones for new fans unfamiliar with Canada's Black Pestilence?**

V: It is the most well-produced release as of yet. However, the song structures and atmosphere are quite similar to previous releases. This release also features a brand new line up with Daniel Toews on guitar and Davey Hellfire on drums. With these two new members in the band, they have helped bring Black Pestilence's sound to a new level.

**AU: Your lyrics touch on the topics of Satanism, what drew the band to write about this subject?**

V: Non-theistic Satanism is the most humanistic philosophy, in my opinion. Satanic philosophy has always supported ideas surrounding indulgence and earthly pleasures. These concepts are mentioned throughout *Hail the Flesh*. Nothing really drew me in to talk about it with the band. There are different aspects of the philosophy I want to speak about and this band allows a platform to do just that.

**AU: Black Pestilence toured Europe in 2016, which country was your most memorable tour show?**

V: The European tour we did in 2016 was very memorable as it was our first tour outside of

Canada. It's really hard to say which show or country was the most memorable as all shows on that tour were outstanding for different reasons. The very first show of the tour was in Bucharest, Romania. It was extremely memorable as it was the first performance for us outside of Canada. Two years after that show, Axa Valaha Productions, (the company which booked our first show in Bucharest) ended up bringing us back to Europe in 2018 for a three-week tour. The last show of our 2016 European tour was in Kruševac, Serbia. It was memorable as we had been on the road for the last few days with a Serbian black metal band named Kolac. We got along great with them and hope to return to the road with them in time.

**AU: With Coronavirus plaguing the world, what's your opinion on future touring? Will we be waiting until 2021? Can we expect a return of Black Pestilence in Europe?**

V: I don't see the world getting back to normal touring until at least summer or fall of 2021. Maybe underground shows with small venues might be willing to reopen in the fall of 2020 if the authorities allow for it. But in reality, I think for big and small venues, nothing will happen until 2021. We did have plans to return to Europe in December of 2020 to tour with Kolac. However, I don't think that will happen and see us pushing it to late spring 2021 at the very earliest.

**AU: Do you think Coronavirus was a natural evolution or are governments hiding in the shadow behind it? Conspiracy or natural reality?**

V: 100% natural evolution. Governments only want power and money. Getting people to self-isolate can be seen as a demonstration of power, but where is the money when the world shuts down?

**AU: If Coronavirus ended the world, where**



**would your last show be, what would be the last album you want to hear? What would be the last thing you want people to know about Black Pestilence?**

V: The last show for us would be right here in Calgary, AB, Canada. This is the city that made us. In the beginning, support was very difficult to gain for Black Pestilence. However, over the last few years, support has been tremendous for us here in our home city. If it wasn't for the support of Calgary, Black Pestilence would be very different today. The last thing I would want people to know about Black Pestilence would be that we stayed true to our music, no matter what.

**AU: If a Black Pestilence track was the cure for Coronavirus, which one would it be?**

V: "Carry on the Black Flame."

**AU: Can fans expect another album in the works already?**

V: No, not at all. We hope to continue to promote this album with extensive touring once the world opens up again.

**AU: Anything else you like to tell our readers about the band and your metal?**

V: *Hail The Flesh* is out now on all streaming and digital platforms. CDs and other merch are also available from our Bandcamp page.

[blackpestilence.bandcamp.com](https://blackpestilence.bandcamp.com)

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# Khemmis

## ***Tales from hallowed halls of wisdom, a resilient music community, and a nation on fire...***

***Erik Lindholm speaks with Ben Hutcherson – vocals/guitar***

### **Absolute Underground: My question to start is, how are you? Where are you?**

Ben Hutcherson: Yeah, so I'm sitting in my home office in the town where my wife and I live, just outside of Denver, Colorado. The question... simply considering how fucking crazy everything is right now... I'm doing surprisingly well. I mean, you know, the world is the fucking dumpster fire right now! So much of what's going on in my world is unprecedented and is alarming. But I can say that, you know, I'm safe and sound with my iPhone at home, I was actually just sitting down to watch a little bit of Metal Injection "Slay At Home" fest, which we are part of later today. But it just kicked off a little while ago, day two, just kicked off, it's a virtual sort of remote fest, with bands performing remotely and collaborating remotely.

And I think it's a good thing to be part of and for Metal Injection to put together. And I feel like now, for a lot of folks, even if it's just a few minutes of tuning out the world, and being in this community around heavy metal, and underground music broadly, I think that offers a much needed breath of fresh air. So, it's been nice to tune into that. We're not like totally tuned out the rest of the world - we need to know what's happening - but to find that balance between sort of news saturation, information overload and total withdrawal from society.

### **AU: For some of our readers who may be unfamiliar with you or the band, what are you all about?**

BH: I am the lead guitarist and co-vocalist, I do all the harsh vocals in Khemmis, the growls and screams and shouts and whatnot. Alongside my three brothers, Zack, Phil and Dan. And we play what I think is pretty easy to peg down at this point, given the title of our newest release, we play doomed heavy metal! If folks don't know it, imagine Iron Maiden trapped in a tar pit. You're on the right path. I recently saw someone describe us as Candlemass started an old school death metal band. I like that one too. That gets added in a different way. But, we don't tend to play super fast. But we do try to play heavy and emotive music. So that's our jam.

### **AU: That sounds amazing. I'd be curious to know a bit of your origin story, read briefly in an Orange Amps interview that you met and formed the band while in a Ph.D program. Can you discuss what program you're in and what the impression has been for your academic colleagues? How did those two worlds mesh as it is?**

BH: Yeah. That's a good question. So yeah, Phil and I met eight years ago now, a year ago this August, when my wife and I moved out to Colorado to get our PhDs. We'd been living in North Mississippi at the time. I was teaching at the University of Mississippi, and had finished my Master's degree there a couple of years earlier. And I met her she was finishing her Master's degree. And we decided we were going to get the hell out of the South. So we came out to Colorado and Phil was one of the first people I met, but was actually the, one of the last people to come on board in Khemmis. He'd never been in a band before so he didn't have a kind of resume. A lot of times when you are trying to put together a band, form a band, you can say, "Here are the albums I've played on", or you can look up someone on like *Metal Archive*. But Phil had only been in a Judas Priest cover band in high school for like, a few weeks. We hit it off really well when we first met. The first time we jammed, it makes me laugh to recount it – he didn't have any band experience and I was a little bit hesitant to go down that path. We went to get together one night at the Khemmis practice space. And we each set up two half stack amps and we cracked open a case of Coors Banquet and we jammed for, three or four hours. I mean, it was the it was the



musical equivalent of love at first sight. And so it's awesome.

I talked to the guys in the band the next day. They asked, "Is this guy you're jamming with a good fit?" and I laughed and said, "Oh, I already told him he was in the band and so we can chat with him but I think it's kind of a done deal." Fortunately, you know, everybody was totally on board.

As for the connection with academia, it's weird, to be a musician at all, I suppose. But it's weird to be a musician and in a fairly stigmatized music world like heavy metal, and people might assume that the academia is open-minded about everything - but the reality is that it's filled with human beings and some of them are more open minded than others. Much the same way that there are some people in academia that are more open to various topics of research.

And so, especially because I was teaching 18 to 22 year olds for the most part, I didn't ever want them to know anything about me. And for a long time that was possible, because no band I'd ever played in really did much. You'd really dig around for a long time. If you googled my name, the first thing that came up was my grandfather, a black Baptist preacher that lived in Kentucky... But as Khemmis has gotten bigger, there was a point where I had to sort of accept the fact that, "Yeah, okay, now if you google me, you find me, it's not hard to find me." And that was weird for a while, but I think part of it too, is just you get older and you stop giving a shit.

So, I quit teaching for my full time job, just over a year ago, and you know, we'll still pick up, you know, online classes at community colleges, whatever, when we're not touring or anything, which is good given the current circumstances. During the last semester when I was teaching at the University of Colorado, a friend of mine had come across a tweet... one of my students had found out who I am, they're like, "Holy shit. My professor plays heavy metal." And then over the course of the semester, they would be times where I put a quiz up on the projector, and they would use their phones to sort of log in and answer and they had to create names, and students who put things like "Khemmis" or "Flying V". And I had to respond like "I know you think you're being clever, but like, I know who I am. So you're not surprising me." I think that once you're mentioned by *Rolling Stone*, I think you have to sort of give up any imagined level of anonymity and for better, or for worse, just be aware that people know things about me and be cognizant of the things I say and do in the public eye and then - who gives a shit?

### **AU: Somewhat unsurprisingly, playing in obscure heavy metal bands is not great for attracting money, women or material success. So often people have two careers and it's always fascinating how they blend, so I appreciate you giving an academic's perspective on it.**

BH: Yeah, it's it's interesting that you asked that. My dissertation, which I'm actually finishing up right now, which I will defend, in a few months here - One of the chapters, broadly is on the Denver underground and the sort of contemporary state of underground music.

But people fall in love with the kinds of views that they fall in love with, how they incorporate participation, that music world, into their concept of self. I have a chapter on how professional musicians or lifers make it happen in 2020, when we're not selling millions of albums, and we're not, playing to 20,000 30,000 screaming fans every night. The reality is that, even for people that get all of their income from the music industry, very rarely are they making it from just one facet. You know, yes, you're playing with your own working

band. You're also booking at a local club, or you're also the artist rep for some company, or any number of things. And it's been really interesting to think about that both academically and as someone who does that. Someone who, cobbles together a living in the gig economy, for the sake of being a creative, for the sake of living a life, that seems to make sense. And I think it's interesting, from my perspective, but also because I think a lot of people still assume that if you have a million streams on Spotify, or you've gotten a certain amount of press coverage, that you're rolling in the money. And that just couldn't be farther from the truth.

### **AU: I personally would be stoked to read your dissertation. So maybe in the distant or near future, if you want to free it up, let us know.**

BH: Yeah, that's, so that's certainly part of a longer term plan. And, generally in academia, you take a dissertation and turn it into an academic publication to get tenure. At this point, my goal is to configure in such a way that I can get it published by more mainstream sort of trade publication, because I think that although some people have zero interest in the sort of cultural theory that underlined a lot of it, I think that it's important that people in heavy metal see themselves in academic work and understand that their experiences are not just valid, but are important sources of data.

And that the idea of having a life that is scientifically valid is something that's foreign to a lot of people. But the reality is, and I always used to tell my students this, everyone life is full of interesting data. And just because you don't think your story is interesting, doesn't mean it isn't part of a bigger, interesting story. And I certainly hope that, as I take the dissertation and turn it into a book, that would be the response to that people who read it. The stories that people in or around the Colorado underground, their stories ring true for people. They are about why we love this music and why, for those of us that make this music, why we do it in spite of not making any money, that we are compelled to do it because we, we have to do what we love - otherwise, we feel like we're not living the life we're supposed to live.

### **AU: What is your impression on touring for all bands, with the COVID 19 virus... how is that looking for your immediate band plans?**

BH: I mean, I think it's all been assumed by everyone in the music industry that live music is dead this year. There's some conversation around drive in concerts, but I think that might work for major artists, your sort of Ed Sheerans, or your pop stars. But, you know, for anything lower than that, I don't see that being feasible for any number of reasons. And so that leaves an industry, not just the musicians, but support staff and label staff, and venue owners everything scrambling trying to figure out what we do for at least a year.

We have a European tour in March, it's the rescheduled series of dates from this past spring, we should have been over in Europe, around the time of Desertfest. We were going to be headlining the Underground stage at Desertfest and of course, that didn't happen because of COVID-19. And when it got rescheduled a year out, we thought, "Oh, you know, that's so far down the road. Everything will be fine by then." And now, there's a lot of concern that even by them, if there's not serious headway on a vaccine and widespread availability to it, even the spread of the disease is somewhat under control - you can't expect bands to get on a closed metal can and fly for 12 to 16 hours with a couple hundred strangers.

One of my best friends is immunocompromised and he's fucking terrified. His wife's terrified you know, all it would take you someone being an asymptomatic carrier and could straight up kill him - at 31!

So, with all of those sort of concerns, there are two options. There's the option of just being dishonest and giving up. But, what I've been really impressed by is, you know, not just heavy metal here, but there's been this push to figure out how we live in this world where live music is not an option, for at least a while. And I mentioned earlier the Metal Injection "Slay At Home" thing, Clutch and Crowbar just did a remote concert a couple of days ago. Code Orange did their record release at a venue with a lighting designer and professional sound and did it online. It had, tens

of thousands of people watching.

And I know that that's not satisfying for really any of us - because I don't relish being in front of a camera instead of people. But if my options are play in a studio with cameras, and fans can watch and still feel some kind of connection and still get some kind of relief - or nothing? Then I'm always going to take the less than ideal option. And it's been really amazing to see a lot of artists being willing to make that decision because, of course, we would rather be on a stage.

But as much as we do this, because we need to create, we need to feel this music being channelled through us. I think we all recognize either explicitly or implicitly, that we owe something to our fans. And we are all fans too, you know. When you start playing heavy metal, or any kind of music, you do it because you already love that kind of music. And I think that feeling that you owe that to the fans, is a recognition of that relationship that this music world doesn't exist without fans and without artists, and then the power that you'll feel at a concert when you're on stage, or when you're in front of the stage, of meeting the other party halfway, is really creating those special shows.

We can do something that at least approximates that remotely, until we can get back to whatever the new normal is gonna look like. And we just have to figure out how to make that sustainable. You know, people balk at the idea of paying for virtual concert. Much the same way, a lot of people still balk at the idea of paying for music. And then, lamenting the fact that their favourite musicians are, as you pointed out, struggling to take time off from their job to make 50 bucks a night. So, we have to move to the place where the fans and the artists, really have to work together to make whatever this new version of bands performing is, becomes something that's sustainable and satisfying. And I don't think we're quite there yet.

You know, I do feel hopeful. In spite of the fact that so many things are bad, rather than giving up and feeling defeated, we're working on getting some of this stuff out. We're figuring out ways to keep some kind of live entertainment happening, to keep that connection going with the fans. And hopefully it will be more than enough to tide us over until hopefully next year, when we can all get back to some version of seeing rock and roll in person.

### **AU: Doomed Heavy Metal was thought out quite rapidly, within our current confines, it's a bit of a reactionary release, given what's going on?**

BH: I mean, the funny thing about releasing anything is that you never anticipate what the world's gonna look like, when it all comes together. I mean, in this case, two of the songs were recorded back in 2017. The newest piece of music on here is "Rainbow in the Dark," which we recorded in August of last year. So fuck me, we had no idea the world would be as upside down as it is. It's about our love for rock n' roll and heavy metal. We've talked about this elsewhere. But that ZZ Top's *Fandango* is the sort of model that we used in putting this release together. And that's, a left of center release from ZZ Top, because it's not a traditional studio album. It's a collection of rare singles, live cuts. But it's cool, because it feels like... less of the music industry... I suppose, in some ways. Like, you came out on a label, yes. But it feels like it's the sort of embodiment of an appreciation for what the music is, and what it means to people. Both the ones creating it and the ones experiencing it. And I mean, that's how we were thinking about doing *Doomed Heavy Metal* the entire time. We just wanted to put something out, as with any album we want to put on there that we're proud of, and that we would listen to, but had a decided fun factor to it, and had, you know, really feel like those kinds of in-between releases we used to get in the 70s and 80s. Between big albums, you'd get a collection of singles, or a seven inch, or something from your favourite band to tide you over and keep you excited about it. And it feels like that has sort of fallen by the wayside in a lot of ways.

There's like weird fetishism for records where people collect every vinyl variant and then lock them away in a temperature controlled part of their house. It's like... "Hey! Put the fucking record on and listen to it!"

**Continued on next page...**



# Khemmis

**AU: Yeah, I know the type of guys you're talking about when they got the orange seven inch single and it's worth \$700 because it's a Japan pressing, and quality is better...**

BH: Yeah, I mean, to be fair, you know what people do with their time and money is what they do. But the way that I have always thought about music is that it is meant to be experienced. Something is meant to be shared. And that is, the reason it matters to me is that it brought me together with people that I love. Music was at the heart of when my wife and I first fell in love. It's at the heart of my relationship with my parents, my brother, all my best friends, my bandmates. Music matters in so many ways, aside from the idea of it as a commodity, or an extension of like, work in a sort of workplace.

And we weren't necessarily thinking about all the things in an explicit manner when we, put this release together. But I think that it's all tied up is all about our love for this music and for music in general.

And the fact that the world is on fire as it comes out and that "Rainbow in the Dark" happens to feel very salient is... I would say a happy accident. But I almost I don't want to say that, because I wish the circumstances were different. I was just people being stoked that we covered Dio and not that it felt the musically relevant given the time, but I don't have control over that. If anything, I do feel a lot of pride in the fact that people are finding some solace in this release that, the fun... I mean, we do take what we do seriously - but there's just enough of a wink and a nod. There's enough of an appreciation of everything that heavy metal is - that when people put this record on, it gives them 35 minutes to just sit outside of their own concerns, and table the bullshit of the world around them.

Find a little piece, and maybe as they are thinking about the show they aren't seeing, the band they aren't getting to catch live, and it's reminding them that's going to come back. The community is going to be there. And I think that remembering the community exists - is super important for all of us right now. And anything that we can do to be part of that process, we are happy, we are more than happy to be part of.

**AU: That's a great sentiment. Appreciate you sharing that. Everybody's trying to adapt right now. And trying to figure out just how strong the culture of whatever sub genre you want to pick - is- in a time when you can't assemble for health reasons, and you can't assemble now for economic reasons. It's all reshaping. And it's questioning, how strong is your desire to to live this way? Or experience your culture this way? You're gonna let it die? Or you're gonna find a new way. It's inspiring, seeing what's, what's going on. Even this magazine that we're talking to, right now, in this conversation. We're a paper based magazine, we come out every two months in print. But our, bread and butter is advertising, and the advertising comes from bars throwing gigs and labels promoting new albums. Well, right now, nobody doing no gigs. So we shifted it up, going to a digital .PDF model right now. And we always do those anyways. But now it's strictly digital because we don't have the advertising and it's all different. You got to keep printing though. Well, in my opinion you do otherwise... your voice disappears.**

BH: Yeah, absolutely. yeah, I periodically write for a publication out here that does live music previews. A monthly calendar of things coming up. I'm the metal guy there. And the publication's dead for all intents and purposes, because, there's nothing - there's no circulation. There's no, like you're saying, there's no ad revenue. And like, it's

fucking rough man, you know, what happens, especially for this publication where I'm the metal guy, but they have like five people that write about jam bands?

I do it, thankfully I am in a position where like, there is no single stream of income for me, aside from being in the band, I suppose, but anything outside of that, no single stream is necessarily life or death.

But so many people are full time writers and the difference between putting their kids in new shoes or whatever is having a couple pieces in that publication every month. And it's fucking scary to be fair.

I'm really glad to hear that y'all are able to move to .PDF and to keep this conversation going because I think that one of the worst things that could happen from all this is to see music journalism, in any and all forms, impaired or destroyed because it's so important to remember that not everybody is constantly hip to everything that's coming out. Not everybody is, reading every email from every label. They're not on email chains from PR organizations - music journalism is what connects most people to the world of music. And without it... most people don't know what the fuck is going on even with their favourite band. I certainly hope that the transition is able to be effective for y'all.

**AU: Yeah, I think so.**

BH: And it's weird, weird, world out there. But as we were kind of covering earlier.

You don't get into metal or punk rock for the money, women and fame. And if you do, I'm fascinated to hear how that's working for you. But we're here because we like it. We're here because we like it and its interesting. So hopefully that persists.

**AU: Nobody's getting rich on running a Canadian free punk rock magazine. And if they are, I want to know how.**

BH: Yup! (laughs)

**AU: We've covered a lot. The only other thing is a pointed question. We touched on in a lot of ways. We've got riots in the States right now, Minneapolis. Atlanta. There's just a lot going on. We're watching up here in Canada. We're relatively untouched, but we're all connected. It's a lot to makesense of.**

BH: Like I was saying, like, a couple months ago, we couldn't fathom living through a pandemic. And it's not like the underlying, causes of these riots are brand new. The violence of law enforcement against people of colour has been well documented for more than half a century in sociological research. It's tied up in the history of the institution. And, in so many ways, like I feel like now - I'm gonna be careful how I say this - because, really now, it makes the most sense to me. The government: at the federal level, and in many cases at the state, and even city level - has failed the working class. Not today, not yesterday, but for decades, for generations. And, there is a breaking point, I think, there's a breaking point. People

in the government, the elite in America, assumed would never come. And they seem to be so surprised that the working class and people of colour would be would be fed up. And, I don't know, how all of this is going to shake out.

But in many ways, I feel optimistic. If it takes rioting, and it takes people being in the streets and it takes burning down buildings to fix generation upon generation of institutionalized practices that discriminate and disenfranchise and prevent people from living honourable, happy, healthy lives, and that's what it takes. And, you know, I more than a lot of people, identify as a pacifist and would prefer that non-violence always be the answer. Whatever it takes to get people the honour and respect they deserve, to get the ability to lead a life - even when we are talking about music - I recognize the importance of having a community. I have a privilege in saying that, I can put on music and feel connection to those around me, and not feel in fear of my life from law enforcement or my neighbours calling the cops on me because my music is too loud. I don't have that concern. And I recognize that is a unique position for me to be in. And I would hope against hope, that a world is possible and within reach that everyone can live like that. It shouldn't be a big deal, and yet it is. It shouldn't be a big deal to go bird-watching, which is in many ways the most mundane thing I can imagine, but yet if you are a man of colour, all it takes is one woman calling the cops on you. I don't want to turn this into too heavy a sociopolitical diatribe, but I'm saying, as much as I appreciate people telling me that our music is giving them some hope or solace, I recognize that you have to be in a particular place to experience that. And for a lot of people, for whom, things have become so unbearable that there is no song, no album, that is going to soften the pain and lift them out. It's going to take real change.

In that kind of case, I would hope as a musician, that our music or the idea of music in general - it won't fix everything - but it would remind people that we are all people, and to remind all people to be compassionate and empathetic, and that every though people's experiences aren't yours, they aren't any less valid. And to recognize that whatever kind of world we are going to have post COVID-19, so many of these other problems aren't going to have magically gone away. That vaccine will help. But we need to be thinking bigger, more compassionately, and working together with people outside our community of heavy metal and we also need to be more inclusive in the world of heavy metal.

I'll sum it up like this... I did an interview a while ago where someone asked me, "why does it seem like heavy metal gets snubbed by mainstream press, by the Grammys, by things like that?" and I ask "do you want that mainstream acceptance? Do we need validation from others?" I think we need to find validation from the community by finding what heavy metal is supposed to be. In my mind, the promise of heavy metal, when I was kid and discovered it, was a world where I could be myself and find people like me. Where I could live more or less without judgment, as long as I wasn't



being a piece of shit. And find a place of peace where I could learn and grow into a better version of myself. I think that is something everyone deserves. I don't think everyone needs to listen to heavy metal, rather stop worrying about what the press or academics say about us, and instead be the best version of this music that we could. That maybe we could affect a lot more change and make this world less shitty than we currently do. Whether that happens, who knows. That is not so impossible a goal, for us as a community.

**AU: Really, a wonderful goal, you said it succinctly.**

BH: Thank you.

**AU: It's been a hell of an interview. Last words to these Canadian busy beavers reading this publication:**

BH: Keep supporting heavy metal. Buy albums. Buy t-shirts. If you can, from the artist that you love. To make sure they can keep making the music that matters to all of us, when all of this is over. A very real possibility for a lot of bands, is having to leave this music world in a way they can't pick it back up the next year or year after. And that would be a real shame. And at the same time, the economic support aside - check in with your friends in the music world. Whether they are bands, fans, roadies, techs and work at venues or whatever. There is quite a bit of research about the prevalence of mental health issues in the music industry at large, especially with musicians. I've struggled with mental illness myself. I've been in therapy, medication. So I don't live in that dark place. But I know that is not on the table for a lot of other people. So check in with the people you know and love. Remind them they matter. Remind yourself you matter! As important it is for your favourite bands to come back from this, we can't do it without our fans. I don't want to do it without you, and play shows to empty rooms. Take care of yourselves mentally and physically and I really do believe together we can all make it through this. Whatever the world looks like, we have to cobble together when we get through this, its a hell of a lot easier the more hands are involved.

- ERIK LINDHOLM

**khemmisdoom.com**





# SASQUATCH BROTHERS

by Matt Norris

I was thinking about ways to piss people off again (as usual).

Take for example, a “True Slayer fan”. Loud, boisterous and proud! All good right ? As he /she plays their favorite Slayer song in pure horns raised glory, ruin the moment by blurting out “This isn’t too bad for being a Bon Jovi song”. Mutter under your breath “It sounds like Winger or some shit like that, glam rock garbage”. The madder they get that you are wrong the more you insist it sounds like weak pop rock to you, then once again insist it sounds borderline religious.

Tell a music enthusiast Motörhead sings the song Back in Black and it’s beyond obvious because it sounds just like their other song Highway to Hells Bells or what the fuck ever. Before they can speak say, “It doesn’t really matter anyway, Limp Bizkit is by far the

best black metal artist in history” and “It’s a fact that there are no satanic underlying messages in heavy metal music and there never was”.

Insist Adele sings for Arch enemy and Twisted Sister was the first ever mixed ethnic all female lesbian disco group.

And yes Ice-T sang for Black Sabbath, true story .

Rob Halford has a girlfriend, and the most famous Judas Priest albums were Jugulator and Demolition.

Blaze Bailey was the best bass player iron Maiden ever had.

Best pop punk band of all time, Kreator.

Most popular and evil hardcore band of all time, you guessed it because it’s fucking obvious,

Nickelback

Anyone asks you who the Big Four are, you tell them, Krokus, W.A.S.P., Cinderella, and Britney Fox.

Tell a metal head the best styles of music are new country and auto tuned hip-hop.

Compare bands that shouldn’t be compared. Testament sounds just like... Warrant, but with a shittier drummer (ouch). Deicide sounds like a slowed down Tool, thankfully.

Ministry is and always was an unpolitical boy band, one of the best, a perfect representation of the polo culture and admired by critics worldwide as a band for the American way.

Ratt were just Mötley Crüe with better songs.

Stryper, you guessed it, were and

still are Slayer in disguise (like I said religious activists).

Glenn Danzig finally admitted he’s Elvis.

Dave Mustaine and Tom Araya became servants of God after years of psychosis, drug use and prominent attempts at misguided Satanism.

Syd Barrett, Sid Vicious and Sidney Crosby started a band called Axe Syd Entally. All songs written on acid about LSD and acid, and or being dipped in acid. The album is called “Influential Instrumentals about LSD and H “Love Sex Death and Hockey “

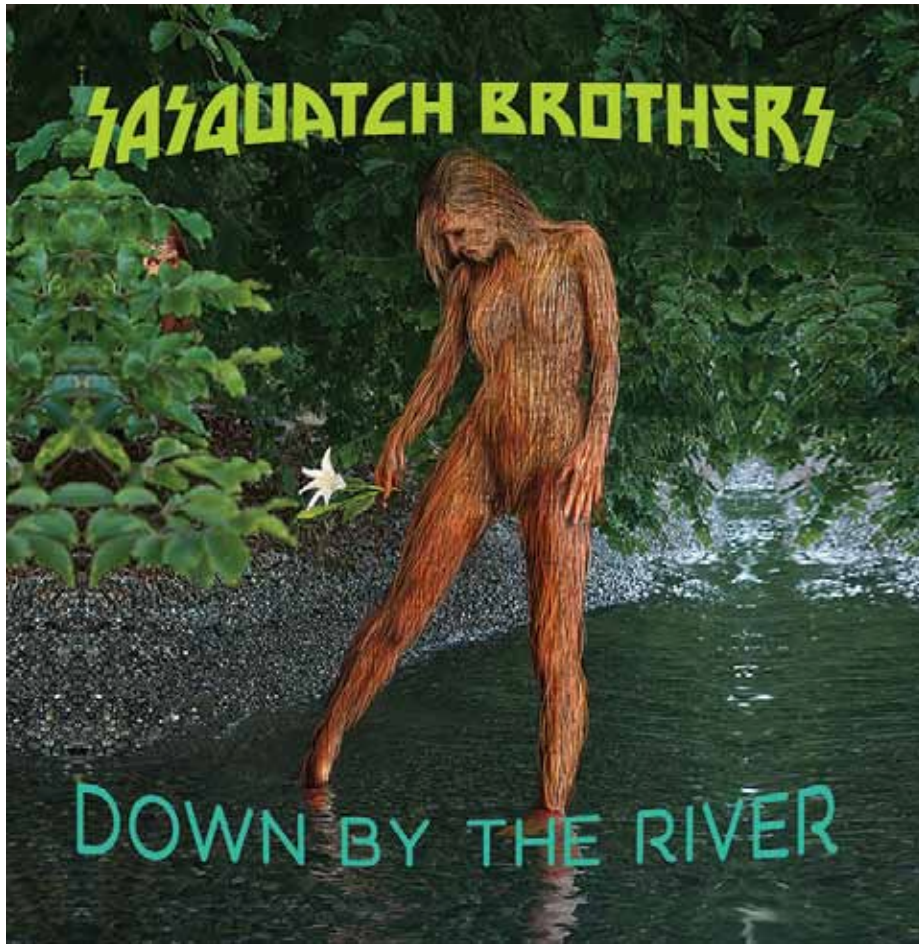
You want to piss of a metal head tell them SASQUATCH BROTHERS are the greatest metal band of all time.

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# The Holzer Files

By Ed Sum



\* Renewed for season two, due late 2020.

The Holzer Files is a strange little paranormal reality show with over-the-top post production that overshadows everything else. These inserts have more of the feel of reviving the golden oldies—the stuff you hear on radio—than getting serious about the matter. When considering you're listening to old tape recordings of trance mediums from the original case files of Hans Holzer channeling their best version of Kane, the malevolent preacher in the 1986 movie *Poltergeist II: The Other Side*, I can't take this program seriously.

Holzer rose to prominence in the 60s. He's best known for studying The Amityville House haunting and no, he's not the father of the paranormal. That honour goes to Loyd Auerbach. Respectable names in this

industry also include William James and J.B. Rhine. Whether you want to believe certain individuals the real deal or not, apparently Darkness Radio personality Dave Schrader vouches for the self trained Austrian-American parapsychologist. When the DJ is not behind the microphone, he's in the forefront and leading medium Cindy Kaza, tech support Shane Pittman and researcher Gabe Roth into situations to validate if some haunts are still ongoing or not.

Unleashing these "skeletons in the closet" isn't always the best. Sometimes, it's best to leave them be. "A Grave Revenge" revisits the Whaley House, and while most people claim to know everything they want to about this very famous haunt, the only saving grace this show has is that it digs up something new past documentaries have not unveiled. "The Haunting of Lambert Castle" is one of the better episodes by a smidgen.

Not everyone will agree with Schrader's methods, and some viewers may find him abrasive—hard on the living and dead in how he handles investigations. He has a huge presence which shows he's loving celebrity status rather than taking his studies seriously. There is also a questions as to whether or not using mediums is helpful. In every new paranormal reality TV program that emerges, an unfamiliar person with the sixth sense is revealed. We don't hear from well-established personalities anymore because they've passed. Sadly, they have not shared their wisdom to the next generation to carry on particular legacies. Whether we want to believe the visions Chip Coffey, Sylvia Browne or Edgar Cayce has, that's besides the point. Kaza is a beautiful fresh face who looks like she should belong to a fashion magazine.

Travel Channel wants to be a destination for all things scary. I've noticed they don't always put legal disclaimers that their programming is for entertainment. They don't always say what they're promoting is paranormal tourism. Besides, do we want to visit to validate the attacks are for real?

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# Ulcerate

By Erik Lindholm

...from the southern shores of New Zealand, drummer Jamie Saint Merat describes a shift in sound for the deathly trio...



**Absolute Underground: Greetings! How are you, where are you? What is the last thing you ate/had to drink?**

JSM: Coffee, black.

**AU: Stare Into Death And Be Still is the title of the newest record. Can you please take us through some of the themes you wished to explore lyrically and musically in the album?**

JSM: This album marks a line in the sand for us in terms of exploring a deeper, darker and more melodic sound. We've stripped away almost all of the dissonance and obfuscation that we've come to be known for and focused intently on making music for this band that represents us as individuals and where our heads are at creatively. Thematically, this album is an exploration of the horror of passively witnessing death's grip slowly

and methodically take those closest to you. Staring into the void, yet being powerless to halt the advance - the sombreness of loss, and the finality of death's energy.

**AU: What was a moment of learning coming out of the recording process that you'd like to share with our readers. A piece of gear, recording technique, mind-altering thought...**

JSM: I'd say for us it was once we were three songs deep into the writing process when things really began to gel in terms of the creative direction. Writing all of a sudden became effortless and we started to gain a real feel for what was intrinsically powerful material. The first round of pre-production on the album also brought to light what kind of an album we had on our hands, which was somewhat surprising how strongly we were executing the vision - something we weren't sure of in the early months as we were finding our feet.

**AU: What a completely breathtaking video in "Dissolved Orders"... incredible. Can you walk us through the concept, and an interpretation of it?**

JSM: The concept is an extension of the overarching theme of the album as discussed earlier - the palpable sense of horror in slowly witnessing death wash over those you hold dear.

Drawn into the next void... There's also key lines in the song that are obvious references for what we're doing visually here, as well as pure audio-visual mood explorations. The visual aesthetic was established up-front - working with visionary artist Dehn Sora has been an utterly perfect collaboration, both him and I were in each other's thoughts with this work, and it was surreal to witness everything coming together piece-by-piece.

We talked at length about film and mood

references, as well as pacing and cutting styles, and how a black and white execution would be the only way forward. I actually gave him a very specific scene from Jonathon Glazer's *Under the Skin*, which absolutely conveyed the atmosphere I was envisioning. Then seeing how he interpreted this was incredible - I wasn't sure how we'd be able to pull this off, but it's actually turned out better than I had ever hoped for.

**AU: What has been your best advice for surviving during this time of social isolation?**

JSM: Can't say I have any, everyone's situations are so vastly different. The three of us in the band have been able to continue our day jobs working from home, but for example my wife had her work severed immediately (she's in film, the whole industry globally came to a grinding halt).

**AU: Are there some cover songs which make it into your live sets? What would be a song you'd like to cover live?**

JSM: No real interest in covers from our side, unfortunately.

**AU: How does it look in New Zealand currently for live music, within the current confines of COVID-19 outbreak and world halt? How is your band, and local scene, keeping up?**

JSM: New Zealand went into immediate level four lockdown in March, so everything was put on hold for months. As of today, we are now more or less back to normal at level 1. So for us, we'll be announcing our first NZ shows for the year. In terms of our local scene, we're a little out of the loop with things over here to be honest, but I'd imagine everyone is in

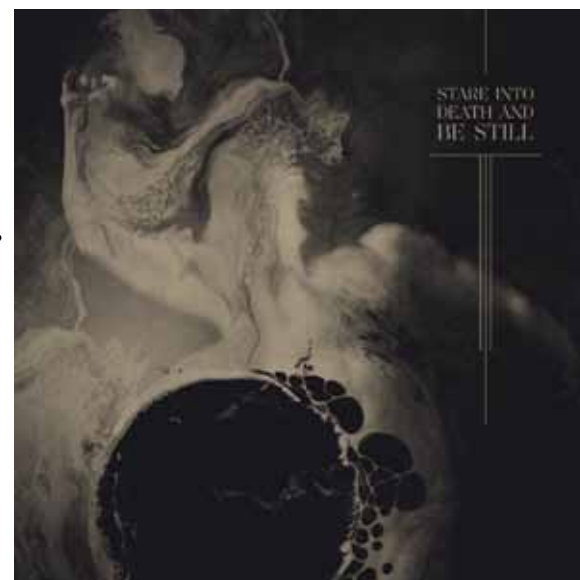


the exact same boat - hungry for live music and ready to start booking shows and tours.

**AU: Last words to faithful busy Canadian beavers amidst the plague times, of social unrest?**

JSM: Thank you for the support

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# Absolute Album Reviews



## Atavistia - The Winter Way Independent

Taking the epic approach to melodic styled death metal, this second album doesn't flinch one bit. All the tracks apart from the dramatic intro are well over the five-minute mark as they use every second to impress with symphonic excess.

Think Wintersun meets Dimmu Borgir on the crushing track "The Atavistic Forest" which travels through huge spellbinding sections on a quest to leave the listener wide-eyed and shaken. "Through the Hollow Ravens Eyes" attacks at first light with killer blast beats and spewing out folk-metal elements overtop the crashing metal riffage bringing to mind ancient Viking chants and thunderous waves as the guitars chug with fury.

Overall, an impressive and mega thorough approach to a sophomore record where many complexities could have sunk it entirely but instead this seven track monument of epicness rises above the churning destruction, offering up notable contributions to the genre-

Dan Potter



## Auroch - Stolen Angelic Tongues 20 Buck Spin

Heavy and lumbering death metal played in the old school tradition is what this band is all about. They don't stray from the hammer smashing face heft of chugging riffs and stereo assaulting screams, which leads to a massive and intense sound. "Carving the Axis Mundi" detonates with inverted guitar spasms, like Beethoven came back from the dead with a lust for human blood drinking. "Coffin Nails" takes the whiplash insanity of Hate Eternal and puts it to good use by spewing utter un-holiness as tormented screams and possessed shredding warn you the gates holding the abandoned are ready to break open.

This is a pretty seething five track release from the Vancouver based group who searches for spiritual rebellion with great success.

-Dan Potter



## Demise of the Crown - Life in the City Independent

Epic riffs cranked to devastation slam down the competition on "Dying Heat" where groovy tech-death guitars meet power metal vocals that wail like a giant tidal wave sucking out the tide to feed its massive

height.

Doomed atmosphere spreads like a killer virus on "Gatekeeper" but the lyrics "Gatekeeper, good luck in keeping me out," speak of a coming fight that will prove who holds the strongest steal. The vocals on this track are super thick and the screeches are made of flames which helps cook up some further top notch guitar shred that arrives late but is a much welcomed gift. Drama reaches a peak on "The Immortal" where its simple chorus is instantly memorable and its guitar solo will go down in infamy.

This Quebec group of metalheads keep their circle of influences tight, never veering into territory unfamiliar to them. It pays off as the strength shines through like a nuclear detonation.

-Dan Potter



## Gridfailure - Sixth Mass Extinction Skulduggery II Nefarious Industries

Horror sounds overwhelm on "No Defensive Wounds to be Found," as the dense and incomprehensible sound collage spirals from dissonance to cacophonies of deleted excess. "Invoke Collapse" plays out with industrial beats and haunting sound delusions reminiscent of NIN most recent work.

This album features a lot of underground music collaborators so quite a number of twisted minds went into creating the oscillations of sonic madness. A rainstorm serves as an introduction on "Rapid Intensification," before tribal drumming and burning transistors wreak havoc on your search for inner peace.

Fifteen tracks in all, this is a very contemplative trip, kind of like a train ride through the subconscious while dying. A little bit of struggling guitar makes its way to the surface on album closer "Irma" leading to a deep confounding feeling.

-Dan Potter



## Heron - Time Immemorial Sludgelord Records

Copious amounts of fuzz encase the fuzzy doom riffs as tales of doom are belted out with extreme alleyway screaming. "Long In The Tooth" lingers just long enough to shimmy off a piece of your bones as its siren guitar calls and over-saturated main riffs search for nutrients to abuse.

Furious chugging descends bringing a dark mist of dread upon the proceedings with "Death on the Malahat" where death metal grooves are forced to prop up demented sludge guitars. Blast-beats turn things into a shit-show as the aggression gets out of control while high-pitched screaming make the horrors all too real. "Void Eater" is a dynamic tune that has cool stompbox sounds that compliment the unsettling wails coming from the lead screamer who

must have been head-banging like crazy while tracking this scorcher.

These veterans of the low end are aging very nicely, like a fine tar pit.

-Dan Potter



## Jupiter Hollow - Bereavement Independent

A genre-hopping band, they start things off with a fleet fingered acoustic guitar ballad that is very romantic sounding followed up with a piano ballad that is like Mars Volta and Queen somehow got together.

Old school prog-rock takes center stage for "The Rosedale" as highly melodic lines blast into thundering palm-muted jaggedness. Layering strong modern singing overtop some King Crimson influenced polyrhythms is done with expert precision that seems to contradict these guys young age. "Kipling Forest" lets loose some jolting Djent with reams of complex riffs and guttural screams that are designed to pummel you to a flattened pancake.

The myriad array of influences found on this album shows the years of dedication this duo has logged in their pursuit of heavy metal perfection. An excellent collection of tracks in its own right, I can't wait for what the future holds for Jupiter Hollow.

-Dan Potter



## Killitorous - The Afterparty Tentacles Industries

With an insane amount of awesome special guests this hilariously-named group waste no time in spilling your fucking guts all over the carpet. Mericless only begins to explain the sonic onslaught of "Married with Children"; it's like a soundtrack to a decapitation spree.

"Eat your God Alive" has some seriously sick guitar riffs, talk about technical death metal, perhaps its better to call this technical death metal for enraged cyborgs. The flurry of vocal gore is as repulsive as it is cleansing, slam approved pig squeals mingle with accelerant covered demon screeches and the brutality reigns supreme.

This album takes its brutal vision and sees it through right to the end like on "Re Anima Tomatron" where the break neck pace and vicious time changes will leave you wondering where in hell you were sent and what you did to get there. The unreal has been made real on this sophomore recording, be warned.

-Dan Potter



## Underer - The Code Nefarious Industries

Mad sounds swirl with the mayhem threatening to pull you under on the raging track "Lady." Untamed blast-beats and a kitchen sink full of odd musical parts coalesce to produce a very imaginative sound that is full of jaggedness that sticks out funny, reaching to poke your eyes out if you aren't careful.

Symphonic movements of weird jazz come out of the mist of angular hardcore guitar driven bulk as the experimentalism reaches peak obsessive-compulsive disorder. "Steven" charges out and punches you straight in the face with scattering rhythms meant to grind bones to dust. Howling screams are the only discernible human element as everything else is robotic and random.

These are some really interesting songs that almost have a collage like feel to them. Clearly this artist doesn't give a damn about your thrash metal record collection, this is pure self-indulgence of the highest kind but it's worth having a peek.

-Dan Potter

## Disavowed - Revocation Of The Fallen Brutal Mind

What do you get when you cross one part old school Unique Leader, another part mid 2000s technical metal wizardry, and melt it all down into a re-vamped, re-defined metal slab synthesis of immaculate brutal technical death metal? Well my friends, what you get is the brand new Disavowed album *Revocation of the Fallen*. Yes, this album dropped out of the sky like an H-Bomb and is easily album of the year so far for me. Want to hear a bit about it? Frigging rights, let's dive in!

There must be something in the water in Holland, or the beer for that matter, for the Netherlands has always had their own unique array of heavy hitting, trailblazing death metal going all the way back to the infamous tape trading days of the mid / late 80s. Pestilence, Sinister, Asphyx, God Dethroned, Gorefest, etc, all put Holland on the map for innovative death metal that was always pushing extremities, as they created their own sonic landscapes. Thus from those grassroots of the early to mid 1990s developed the thickened low end, blistering speeds, and inhumane vocals of the niche sub-genre brutal death metal. What spawned forth was a plethora of bands from the late 1990s / early 2000s including the likes of Severe Torture, Prostitute Disfigurement, Pyaemia, Arsebreed, Mass Murder, Brutus and of course the mighty Disavowed.

After demos as Nocturnal Silence they changed their name to Disavowed and released their 2001 debut, *Perceptive Deception*. This monster of an album established them amongst a new breed of brutality that was Unique Leader, a new label at the time created by the late Deeds of Flesh guitarist/founder Erik Lundmark. To this day, diehard fans of the BDM (brutal death metal) scene revere Disavowed's debut as a testament to the scene, one that's aged like a fine wine. Fast forward to 2007... Disavowed went for that next level of brutality as bands commonly do, trying to forge unfathomable territory to outdo their ambitious debut. With recruitments of Daniel van der Broek and Romain Goulin, both of Arsebreed at the time, they intended on breaking the Richter scale with a magnitude of an album that would be entitled, *Stagnant Existence*. This album is really in a league of its own. The band slightly departed from the minimal, simplistic, percussive, bludgeoning of the debut for refined technicality, all

the while not sacrificing catchiness, nor songwriting ingenuity. Now this brings us to the present day, the third installation to Disavowed...

From the very first seconds of *Revocation of the Fallen* you know what type of an album you're in for. Opening track "The Process of Comprehension" wastes no time whatsoever. You hear the first riff, the song drops into gear and we have lift off. BOOM! Disavowed's unrelenting, blistering, full throttle, percussive, blasting attack is simultaneously punctuated by the signature, distinctive scream of Robbe Kok. This is exactly what you want from a new Disavowed album, the excitement, the energy, it's all there. They are back and stronger than ever. The whole personnel of the band returns from *Stagnant Existence* except for Romain Goulin. On drums is highly touted Turkish drummer Septimiu Hârșan (ex-Pestilence) and he is simply put, the perfect addition to Disavowed. Technical prowess, crazy foot work for days, airtight blasts, and tasteful transitions / fills. Gerben van der Bij and Daniel van der Broek return with their brilliant two guitar work. Really well structured riffing that is never overplayed, and very tasteful. After the first two songs being ripping, scorching tracks we fall into a mid-tempo, almost progressive song. The album has a lot more curve balls and surprises than I anticipated. For example the title track struck me as a slow burner, but after a few more listens it really grew on me. They took a lot of risks on this album and years down the road it will all pay off. The track "Revocation of the Fallen" is a slower song that keeps building and building in a progressive sense. This is a song structure type that has never been on a Disavowed album before, but it's surprisingly refreshing and in the context of the full album, rewarding. It perfectly lures in the listener, then right dead set in middle of the song is one of the best riffs on the album. It's a turning point transition riff with these dizzying guitar harmonies in Suffocation-esque notation that twists you inside out and throws you into a groove (or slam riff as the kids call it these days) that sounds like a wrecking ball going through a mosh pit and completely pummeling everyone into oblivion. Riddled throughout the album is some excellent bass work that is arguably the highlight of the whole album. This is executed by one of the best bassists in the underground, Nils Berndsen. As the first two albums would have bass runs, or flourishes here and there, slaps and pops... this new album is just next level. Man, I'm almost speechless, buy this album just for the bass work alone and notice the attention to detail with regards to songwriting. Mid-

way through songs, as riffs repeat, different instruments do different things....the bass morphs and jumps at ease making the album such an enjoyable listen. In the end it doesn't matter the context or type of music, bass is the glue that really makes or breaks a band, and this is an exemplary effort. Track four, "Imposed Afterlife" is my favourite track on the album. Ferocious song with lots of great dynamics and complimentary chemistry between instruments. Other progressive ideas come to light including track six, "Therapeutic Dissonance" almost taking on a Death-like vibe but with Suffo harmonies. In the end, just like their first two albums, Disavowed achieves many cool, memorable moments that make this album infectious and easy to replay over and over again.

They say good things come to those who wait and this is most definitely the case. Each riff blends effortlessly together, hook after hook. This is very much along the lines of where *Stagnant Existence* left off but a more mature, dare I say modern offering. Modern being relevant with regards to production, it's a phenomenal sounding album, but also sonically. There's a lot of new stuff here and I think these sounds will come across successfully in a live setting. Instead of just returning to blastbeats for days, they chill and groove in certain songs, and in the end it makes it a well balanced offering of an album. There's a part or two that are almost "Bree Bree" vocals! Now I'm sure I've lost all you die hard old school Unique Leader fans, well hold on there's many moments that remind me of the old school "less is more" riffing brutality. Although you'll have to take your elitist hats off, put down your ping ping drums, and look past the slick production to see it though. Each song sounds fresh, all new unique ideas, all in the vein of Disavowed, yet it's a new chapter, a new synthesized entity all in its own.

Well after a 13-year writing hibernation, Disavowed is continuing their natural evolution, crafting the perfect amalgamation of their unrelenting brutality, seamless signature song-writing, and perfect harmony / chemistry between the instruments / band mates. Remember, a band of this calibre is almost a thing of the past, for an album like this doesn't fall from the sky every year, so do your part to not miss out on this yet to be classic. Be sure to get your fix and also complete the Disavowed trifecta that should be in every brutal metal heads collection! 9.8/10

Disavowed *Revocation of the Fallen* will release July 31, 2020 on Brutal Mind.

- Sasha C.







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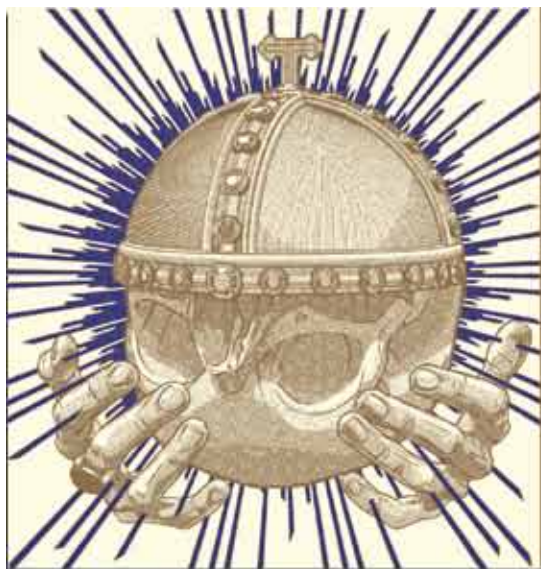
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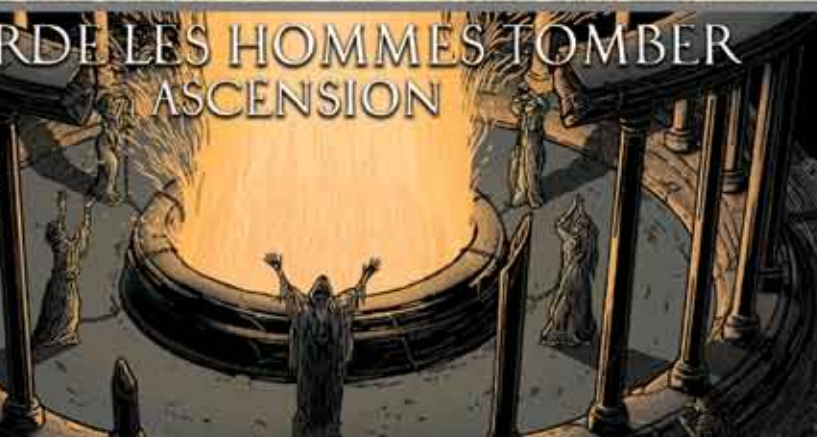


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