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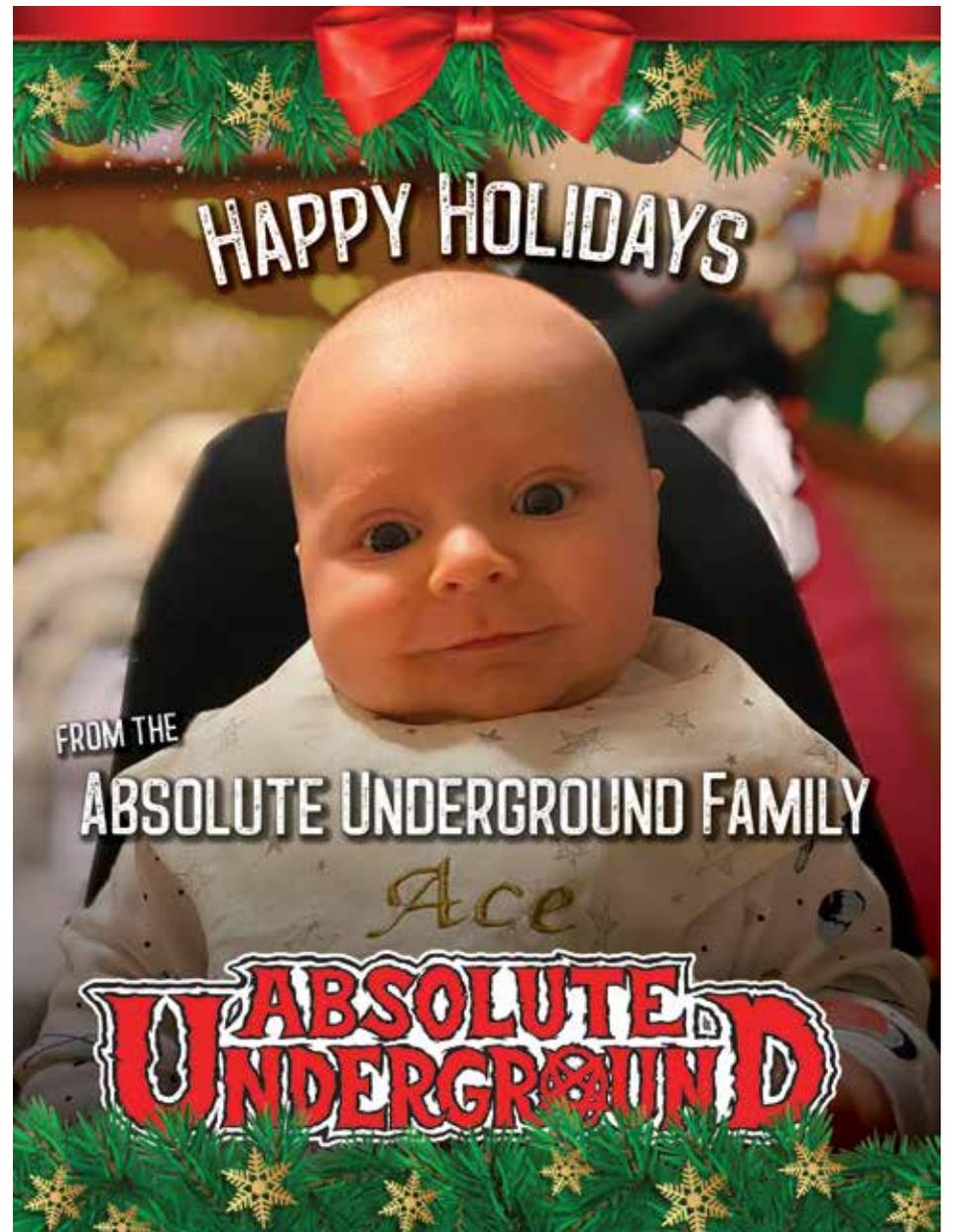
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Canadian Live Music Association

Take Action: Help Bill C-2 to Pass

The CLMA (Canadian Live Music Association), alongside the coalition of the hardest hit businesses, praises new legislative proposal in support of businesses still facing significant pandemic-related challenges.

OTTAWA - November 25, 2021 - The Coalition of the Hardest Hit Businesses praises the Government's legislative proposal to provide

much-needed support to the tourism and hospitality sectors. Bill C-2, An act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, is the first Bill introduced in the House Commons by the new Liberal Government and makes good on commitments to save valuable business and jobs that are critical to Canada's economy. It includes the extension of subsidies under the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS), and the Canada Recovery Hiring Program until May 7, 2022.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, live music has been devastated by business closures, capacity restrictions, border closures, travel bans, and the loss of international and domestic travellers.

"The live music industry continues to face significant financial hardships as COVID-19 challenges carry into winter 2022," says Erin Benjamin, President & CEO of the CLMA. "Our sector was among the first and hardest hit by the pandemic. It is clear that this bill recognizes the critical support our industry needs in order to survive and recover."

The CLMA, with the Coalition, also notes that this legislation was made possible because of the personal engagement of the federal Cabinet and the broad-base support among all Members

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of Parliament in the House of Commons who understand the importance of the tourism sector's recovery to Canada's economic growth and global competitiveness.

The Coalition urges all MPs to pass this Bill as quickly as possible to ensure continued support to tourism businesses in Canada.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Write to your MP and thank them via social media, letting them know how important this legislation is to you and your business.

Visit canadianlivemusic.ca/ftl01

Share this information with your peers and networks, asking them to do the same.

About the Coalition of Hardest Hit Businesses:

Established in September 2020, the Coalition

of the Hardest Hit Businesses is an industry-driven coalition that represents the hundreds of businesses in tourism, travel, arts and culture, events and festivals, motor coach, accommodations and hospitality, and Indigenous tourism experiences.

About the Canadian Live Music Association:

The CLMA is the voice of Canada's vibrant live music industry, working to entrench its economic, cultural and social value and creating the conditions for concerts to thrive. Among its members are concert promoters, festivals, talent agencies, venues, clubs, arenas, performing arts centres, industry associations and networks and suppliers.

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Skincrawl

By John Carlow

SKINCRAWL is:
Clinton Witter- Vocals
Nathan Pollok- bass
Bryce Gillis- drums
Adam Fisher- guitar

Absolute Underground: Cool band name. How did that come about?

Skincrawl: Clinton came up with that name years ago. He drew up a logo to go with it that we didn't end up using. We like it because it conjures up a general feeling of discomfort, ugliness, and anxiety, all which factor heavily into our daily lives.

Absolute Underground: What kind of music does Skincrawl play?

Skincrawl: The best way to describe it is 80s style hardcore punk. We've all got different influences that add spice to certain songs, but that's the main common thread for us creatively. Lyrically the underlying basis of most of our songs come from 80s horror movies or different human phobias. We're all about the inherent terrors of humanity.

Absolute Underground: How did the band come together?

Skincrawl: Nathan and Adam had known each other for a couple years from playing shows together in other bands (Hate the Rich, Strategic Abuse, REK, Automatic Chaos). They were both at a show at Lucky Bar and the headliner was some lame pop-metal band. Neither of them could stand it so they ended up outside and talked about how they should start a band that's the opposite of what they had just seen. Jarrod had just left Bad Human Beings so we snagged him to be our drummer right away. We jammed as a three-piece for about a month while we looked for a singer. Everyone but Adam had known Clinton for years, but it never occurred to them

to ask him. When Adam finally met him at a party, he thought he looked just like Steve Albini and knew right away he'd be an ideal front man.

Once that lineup had crystallized, we put out our 2020 demo soon after. Jarrod ended up moving right after we put out our 2021 EP, so we panicked. He played a huge part in creating our initial sound and vibe, and his and Adam's shared metal influences added a unique flavour to the songwriting. When we set out in search of a new drummer, the most important quality we wanted was camaraderie. Ability is important, but if band members butt heads it's a nightmare. Bryce was the obvious choice. He and Nathan already had chemistry from playing together in Strategic Abuse and REK. He's a great fit personality-wise and he has the chops to match.

Absolute Underground: Tell us about your creative process.

Skincrawl: It's an organic process, usually someone brings in a germ of an idea - a riff or a couple lines of lyrics - and it all sprouts from there. Almost always we have the song ready to roll by the end of the jam. Sometimes one of us will come up with a little embellishment or garnish after the fact, but we work best when we ride the initial wave of creative enthusiasm. There are no big egos in the band, no one is married to any ideas they bring in, and all decisions are democratic in the pursuit of what best serves the song.

Absolute Underground: What bands influence your sound?

Skincrawl: DOA, Black Flag, Jerry's Kids, Dollhouse, Zeke, Dead Kennedys, DRI, Strutter, Dawn of Humans, Nasti, Spazz

Absolute Underground: Tell us about 'Demo 2020'

Skincrawl: We started the band right before Covid broke out, so we knew from the start it would be a while before we got to play any shows. That

VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY

made it easy to focus on recording instead. Plus, being able to eventually walk into our first show with all the songs totally dialed was a bonus. We do all our recording with Cody at Circle A Studios; he does the mastering and everything too. Not only is he the best in town, but we rehearse at the studio already so we're familiar with the space and the sound. He lets us track live off the floor which terrifies most other engineers. By the time we're ready to start recording, Cody's heard our songs about 50 times each, so he knows the arrangements well from the start of the process.

Absolute Underground: What bands would you like to be billed with?

Skincrawl: We really loved sharing the stage with Chain Whip, so we'd be stoked to do a show with them on the mainland someday. We'd like to work our way up to getting some opening spots with more established touring bands. There are a few local bands we haven't gotten to play with yet, such as Knife Manual and The Mandlebaums. We'd like to play more shows down the road with our friends in Fully Crazyed, Dead Rights, Mar Mar and The Grits, and Bad Human Beings.

Absolute Underground: What's next for Skincrawl?

Skincrawl: Right now, we're preparing to do a physical release of our new EP on vinyl. It's something we're all really stoked about, we all grew up listening to and collecting records and we still maintain that it's the best way to hear recorded music. Besides that, we're already hard at work writing songs and planning our next release, hopefully our first full-length. Both of our releases are up on Spotify and Apple Music and are available for download on Bandcamp. We should have our merch set up on Bandcamp soon as well. Currently our shirts and pins are for sale locally (just send us a message!)

skincrawl.bandcamp.com

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Shot Caller

By Heath Fenton

To say Cam Kroetsch is one of the most prolific metal guitarists in Vancouver is a huge understatement. With massive projects *Minority*, *Process*, *Punchdrunk*, and *Savannah* all under his belt, Cam has assembled a new metal studded band called Shot Caller. They just completed recording and shooting their video for their first single "Pieces of Me". So let's hear about it from the man himself.

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you infamous for?

You are talking to Cam Kroetsch. And I am infamous for next level partying and rowdy good times. Not so much these days though. My attention is on my family and music.

AU: Tell me how the idea of Shot Caller came about?

The idea of Shot Caller came about while I was at

work writing music on garage band in my shuttle.

AU: How did you go about finding the band members of Shot Caller, who are they and what are some of their other projects they have been involved with?

I found the members of the band by straight up cold calling. They're all my friends and all I had to do was ask. Arron Gustavsson plays bass, Adrian White plays drums, Eli Slamang plays guitar and I sing and play guitar.

AU: How quickly were you guys able to gel?

We gelled very quickly. These are some of the best musicians in Vancouver. I knew because of Covid I would have to have players that I could rely on to do their own homework and show up at a rehearsal space prepared. I sent the song to everybody and they did their own homework.



AU: What can you tell me about your song "Pieces of Me"? What was the writing process and what topics are touched upon lyrically?

The song is about me getting my life together. It's about finding a new way to live. I was really worried that there was only boredom and loneliness in sobriety. I was never more wrong. The writing process was easy. I try to make music that I would like to listen to. It's pretty standard Cam style music.

AU: Tell me about the video shoot for "Pieces of Me"? What was the concept?

I came up with the concept for the video. It's basically friends and bandmates that are bringing me pieces of my past. Music, skateboarding etc. It's basically all the things that make Cam be Cam.

AU: Is Shot Caller a real band or is it a one off project? Do you guys have more songs? Recording plans? Touring? Local shows?

We never really intended to be a band. But after some rehearsing everybody seemed to be having a really good time. And everybody seemed

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

interested in doing

more. So now we have a couple more songs on the go. The plan for now is to make videos and singles. I am once again a new father with a very young child at home and a family that needs me so I don't have much time to put in the music these days. I figure the best way

is to chip away at it with singles and videos on the internet until we have enough music to start throwing down live.

AU: So who is counting? Is this your 20th killer band? How does Shot Caller fit into the Cam

AU: Moving forward, what is next for Shot Caller?

The next move for Shot Caller is recording and releasing the next single which is called "East Van livin... the ghetto plan". It's about tour life. Sketchy shit that happens on the road living the life of independent artists.

AU: Any last words or care to add anything?

I wanna throw out the hugest thanks to my oldest son Damian Moore. He directed the video and did an awesome job! He never got to be involved as a kid in my career because most of it was spent on the road. I missed a lot of milestones in his life. He's an amazing individual whom I am very very proud of. And thanks to my band members, my beautiful partner Vanessa and my 9 month old boy Meko Morin!! They always have my back.

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ARTIST PROFILE



Brady Tighe

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most famous or infamous for?

BT: My name is Brady Tighe, and I am a writer and an artist.

AU: How long have you been a writer and an artist, and what got you started?

BT: I have been a writer and an artist since I was very young, and it's just something that I always loved to do. I always loved to draw, and I always loved to write.

AU: How would you describe the art that you create?

BT: I would describe it as fun comic book art. Saturday morning cartoons and the literacy of an adult.

AU: What are some of the major influences on your artistic style?

BT: I would say Geoff Darrow, Daniel Warren Johnson, Moebius, and Ed Piskor.

AU: What sort of stuff did you start out doing when

you were first getting started? This is a while ago because you started and then took a break?

BT: Yeah. I started when I was a kid and draw everything all the time. I would draw dinosaurs, I would draw spaceships, I would draw giant battles, just typical kid stuff all the time. At a certain point in my teenage years, I slowed down

with drawing, and thought to myself, "Well, I don't really want to do that anymore, I want to pursue this writing thing instead." Right after that I basically stopped drawing altogether. This lasted until COVID happened, and while stuck in isolation I thought, "Well, I kind of have some free time, I should get back into drawing," and I loved rediscovering it so much that it quickly became the only thing I wanted to do all the time, and now it basically is all I do.

AU: How did you get your first break? What was the first professional job you worked on?

BT: The first professional job I had as a writer was working for the newspaper at VIU, and the first professional job I had as an artist was doing a logo for someone. <takes time to talk to his cat.>

AU: What first got you into Science Fiction?

BT: Star Wars. When I was a little kid, my Mom heard the score on the radio one day and thought, "Brady would absolutely love Star Wars. I should rent it for him," and it shattered my entire world. She did wait a few years after that to tell me that there were sequels, which I felt was cruel.

AU: What are you some of your favourite projects that you've worked on?

BT: I would say the Hashtronaut Project, and the art and the storyline that goes along with that.

AU: Can you tell us about the projects you've been working on?



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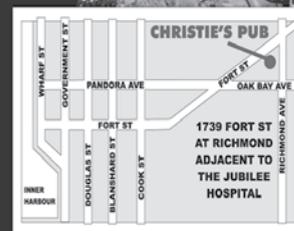


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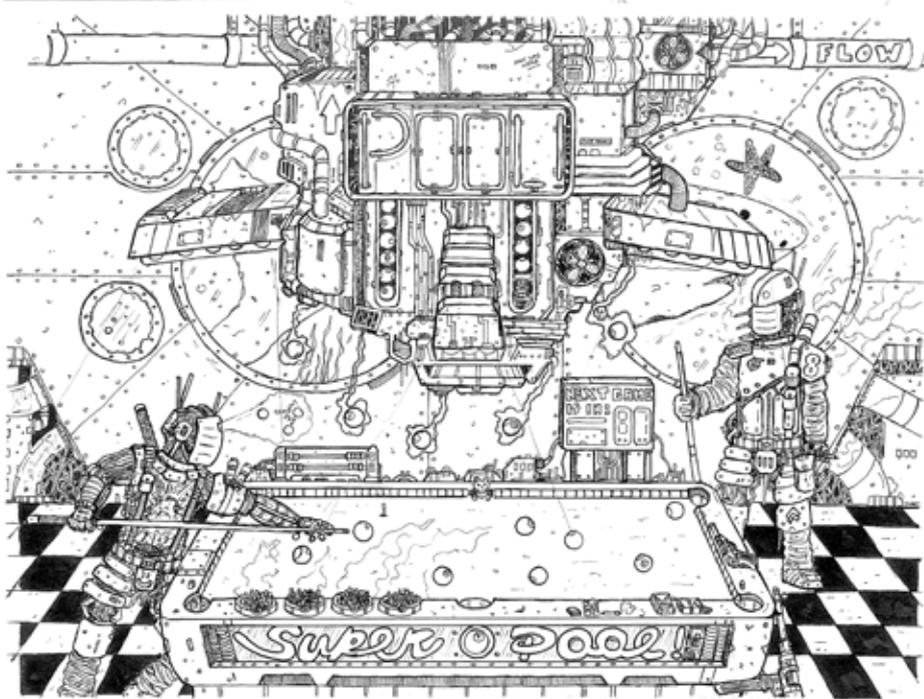
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BT: Kind of. I had a friend of mine from work who was moving on to something else, so I decided as a going away present I would make him a fake record. So, I printed up a fake sleeve with a cover, and then took a beat-up old record I didn't need anymore, and glued new record labels with some art on them to it. I did some liner notes too, and then had the link to a track listing on Spotify. So, it wasn't a real album, but it should still count.

AU: When you're working on an image or an idea, do you immerse yourself in the culture that surrounds it?

BT: I want to see a ton of art on what I'm trying to put together, because it's great to see people way better than me, or who inspire me, do the ideas I'm interested in. I want to consume all the art of the artists that do what I want to do, at the highest level.

AU: What mediums do you work in, and is there something you've always wanted to try?

BT: I work in pencil, pen, and ink. I've always wanted to try more stuff with color.

AU: Any other hidden talents unrelated to art?

BT: I can play the guitar.

AU: What music do you listen to when you're working?

BT: Everything; lots of jazz, lots of heavy metal, stoner rock, punk music, soundtracks, some snythwave stuff. Lots of stoner rock and snythwave when working on Hashtronaut, that's what builds that universe.

AU: Do you take commissions? And what's the strangest thing you've been asked to do?

BT: I'm very to new to this, and I've only been working on art as a serious gig for about a year, but yeah, if anyone wants to commission me to do something, they're more than welcome to shoot me a message. Nothing strange yet, but hey, try me.

AU: What's the latest thing you've been

working on?

BT: I've been working a lot on the Hashtronaut zine, and working on the pencils of this drawing of an army in retreat.

AU: Have you ever seen your art tattooed on people, and would you like to see your art tattooed on people?

BT: No, I have not. And yeah sure, if you like it that much, your body your choice.

AU: I'm not going to do it.

BT: That's okay.

AU: Any plans for the holidays this year?

BT: Read more and draw more.

AU: A dream project you're still dying to do?

BT: I want to illustrate one of Dan Carlin's podcasts. I'm a big history nerd, and the way he covers history is very relevant and extremely smart, so to take one of those giant podcasts of his and do it in my own illustrated style would be a blast. Even if it would take forever.

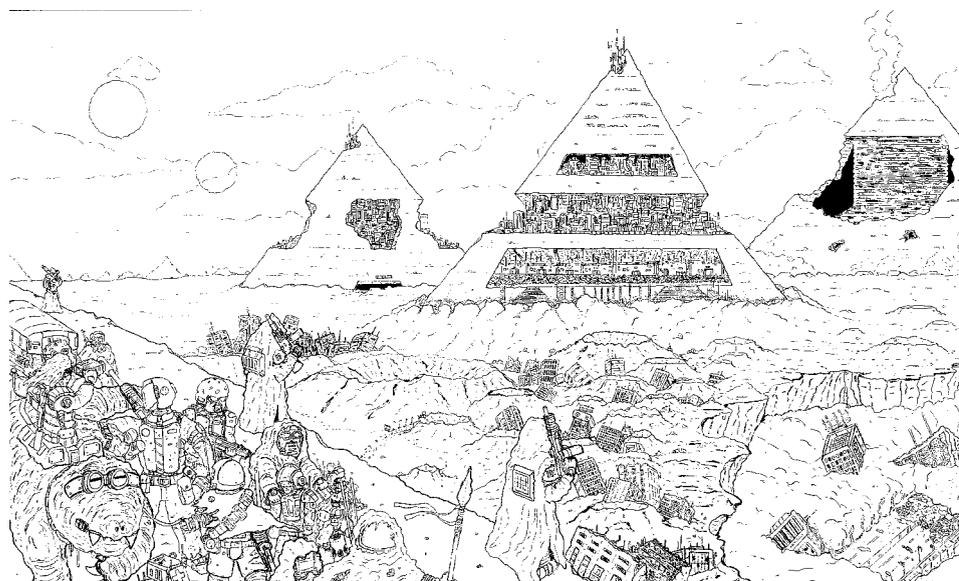
AU: Any upcoming projects or exhibits to promote?

BT: The Hashtronaut Zine should be available soon through the Hashtronaut website that I haven't made yet, because I haven't got around to it. That and the Instagram is where you'll be able to buy the zine, prints, proofs, postcards and anything else. Also, Little Shop of Strange down in Market Square here in Victoria has some of my stuff as well.

AU: Anything else we should know about you that might surprise our readers?

BT: Oh my god, no.

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Little Shop of Strange, Victoria



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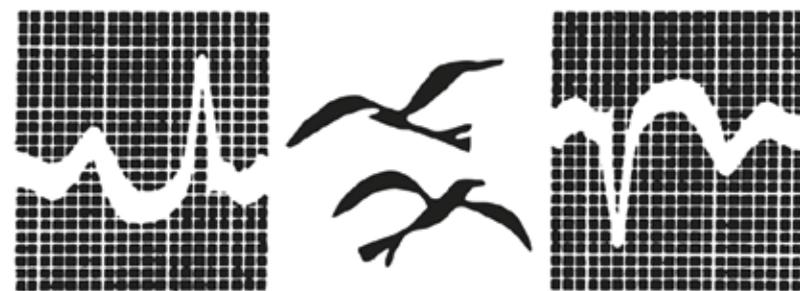
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Russ Rankin

Come Together Fall Apart

Interview by Ira Hunter and Jared Amos

Russ Rankin has been one of the most influential frontmen in punk for the last 30 years with Good Riddance and numerous other projects. On his solo records, Rankin continues to refine his songwriting, delving into social and political topics. His brusque delivery serves as a catalyst in advocating for social justice and animal rights, reaching beyond the borders of the punk scene.

AU: Who are we talking to today?

RR: My name is Russ Rankin and people probably know me as the singer of Good Riddance. I also sing in a band called Only Crime and I'll have two solo albums out soon.

AU: Is your new solo album coming out on Cursed Blessings Records out of Toronto?

RR: Cursed Blessings Records in conjunction with SBÄM Records out of Austria.

AU: Are you also involved in some sort of a supergroup that is on Cursed Blessings as well?

RR: No, I'm in Only Crime on Cursed Blessings. Our bass player in Good Riddance Chuck (Platt) he's in another band that has a release on Cursed Blessings called Seized Up.

AU: How did you first become involved in the in the punk scene?

RR: Grade 10 was the first time I really got introduced to it and I just dove in. I was really into skateboarding and surfing. Thrasher magazine had a section called "Notes From The Underground," where they'd talk about punk bands. Sometimes if you subscribed to *Thrasher*, you'd get a copy of a punk album. So there was crossover with skateboarding. Then I just got really into the music, checking out all the bands that I could. Later on, I had some friends who were trying to get a band started and they asked me to sing for them. I said I would if they played all these Sex Pistols covers and that is kind of how singing in bands got started.

AU: What bands influenced you back then?

RR: The first band I really got into was the Dead Kennedys, then the Sex Pistols and The Clash. I was buying lots of compilation records. That was really cool because you could get exposed to a lot of different bands. There was a compilation by Maximumrockroll put out called *Welcome To 1984* that had international bands. Later I was into California bands like the Adolescents, D.I., Decry, Battalion of Saints, Circle Jerks, Bad Religion,

and T.S.O.L. Then Bay Area bands like Crucifix, Social Unrest, and Flipper. Then bands from other parts of the country like Articles Of Faith and Naked Raygun out of Chicago, Hüsker Dü out of Minnesota. I was really into Kraut, Cro-Mags, Agnostic Front, Bad Brains, Minor Threat, and SSD.

AU: I first discovered Good Riddance on the first Fat Wreck Chords compilation.

RR: Yeah, there's that and also one called *Punk Sucks*, a compilation that was really popular down here in the

mid 90s. We happened to get a chance to be on it along with tons of other bands. That was also an introduction for a lot of people to our band, that really helped us a lot.

AU: Was Good Riddance your first band?

RR: No it wasn't. I was in bands that had kind of the same members. One was even called Good Rhythms. It was like a party band. Luke (Pabich), our guitar player, was playing in a thrash metal band called Rude Awakening and we would often play shows together. He was transitioning from being into thrash metal and getting into punk. He and I became friends. Then our guitar player broke his wrist skateboarding and we had a show booked. Luke filled in on guitar. Then when his band broke up he asked if he could join our band. Once Luke and I got in the same band we really wanted to start writing original music, book tours on our own, and make a go of being in a band. We were both taking it seriously. In my experience there's a lot of people that want to be in a band but not everybody wants to put in the work.

AU: What made you want to have a more serious band that made actual political statements and had an activism element to it, as opposed to just a party band?

RR: Well, the party band was more like just me and some guys playing Sex Pistols covers and not much else. Also I quit drinking and I got sober. The first punk band I was drawn to was the Dead Kennedys. The sociopolitical stuff always really appealed to me. The political stuff resonated with me. I always thought that would be cool if I ever had a band to use to that platform or to use that music as a medium to communicate some sort of relevant political or social message. Then getting into bands like Bad Religion and seeing the way that they used the lyrics so intelligently. I was always drawn to the political stuff and to me that was really a big part of being into the punk scene.

AU: What prompted your solo albums?

RR: I was introduced to doing solo stuff by my friend Tony (Sly), because he was doing it. He had always been really complimentary of my songwriting and he suggested that I try it. So, I started trying to write some songs that I could play with just a guitar live. I've always loved Billy Bragg. Specifically the combination of really heartfelt, emotional kind of relationship type songs, which I've written a few of. Also Billy Bragg's politics are my politics and seeing him live was just electrifying.

AU: You were on a Johnny Cash tribute album?

RR: They asked what song I'd want to do and "I

Walk The Line" wasn't taken yet. So I agreed to do the song and when I went to learn it, I was like, "Oh wow, this changes key like six times." But I ended up figuring it out and it was pretty cool.

AU: Did music influence you into your straight edge approach and vegetarianism/veganism?

RR: In the late 80s I got sober and being a punk rocker, I wasn't surrounded with a lot of sobriety. Most of the people I associated with were really heavy into drugs and alcohol. I didn't know that you could still be a punk and not take anything. When I got sober, right around that time there was a really big wave of positive straight edge bands that were out playing and they had a huge influence on me. Going to straight edge hardcore shows was a really cool way to discover that I could still stage dive and get crazy and I don't have to be fucked up to do it. For the vegetarianism stuff I read a book called *Diet for a New America*, written by John Robbins, and it was really eye opening and impactful to me. Then there was a zine that I read called *No Answers* by Kent McClard. There was a big piece in there on vegetarianism and animal rights that really hit me. Then Youth of Today came out with an album called *We're Not In This Alone*, and they had a song called "No More." At that time, hardcore bands didn't really sing about animal rights as much. But that song was specifically about it. It really was like all these things happening at the same time and I was open to it because I liked these bands and I respected them. Once I learned that I would be actually healthier physically and that it was considerably better for the planet, I didn't really see any reason how I could continue to be a carnist.

AU: Any plans for a new Only Crime album?

RR: Yeah, we are currently trying to figure out everybody's schedule for 2022 to see if we can make some time to jam and write some new music. So I would definitely say it is in the cards.

AU: What about a 10th Good Riddance album?

RR: Yeah, I was actually starting to write new Good Riddance stuff when the new solo album kind of sidetrack me. But we do have a pretty decent amount of stuff planned for 2022. I think that as long as we're still having fun playing shows there will be new material sooner than later.

AU: Did Good Riddance play Punk Rock Bowling this year?

RR: Yeah. It was really cool. We played the Main Stage to a pretty good sized crowd.

AU: I guess you've got to have strong willpower to resist the temptations of Vegas.

RR: Not for me. I was never a gambler. Obviously I don't drink and there's enough examples of what it does to you everywhere in Las Vegas. For me it's a pretty good reminder, this could have been me.

AU: There is that #passedoutpunks hashtag where everyone's passed out all over the place.

RR: Yeah, I sort of bum out on it because in my head I'm thinking there's thousands of us, with political patches and slogans on our shirts and jackets. We're all concentrated in the same space, what a great time for us to use this opportunity to push for some kind of social change. But most people just want to get drunk and pass out. Everybody can do whatever they want to do but in my head I feel like it's a missed opportunity.

AU: What are you exploring in your solo work?

RR: Generally it's some historical stuff. There's

a song about ways the English monarchy tried to snuff out Irish culture. There's stuff about the current socioeconomic situation, the disparity. Children living in poverty but the Pentagon gets billions of dollars every year. There's songs about that whole dynamic. I also lost both my parents last year so there's a song that deals with that.

AU: How has your solo work evolved since your debut album, *Farewell Catalonia*, up to the new one, *Come Together Fall Apart*?

RR: I think I know a lot more about crafting songs for that kind of environment. When I went to do *Farewell Catalonia* I went to the studio of my friend, Paul Miner. I had never done a solo before and he had never engineered or produced one. So neither of us knew what we were doing. It was a cool process, because we would sort of just try things. Also I'd just been teaching myself how to play acoustic guitar with open chords when I did that first album and I'm much further along with that now. It's funny to say this now but during the first album I didn't even know what a capo was, I had no idea. So every song is in standard tuning on the first album. So on the new album there are songs that are written in different keys, depending on the tension that I want. Having that ability and knowing about that aspect of acoustic guitar has really helped me make better songs.

AU: What are some worthy current causes?

RR: I'm a big proponent of single-payer health care, of tuition free higher education, of abolishing the death penalty. I'm a fan of the LGBTQ community and trans rights. A woman's right to choose and have autonomy over her own body. Those are the biggest things for me.

AU: Are you planing a solo tour?

RR: I really want to. It's something I enjoy doing.

AU: Is your new solo album coming out on vinyl? Tell us about the first single, "Babel."

RR: Yeah, there will be vinyl and CDs everywhere people get music. I guess Stefan must have thought that "Babel" was the strongest song to be released as the first single in a lyric video.

AU: Any shows planned for the holidays?

RR: Good Riddance plays Costa Rica on Dec 10th.

AU: Anything else you want to promote?

RR: Look out for the album on the 28th of January.

AU: How has it been working with AI Nolan, the founder of Cursed Blessings Records?

RR: I've known AI for a long time and I think AI is doing an exceptional job with that label. I think he found his calling, he's doing great. I'm really happy I was able to put something out with him. He's got a good ear and a good work ethic.

AU: Final words of wisdom for Canadian punks.

RR: Canada in general has been really kind to my band over the years and we really appreciate it. Love Canada, love Canadians. I'm sending good vibes to all the people in the Lower Mainland that are being affected by this flooding. If anything hopefully it will wake even more people up to the horrors that are in store with climate change if we don't do something to arrest it.

AU: How do people find you online?

RR: I have a Facebook profile. One for my solo music and then just a regular one. I have Twitter russrankinNJD and Instagram russrankinNJD

grpunk.com

linktr.ee/russrankin

cursedblessingsrecords.com

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Hammerdrone

Absolute Underground: Thank you Hammerdrone for taking the time to do this interview. For those unfamiliar with the band, please tell us some quick background info? How would you describe your music?

Graham Harris: Thank you for taking the time to interview us! We formed back in 2010, and have released two full length albums, a live EP, another EP and a single. We are a death metal band in a melodic vein, but we keep our music dark, intense and aggressive and don't do clean singing or synths. We incorporate influences from black and progressive metal, and our songs range from 3-4 minute neck-snappers to 7-8 minute epics.

AU: Hammerdrone has a new EP, "A Trinity of Rage" being released on December 10th, what can you tell our readers about this record?

GH: It's a three-part concept EP. Each track is telling part of a story and the music and lyrics were deliberately written to complement each other. It takes the form of a traditional trilogy - "Part I - Rage, Corporeal," is the rise of our "hero", "Part II - Rage, Besieged," is our hero facing the darkness of his own guilts and doubts and almost being destroyed, "Part III - Rage, Consummated," is our hero finally realizing a triumph over the forces of evil.

AU: Hammerdrone deliberately wrote "A Trinity of Rage" as a concept release and we read it took four years to craft, why did the band choose to release a concept record and how did you decide to choose that specific subject matter?

GH: Yes, pulling this EP together has been a real journey - initially, the writing came together quickly and we thought this was going to be a fast follow-up to *Dark Harvest*, which we released in 2017, but it wasn't to be. After some initial momentum, we ended up re-writing whole sections and whole songs over and over, and the same with the lyrics. It was frustrating at times,

but we were determined to make this a really strong and coherent release where all elements were working together. Then when we finally started recording, we went into COVID lockdown and that really slowed us down even more.

As to why a concept record, I've been increasingly drawn to telling stories through my lyrics, and



a concept release allows for extending a story-line out across more than one piece of music and therefore really exploring a theme in-depth. The concept in this case is an exploration of rage, grief, death and vengeance, as told through a historical fantasy, which is set in central Europe in the years immediately after

the First Crusade.

The genesis for the story was sitting through the funeral for a friend's wife, where the minister was basically telling everyone that mere mortals cannot see God's plan but should accept it. I think it was supposed to give the family comfort - some idea that premature death is somehow OK because of the idea of Heaven. But I remember thinking that if I was a believer and God broke my heart like that, then I'd just want to kill him.

AU: The EP is accompanied by an original short story, "Eversor" (available as a bonus download via Bandcamp). What can you tell our readers about the short story?

GH: So, "Eversor" is essentially the prelude to the lyrics of the EP. Without wanting to give too much away, the story takes place during the life of our protagonist, a former Crusader called Reynir; the album cover art then depicts the nexus between his life and death; the lyrics and music of the EP then take over to the complete the story, which takes place in the afterlife. It events of the story revolve around a fictional second book of Revelations, in which is foretold the coming of Eversor - the Destroyer - whom is the embodiment of humankind's sin and has the power to destroy Heaven.

AU: The EP is all in-house production (minus mastering), how was it for the band to put this all-together DIY? Any learning experiences to share? Any obstacles that you do not foresee?

GH: We've gradually worked our way up to doing everything ourselves - I'm sure Vinnie, our drummer (who does the mixing) could tell you a

hundred things he has learned about the process of recording and mixing music, which he did for our last two releases as well. It's not for the faint of heart - you need a lot of time and patience to learn the software and the techniques for recording.

In terms of learnings - recording yourselves is a blessing and a curse in terms of time; while there is no time pressure and you have the luxury to go back and perfect performances, or re-write sections, the fact that there is no time pressure tends to mean things take longer than they should. Also, you need to learn and recognize your limitations - whether they are skill based or equipment based - which is why we decided we needed to engage a professional to master this EP.

AU: You had Jens Peter Daniel Bogren (Swedish record producer, mixer, and recording engineer who has worked on albums by Opeth, Dimmu Borgir, Sepultura, Arch Enemy, At the Gates, Katatonia, Babymetal, Soilwork), how did you get such well-respected producer to master the EP?

GH: I'd love to tell you some big story about how this happened, but the reality is that music is a business and we paid him to do it! I guess he would have told us no if he thought we sucked...? Regardless, I'm a big fan of Jen's work with Amon Amarth and we are really pleased to have had him work with us on this EP - it made a big difference to the clarity of sound on the final versions.

AU: Hammerdrone made the Wacken Metal Battle Canada finals in 2018 from over a hundred bands who participated, as the Western Canadian final champion, how was that experience? And what did the band learn from it? Would you try again for a future battle to have an opportunity to play Wacken Open Air?

GH: That was an awesome experience that really made us a better band, particularly in a live setting. We have always been strong on stage, but getting critical feedback from the judges was really useful to hone what we were doing and make us a better unit. Taking part in the battle

made us focus on being completely prepared for every show and on putting in a whole band performance, every single time. I'd always be tempted to try for an opportunity to play Wacken - it's such a major festival - so never say never to us trying again!

AU: Not many bands had an opportunity to perform live this year due to the Covid nuisance? How was performing at this year's Loud As Hell Festival?

GH: It was so damn amazing to play Loud As Hell! That was the first time I'd seen any live music since Covid started and I think that was true for almost everyone there, so the atmosphere was just wonderful - everybody was smiling and hugging and just having a blast. Loud As Hell is always a good time, but this one felt really special and really celebratory, like a big metal birthday party. I think it's that old trope of you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone, right? We were all starving for live music and didn't know how bad it was until we got to do it again.

AU: For readers hungry for live shows, are there any upcoming that they can see Hammerdrone perform at?

GH: Sadly, not - our situation isn't currently conducive to live shows as two band members have moved to Vancouver. They both came back especially to play the Loud As Hell show, so we may do something else if the timing is right, but for now, folks will just have to enjoy the new EP.

AU: Any final thoughts you like to share with our readers?

GH: Thanks for taking the time to check us out - we hope that you enjoy the new EP and that the effort that has gone into it has paid off. Let us know on Bandcamp, or Facebook, or email us!

<http://www.hammerdronemetal.com/>

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TYMO

Absolute Underground: Thank you TYMO for taking the time to do this interview. For those unfamiliar with the band, please tell us some quick background info? How would you describe your music?

Thank you for having us! We are a thrash metal band from the cold prairies of Edmonton, Alberta! We formed in 2015 and released our debut album *Purge & Reset* in 2017! We are taking everything we love about 1980s thrash metal and presenting it with our own spin on it in the modern-day! We are currently getting ready to release a new album next year, which will be much faster and more aggressive than *Purge & Reset*.

We like to describe our sound as "a golden shower of thrash metal." Everything you love about thrash metal can be found in our sound, especially on the new record!

AU: TYMO has a new album *The Art of A Maniac* being released on February 5th, what can you tell our readers about this record?

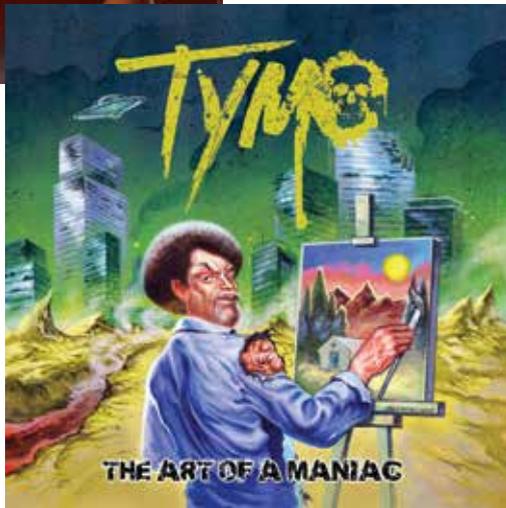
The Art of A Maniac will contain nine tracks of heavy, fast-paced thrash metal with a variety of

lyrical topics. Musically, it is a big step forward from our previous release, and a strong representation of the direction our music is heading. Additionally, the album will feature artwork by Andrei Bouzikov

AU: We read that this album is a more focused recording compared to your 2017 debut album *Purge & Reset*, what can you tell us comparing the two albums?

The Art of A Maniac is more consistent with the thrash metal sound and we sound more confident in our direction! All of the songs feel like they sit well together as an album!

Purge & Reset had hints of thrash and hints of hard rock; it's hard to pinpoint the direction the album is taking. We are still happy with it, but we have grown since then!



they would laugh at our dry humor and take pity on us!

AU: The album art for *The Art of The Maniac* was done by legendary metal artist Andrei Bouzikov who has illustrated album covers for Vektor, S.O.D., Municipal Waste, Skeletonwitch, Dustbowl, Toxic Holocaust, High On Fire, how did you end up hiring him for the artwork design? What was the process? Did

he have to like what he heard from the album? Was there a Bob Ross suggestion made by the band or him?

We are very proud of the work he did, he is beyond talented! We tracked down his email, sent him a song, and the rest was history! We had a rough Bob Ross concept in mind and he brought it to life!

He was very excited by the concept and the entire process was so easy! Artwork can be the trickiest

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part of an album, it's the first thing people see, we love the colors he chose, and it's very attractive to the eye!

AU: Not many bands had an opportunity to perform live this year due to the Covid nuisance? How was performing at this year's Loud As Hell Festival?

It was so welcoming! As soon as we hit that first note on stage, it felt like we were awakened from a long depressing slumber and everything was back to normal again! Back in 2020, no one really knew what the future was going to hold, would live shows ever be the same?

Loud As Hell reassured us that everything was going to be okay and we will get past Covid! A huge thank you to Geoff Bourrie for having us at the festival, it was an amazing time!

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours that readers can take note of coming up?

We are definitely playing a CD release show in Edmonton on the release date of the album! We plan to promote and tour through Canada in support of the album. We are also planning a string of European shows which will hopefully happen in 2022! As long as Covid doesn't postpone those plans!

AU: Any final thoughts you like to share with our readers?

Please listen to *The Art of A Maniac* once it's released, you will not be disappointed! Please don't get a speeding ticket while listening to it!

Thank you so much for interviewing us, stay safe and healthy out there!

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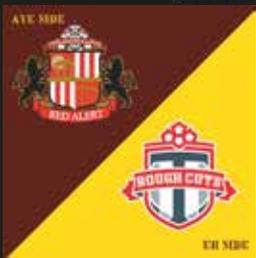
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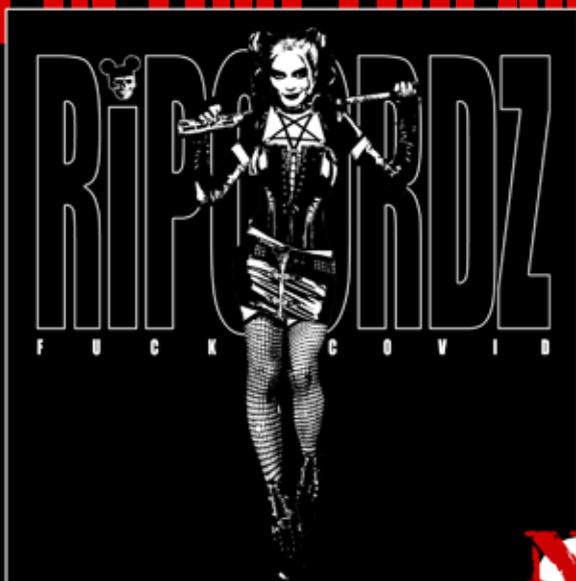


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Depleted Uranium

Murray: Guitar / Vocals

Nick: Drums

Babak: Vocals

Corey: Bass

Absolute Underground: Thank you, Depleted Uranium, for taking the time to do this interview. For those unfamiliar with the band, please tell us some quick background info?

Andrew Murray: We have been a band with the current lineup since 2009 with Babak (vocals), Nick (drums) and myself (Murray, guitar) going back to 2006 as the early rendition of the band; Static Project. Prior to that, Babak, Corey (bass) and I played in a band 2001-2004. Our motto in the early days was; if it's easy to play you're playing it wrong. The early inspiration of the band led to a mathy, thrash power violence sound with dual vocals battling back-and-forth during songs.

We have been primarily a live band however there were several years with little activity due to band member injuries, family deaths and recording our self-titled album. After which 2018-2020 was spent playing shows all over southern Ontario from bars, to a pizzeria to small Metal festivals. Several of our early inspirations include: The Dillinger Escape Plan: *Calculating Infinity*, Converge: *Jane Doe*, Charles Bronson: *Discography*, Orchid: *Chaos is Me!*, Swarm of the Lotus: *When White Becomes Black*, Refused: *The Shape of Punk to Come* and The Bled: *Pass the Flask*.

AU: Depleted has a new album, *Origins*, being released on January 28th, what can ya tell our

readers about this record?

AM: *Origins* was recorded one take, live off the floor in the summer of 2010 by a guy named Dave who worked and lived at Encore music Studio in Toronto, Canada. Along with the studio, Encore had rehearsal rooms which are where we began rehearsing regularly from 2007 to 2010.

In summer 2010, the five of us entered the studio with the idea of capturing us as we are. Everything recorded was done in one night, one take, live off the floor which we felt truly captured us. Mistakes and recording peaks; it's all part of an intense live performance as nothing in life is perfect.

We were given a stereo track of the recording and it was put on the back burner for 10 years due to our individual journeys in life and as a band. 10 years after the recording and during the pandemic of summer 2020, we decided to release our old material and call it *Origins*; who we are and where we come from.

AU: What would you like current and new fans to take away musically from this album?

AM: I guess to look at how things were to how things are, that's why we decided to go with it as a prequel album. For us, as a band, it sums up who we are and where we come from on the journey, which led to our debut following the album release in 2018. But it is also about the stress and uncertainty of life along with inevitable death and decay, which our album front and back covers sum up. The overall message is to persevere through the dark and heavy times and adapt to make your life the place you want and avoid focusing on the world problems you can't change, instead of changing your life to give you peace. Our expression through Depleted Uranium has always been intense and is an outlet for all of us.

As for lyrics from Small Odds, Track 8 off *Origins* sum up; "...Small odds, dire consequence, inaction, no longer an option."

AU: We read that this record is meant to be

heard with your 2018 debut self-titled album, how do the albums intertwine with each other?

AM: *Origins* is being released as a prequel album to our self-titled full-length release in 2018. We are calling it a prequel album as it was recorded one-take live off the floor in 2010, and has been sitting on the shelf since. Due to all shows being cancelled and revolving lockdowns, we decided to release *Origins* as a prequel album due to the lack of writing and rehearsals during that time as well and it was inspiring for us to have it cataloged as we are working on new material and we wanted *Origins* to be a brick in the wall. And the concept of a prequel album is somewhat unique, in that it represents a different time and space and adds to our story of evolution as a band.

The overall feeling of *Origins* holds high tension throughout every song with the total length of the album being less than 17 minutes. The physical CD version contains a bonus track as a 4 piece featuring Matt Kozma on bass, which was recorded in 2008.

AU: The band's extreme music formula is grindcore + power violence + math metal + death = *Origins*, what is the missing ingredient to complete Depleted Uranium's sound?

AM: I would say it is life and our drive to continue. There have been several incidents, which have halted our progress and threatened the existence of Depleted Uranium, such as Nick (drummer) dislocated and fractured his shouldered 10mm and required surgery to screw together and Babak (vocals) severed his ACL and required surgery, unexpected deaths and relationships / careers ending. All through it, we've been a band and have built camaraderie that comes from experience and time.

AU: The music industry has been dealing with many obstacles during the Covid pandemic, how did you find it working on this album and releasing it during Covid times?

AM: One of the reasons we decided to release

TORONTO TRASH

our prequel album *Origins* during this time, was that we could work on it during the isolation and lockdowns. Because all of the music was already recorded and we only had a stereo track which required a remix and mastering, which was done by Alberto Bandino at Cut Fire Studios in Italy, and we think he did a phenomenal job considering what he had to work with!

Along with the music, once we decided all album art was going to be band pictures of that era from when the music was created and recorded, it made it easy as a concept and it just required going through hundreds of pictures. Our band artist, Ryan Van Steenburgh at Reel Versatile Studios, has been with us since the beginning and is the visual representation of our band from all CD artwork, to our logo to our upcoming two part animated music video for our singles off *Origins*.

AU: Any final thoughts you'd like to share with our readers?

AM: I guess to just keep pushing forward and adapt to the times. So much has changed in the last few years and I believe the change will continue, but keeping traditions alive is always on a grassroots level.

Our prequel album *Origins* will be released January 28, 2022, and will be followed by 2 part animated music videos for our singles "Alpha Particles," which was released for streaming and download on November 9, 2021, and "Beta Particles" which will be released in December 2021. We will also have a live video performance of *Origins* which will be streamed on the album release day. Keep Strong!

<http://depleteduraniumband.com/>

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Thrash La Reine

Absolute Underground: Thank you Thrash La Reine for taking the time to do this interview. For those unfamiliar with the band, please tell us some quick background info? How would you describe your music?

Renaud: We are a trio from Montreal, and we started the band in 2017-2018. Although our band name suggests we would be a thrash metal band, we cover many different metal subgenres. We don't like classifying music too much, as we think it kills creativity! However, we could classify ourselves as a "Francophone heavy metal band."

AU: Thrash La Reine has a new album *Notre-Dame-de-l'Enfer* recently released on October 29th via Quebec label Bam&Co. Heavy, what can ya tell our readers about this record?

R: On this album, we added some Quebec folklore elements to our heavy metal sound. It is a 13 track epic concept album with lyrics mostly about 18th and 19th-century tales. We also added some traditional music elements: mandolin, organ, strings, and melodion. The vocals also have harmonies that will remind you of the old "chanson à répondre" (sing-along song). We also performed a cover of the popular song Au chant de l'alouette.

All of it is done in a catchy and enthusiastic fashion that will remind you of the 19th-century village gathering! There are also some darker more melancholic songs on the album ("La cage de fer," "le fantôme de l'avare"). The album starts with an instrumental introduction and finishes with an epic seven minute song.

AU: What's the story behind creating an all francophone metal album about French Canadian folk tales?

R: There are a lot of metal bands who sing about history and legends: Vikings, Ancient Egypt, crusades, Lord of the ring, are all topics that are commonly found in metal lyrics. In Quebec (and the rest of Canada), we also have our own interesting tales about witchcraft, werewolves, wendigo, etc. We thought it would be interesting to use these topics in our heavy metal songs. Our province also has a dark religious background, with sinful stories about the devil. We thought all of this was inspiring metal imagery!

And there is also the music: the traditional music from Quebec is something we personally enjoy. There are so many folk metal bands around the world who mix heavy metal with the traditional music of their country. We thought: why not do it with the music from our countryside?

AU: What is one of your favourite Quebec Folk tales? And do you find that less and less of a new generation are unaware of Quebec folklore?

R: "L'étranger" (the album opener) is an interesting folk tale from the 19th century. It is about people from a small village doing festivities past midnight during Mardi Gras. Then, a strange man comes to the party... nobody knows but this man is the devil himself. He dances with the prettiest girl in town, seduces her and takes control over her soul!

I think there is still interest from the youngest generation to know about Quebec's folklore. I remember I have read L'étranger for the first time when I was in CEGEP (Quebec's college), and I know some of these tales are still learned in different schools across the province. If people keep learning these legends and songs, the interest will remain among younger generations.

AU: For those unfamiliar with the Montreal Francophone scene? How would you describe it compared to the majority Anglophone metal

scene in Montreal and the rest of Canada?

R: The francophone scene in Montreal is interesting. The punk francophone scene seems to have always been stronger with bands like Vulgaire Machin, Grim Skunk, Rouge Pompier, Exterio. It seems that the franco-metal scene has always been a bit weaker. We hear a lot of times "French does not sound aggressive enough for metal." However, it seems that during the last few years, there has been a growing interest in doing metal in French, with bands like Anonymus, BARF and Nova Spei. It is a matter of finding the proper approach and the right topics to make it sound good with metal! There are a lot of people who respect the fact that making lyrics in our native language makes our music more authentic.

AU: Will the band be touring Quebec, Canada, or internationally in the coming future?

R: We will have a couple of shows in Quebec in November-December 2021. We plan to go to Ottawa at Mavericks on January 22nd. We are excited about that, as it is the first time we will go out of the province!

AU: We read you recorded the last songs on the album *Notre-Dame-de-l'Enfer* using the Voivod drums and amps that were in the studio? How was that feeling using those instruments, knowing they were used by Canadian metal legends? Did it inspire or influence the playing in any way?

R: Our last recording session at studio Radicart was between two Voivod sessions, so Francis Perron (Producer) asked us if we had any issue using Voivod's drum kit and amps, as they were already set up in the studio... and he did not want to move them away! We were more than happy about the offer! Of course, that was really inspiring: the reason why we chose Francis as a producer was because we liked how the latest Voivod's album, *The Wake* sounded. Being able to use their same settings was making us nearer to what we wanted to achieve in terms of sound!

AU: The music industry has been dealing with many obstacles during the Covid pandemic, how did you find it working on this album and releasing it during Covid times?

R: Surprisingly, working on the album during the pandemic was enjoyable and efficient... it was also what kept us sane! We had a lot of free time to work on the songs and lyrics. We were lucky enough to be able to go to the studio when sanitary measures allowed it.

Releasing the album was a bit more challenging. We will still have to wait until March 2022 to be able to have the vinyl version of the album, because there is currently a vinyl shortage resulting from the pandemic.

AU: How would you sum up this past 2020 and 2021? And how do you think going into 2022 will turn out for your band and others?

R: When the pandemic started in 2020, we were in the middle of the creative process of the album. Even though we knew there were full of challenges ahead, we were determined to do a kick-ass heavy metal album about Quebec's folklore!

2022 will be the year we conquer the world with this Quebec folklore heavy metal album! We will prove to the world that it is possible to make an interesting album about our francophone culture!

AU: Any final thoughts you like to share with our readers?

R: We live in an age where different cultures from all around the world are more accessible than ever! These different cultures are treasures that we need to preserve. Be true to what you are and be curious about how people live and think all around the world. Continue to support the local and underground scene!

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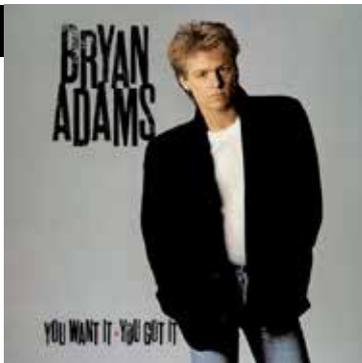
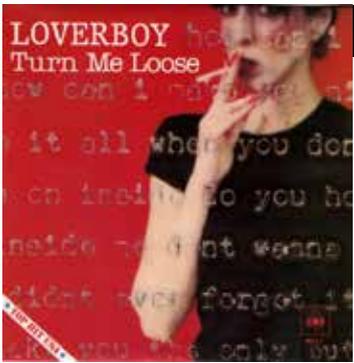
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BLAST FROM THE PAST



the house lit arena and making my way to the merch table to buy a shirt. Like that shirt would fit me today? Yet I still have it. I preferred to stand on the general admission floor and this was also a good way to keep warm as being part of the

had actually played my high school the year before in a local band from Vancouver calling themselves Bowser Moon (1972-82), who I remembered as excellent. Here in '81 Bryan Adams was young at only 22 and his music felt great. His concert was a welcoming for Canadian artists to be proud of. As that magic hour drew to a close, Bryan said his thank yous to everyone and wished us a merry Christmas and to enjoy Loverboy coming at us next.



we all got hit with their biggest hit of the year, "Working For The Weekend". As the show ended and the lights came on we all left feeling electrified and no one went home cold. Loverboy still performs to this day and has dates coming up in 2022. If you get a chance I highly urge you to experience them live. 40 years later its simply great knowing both these artist are still kicking.

Blast From The Past

presents:

COMIN' AT YA TOUR Winter 1981

Loverboy with special guest Bryan Adams
December 16, 1981 Victoria Memorial Arena

Hello past blasters. As time moves into the Christmas season, I thought I'd trip back to Victoria B.C to a concert at the ol' Memorial Arena. The date was Dec 16th 1981 so I had to celebrate the 40th anniversary of this night here in 2021.

The band who was headlining is Loverboy, who hit the scene in 1980 with their debut LP of the same name. That LP contained the mega hits "The Kid Is Hot Tonight" as well as "Turn Me Loose".

I actually saw Loverboy at this very arena on December 5th, 1980 as the opening act for Prism, who remain a staple in Canadian Rock today. And here I am a year later on a

cold Victoria night waiting to get into the arena. I'm now an avid concert goer.

My last article was on April Wine w/Harlequin 5 months prior in the summer and as Loverboy was so great the Dec before I had better not miss this show. So skinny me freezing at 15 finally enters the cue where the

turnstile person rips my ticket and I'm back into



crowd makes one feel alive and we are all there to hear Rock and Roll music. The 70s were over and Loverboy had a new LP called *Get Lucky* with hits as well. Yet the opening act was a new up and coming Rocker from North Vancouver and his name was Bryan Adams. He had released a debut entitled Bryan Adams in 1980 and here he was to promote his new LP *If You Want It You Got It* and I was ready to see what the fuss was all about. Once the house lights faded to black, Bryan and his band readied, then the announcer appeared. "Good evening Victoria, please welcome A+M recording artist Bryan Adams." Bryan and his

band kick off with the new LP's title track and for the next hour he had the audience transfixed with a solid performance of pure Canadian magic. Other tracks I remember were "Coming Home", "Lonely Nights", "Jealousy" and the radio smash "Fits Ya Good". Mesmerized as I was, I did however notice one cool thing. Bryan's guitarist Keith Scott, I recognized that he



While the lights were up and everyone took a break pre-Loverboy someone tapped me on my shoulder and I turned to see a pretty woman offering me a Bryan Adams pin for my jean jacket as she was passing them out. I graciously accepted and actually found that pin last week. Haha. Memories indeed. Those little keepsakes are a fun way to Blast

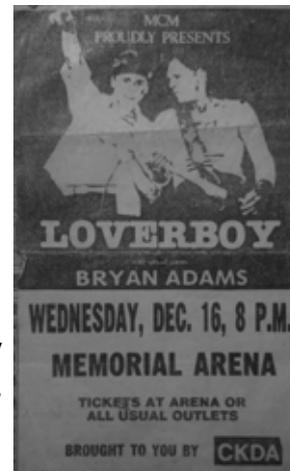
back into yesterday. Bryan Adams eventually went as high in fame as any solo artist could ever hope for, yet he remained humble. His next show I saw he backed up Supertramp in BC Place in 1983 to a stunning 56,000 people. Bryan even played at Live Aid in 1985. In 2019 he released a 4 song Christmas EP and it includes his 80s smash hit song "Christmas Time". Bryan is set to play Rogers Arena this coming New Years eve in Vancouver. So awesome he still performs.

Back to the show... As we all regrouped ourselves at the 9 o'clock hour set in and those lights lowered back down until it was black as a starless night except for the lighters and plumes of foggy clouds of B.C.'s finest Christmas fragrance. Then came the announcement.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. Please welcome Columbia Recording Stars LOVERBOY!"

They opened loud and proud with "The Kid Is Hot Tonight" from their debut LP and from there they played an almost 2 hour set of high class hit after hit. Songs from the new LP like "Jump", "When It's Over" and "Take Me To The Top" were played. It was a fantastic experience as the LP was played over and over on my bedroom turntable for weeks prior to this night. So epic. Then came the big hits like "Turn Me Loose". Now they had lasers as large light saber like green beams appeared to all of our steaming naked eyes. What a show! And boy oh boy did the chicks like Loverboy I must add. All in red leather and a phenomenal singer wailing away the winter cold and warming our hearts with his amazing vocals. His name is Mike Reno and to this day his voice shines bright. Awesome. The other members are renowned Vancouver drummer Matthew Frenette. The late Scott Smith on bass. Guitarist extraordinaire Paul Dean and keyboardist Doug Johnson. As the show came to an end and the band said good night, we all knew what was next. The encore was the best part. One last blast of Rock n Roll and

With that I'll draw this issue's Xmas Blast to a close. I'd like to add here a personal note also that in 1982 a store opened on Yates St. in Victoria. This new store called Lyle's Place was located only a hundred feet away from the old Kelly's Records



where Loverboy appeared on this show day in Dec 1981 just prior to the evenings show. So cool.

Then in 1982 Lyle's Place became the place to go. It was a used record and memorabilia collector's store. Posters and videos and all that magical fun stuff. The store recently closed its doors after 39 proud years. I went to Lyle's one last time and low and behold I saw a CD by Bryan Adams. It was called *You Want It You Got It*. I instantly picked it up. I think waiting 40 years to finally own a copy was long enough. While listening to it I decided to write about

that night in 1981. If anyone needs to give a gift this Christmas, you might want to give the gift of Canadian Rock and Rollers, Loverboy or Bryan Adams... It's a win win.

I wish you all a very safe and comfortable Christmas, especially in these surreal times.

I'll leave you with the Bryan Adams lyrics from his song "Christmas Time".

We waited all through the year
For the day to appear
When we could be together in harmony
You know the time will come
Peace on Earth for everyone.
We can live forever in a world where we are free
Let it shine for you and me
We're all as one tonight
Makes no difference if you're black or white
'Cause we can sing together in harmony
I know it's not too late
The world would be a better place
If we could keep the spirit more than one day in the year
Send a message loud and clear
There's something about Christmas time
Something about Christmas time
That makes you wish it was Christmas every day
To see the joy in the children's eyes
The way that the old folks smile
Says that Christmas will never go away

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L.A. Guns Checkered Past

Interview with vocalist Phil Lewis
by Ira Hunter and Sheldon Byer

Long running hard rockers L.A. Guns have released their new studio album, *Checkered Past*, continuing the darker lyrical tone of the preceding studio albums, but also pushing the band forward. After reconciling past differences, the songwriting combination of Tracii Guns and Phil Lewis has released two new studio albums, two live albums, and a special Christmas covers EP since 2017. Clearly the creative fires of Guns and Lewis are burning bright.

AU: Where have you been hiding out for Covid?
Phil Lewis: Locked away in a cave in Nevada.

AU: How'd you get 666 in your phone number?
PL: It was a devil of a job, but I managed to sort it out. I couldn't resist it, you can't forget that one.

AU: Who are we talking to officially?
PL: Philip Lewis the singer for L.A. Guns, who has somehow survived the music business and managed to remain relevant for over four decades. You're talking to a veteran rocker.

AU: What's the origin of L.A. Guns?
PL: L.A. Guns was an offshoot of Guns N' Roses. They were a band that was formed in the mid 80's. There was a band called Hollywood Rose. Both Axl and Tracii were in that band. And then it morphed into Guns N' Roses. At which point Tracy decided he wanted to go another route: Guns N' Roses is very bluesy but Tracii had a lot of angst and he wanted to put a metal band together and he found Guns N' Roses to be a little bit mainstream for him.

He was more into bands like W.A.S.P. instead of The Black Crowes. That's where the split came and that's where he formed L.A. Guns and Axl went on with Guns N' Roses. I got brought in to L.A. Guns when I was recruited about 1986.

AU: Coming from England's NWOBHM scene. How did you end up on Sunset Boulevard?

PL: Well, it was a fantastic piece of luck. The guy who managed Tracii was an English bloke called Alan Jones, We got talking and he was telling me about the scenes in LA and Hollywood, I just couldn't believe how exciting it was that he was managing this band. They weren't looking for a singer at that point but six months later, Alan mentioned to Tracii that he knew me because they were having problems with the current singer at the time. And he's like, "Well, that's fucking great. Call him up and get him out here." I was having a hard time in London. I was in a band called Tormé, a great heavy rock band. But heavy rock in England was a dirty word. It was all Duran Duran and Boy George. I just wanted to rock and London was populated by people who were revolted by hard rock. So to be transported virtually overnight, and land in LA, with the sunshine, palm trees and scantily clad women.

The Girl stuff, from my previous band, was never released in America, but they knew about it. There were lots of bootlegs and people knew about me. So that was an added bonus.

AU: What was your earlier band Girl all about?

PL: We were sort of manifest in the punk rock era. Punk rock came out essentially in '76 and we were influenced by it. We didn't want safety pins in our noses, we just wanted to be punk rock in our own way. And the most important thing for us at the time was to be incendiary and we thought what a great idea, let's call a band of five guys, Girl. I don't know what we were thinking, it was madness. Girl only lasted two years and we made two records.

AU: What made L.A. Guns unique in the 80's?

PL: Me for a start, it was a hybrid, it was an English Anglo American band, and that made us different. They were listening to Van Halen

and I'm listening to Alex Harvey. That set us apart and it's certainly in our writing approach to being authentic. They never tried to fob me off as being American. We also have a virtuoso in our band. Tracii, who founded the band, like him or hate him, you can't deny his ability. His skills are virtuosic.

AU: Who else is in the band right now?

PL: Well, Johnny Martin, our bass player, has been around since the reunion. I know people laugh a lot, because of how many members we've had. But for me personally, as long as I'm with Tracii, that is the nucleus and other people will come and go. Now I'm real happy with Ace Von Johnson on the second guitar. I think we've exceeded the 50 members mark.

AU: Why do you think your voice has held up so well, compared to other vocalists from the era?

PL: I take care of it, I've got a modicum of discipline. Essentially the voice is a muscle and my job is that of an athlete. You can't just go from sitting on a couch smoking, to getting up and singing a song like "Cannonball." You've got to be fit, you've got to be strong, you've got to do your vocal warm-ups, that's the most important

thing. Then you gotta chill out after you do it. You can't be yelling, you gotta keep it quiet till the next day.

AU: Was the early Sunset Strip scene as debauchorous as legends make it out to be?

PL: You can't even describe it. It was worse, I mean better than you can imagine. I had a flat above Sunset behind the Whiskey, and I used to joke about how I could throw a net out my window and I was bound to catch something. It was really mad. It was an exciting time by golly, and rock n' roll was king. And that came along with hedonism, and there was no shortage of that.

AU: Tell us about new album, *Checkered Past*.

PL: Recorded remotely, it was a labor of love. Such a good distraction during lockdown, a challenge, something to sink my teeth into. I recorded and engineered the vocals myself. This record was a blank canvas, 11 songs from scratch, and I'm really happy with it. It's got a good diversity. That's a big part of being in L.A. Guns, keeping it interesting and that's what this record is definitely.

AU: What are some standout tracks?

PL: "Cannonball". I knew that was going to be a

monster when I was recording it. Visually I could see the video when I was doing it. I always felt like that pirate. That salty Captain. I got right into the whole pantomime of it. I love the track right after it too, "Bad Luck Charm". The lyrics are so funny. It's just really cool, bluesy - it's hard to make blues fun, quirky and new. I love "Living Right Now", when I first heard the music I couldn't wait to get behind a microphone and do my contribution to it. "Get Along" is sort of Led Zeppelin III, "Gallows Pole", kind of an acoustic folk rock vibe.

AU: Will L.A. Guns be touring Canada?

PL: Yeah, next year I'm hoping. We've got a summer tour lined up with Tom Keifer from Cinderella. So hopefully we'll get back up to Canada. We've had great times up in Canada and the response to the reunion has been fantastic.

AU: What's your best Lemmy memory? And was he the inspiration for your pirate moustache in the "Cannonball" video?

PL: I've known Lemmy since I was 12 years old. But no, there can only be one Lemmy and I could never be that handsome. I'm not trying to copy his look. I grew this moustache during the pandemic, I just made a pact I wasn't going to shave it until my next gig. So that's how the stash manifested. This thing just kept growing. So let me tell you a Lemmy story. I was about 15. My dad had a guitar/music shop, and it was our apartment upstairs, Lemmy used to come over a lot. My old man used to lend him money and Lemmy would leave a guitar or his passport as collateral. One day he came over and he had this beautiful girl, this Swiss girl, she must have been about 20/21. And as I said, I was about 15. She didn't speak a word of English and he left her with me in my flat. He left her with me for three days. This was before cell phones, she didn't know how

to get hold of him and he obviously didn't want to get hold of her. So I just banged this Swiss girl who didn't speak a word of English for three days. Eventually he came and picked her up. I said, "Thank you very much, Uncle. I appreciate that."

AU: Would you ever do a Girl reunion show?

PL: No, that was a long time ago. There are certain bands, like Iron Maiden and Def Leppard, and they've become like a thick book of epic masterpieces, and Girl was a poem, a two page poem. I just want to leave it as that, a happy memory. I think that would break the spell.

AU: Who was your favorite New Wave of British Heavy Metal band that never made it big?

PL: Diamond Head. They had that fucking great song called "Call Me". Then there was another really obscure band called The Dick Smith Band.

AU: You worked for Alex Kane as a telephone psychic. Did he employ any other rock stars?

PL: I don't know. It's funny. I was buying an amp, I had never met Alex before and I went over to his apartment to check it out. He goes, "What are you doing for money?" And I said, "Well, things are tight" because the 80's bubble had burst. Alex says, "I've been doing this psychic reading thing," and I said, "Well, I know nothing about astrology or any of that," he goes "It doesn't matter. Just make it up. All you've got to do is keep them on the phone." So I did it for a couple of nights. But my conscience got the better of me. I'm not a psychic and I just couldn't fool people like that.

AU: Any plans for Christmas?

PL: Yeah, just to blow the roof off of Vamp'd in Vegas, and then do the same thing on New Years at the Whiskey!

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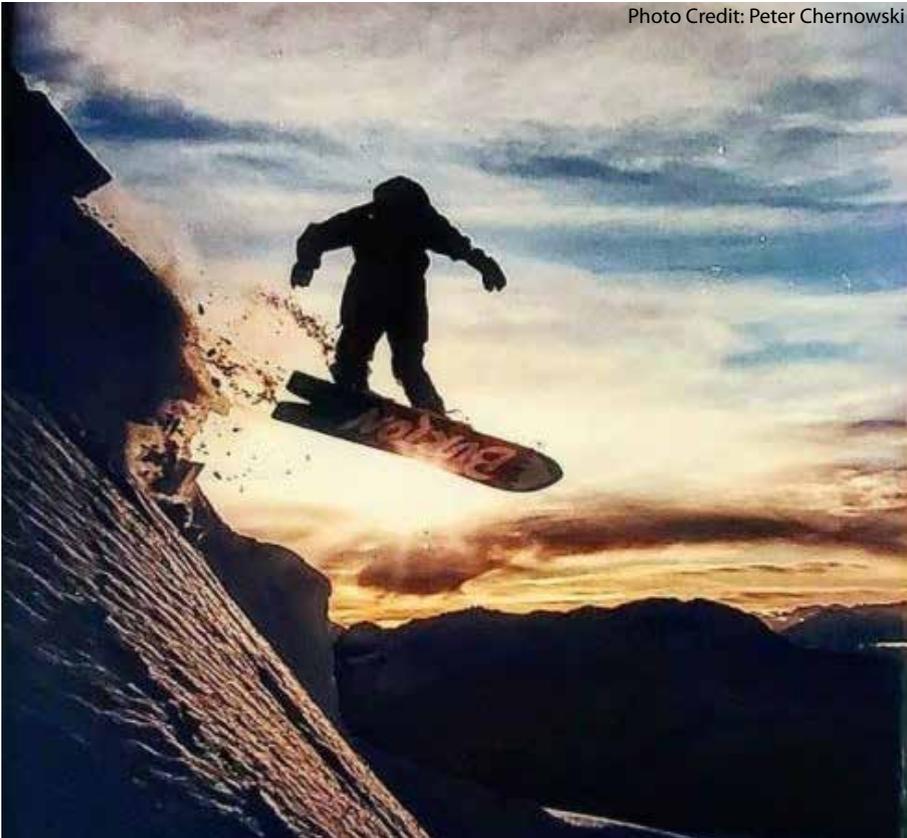
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POWDER SEEKERS

guy from Serbia. So yeah, they're big into skiing there, it's huge. They had the Winter Olympics there.

AU: Any advice for up and coming or new snowboarders? Maybe someone that is inspired by you and wants to make it to the Olympics one day?

RR: Well, I was gonna say your boots are your most important thing. But if you're actually wanting to get into competition, or are into competition, I guess you have to realize your ability. And if you have what it takes, then just pursue it. If you keep winning, that's the sign to keep going. I would say it's a hard day even on the day that you win a World Cup. It looks like a glamorous lifestyle but you have to fucking want it. Something has to be in you that drives you to do it, because it ain't easy.

AU: At our local hill Mount Washington last season they had an app that tracks all your runs, vertical, and kilometres. It was almost became like a video game because you were in a competition with these people you didn't know. It really drove me to try to get in as many days and runs as possible. I ended up in third place for the season, behind a 12 year old girl named Olivia and someone named Liability Rob who worked on the mountain.

RR: Whatever it takes to get the motivation. I use an app called Strava for tracking my runs, and obviously we didn't have those sorts of things back in the day. We just had to know that that's what we wanted to do because no one around us was doing it except for us. I almost literally didn't know anybody else who was snowboarding besides me and my two buddies. When I'd see a guy snowboarding at Blackcomb I would chase him down and be like "Hey man, where'd you get the board?" like there wasn't even any snowboard shops back then.

AU: Did you ever also skateboard or surf?

RR: Yeah, it was a big skater and I was the guy who had a subscription to Surfer Magazine but had never seen a wave

AU: What were your strong suits when it came to snowboarding? What got you to the level to win your gold medal?

RR: I think I had the drive and the mindset.

AU: Describe the sensation of snowboarding verbally if at all possible.

RR: Freedom.

AU: How would you describe riding through a nice fresh batch of powder snow to someone who has never experienced it?

RR: I would say it's like flying and riding in the clouds. Like when you're a little kid and you're looking out the window of the airplane. Because

the snow is clouds that just fell down, right?

AU: Yeah, I like the feeling of fresh snow hitting me above the knee when I ride. Like there's just something so awesome about that. I almost wish that I didn't have snowboard pants on so I could get even more of that sensation.

RR: Yeah, you can feel the pressure of the snow pushing against your board. Pretty cool. Yes, it's a cool feeling to feel the snow come up around you as you're going down. It's like the fantasy of the whole thing. You know, watching Warren Miller ski movies growing up and you see the big powder plumes behind the pro skiers, and then you find yourself one day riding powder. Or like surfing your first barrel after staring at pictures of barrels for 20 years.

AU: How high was the biggest cliff you ever



Ross Rebagliati

Still Going For Gold – Part 3

Interview by Ira "Irocker" Hunter and Brydon "Panda Face" Parker

We now feature the third part of our interview with Olympic gold medal snowboarder and cannabis activist/entrepreneur Ross Rebagliati.

Absolute Underground: What was your best epic powder day?

Ross Rebagliati: That was at Whitewater out of Nelson. And it was overhead powder. So it wasn't waist deep or shoulder deep, it was overhead powder. Minus -25 fluffy champagne powder, as they say. And I saw guys in the lift line when we were lined up in the morning, and they all had snorkels and I thought it was like a stag and that they were joking. And when I saw them go, all you could see was the snorkel, and I couldn't even believe what I was looking at. Then when I went down, instantly the snow just billows up right over your knees, over your chest, over your head, and you can't breathe. You have to hold your breath. You literally have to stop, otherwise you'll suffocate.

AU: When I was in Japan once and it felt like my board was floating in front of my face. I tried to explain that sensation to people later and they said that I had found bottomless powder.

RR: You know, Japan would have to be the number two best place I've ever been in powder.

Japan has the best powder ever. It really does. I love riding there.

AU: Did you ride Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan as well?

RR: Yeah, we rode Hokkaido at resorts like Rusutsu and Niseko United. And then down further South we rode all over the place. Japan was always a really fun trip.

AU: So that's where you won your Olympic Gold Medal was at Nagano in Japan?

RR: Yeah. At Nagano we were at Shiga Kogen resort, just a couple hours outside of Nagano.

We actually competed there the year before on the same run. That's how you homologate an Olympic run. So the year before we competed there and I got third place. But that backstory was never part of it, you might be the first person to ever write about that.

AU: Very cool. Yeah, me and buddy Brydon have boarded all over the world. We've rode the Caucasus Mountain near Russia, the Andes, and the Alps. Is there somewhere in the world that you still want to snowboard? We were trying to go to the Himalayan mountains, but the resort is supposedly controlled by the Taliban.

RR: Yeah, I was thinking about that too. I wouldn't mind doing something like that. And there's some cool places in like Afghanistan that there's a ski resort, and some other weird places like Iran.

AU: There's the Bosnian Alps.

RR: I was actually just texting this morning with a



SHRED SESSION



Influence Boardshop

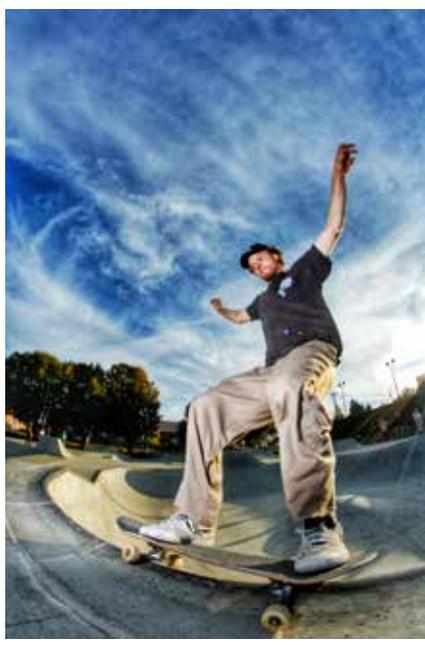
Interview with shop owner Steven Munro

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what is your involvement in the Victoria skate scene?

SM: My name is Steven Munro. Victoria Skate Scene? Let's do it like this. I'll start by telling you my ridiculous dreams... I wanna skate! I can still hear them tell me you will never succeed, you are being unrealistic, you are going to need a real job, stay in school. Blaaa! But I said to myself okay,

how am I going to do this? What else could I do? I set my mind to it and never looked back. I was around seven years old when I hit my first air. I was hooked. After that day my life goal was set in stone. Keeping skateboarding as a career, that was the only focus I had. But know it has been a hard road but it's worth it. Skating is so much more than just a lifestyle or a fashion. I can't explain, it is just what you do every day if you're one of us. Like an artist or musician, you just do it. On the streets and the park I was never the best, it never mattered broken bones or concussions. I was always back to be part of the movement. I would be lost without it, for real.

In my humble opinion a modern city needs skate shops and skate parks to properly raise our youth. That's what I provide for the community. Now with that knowledge I do my best to support the skate community of Victoria with my Skate shops. That's who I am. Period.



AU: What makes Influence Boardshop unique?

SM: It is a melting pot for young people to meet, become friends and learn to deal with differences in personalities. We have an indoor skate park that we have used not only for skating but to host shows for the locals. We support our community with skateboarding in a completely different way, an all-inclusive way.

No one, whoever they are, gets treated poorly from us, unless they are jackass to others. We are shaking off the old view of what people think it is to be a skateboarder. Let's put an end to the gate keeping and just fucking skate. You don't have to dress or act the same as us to be one of us.

We sponsor a huge team of individuals and we are always adding riders.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

SM: It's not like that. I guess if you think about it for a second, our mission is easy, to support and grow a skateboarding culture that accepts everyone that's willing to drop the hate and learn to be real. It's hard but it's worth it though.

AU: Who is currently on your skate team and what does each individual bring to the table?

Todd Tessier. Very experienced in skateboarding and always brings the stoke to the spot like no one else!

Dustin Schwam. The dude is OG. From punk shows to tattoos and skateboarding. He always

brings it with the intensity and the inverts. Brady Murray is a true street skater always out hunting for the spots. Dude is putting in the work and getting tricks.

Jose The Dude is the chiller but get him on a board and he will rip up the spot.

Ollie Morgan is a Van local with the right mix of hair dye and stylish tricks. His skate game has increased amazingly over the last year.

Eubey Panter. The guy with a layback slide style you wish you had and an awesome eye for skate pictures.

Kokaro. This kid is on fire with his flat game. He recently had to move back to Japan but he will always be supported by us.

Fynn Leppan. This Vic local is on fire right now! His bag of tricks is unreal, good luck beating him at a game of skate.

Jordan Barry. Now this guy has a crazy style. We are talking about one of the most powerful guys on a board in Vic, and he shreds on a guitar.

Brandon Casper brings that Vancouver local style to the team. This guy throws down hard every time I skate with him, but best of all he always brings Ollie, the loyal skate team dog!!!

Conner Mayer. Always has a smile on his face. He is the first one out of the car at the bowl and the last one out.

Clayton Ikuta is the renaissance man of the group, a filmmaker, musician, skater and engineer. Dude has got talent.

Owen Rees, this dude has style on his flips tricks. He has been my co-worker for years. I can tell you he has skills on and off the board. Art, Music and Snowboarding.

Carla Hyslop. She is our resident skate coach and lover of animals. You better believe she has a mean front tail.

Evan Reefer has been a local hero at the gordo skate park for years, destroying all transitions with inverts and miller flips.

Merrick Orr "The Butcher". If you have ever seen his shred you know he is one of the best in Canada and the beast of Sooke!! (Skatetanic)



AU: What does it say on each of their Tinder Profiles?

SM: I wouldn't know you'll have to match with them I guess.

AU: What do you look for in a skater when thinking of adding a rider to your shop's skate team?

SM: I look for someone with more than just skill on a skateboard. I'm looking for people that represent the best of what skating is. Sure we are a motley crew but we are the real skaters living our lives. If you're looking to join, keep skating, don't be a dick to people, keep your shit real, get with the program, and make the world around you a better place.

AU: Any events, comps, or demos planned for the Influence Boardshop skate team?

SM: Ya, this January we will be throwing an event at our skate ramp. It's been a strange year but keep checking in if you are interested.

AU: Tell us about the recent indoor ramp mishap and what does the future hold?

SM: The ramp was damaged from water, A sprinkler head burst over the ramp and flooded it under half a foot of water. The community and local businesses came together and helped us raise the money we needed to repair the damage before the winter rain came.

AU: Advice for younger skaters hoping to make the team one day.

SM: Learn to skate. Really take the time to learn the craft. Then make friends with us. Film like crazy and don't be an ass. It's that easy.

AU: Any plans to film a skate video in the future?

SM: Ya, we have a lot of things on the go and a video is one of them. It takes a lot of work to get a film together, lots of people and moving parts. When it comes out you will not be disappointed.

AU: Anyone else you would like to promote?

SM: I have to give props to my business partner, Justine. I would be a wreck without her. She sees what I see. She is a true Champion.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers.

SM: Don't do Down, that damn garbage is killing us. Remember my friends, you are the misfits, skaters, artists and musicians. We make the culture of this world no matter what anyone thinks or tells you. Oh ya and wear your kneepads when you skate.

Influenceboardshop.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Eubey Panter

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BBAM! Gallery

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

RA: My name is Ralph Alfonso. I co-own BBAM! Gallery in Montreal which is an art gallery/record store/performance space. I ran Canada's first punk club, the Crash'n'Burn in Toronto (1977) and also manage The Diodes (with whom we created the space). I currently manage The Damn Truth, a 70s-influenced hard rock band from Montreal. I am also known for my own band, RALPH, which was a garage rock jazz outfit active in the 90s as an offshoot of my RALPH (Coffee, Jazz and Poetry) zine that I did for about 10 years. I also worked at Attic Records, Warner Canada, Capitol-EMI Canada, and Nettwerk Records



BBAM! gallery

(all of that is another story) and I also work as a freelance graphic designer for various groups and record labels. In the 70s, I was a rock writer/photographer specializing in the punk/new wave scenes of that era (my work appeared in *Bomp!*, *Kicks*, *New York Rocker*, and other mags). I also published the book, *Treat Me Like Dirt* (by Liz Worth), about the 70s Toronto punk scene. I am very proud of that. I also run Bongo Beat Records (home of the non-hits).

AU: Tell us about your business, BBAM! Gallery. Where, how, when, why did you start it up?

RA: BBAM! started as a result of selling vinyl at record shows and people asking where my store was (I didn't have one). At the same time, my wife, Alison Rogers, was talking to our painter friend Carylann Loepky in Vancouver about maybe doing a pop up show of her art. Anyway, we kind of melded the two ideas into one, and found an "art gallery for rent" on KIJJI (true story) and that was our first location for 7 years. It was a falling apart 100-year old space but it all added to the funkiness. We've been in our new location for three years and will celebrate our 10 year anniversary in February, 2022.

AU: What makes your business unique?

RA: We are an art gallery, record store and performance space for live music. We also have a cafe license but we haven't really taken advantage of that, maybe next year. There is a bit of a punk DIY vibe here because that's where we come from.

AU: And it's also a record store? What sort of music do you focus on?

RA: We focus mostly on used cause we can't really compete with the more established places and mostly all the interesting, obscure and more

specialized areas that the other stores don't. DJs and producers love shopping here for samples and breaks cause our prices are low and we have the weird records they love. Our jazz, calypso, latin and new wave is pretty good and I think we have the best dollar bins in town. We also specialize in singles and have a very organized section for that. We do a lot of consignment for people who are downsizing their collections, so there's always amazing stuff coming through.

AU: As a performance space as well, who has performed there so far. Any upcoming events planned?

RA: We have had Kevin Kane (Grapes of Wrath) and Bryan Potvin (Northern Pikes), CR Avery, Donovan Woods, Safia Nolin, Jay Semko (Northern Pikes), Dave Rave (Teenage Head), Ronney Abramson, Bruce Murdoch (legendary folk singer, his first gig in almost 30 years), Motel Raphael, and lots of up and coming bands who have gone on to Juno and Polaris Prize nominations. These days, during Covid, we have had to cut back drastically

and are currently doing a cool jazz series called Chef D'orchestre where it's a limited seating concert with a light meal cooked up by one of the musicians. It's a very 50s/60s jazz club vibe and people love it. It's a great space for record labels to showcase roots and semi-acoustic artists.

AU: Any upcoming art shows in the works?

RA: Our current show is called the She-BBAM! Salon and features all-female artists from Canada and the USA, with a portion of sales going to Too Young To Wed (they rescue child brides) and SOS Violence Conjugale (a Montreal based organization that helps women dealing with domestic abuse).

AU: Tell us about the Ramones archive photo prints you are currently selling. Who is the photographer?

RA: I am the photographer and these are all photos I took during the 70s when I was an active rock writer/photographer. I saw The Damned at CBGBs (their debut USA show) with the Dead Boys opening, for example. The Ramones session was done the day of their debut Canadian show at the New Yorker Theatre in Toronto. It is the ONLY posed photo of The Ramones smiling, because shortly after it was published (*Cheap Thrills* magazine), Johnny imposed a "no smile" rule on the band. I am working on a book of all my old interviews and photos; it's taking longer than I



thought, but it will happen.

AU: Have you learned any valuable lessons over the course of running this business?

RA: Music is very important in people's lives. I cannot judge someone by their appearance or dress any more; who people really are is revealed



by their music and art loves. You definitely know who your real friends are when times get tough.

AU: What are your hopes for the future of the business, do you have any long term goals?

RA: We have a gigantic basement that we will convert into another gallery and retail space - more art! more records!! and maybe an underground punk/rock space (literally).

AU: What should people know that they don't already? Anything else to promote?

RA: We love cats (we have three). My music is on all the digital services (search: Ralph, This Is For The Night People). I am still doing my beatnik poetry (on Instagram).

AU: Any final words for our readers?

RA: Support local businesses. Support local music. It's hard because there is a globalized effort to push us out and eradicate us, but they can't. We're like a bad weed, we'll pop right back up somewhere.

www.bbamgallery.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Elaine Louw Graham

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Hawkwind

Interview with founding member Dave Brock by Ira Hunter and Clark 'Super' Mantei

AU: Who are you and what are you known for?

DB: You're talking to Dave Brock and I'm famous for a band called Hawkwind. A world-renowned band for 'Space Rock' music.

AU: What's the meaning of your band name?

DB: Well, it's a Japanese Zen quotation 'Better be the hawk that flies over the forest, than the eagle that flies over the mountain.'

AU: What were your musical influences?

DB: I listened to old blues. The psychedelic 60s. Steve Miller, The Mothers of Invention. I wanted to capture that electricity and vibe.

AU: Where did the theatrical elements of Hawkwind come from?

DB: It probably comes from my wife who studied drama and worked doing circus gigs and mime stuff. When we did *Space Ritual* in 1973, we had a very famous mime artist working with us. We've also had quite a few famous dancers and circus people. In fact, a guy called 'Scouts' nearly had the world record for fire breathing. His fire reached 42 feet. Imagine, 42-foot flames shooting from your mouth, it's quite a feat.

do lots of weird sort of soundtracks as well.

AU: Your uncle gave you a banjo at age 12?

DB: Yeah, my uncle did give me a banjo. That's where I started to play my own stuff.

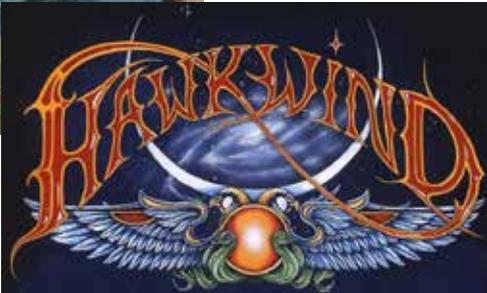
AU: Any career highlights or lowlights?

DB: Highlights? Blimey, I've had loads, I've had a few low ones, too. We recently played the Royal Albert Hall and the Palladium in London, which are really lovely venues. We had a really good light show with images and back projections moving to the whole thing. The low ones? We were actually about to play on stage in Manchester and all of a sudden, the fire alarms went off and we had to cancel the gig because they couldn't find a fireman to reset the code on the fire alarm.

AU: I saw you guys perform at HellFest several years ago and the stage show was so amazing, you had these creatures with long legs walking around like something out of *The Dark Crystal*.

DB: We have a lot of strange things going on sometimes, very primitive art forms with people walking on stilts. It's hard to explain it offhand. We will constantly change. Sometimes we do a primitive weird show. Then a year later we'll be doing a big laser light show.

AU: Describe Hawkwind's sound.



DB: I would describe it as weird electronic with heavy rock riffs. Relentless! Haha sometimes we play one number for maybe 17 minutes.

AU: What was your drug of choice in the past? And what is your drug of choice these days?

DB: At my age in life, wine, champagne, brandy, and the old marijuana joint. Yet obviously around about the late 60s and early 70s, we did take LSD and organic

mescaline but not constantly. These drugs were actually treated with sort of respect.

AU: Tell us about the *Dust of Time* (1969-2021) anthology release by Cherry Red Records.

DB: It's out in December. We've been with Cherry Red Records for many years. They're a good label. I'm sure they've done something really good.

AU: What are some of your best albums?

DB: Try the one that we've just released called *Somnia*, which is all about dreams. Which is quite interesting because it's a thesis on nightmares, phantoms, and going back into mythology.

AU: Are the stories true from the Lemmy documentary where Hawkwind would dose the crowd with acid and lock the doors?

DB: No, they always over-exaggerate these things. There's a new movie coming up on Lemmy and I am supposed to be the consulting producer on it.

AU: Arthur Brown mentioned that you and Lemmy made peace and performed together.

DB: Actually, yes indeed. Lemmy, he did play

and of course he chose his favourite song, "Silver Machine." He loved that song. He was great. And Phil Campbell the guitarist from Motorhead actually joins us live on stage from time to time.

AU: Who else do you keep in contact with?

DB: I still keep in touch with Eric Clapton. Eric played on the last tour with us.

AU: Were you a busker early in your career?

DB: Yeah, I did actually earn a living busking the streets of London, which was quite a hard go.

AU: What got you from banjo to guitar?

DB: My mum and dad bought me a guitar when I was about 13, and I got a book to learn how to play. I progressed listening to records and copying different musicians. We used to hang out at a jazz and blues club called Empire when we were young, it was a big influence on our lives

AU: Was LSD ever used during your recording sessions to enhance the vibe?

DB: Well some of it. The engineers used to get paranoid about their cups of tea being spiked. As legends go, it sounds like everybody was

totally out of control all the time. Not so.

AU: Who was the naked lady that always got painted up during Hawkwind shows?

DB: That was Stacia, who was six foot high with a 32-inch chest. I got on the wrong side of her once and she punched me in the mouth. She was part of the show and she toured with us extensively.

AU: Who is currently in Hawkwind with you?

DB: Richard Chadwick, our drummer, has been in the band for 36 years. Magnus Martin plays guitar and keyboards. We now have Thighpaulsandra, who played with the Charlatans. And also, Doug MacKinnon, who's playing bass with us now.

AU: How has Hawkwind endured so long?

DB: I've always regarded it as like a ship sailing along and I'm the captain who might have different people come on board and give their

influences and then go off and do something else. It is a bit like a ship sailing the seas of time.

AU: Will there be a Hawkwind documentary?

DB: We had Sky Arts actually offer a deal to do a documentary but when we started really seriously thinking about it, we decided we didn't really want to reveal everything about ourselves.

AU: What keeps you enthused?

DB: My lovely wife keeps me enthused. Music is supposed to be an art form, as long as it's creative and different all the time, then it's very fun.

AU: Do you still enjoy smoking marijuana?

DB: Yeah, occasionally I do. I've got my special inhaler and she's nice and cool. It stops me from coughing. I've never smoked tobacco. Smoking marijuana is much nicer. We used to get a good selection of marijuana in our younger days, you'd have Thai sticks and African grass and Moroccan.

AU: How did you become Doctor Technical?

DB: Probably because I produced a few tracks. I decided that because I was quite technical in the studio. So, I use a pseudonym Doctor Technical.

AU: What were your initial thoughts when you heard of Lemmy's passing?

DB: Sad. We were in contact with each other all the time. I knew he was really ill already. He wanted to basically die playing on stage. Over the years we've had quite a few people in the band who have died. You really miss them a lot. Shocked when they go. These people are really good friends of yours. It's a very sad thing. Always.

AU: Any chance you will play in Canada?

DB: Yeah, we would love to play in Canada. I

AU: Anything else you would like to promote?

DB: We've got a live album coming out in March. Then we'll probably record the band in the next few months for a new studio album.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

DB: Keep safe and let's hope we can fight the plague!

www.hawkwind.com

facebook.com/HawkwindHQ

Photo Credit: Marianne Harris



AU: So, who penned the title space rock?

DB: Space Rock was probably penned by the British press. It's electronic with quite a few heavy roots, with a bit of nice acoustic guitars occasionally. And we just had that 'niche'! We used to read science fiction magazines and books. So, we'd have lots of ideas for song structures from those.

AU: Arthur Brown joined Hawkwind for a bit?

DB: Yeah, we had Arthur working with us, in fact, we did a festival earlier in August with Arthur. We've known each other for quite a few years.

AU: Tell us about HawkFest.

DB: It's our little festival that we try to do every year. We had some good bands like Soft Machine.

AU: Do you still keep in touch with bands from the early Space Rock era?

DB: Yeah, I played synthesizer with Soft Machine. And there's a band called Man, who toured America with us in the 70s, and now they've got a band called The Sons of Man. We've done a single that's been broadcast from the space station. We

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Gorepot

Taiwanese Stoner Grind

Interview with Larry Wang

By Ryan Dyer

Larry Wang is the king of extreme metal in Taiwan. In addition to the stoner grind band Gorepot, whom he composes all of the music for, some of Larry's projects include Fatuous Rump, Perverse Imagery, Guttural Corpora Cavernosa, Coprocephalic, Tracriomy, Virginity Fraud, Maggot Colony, Emasculated Vituperation, Lesbian Tribbing Squirt, Gingivectomy, Umbilical Asphyxia, Geisha Dissection and Facelift Deformation. If you want to start your journey of learning about extreme metal from the heart of Asia, check out any of these bands or look into his label, Fat Tub of Lard Records. For this interview, we will try to focus on the gore, the pot and some connections Mr. Wang has to Canada. So, roll up a Gore Filled Pizza Bongrito and get prepared for an All You Can Smoke fest with Gorepot.

Absolute Underground: What is your history with pot? In Taiwan it is fairly illegal to smoke it, like China, right?

LW: I started smoking intensively in Taiwan actually. I was a straight edge back in college so I didn't really get into it, I am not sure what I would become if I did - school and the parents were going hard on me so I didn't want to risk anything. When I got back and got a good job, that's

when I started to smoke and I loved it. It helped me discover new grounds and put my mind in different perspectives. If you get caught in Taiwan you get locked up for a few days and have to do community service, get a record and get chased down via phone tracking system. When I went to China with Beyond Cure, I actually smoked quite a bit, people were growing weed and getting seeds shipped to China. It was heaven back then - when we went as Coprocephalic there was a cop who actually had DMT and LSD from confiscations at customs. At that time, I was blown away by how advanced the knowledge and how far the Chinese people would go to try new things and explore their minds. Later on, when I started my new job that's when things got crazy. I think it was around 2014 when things started to get crazy and strict.

AU: How about betel nuts (which are sold on the streets of Taiwan)? Do people chew these as a pot substitute?

LW: For people who chew betel nuts, in general they don't really know weed or have ever tried it. So, it's just a local thing that people think is cool to chew and spit red liquid on the streets. It's like kids pretending to be Yakuza gangsters. I've never really gotten into it, they can never substitute weed. It's like cigarettes - you keep smoking but they just keep you slightly awake and warm and they make a lot of mess in the end.

AU: There are a lot of stoner bands out there that play stoner metal. Gorepot plays fast, extreme music, which I think breaks the stereotype. What are your thoughts?

LW: I personally enjoy fast music when I am stoned. It does feel extra comfortable listening to super slow tempo bands, but I have a serious condition of ADHD, and I do believe that there's no specific way of connecting to a stoner. I took the route of this ultra-fast paced writing pattern to lead and guide the stoners into a much different extreme. According to many fans, they are very confused but were fed a lot of information so they went back again and again to realize what they missed out on, and in the

end it's something you don't put a lot of effort into understanding but realize later on one has missed out on too much. I also had feedback saying they are sober but feel stoned after finishing the album. So, I guess I've achieved multi levels with this new stoner sound (laughs).

AU: Did you consider putting together a stoner rock band?

LW: Actually, yes recently since I just turned 40, my pace has slowed down a bit and I am actually in the process of producing this stoner sound that I interpreted.

AU: Canadians love Gorepot. What is your connection with Canadian bands?

LW: Thank you bosses in Canada for the sick support! I did guest vocals for CUFF, Existential Dissipation, Necroticgorebeast (hot damn these guys are sick!!!) opened up for Cryptopsy, am planning to start a band with the member from Orchidectomy, met and hung out a bit with the vocalist of Orchidectomy, probably will do guest vocals for Gravitational Distortion (my personal favorite for a long time). I would love to get connected with and to discover more Canadian bands and one day play in Canada to hang out with everyone out there!

AU: Fatuous Rump, one of your many bands, just performed for the Sick Dog Fest online streaming festival. What else is new with the Rump?

LW: We are trying to apply for a bunch of fests in Taiwan. Even though we were rejected, we are going as a rock band to see how far we can go even though there are obstacles. As for releases goes the label, Lacerated Enemy, is planning a lot of merch along with a vinyl format release. I was being contacted by another label that wants to (I wrote a total of three albums this year) take the two albums under his label. We shall see how it turns out after the current release is finished! Oh, and we are playing a show on 12/25 - my wife is very pissed off about it since she wants to enjoy Christmas with the family but Fatuous Rump needs to get out there too!

ABSOLUTE ASIA

AU: You have connections with a lot of artists - many of whom have done album covers for you. Who would you like to pimp out here?

LW: There's a lot of underrated artists out there, personally my ultimate favorites are Aditia Wardhana, Armaada Art, Lordigan, Visual Darkness, Tony Koehl, and Tony Cosgrove. The Indonesians seem to be taking over the scene now due to the wide range of concepts they can pull off, but I am still in search of really unique artists that weren't discovered yet.

AU: You also work for Cheyenne Professional Tattoo Equipment. You mentioned a Canadian connection with tattoo artists - who is buying the equipment?

LW: Oh yes, a few years back I was hanging out in China with James Tex, who is legend in Canada, since our company changed the way the world tattoos. I am usually overwhelmed so I can't really remember who's from Canada but an example of the other world I am in is I am friends with both the recent artists that tattooed The Rock, tattoo artists who were on TV, tattoo super models, Suicide Girls and TV hosts. It may seem glorious but a lot more effort needs to be put in order to do the job right. Otherwise, one just gets shunned from the first hello.

AU: Anything else?

LW: Thank you, boss Ryan, for this amazing interview, I had a lot of fun answering the questions. I wish one day extreme metal would be more commonly accepted, usually people are a lot more fun and tend to enjoy life more and have high productivity!

<https://www.facebook.com/gorepottw>

<https://brutalmind.bandcamp.com/>

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Steve Johnson - Part 2

Rubberhead: Sex, Drugs, and Special FX

AU: What are you most infamous for?

SJ: Why do you think the subtitle of the book is *Sex, Drugs, and Special FX*? I am kind of known as the punk rock star of Special FX. And yes, I have a very bad reputation in that regard for drugs and sex and just being a loose cannon, and that's what I'm infamous for, I like to say famous for, but some people would call it infamous.

AU: Tell us more about the sex and the drugs.

SJ: Oh Lord, well it was the 80s, you know? Virtually every movie I worked on in the 80s, including *Ghostbusters*, it wasn't just me that was doing drugs and going crazy. It was the actors, writers, directors. It was actually a status symbol back

then to live that way. But it's no longer and I don't agree with drug abuse anymore. I agree with drug use, but not abuse. Haha.

AU: Did drug use ever affect your work? I assume it helped you keep going and allowed you to work long hours creating Special FX.

SJ: When I was 19 working on a project in London and a very famous actor introduced me to my first line of cocaine and it was like, "Oh, my God!" Back then it was like what the Incas used when they were building pyramids, it was pure. Not even necessarily bad for you, it wasn't cut with a bunch of horse shit. I came back to LA to the project and found some more. I realized that it was the secret ingredient to supercharge rocket fuel success because I could work ten times harder and ten times longer on it. But ultimately they always take you down. So, after a long and storied battle, I no longer do cocaine, unless it's New Years Eve and somebody has along some. Haha. For a long time in the 80s, it's all anybody was doing. But I'm almost 62 now and those days are over.

AU: Man, you've got an impressive IMDb.

SJ: IMDb is always notorious for making horrendous errors. There's some movies I didn't work on listed and many I did work on that aren't.

AU: I watched the promo video for your new book Rubberhead 2, and thought "Steve has really got the personality."

SJ: After two shots of vodka anybody has personality.

AU: I noticed you were smoking a cigarette at the start of the video and then I think at the end it looked like you were smoking a joint?

SJ: It was a joint. So I was high and drunk, I believe the kids call it cross-faded.

AU: What's the difference between Rubberhead Vol. 1 and Vol. 2?



SJ: *Volume One* is kind of an introduction and tells a story on its own. Because here's the thing you need to know about these books. I never wanted to write a book if it was going to just be like everybody else in the FX industry had already done. Stan Winston, Rick Baker, and Tom Savini did it already and I didn't want to do something in chronological order. I wanted to go way Hunter S. Thompson. I wanted it to be as much about the words and the story as it was about the photos. But the thing about *Volume Two* is that it also focuses on a horrendous thing that happened when I was working on *Fright Night*. And that is a friend of mine, my best friend actually, I fired him for cocaine abuse. He didn't show up one day and I was so angry that I said, "Look, you've got to get this under control. And when you've proven to me that you can handle the job again I will hire you back." And he went home, put a gun in his mouth, and blew his head off. So in *Volume Two* there is this kind of ongoing haunted ghost story that weaves itself in and out of all these tales of the greatest hits of the 80s. A lot of the kids buy the books just so they can jerk off to the pictures, "Oh look, here's my favorite monsters. Here's Slimer, here's the Librarian, here's the Wildman from *Big Trouble*. But it offends me that a lot of people

don't read the fucking words.

AU: What was the most challenging special effect you ever worked on?

SJ: Maybe the Don Rickles deterioration from the John Landis film *Innocent Blood* because that was incredibly foolhardy and dangerous. It culminates with an animatronic puppet of Don that we plumbed with a brass capillary system. Then we actually pumped sulfuric acid through it and saturated the foam puppet.

Then I went in right before John yelled action and hit it with an eyedropper of nitric acid. And when combined that literally makes liquid nitroglycerine and it absolutely destroyed the puppet while the animatronics were screaming and banging around. I don't think you could get away with that shit these days, that's fucking poisonous.

AU: In this age of CGI, why are practical effects still so important in your opinion?

SJ: Well, part of it has to do with the fact that the materials have evolved along with the equipment. We could get away with anything if you shoot on 35 millimetre, it's grainy, and it's dark. And we used to use opaque white foam rubber to do age makeups and character makeups and you can fail miserably with that, and then there's no fixing it in post. But since resolution has increased to such a great level of detail, we now use silicone, which basically you can't fuck it up. Because it's translucent like skin is, the edges melts away like butter in a frying pan, you can't see the edges. Also the internet is just a worldwide community of people that exchange ideas and techniques. So the state of the art has really increased with the prosthetic industry. And most importantly, if something fucks-up, you can fix it digitally and you couldn't do that before. So people are a lot more willing to put their actors in prosthetics than they used to be.

AU: What are some of your career highlights and career lowlights?

SJ: Here's a highlight and a lowlight at the same time, creating the non terrestrial intelligences, the aliens for the *Abyss*, the James Cameron film. It's a highlight because we were able to pull it off because back then there was no digital fallback. So at the culmination of the film we see the aliens come down and the end and say, "We will destroy you if you don't change your ways." And if we didn't have any aliens in that two million gallon tank, they wouldn't have a movie. So it was a lot of pressure. So the highlight was I got it done, the lowlight is that we all know how difficult James Cameron is to work with. It was a bloody battle.

AU: Any other tough shoots pop to mind?

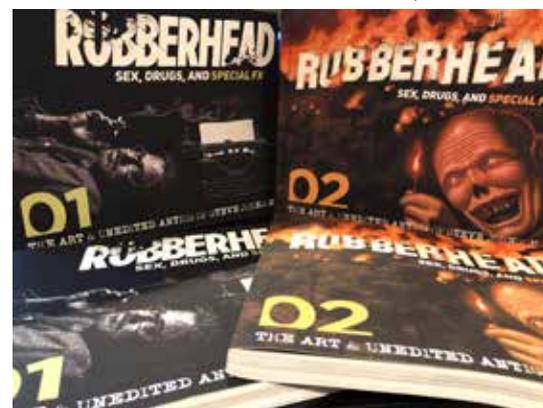
SJ: There's a better lowlight, the lowest lowlight is the whole *Predator* disaster. That's the worst one. You know about that, right?

AU: No, I just see you listed as uncredited Special FX for Predator.

SJ: Well, there's a huge story in *Rubberhead Volume Two* about the *Predator* disaster. I was hired to create the *Predator*. They brought in designs, before even hiring us, that were

SPLATTER GODS

absolutely impossible to create. We were shooting the whole thing on location in the jungle. We had Jean-Claude Van Damme just off the boat from Brussels and he'd never done a movie before. And this thing had backward bent legs, a mechanically extended neck and head and extended mechanical arms and I was like "Guys, this is not



going to work. This is never ever going to work." And they just wouldn't take no for an answer. I begged and pleaded with them, "Let me redesign something to work for us. Let's just go back to the drawing board." and they went "No, no, no, we are paying you to solve these problems, you figure this out." And it didn't work, I mean it would have worked, but it was very, very time consuming to shoot. And so they fired me and they fired Jean-Claude and they shut down production. They came back to Los Angeles and regrouped and hired Stan Winston to make the *Predator* and now that's in all the history books that Stan made it.

AU: What about working with John Carpenter on Big Trouble in Little China?

SJ: John and I didn't get along on that film. I was really excited because John had worked with Dick Smith, he'd worked with Rick Baker, and with Rob Bottin obviously on *The Thing*. And I finally had my chance and John didn't want to hear it. He was so fed up with, as he called it, his Special FX team showing up to set in limousines because, you know, we all have huge heads and egos. And everything was just a battle and I'm not even very happy with what we did on that film. Because even though I will say it does fit the tone of the film, at the time I didn't really know what John was going for necessarily. And he just kept pushing me to do these outlandish more cartoony things, and I thought everyone was just gonna make fun of me because here's my chance to do a John Carpenter film and I look like I don't know what I'm doing. But you look back at the movie and it's like if the FX stuff was done more seriously I don't think it would fit the tone of the film. So the lesson to be learned is always listening to your director, kids.

stevejohnsonfx.com

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To Be Continued Next Issue...



MUSIC FOR PEOPLE WHO LIKE THE WORD

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INFAMOUS
RECORDS



Bishops Green

Interview with drummer Orville Lancaster and vocalist Greg Huff

By Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Is there going to be a new full length album to follow the two awesome new compilation tracks that were released around Christmas last year?

Greg Huff [GH]: We have the "Waiting" 12-inch coming out. "We Decide," "Working Poor," and "Waiting" on the A-Side, and on the B-Side there will be three live songs that we did at the Rickshaw last June. We just released a video for "Waiting."

Orville Lancaster [OL]: The live songs come from the livestream we did.

AU: Now you're doing a video for "We Decide"?

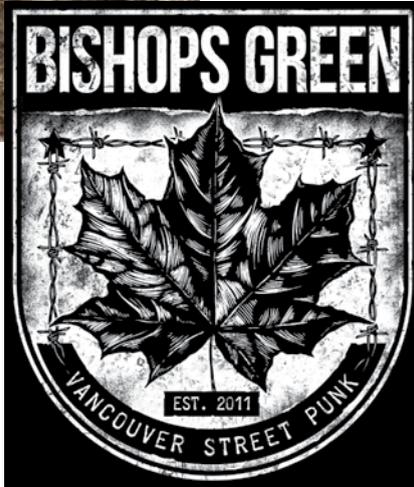
GH: We're doing a video for "We Decide" because a lot of people haven't heard the song.

OL: It also goes back to focusing on things that we

had control over, COVID has been really tough. We can do videos, focus on being creative. Greg and I are in the same bubble, so while we learn to exist in this new reality, we've found ways to keep going and not be vulnerable to shut downs, or things we can't control.

AU: Both of those tracks, "We Decide" and "Working Poor" were exciting for fans to hear. Anything you would like to add about those songs or the Pirates Press Records compilations they were released on?

OL: We've been working with Pirates Press really since the inception of the band. All of our plans last year came to a crashing halt because of the pandemic and we were trying to figure out how



to keep things moving, how to stay engaged.

So when we were invited to contribute to the compilations we jumped at the opportunity.

AU: Is the new album "Waiting" a transition from the last full length, A Chance to Change?

GH: No, I don't think it's a transition. I think I would consider it more of a reflection of where we are at, maybe a progression? We finished recording and mixing six songs last June [2020], and we only ended up using three. After listening to them for a while, they just didn't take hold, so we dropped them. We realized, we're not on that page anymore, we've changed. The new album we are

currently mixing better reflects where we are now.

AU: Where is street punk really popular that you guys haven't been to yet?

OL: Indonesia has got a great scene and they want us to come. We're going to see if we can get over there. We have also tentatively lined up tours for Chile, Brazil, and Japan.

GH: Australia. I would like to just go somewhere you'd never expect a scene to be and you just show up and it's wild. Discovering a new scene. That, to me, would be interesting.

OL: I'd like to play Russia. St. Petersburg and Moscow.

GH: Ukraine apparently has got a great scene. Also Stockholm.

OL: We would like to play Norway, Ireland, and it would also be cool to play Singapore.

GH: Have some Singapore slings.

AU: Is it true you guys are always treated the

PIRATES PRESS RECORDS

best by European promoters?

GH: They treat you really well. You get spoiled, you get delicious food. You get treats like chocolate bars and chips. They made me a birthday cake. They make you feel so welcome. It's great. I love touring Europe. It's the best.

OL: I think it's also the way that the whole scene in Europe works. They figured out that music, and art in general, is an important part of a culture. It's an important part of a city and it's what makes communities vibrant. The venues are set up to support the artist.

AU: What's your favorite thing about being on Pirates Press Records?

GH: They are pretty easy to work with and they love to push coloured and splattered vinyl. Seriously, they're the best. They are like family.

OL: They have been so supportive of us and we have a great relationship. Last year, I knew I could pick up the phone and talk with Skippy about anything. He is always super supportive and he has a great team of people.

AU: Anything else you'd like to mention?

OL: We are still looking for a dedicated Jam space. If anyone in Vancouver has a lockout they would rent to us, please reach out. We've been searching but can't find one!

AU: Any final thoughts to share?

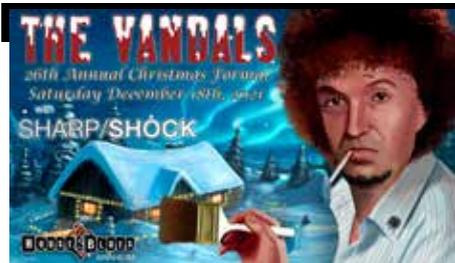
OL: I want to thank you for doing this. I was reading an Absolute Underground issue yesterday and it was really good. We haven't really done a lot of interviews like this in Canada. It's nice to do this.

GH: Yes, it's been a while, so it was cool to catch up.

www.bishopsgreen.ca

www.piratespressrecords.com

Photo by RD Cane



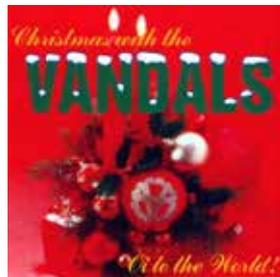
The Vandals

Stuff Your Stockings

Interview with old school member, bassist, songwriter, and busy elf Joe Escalante by Ira "Anarchy Burger" Hunter

It's been a Holiday tradition for a quarter of a century now; punk rock icons, The Vandals, put on a high energy, hit-packed Christmas concert to celebrate the Spirit Of The Season. The band filmed their entire 2020 Holiday show and are releasing a multi-media concert extravaganza!

25th Annual Christmas Formal finds The Vandals performing many beloved holiday classics, such as "Christmastime For My Penis," "My First Christmas As A Woman," and the now perennial classic "Oi To The World."



AU: Please introduce yourself.

JE: I am Joe Escalante, most famous for being the bassist of the Vandals.

AU: How'd you first get involved in punk rock?

JE: In 1978 I heard a kid describe a punk rock band called the Snot Puppies who played at his school. The guy said the audience threw food at them and they liked it. I was sold right there. I called my brother Greg and he reminded me that I already owned a punk record, the Ramones first album. This was true but I didn't know it was associated with punk rock. I thought KISS was punk rock. Because in my Jr. High bathroom it said "KISS Sucks. Punk Rock Sucks" so...

When I was 15 my first concert was seeing the Ramones open for Black Sabbath a few months later. This caused a division at our high school. My Ramones shirt made me an enemy of all hippies, constantly under attack. I still consider them my enemies. If you are a hippie. I'm coming for you.

AU: Who else is in The Vandals with you and what would it say on their dating profiles?

Dave Quackenbush, Singer:

"If I wasn't married, I would date you if you were a super model."

Warren Fitzgerald, Guitarist:

I was home-schooled before it was legal. Hope you like primary colors and life on the spectrum.

AU: What do you remember about being in the film *Suburbia*?

JE: Two bands were chosen by Penelope Spheeris, the director. Roger Corman didn't know what was going on, but I was a fan. The cast got to vote on the third band, we were voted in.

The Decline made "stars" out of the Circle Jerks, Black Flag, X, Fear, etc. so I thought this was a

big deal. I visited the set where the abandoned houses were. It was thrilling. I had seen a day of shooting on The Waltons before but this was even more exciting. When it came time to shoot the concert scene, D.I. played first and it was a bit awkward trying to make punk rock happen with limited extras and the director yelling "cut" all the time. TSOL played next. They had just switched styles so they didn't play their hits like "Property Is Theft" or "Abolish Government," which I thought was a huge mistake. So they played these slow spooky numbers with loud keyboards. More awkwardness. We played our hits, "Pat Brown" and "Urban Struggle." By this time there were more extras and they were itching to create a real slam pit. It got so crazy that equipment was getting damaged and Penelope finally told all the extras that they were too violent so they ruined it and she actually said, "OK, that's it, the Vandals are not in the movie." I was disappointed but I also

enjoyed being the band that was too punk for the movie. We lived for that kind of stuff. They ended up being able to cut enough of the "Urban Struggle" performance together for us to still be in the film, for that I was grateful. The biggest bonus was probably being on the back of the VHS cover. Video stores were hugely popular back then and I could take a girl to any one of them and go, "Oh, what's this? Me? On the cover of this movie?" There weren't a lot of rewards in punk rock back then so you had to milk whatever you got

AU: What is it about the instant classic Christmas album you released in 1996, *Oi to the World!*, that has managed to have such staying power with fans for 25 years now?

JE: That LP is a testament to Warren Fitzgerald as a songwriter and producer. I got lucky with one song, which I couldn't have written without his help. It's four people who believe in the power of Christmas and one who was actually born on Christmas.

AU: What's the story of writing and recording the *Christmas With The Vandals* album?

JE: Warren and I had just started Kung Fu Records. The Vandals were signed to Nitro Records but Dexter Holland gave us permission to record a Christmas record on our own label. We were delusional enough to think there would be a market for it. It was written and recorded in July / August of 1996, which was weird, trying to keep the Christmas spirit alive in the middle of a long hot California summer. When it was released, it did well for our new little label and we were very proud of it. That and the Assorted Jelly Beans set the bar for the kind of punk rock we wanted the label to be known for. However, come January, we got tons of returns from our distributors. No one wanted to stock it during the year. We were miffed because we thought it was a good punk rock record to listen to anytime. We needed to find a way to keep it on the shelves all year. So we decided to re-package it and make it look like a punk rock / Oi album and not a Christmas album. Some artwork by Canadian artist Adam Swinbourne did the trick. It was now just called *Oi*

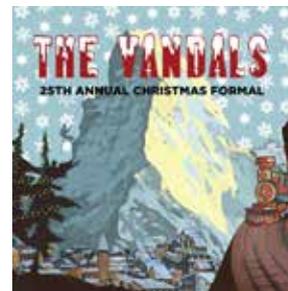
To The World with a picture of two skinheads on the front. We never ever got a return after that.

AU: Describe what happens at the live performances of your Christmas Formals?

JE: It's called a Christmas Formal so people tend to dress up in formal wear. We usually have a photo booth and other fun stuff like wrapped presents for Warren and Dave the throw out into the audience. We've had many themes like Hawaiian or Elvis but after 25 years we've run out of ideas. We usually play our Christmas album first, every song except "Hang Myself From The Tree" and "Oi To The World," which we save for the end after we play a bunch of our regular songs.

AU: Tell us about the CD/DVD that people can order of the 2020 Christmas Formal.

JE: In 2017 we sold our label to Cleopatra Records and they are doing a great job of keeping the label going. They've signed some great bands like Down By Law and Unwritten Law. They are releasing a CD/DVD combo of the 25th version of the concert which was done as a live stream during the pandemic. It was a fun show on a sound stage in Orange County. It looks like we're on a TV variety show like Donnie and Marie of *The Flip Wilson Show*. Kind of throw-backy. It's out now wherever Kung Fu Records and tapes are sold.



AU: Anything special planned for this year's Christmas Formal live performance on Dec 18th at the House of Blues in Anaheim?

JE: We are too old to do anything special, but we do have some new decorations this year.

AU: Were you ahead of the "Woke" movement with such songs as "Christmastime For My Penis," and "My First Christmas As A Woman"?

JE: Hahaha. Our singer keeps telling us "My First Christmas As A Woman" is not woke, but the rest of us disagree. That penis song is just a remnant from when we used to write material for Blink 182.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice this year?

JE: I have had the best couple years of my life, but I feel for all the people who have suffered. I have been married for 25 years and you can't do that by being very naughty, unfortunately.

AU: *Oi to the World!* is such a classic Christmas album. Have you ever thought about creating any new Christmas songs for a follow-up?

JE: I think about them all the time but then I just leave it alone.

AU: Any other punk rock Christmas bands?

JE: Kung Fu released a Christmas EP by the band Knock Out. It was pretty good. But most Christmas songs written after 1970 are terrible. The Bad Religion versions of the classics are really good. I wish they would play them live or join us at the House of Blues.

AU: Are you still involved in filmmaking?

JE: I am a full time TV show-runner now. I have been writing and directing a TV series called *Monsters Across America*. I have been blessed to work on shows like *Ancient Aliens* and *Curse of Oak Island* for History and *True Nightmares* for Discovery. People can go to EscalantePictures.

PURE PUNK

com to see what kind of stuff I'm doing.

AU: Will there ever be a Vandals documentary?

JE: We have *Sweatin' To The Oldies* which introduces our origins from the late 80s and we have a doc about our time in Iraq and Kuwait.

AU: Tell us about playing for the troops in Iraq.

JE: It was the greatest professional experience of my life. It was amazing to finally be doing something that could be perceived as important. We were sent to improve moral over the holidays when they have a lot of depression and even suicides being so far from their families and in such thankless danger. We played shows every day for a week. We slept in barracks at Saddam Hussein International Airport. Each morning we would go to one of the places where helicopters land. We would wait for two Blackhawks. One would take our gear, the other we would ride in to

forward operating bases where small groups of soldiers were based. We would land, play a set, eat with the troops, then fly back. It was amazing.

AU: Anything else you want to promote?

JE: Fly down from Canada for our Dec. 18 show at the Anaheim House of Blues. You can go to Disneyland the next day.

vandals.com

Instagram @joey.escalante

www.escalantepictures.com

DVD/CD Track List:

1. Dance Of The Sugarplum Fairies
2. Gun For Christmas
3. Nothing's Going To Ruin My Holiday
4. Grandpa's Last Christmas
5. Thank For Nothing
6. Christmas Time For My Penis
7. I Don't Believe In Santa Claus
8. My First Christmas As A Woman
9. Here I Am Lord
10. C.H.R.I.S.T.M.A.S.
11. People That Are Going To Hell
12. Idea For A Movie
13. Change My Pants (I Don't Wanna)
14. I've Got An Ape Drape
15. Live Fast Diarrhea
16. Anarchy Burger (Hold The Government)
17. Urban Struggle
18. Euro-Barge
19. It's A Fact
20. And Now We Dance
21. My Girlfriend's Dead
22. Hang Myself From The Tree
23. Hungry For You
24. Oi To The World

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Varius

Absolute Underground: Thank you Varius for taking the time to do this interview. For those unfamiliar with the band, please tell us some quick background on Varius?

Vladimir Prokhorov: Varius is a heavy metal band from the Niagara Region, Ontario, Canada. We actually started out as an instrumental four-piece; we eventually parted ways with our keyboard player and brought in our current vocalist Joey. Shortly after we released our first three-song demo in 2017 titled "The Red Messenger." Since then we have released a four-song EP called "The Great Tribulation," a single "P.I.S.S.," and we've just released our second EP, titled "Concordance." We have played shows in the London, Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls regions, making new fans and selling merch as we begin to slowly but surely create a name for ourselves. Everyone in the band has very diverse musical tastes and it plays well into our writing and playing styles, which is very much showcased with our current release, "Concordance."

AU: You just released your second EP "Concordance," for this release we were informed that you took a bit of an unorthodox approach or experimented differently from some other bands where each track was written by one member, making this EP eclectic and each song definitely different from

each other. What made the band decide to take this approach?

VP: I think everyone just had so many ideas, and they were all great and had potential, that we just said, why don't we all just bring something to the table and see where it goes. The cool thing was that everyone took completely different approaches to how they initially wrote and orchestrated their songs. Joel for example began writing his song on acoustic guitar and piano, even though his main instrument is bass. I wrote my entire song on keys, and Joey and Pat mainly wrote their songs on guitar, compiled dozens of riffs, and we went through them all. So it was an inherently different approach from each member as well, which I think is pretty cool.

AU: How does this EP compare to your 2017 debut? Any stand-out tracks you are personally stoked on?

VP: The recording quality is cleaner compared to our debut EP from 2017. That alone makes it stand out a lot more. In terms of the songs, I think "Golden Crown" really stands out to me because it's very different from anything we have done in the past, it's slower, with a massive main riff, and I really like Joey's approach on the vocals in that one.

AU: You're based next to one of the world's great wonders of the world, Niagara Falls? What is life like for a metal band having the biggest natural wall of death at your doorstep? Any plans to use Niagara Falls as a backdrop for a music video? or perhaps recordings of the thunderous falls in future recordings?

VP: You know it's funny, like anything, the longer you live here, the less you care, with that being said, every time I drive or walk past the Falls, I am instantly mesmerized by its sheer beauty

and raw power. Every. Single. Time. It truly is an unbelievable sight. Not too sure about the Falls backdrop idea but getting audio of that deep reverby rumble would actually be amazing! Good call guys.

AU: Like many bands around the world, how was the band affected by the covid pandemic, did it change how you guys practiced, recorded, and release this EP? What got the band through it all?

VP: Yeah, the pandemic definitely screwed up our plans a bit because we were initially going to wait until it ended and put on a local release party with a bunch of friends and bands, but eventually we realized that we are just sitting on recorded material, instead of just releasing it and continuing to write and record more music and content. Which is what we ended up doing, it just made sense. In terms of rehearsals, yes of course we have been playing a lot less together in general, but practices have been picking up and we have also some cool video content coming down the pipeline, so that's cool.

ABSOLUTE METAL

AU: As the world is slowly returning to live concerts again, any future plans to present Concordance live in Canada or internationally?

VP: We don't have any definitive plans quite yet to play live. Bands are slowly starting to come back, and if the pandemic starts to come to an end, we will be on stage sooner than later playing the full EP and more for our fans, maybe even an iconic metal cover.

AU: Any final thoughts you like to share with our readers?

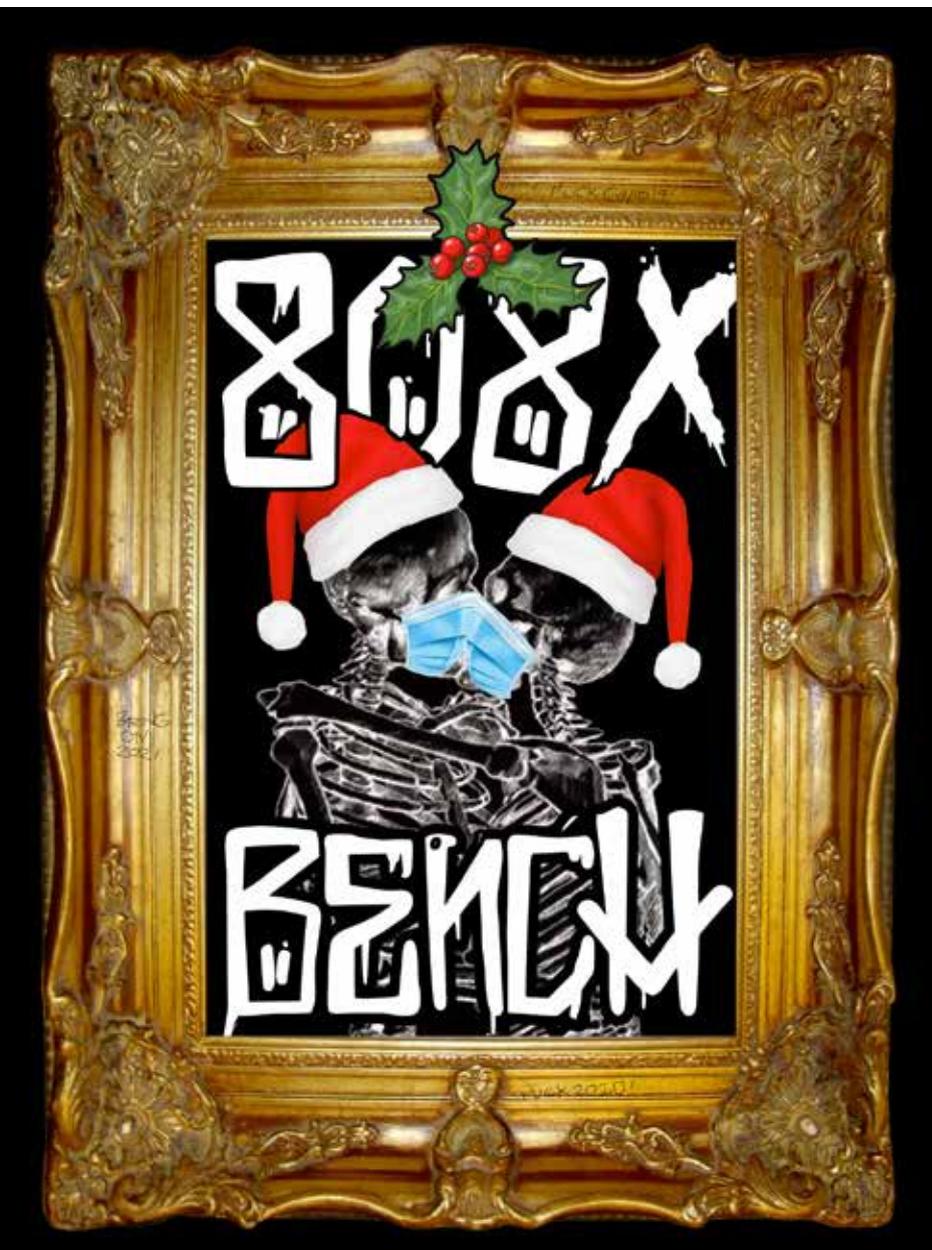
VP: I just want to thank *Absolute Underground Magazine* for taking the time to check us out, and helping promote our music and helping musicians, music, and art, in general, be seen and be heard, rock on guys, that was fun! Stay Metal!

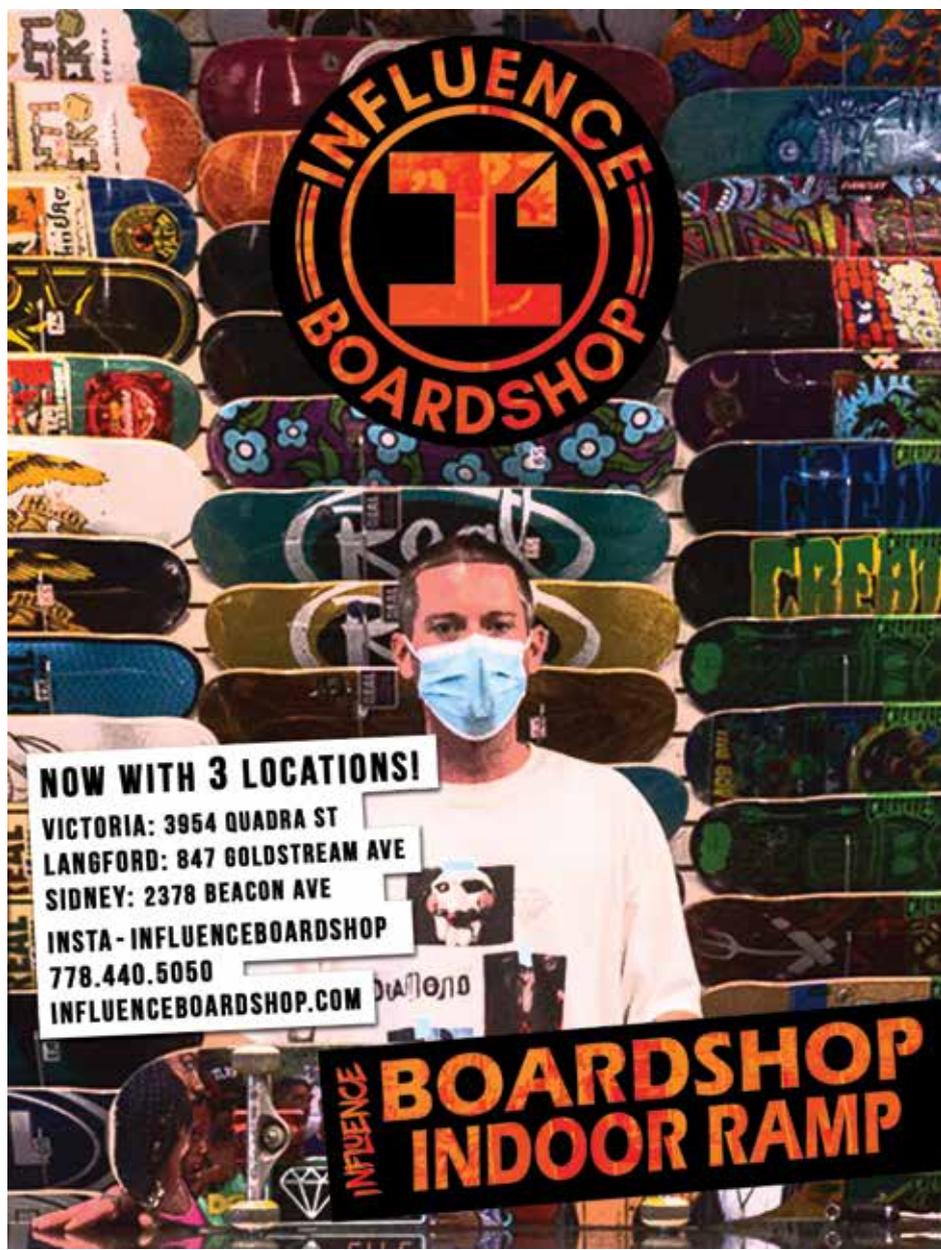


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Tent City

By John Carlow

Seamus Ryan-Lloyd - Guitar, Bass, Vocals
Christian Hardy - Bass, Guitar, Vocals
Neil Crosswell - Drums, Backing Vocals

Absolute Underground: Tell us about the band name.

Tent City: We had a page full of band names that we had written down, and we went in a circle scratching names off until there were four names left: Mudlung, Pollution, Tent City, and Musgraves. We settled on Tent City, in hopes the name can bring attention to wealth disparity, trying to get in the face of the people in Vic who have a NIMBY attitude. A band name is kind of an arbitrary thing anyway, so we figured we may as well put it to some good use. If you're a local it's a bit of a gimmick.

Absolute Underground: What kind of music do you play?

Tent City: We try to play music that gives people

permission to feel and think freely. To connect people. We try to push boundaries and be experimental while still retaining a catchy sound. When we see the crowd connected to the music, it makes us want to put more energy and intention into our performances and songwriting. Genres are arbitrary and kinda meaningless, but we're Post-Punk.

Absolute

Underground: How did the band come together?

Tent City: We've been making music together in some form since the summer of 2018, when Seamus and Christian were working on a one-off recording project under the name Deadwood. Christian had been in another band called Peach Mountain with Neil in the past and asked if he could come play the drums. Those recordings never ended up seeing the light of day, but it did result in the three of us starting to have on and off rehearsals for a year while Seamus was finishing his degree. We finally came together under the name Tent City in May of 2019. We've been writing and playing regularly together since then.

Absolute Underground: Tell us about your creative process.

Tent City: So far most of what we've written is the result of Seamus and Christian getting together with some chord progression or loose concept and arranging the guitar and bass parts between the two of them. Then the songs are brought to Neil who fleshes them out with drums and the three of us finalize the form of the song, adding finer details. Lyrics usually come near the start either in a half-formed state, or mostly there,

requiring only a couple tweaks later. We treat the lyrics as an equally important part of the process as the music.

Absolute Underground: What bands influence your sound?

Tent City: Talking Heads, Modest Mouse, Spirit of the Beehive, Idles, Parquet Courts, King Krule, Pavement, Nirvana, The Beatles, The Pixies, Women, Joy Division, Radiohead, Interpol, Wilco, Frank Zappa, Slint, Cloud Nothings

Absolute Underground: Tell us about the album *Conscious Incompetence*.

Tent City: We recorded the EP at a few of the jam spaces we were renting in spring of 2020, in the midst of Covid. We felt it was necessary to record some tracks, as we weren't able to keep playing shows around town. We took the five best songs we had at the time and decided to release them as a collection of demos to have something to show for ourselves, given the state of live music at the time.

All music was recorded with a stereo field recorder, mixed and produced completely independently by Christian, as well as some mastering work from our friend Alex.

The artwork for all the songs on the EP, and everything we've released since, has all been done by Seamus. The title comes from the 4 Stage Competence Learning Model. We resonated with the second stage, Conscious Incompetence, which basically means you're painfully aware of how much you suck. Being aware of both our strengths and our limitations as a band at the time, we felt (and still feel) that it's an apt description of what it feels like to be a young band trying to find their sound.

Absolute Underground: I really dig the track "PNW." What's the story there?

Tent City: Seamus had written the song while on a shitty contract job in Vernon B.C. about struggling with mental health despite being surrounded by the beauty of the PNW. Seamus and Christian developed a lot of that song while on a camping trip in Port Renfrew on acoustic instruments, and later brought the idea to the full band set

up. Sonically it was heavily inspired by the Cloud Nothings album *Here and Nowhere Else*, and lyrically inspired by the late Scott Hutchinson of Frightened Rabbit. We consider it to be one of the first tracks to inspire a complete project we have in mind for the future that more fully explores what we feel sonically represents the PNW

Absolute Underground: Fav local bands? Anyone you'd like to be billed with?

Tent City: At this point, honestly, we'd play on a bill with a ham sandwich. But some of our favourite local bands include Wet Cigarette, Absentia, The This, i.o and Finch.

Unfortunately, a lot of bands we really fucked with didn't survive the pandemic, and since shows have been inconsistent at best, it's been difficult to really connect with the local scene. Boo hoo wah wah.

Absolute Underground: What's next for Tent City?

Tent City: We're still eager to play shows and looking for opportunities there, but given the uncertainty of that, we're starting to really think about how we want to record and produce our music moving forward. One of the consistent things with us is we have a bunch of different avenues in mind for future sounds to explore and are always experimenting with new ideas that fall way outside the sounds of what we've released so far. Currently we're working towards a full-length project that encapsulates a catchy, energetic, clean-punk sound.

The goal is that we'll be constantly evolving our sound as a band. The stuff we release a few years down the line might sound completely different from what we're doing now, in fact, we hope it does. We see Tent City as three musicians constantly working to make the music that inspires us the most, and that isn't attached to any specific genre or sound.

Chat and photographs: John Carlow/ Finding Charlotte Photography



JOSH FREESE

Drum Slut Extraordinaire

by Ira Hunter, Ty Stranglehold, and Jared Amos.

Josh Freese, legendary drummer for The Vandals, Devo, Sting, and countless others, has recently released *Just A Minute Vol. 1*, a collection of one minute songs written and recorded during the 2020 lockdown on Loosegroove Records.

AU: This interview is for our Christmas issue so we might delve into some Christmas topics.

Josh Freese: Right like the day I was born. Christmas Day.

AU: Oh yeah? No way!

JF: Yeah, there we go. What a perfect Christmas issue, huh?

AU: So, you're kind of like a little baby Jesus.

JF: Little Baby Jesus!

AU: And then the three wise men brought you your drums, your cymbals, and your sticks.

JF: Yeah, I've got three wise standard poodles that I live with.

AU: Introduce yourself and let us know what you're most famous or most infamous for.

JF: Well, this is Josh Freese. And I don't know if I'm more famous or infamous, but I am a professional drummer and songwriter. When I was 12, I started playing in a cover band out at Disneyland until I was 15. At that point I started making records and touring. I left high school early and just kind of never stopped. I've gotten to work with a lot of great artists, and a lot of bad artists. And I'm grateful that I'm able to do it for a living, and support my family playing drums and music.

AU: My buddy, Ty says you were an electronic drum player. Does that make sense?

JF: It does make sense. What it was is, before playing Disneyland I got involved with this company that was this really popular cutting edge electronic drum company in the 80s called Simmons electronic drums. If you look back at any rock videos on MTV between the years '83-'89, sometimes you'll see drummers playing these electronic drums that are kind of a flat hexagon shape. Those are Simmons drums. I worked with the company when I was a kid. I'd do these clinics, alongside the other actual famous older drummers, and I was like this novelty cute little 12 year old kid that could play the drums pretty good. The joke is there's a Vandals home video concert documentary called *Sweatin' to the Oldies*, and in it they talk about how they snatched me out of Disneyland, and ended up calling me Electronic Boy. It's still this ongoing joke.

AU: Way back then did you ever imagine

you would be playing with some of the most legendary bands in the world?

JF: I didn't. But I mean, that was what I had my sights on. The fact that I've gotten to play with some of the greatest artists out there, and some of my favorite artists that I grew up loving and listening to, is really, for me, my greatest success. On a personal level, getting to work with people you admire, or when you were younger would dream about meeting one day, let alone being in a band, or working with them. That part's been really cool. So, I had big dreams and I lucked out. It's always a combination of hard work and luck.

AU: What are some bands that you've been in?

JF: My personal favorite ones, are bands that aren't even the most popular, most successful bands. I've worked with two of my favorite bands growing up, Devo and The Replacements. So getting to work with Devo, and Replacements to me, on a personal level means a lot more than working with Guns N' Roses. No offence to Guns N' Roses but I didn't grow up dreaming of being in Guns N' Roses, and listening to the records obsessively. I didn't respect them the same way I respected the guys from Devo or Paul Westerberg from Replacements. I've been working with Paul Westerberg since I was 19 years old, and working with Devo since I was 24. But getting to work with Trent Reznor and Nine Inch Nails, and being in Sting's band has really been a treat. I still kind of have to pinch myself sometimes.

AU: When Devo played Punk Rock Bowling the first time several years ago, you couldn't do it because you were on tour in Europe with Sting. Where you thinking "I wish I was at Punk Rock Bowling with Devo," how do you choose?

JF: Yeah, that's the tough part. Devo, at this point, plays so seldomly, and Mark Mothersbaugh, the singer, makes such a good living composing music for film, that he doesn't do Devo for a day job anymore. It's kind of like on the side for fun once in a while. So I'll be out playing drums with Sting, and Devo will call and say, "Hey, can you play one show with us?" and I'll be like, "I'm actually in the middle of a 10 week tour". I love playing with Devo, and on a personal level, it



means a lot to me. So I hate having to miss stuff.

AU: I think it was Fred Armisen that stood in for you at the first Punk Rock Bowling show.

JF: Yeah, I was happy that he was able to do it, because whenever I can't do it, I feel a little bit guilty. So it was kind of fun for fans to go "Oh, how cool Fred Armisen is playing drums with Devo". It's like this extra added bonus. Fred's such a big Devo fan and a cool guy that can pull it off.

AU: So this year you did drum for Devo at Punk Rock Bowling. How did the show go?

JF: Man, it was great. We played well and it was a lot of fun. I was very happy that I was around and available to do it. The Devo guys are such eccentric, nutty kind of guys that it's just fun. It is great playing those songs and they're just so funny to be around and hang out with.

AU: Does Sting smoke weed?

JF: Does Sting smoke weed? (laughs)

AU: Well, he's into meditation and tantric sex.

JF: I've never seen Sting smoke weed, but I don't think he's against it. He's actually pretty open minded about that stuff and he probably does. Is he a pothead? No. He's definitely not sober or anti-drug. He's also not some junky fuck-up.

AU: Were you with Devo when they played the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010.

JF: I sure was

AU: Epic Show! Devo handed out blue energy domes and they said "Red is dead. Blue is new".

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JF: Yeah, that was a fun gig. If you want to have a laugh, go on YouTube and there's a weird little video I made. There was a protest going on at the airport in Vancouver. But the joke was, I went out there with Jerry from Devo and he made it sound like this protest was people that heard about the censoring of the Devo videos by the Olympics. Search Devo Protest 2010 Olympics on YouTube.

AU: Tell us about your collection of one minute songs called *Just A Minute Vol. 1*.

JF: Well, at the beginning of lockdown last year, 2020, I kind of retreated to my home studio. I literally just wanted to have fun and take my mind off all the bullshit. So I wanted to write a bunch of little fun songs, with no intention of releasing them. Just record the songs because I like the process of doing it. Just making art for the sake of making art. So I set out to write a bunch of fun one minute songs. I didn't expect anyone to hear the stuff, but I made some little one minute videos on my phone and put them up on Instagram. I posted five or six songs, and my friend Stone Gossard from Pearl Jam, who is one of the few cheerleaders of mine when it comes to writing and recording solo material. So he called me and he said, "I've been seeing these little one minute songs you're posting. What do you think about making a record and having Loosegroove put it out for you?" I said "Sounds great."

Most of the stuff was already recorded, and it was gonna be one album with 41 60 second songs on it. But then because we're having fun doing the artwork for the vinyl and stuff, Stone said, "How about we do two different records? Just A Minute Volume One and Volume Two." The first one came

out October 29th. The second one, will probably be out in like three months.

The album is for the ADD short attention span community, which is basically the whole world right now. They are one minute songs, and my joke is, if you don't like the song, by the time you get up to skip to the next one, that song is over anyways, so just sit down and listen to the damn thing. There's songs that sound like regular rock and roll songs or real songs, even though they're short. And then there's songs that just sound like weird art projects, and just craziness.

AU: Are you still making videos for the songs?

JF: Yeah, I can't wait to make a video for a song on called "Somehow I Like Lou Reed", it's on the second record. I'm gonna get a Lou Reed look alike, and I'm gonna do all this funny shit with him. I just put up a new really cool video for the song "The Dwarves and The Queens", it's about my friends in the band The Dwarves and my friends from the Queens of the Stone Age, who used to be friends and then got in a big fight and hate each other now, and how it's kind of a bummer. I had these Ukrainian sisters (Mad Twins) do this great animation video for it.

AU: Any expectations for these albums?

JF: I have very low expectations for the record sales. I just am happy having it out and available. It was fun to do the artwork. All the artwork on it is my artwork, Loosegrooves let me lay it out and I love the way it looks. And we got hot pink vinyl on the first one, and we're gonna come up with something fun for the second one too.

AU: What makes a quickie so much better than a long drawn out song, or with sex?

JF: Oh, you know, you get right down to it and then on to the next thing. No fucking around, in and out. Literally on both accounts.

AU: This project reminds me of the Fat Wreck Chords compilation, *Short Music For Short People*. The Vandals had a song "To All The Kids" on there too. Did it inspire you at all?

JF: I forgot about that record. Really, the one I was using as an inspiration was the avant-garde band The Residents from San Francisco. They made a



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record called the Commercial Album about 30 years ago. And it was verse, chorus, verse, chorus, done. They're all exactly 60 seconds, there's probably 20 or 30 of them. I loved those when I was younger, I still do. They were all just short, to the point. Kind of poking fun at commercial music by just being kind of assembly line.

AU: Is this the weirdest album you've done?

JF: I keep on talking a big game about making a weird record, but it's like maybe some of these lyrics are funny, but a lot of stuff isn't that weird. I'm still like, when am I gonna make my really weird record? But the problem is, I think when people make really weird stuff for the sake of weird, it's like after a song or two, you're like, "Okay, this is just super out there and who cares?"

AU: *Just A Minute Volume One* has a really crazy album cover. What are we looking at here?

JF: Well, that's a doll that hangs on my wall in my studio, it's called Laughing Head Granny. It's a novelty toy from the late 70s, and it's really creepy. The eyes go up and down, and the tongue goes in and out, it spits water from it's mouth, and it does this laugh it goes *mimicks doll laugh* (in the background his dogs starts barking) Sorry, that laugh freaked the dogs out. Anyways, it's really scary, and really creepy. I took a photo of it from the side and drew those eyebrows on it.

AU: Tell us what this one minute song called "Can't Get Married, Can't Get Buried" is about. What are some other stand-out songs?

JF: It was early on in the pandemic, but a friend goes "It's so weird out there, you can't get married and you can't get buried." You weren't allowed to have real weddings legally and you weren't allowed to have a real funeral. I was like, "Oh, how fucked up." It was just bizarre. It's kind of one of the more serious songs on the record, to be honest. I like "Headlock Headlock Nicolas Cage". It's a good song, and a true story about Nicolas Cage and Vince Neil day drinking in Vegas. I like "Baby's First Beard" a lot, and there's a crazy video for that. I grew a beard for the first time in my life

last year during lockdown. I was like "Can I grow a beard if I tried?", and I pushed through it, man. I got a full on gross beard that my wife hated. But Baby's First Beard is about me. I'm the baby I guess. It's like a slow, weird Black Flag song, meets the Butthole Surfers. There's another cool song called "God Gave Rock and Roll To You And Satan Wants it Back". I also like the song "Mom Buns".

AU: Mom Buns? Is that about mom's asses?

JF: It's about mom's asses at school. Yeah, pretty much. *laughs* I go to drop my kids off and I'm like, you know, perverting all the moms at school.

AU: Like "Hey mother, want another?"

JF: Yeah. Like just messing around, just being as silly and dumb as I can on that one. "Lock Down" is a good one. It's got my kids screaming on it and my brother playing saxophone. Its super fucked up and weird. I like "Aint Nuthin Funny Bout 2020" too. This album is all over the fucking place.

AU: What are your plans for Christmas?

JF: I'm going with my family to Palm Springs to lay low and not be on tour for a second.

AU: How was The Vandals 25th Anniversary Christmas Formal?

JF: It was all right. Last year we just did an online thing because it was better than nothing. But we're doing it this year on December 18th in Orange County, so I'm looking forward to that. That's always kind of my favorite show of the year, The Vandals Christmas show.

AU: Did you originally get into music for the sex or the drugs?

JF: All the above.

AU: Well, we appreciate your time. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy Birthday.

JF: Thank you very much.

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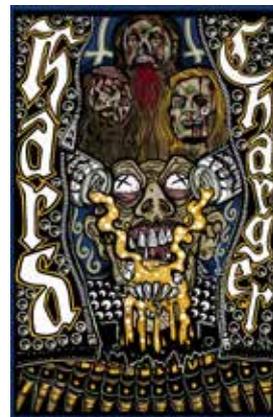

Hard Charger

Rumbling in from Canada's East Coast, Hard Charger is a vicious three-piece that brandishes the sonic constitution of a punk rock jackhammer. Ploughing through long nights and heavy mileage, they've been breaking intercontinental asphalt for well over a decade, bludgeoning blood-thirsty audiences across Canada, the US, Mexico, and Europe since 2006, with no signs of slowing down.

Their most recent release, *Vol. 4: Take The Guff & Suffer* was released via D7i Records [CA], Doomsday Machine [CA], Emergency Records [CZ], and Wasted Time [ROW]. "Growing up in a small town and feeling like you're stuck, stuck in the grind, getting the life sucked out of you." *Vol. 4* is an album for the working class, dragging listeners through fever dreams of dirty dive bars, \$2.50 beers, and poor life decisions. With a hefty catalogue consisting of four full-lengths and several EPs, Hard Charger locks in with the staunchest axe-slingers of modern day rock, punk & metal.

What started in 2006 dedicating leisure hours to noise, has grown into one of the best-respected touring acts on the East Coast. Hard Charger's current lineup - Tom (drums/vox), Dave (guitar/vox) and Shawn (bass/vox) - devote

themselves to making their self-described brand of "...crust n' roll. Like, shoe-wrecking, gas pedal-mashing, f*ck you-finger-waving, right reckless and nihilistic rock n roll."



With appearances at heavy-hitting festivals - Obscene Extreme (CZ), Maryland Death Fest, & Radioactive Earslaughter (Montreal) - and sharing the stage with the likes of Voivod, Poison Idea, DOA, Weedeater and many more., Hard Charger is no stranger to the big stage. Yet among their many career successes, you'll still find them hanging in gritty basements, hammering out house shows and hellfests alike. In fact, when they're not hustling out on the road, Hard Charger's members are integral parts of their home scene in Fredericton, NB, Canada

- putting on some of the city's heaviest shows in their basement, fittingly called the Maniac Mansion.



In their years of trials and trampling, Hard Charger has proven to be one of the hardest working, hard-hitting bands on the East Coast. With *Vol. 4* in their arsenal and big plans for non-stop touring into the horizon, 2019 promises to be a big year for this well-deserving crew. A pummelling pedagogue for the proletariat, they are the speed beast and we're screaming in the stands.

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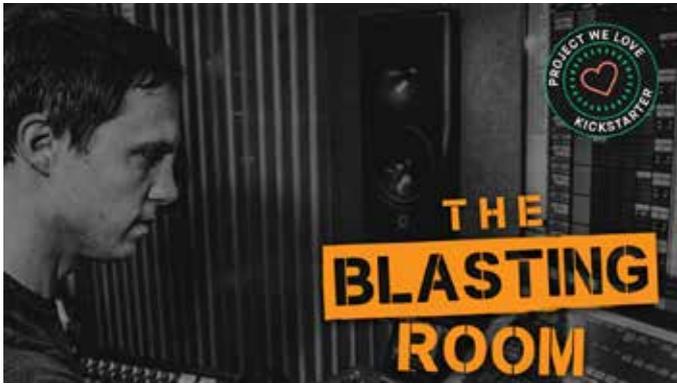
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The Blasting Room

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

AP: My name is Aaron Pendergast, and I'm probably best known for a feature documentary called *Floating Horses: The Life of Casey Tibbs*. Wasn't a huge success but we played a ton of festivals and won a fairly major award for it. My roles were as a Producer, half of the production crew, and assistant editor.

AU: How did you get your start in filmmaking?

AP: That can be a long story. The abridged version is I got interested in video editing, but when I started film school everyone I worked with already had editors. I just decided to make my own movie so I could edit it. It was a short documentary about a good friend of mine and people liked it so I continued making docs.

AU: What are some previous projects you have worked on? Were you also involved with Filmage: The Story of Descendents/All?

AP: Aside from the aforementioned, I worked on a film called *The Buffalo King* that was distributed by PBS and aired to an audience of ~17 million if memory serves. I've also made about a dozen short films, this will be my third feature. My fellow producer Kevin Kirchner worked on *Filmage* and has shot with many of the bands featured in the film previously.

AU: Tell us about the latest project you are working on about the legendary punk rock recording studio called The Blasting Room. What was the original idea for the film and has the scope expanded since beginning the process?

AP: The original idea came from a conversation I had with a former coworker who thought it was weird that I went to a Less Than Jake show in 2017. Like because they aren't mainstream then I guess in this person's mind the band doesn't matter or isn't worth seeing? Anyway, I'm a huge fan of music and I truly believe it has the ability to change a person's life in a positive way, and just because something isn't on the radio doesn't mean it's not important to someone or that it's not good. I really wanted to tell a story that highlighted the impact that music can have and showcase that it doesn't have to be "mainstream" in order to be relevant.

AP: What is the origin story of The Blasting Room?

AP: The cliff notes version is that the band ALL got an advance from their label and used the money to build a studio instead of paying for recording time at an existing one. If you want more than that you'll have to wait for the film.

AU: What makes The Blasting Room special and unique and worthy of a documentary?

AP: For me it's that they were able to build this thing from the ground up without any formal training and minimal funding. They just wanted to do this thing and they did it and it has turned out awesome. And since it started if you're a fan of punk rock you have multiple albums that have been touched by *The Blasting Room* whether you realize it or not.

AU: How has it been working closely with drummer/producer Bill Stevenson one of the founders of The Blasting Room. Any good Bill stories to share?

AP: You know, we haven't worked directly with Bill much on this. He's a busy guy and the film is

expansive, so we typically work with Jonathan at the studio for coordinating shoots, contacting bands, and so on. Mostly I want to be respectful of the fact that it is a business, and I don't want to impact that in a negative way. Given that we try to be as minimally invasive as possible when working with a subject, but especially so in this case.

AU: Who else have you interviewed so far for inclusion in the

documentary?

AP: Oh man, so many people...we're up to 30 something interviews and have a few more "must haves" but we're almost done. Pretty much everyone listed on our website and Kickstarter has been interviewed save for a few we need to pick up.

AU: What are some of your favourite bands and albums that have been recorded at The Blasting Room?

AP: The Ataris – Look Forward to Failure, Rise Against – The Sufferer and the Witness, Good Riddance – Thoughts and Prayers, Useless ID – Redemption...honestly too many to mention all of them but that's a good start.

AU: When will the documentary be completed and what's the plan after that? Film Festivals? Physical release?

AP: We're hoping to have the film completed by July/August for a festival run and release on physical and digital after. Distribution is a difficult thing these days so a lot of that is up in the air.

AU: Are the rest of the members of the



Descendents involved with The Blasting Room and are they included in the documentary as well?

AP: Karl and Stephen were very involved in the early days, but they've since moved on. Karl still records a lot there and will play on bands recordings if they need. That being said, all of the members of the Descendents are featured in the film.

AU: Will there also be a soundtrack release? If so, what bands would be featured on it? I heard something about an exclusive Descendents song?

AP: We will most likely not do a soundtrack as licensing music for something like that is extremely cost-prohibitive for independent filmmakers like us. The Descendents song is on a vinyl record compilation, curated by the studio staff available exclusively through our crowdfunding effort on Kickstarter. Since these were not direct sales we were able to create them as a promotion but we will not be able to sell them at any point.

AU: Any advice for aspiring filmmakers reading this?

AP: NEVER interview a band for a film while they're on tour. Too many moving parts, too much of a headache. I've learned this lesson and still made the mistake on this film. This last time was it though, never again. Also, be prepared to spend a lot of your own money. I could go on for days honestly but those are the most relevant.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

AP: Nope! I make films as more of a hobby so I only have this going on right now.

AU: How can people find you online?

AP: Check out blastingroomfilm.com or find us on Instagram @blastingroomfilm

PHOTO CREDIT: Kevin Kirchner

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COMING SOON - TURNTABLES & AUDIO EQUIPMENT



The Blasting Room Descendents Interview with Bill Stevenson

By Ira Hunter and Jared Amos

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

Bill Stevenson: Bill Stevenson drummer of the Descendents and owner of the Blasting Room Studios. Sadly I might be most infamous for my horrible gas.

AU: Have you had your coffee yet this morning?

BS: I have!

AU: Yeah, we interviewed Milo down at Punk Rock Bowling and he said that you drink more coffee than he does.

BS: The older I get, I have to drink a real big amount of it to get through playing the songs at the tempo they go.

AU: So instead of having water besides your drum kit, you've just got a big pot of coffee?

BS: No, more like I drink 10 Espressos one hour before we play.

AU: Holy shit. That will keep you regular.

BS: Yeah, exactly. That's the side benefit.

AU: How did you first become involved in punk rock?

BS: We started the Descendents when I was 15. It was probably my connection at the fishing tackle store in Hermosa Beach. Keith Morris from Black Flag/Circle Jerks, his dad owned it. I knew Keith from the time I was 8 years old. Keith is several years older than me, but when I got to be an early teenager, he was in his late teens, early 20s, he started telling me about various bands that I should check out. A lot of them weren't necessarily punk rock, some of them were pre-punk rock, it could have been The Stooges or The Kinks, it could have been Television or The Normal. The other big thing that drew me into it was Frank Navetta, the original guitarist of the Descendents. Also the Nolte brothers Dave, Joe and Mike Nolte from the band The Last. Dave would make me mixtapes. He wouldn't really talk about the bands as much as just go "Here. I made

you this cassette". It would be two sides of like everything from Blue Cheer, MC5, it could be a Ramones song or an X song. Then they told me about Rodney On The ROQ, his specialty show that he would do on KROQ. Rodney Bingenheimer would play all kinds of new new bands and it was like a whole world opened up to me. Then right around that same time, Frank's brothers drove him and I up to Hollywood and we saw so many shows in that six month period. It was like The Go Go's, The Bags, The Weirdos, and the Germs. My head just exploded from all this crazy new music that I was being turned on to.

AU: Descendents was your first band. What else is on your musical resume?

BS: The Descendents has really been my main thing of my lifetime and then the off branch of the Descendents, which is called ALL. Which is basically Descendents but with a different person singing. I did three albums and a lot of touring with another band called Only Crime. I did one tour and one album for The Lemonheads where I produced and played drums on the record and then I played drums on the tour but I wouldn't consider myself a member of The Lemonheads.

AU: How did you end up in Black Flag?

BS: I forgot! I was in Black Flag from '81 to '85 and did a lot of recording with Black Flag. I guess I've kept myself pretty busy.

AU: Were you also ever a member of The Last as well?

BS: I produced a couple albums for them and I played drums on one album for them. I've done a handful of shows as their drummer. I don't consider myself a member of The Last but yeah, there's that too. The Last were the biggest, earliest influence on the Descendants, so they're like a brother band.

AU: Any chance of a new Only Crime album?

BS: We would love to. The logistics of getting everyone in the same place becomes harder as people get older, get married, and have kids. One interesting fact about Only Crime is that it's for sure the most difficult drumming that I've ever had to do. A lot of those guys are quite many years my junior and they would push me to play things that I didn't even think I would be capable of playing but they helped push me into it. A live Only Crime show just about gives me a heart attack.

AU: Tell us the origin of your recording studio, The Blasting Room.

BS: When the band first moved, we're originally from LA, but we ended up settling out here in Fort Collins, Colorado. We needed a home base to practice and to do our mail order. At that time, we needed a place to live too because none of us had apartments. So we rented this big space and we were getting ready toward recording and it was actually Stephen's idea. He said, "Hey, why don't we build our own recording studio, then we can just record whenever we want. We don't have to spend money on recording studios ever again." So we did it, we built our own studio. I never had it in mind that it was gonna become a commercial recording facility. I just thought I was building it for us to practice and record. It seemed like before we even had paint on the walls bands were calling to come record. It's just been like that ever since, we never advertised or anything. It just kind of took on a life of its own as soon as we built it. They say if you build it, they will come. That's kind of what happened.

AU: What makes the experience of recording at The Blasting Room unique and special in your opinion?

BS: At the time we first started producing records,

I think one of the biggest things was just that there weren't hardly any engineers that really understood the DNA of punk rock and its related subgenres. So a band would go into whatever random studio and they might get an engineer that only recorded hair metal or only recorded pop bands. The results were kind of a lottery. Could be a crapshoot as to whether your thing was going to turn out well or not. So I think initially, it was because we were a place the bands could go where they knew that we understood the music, and that we were also capable engineers.

AU: Who else works with you at Blasting Room Studios?

BS: There are five of us. Myself and the co-owner of the studio, Jason Livermore. Jason's been with me since the very beginning and we built the studio, he's an engineer, mixer and he does all of our mastering. Andrew Berlin, has been with us now for 20 years and he's also an engineer, producer, mixer. Chris Beeble has been with us now for 12 years. He's also an engineer, producer, mixer, he also handles the administrative stuff for the studio. Jonathan Lunginbill has been with us eight years. He's our on-site technician. A couple of years ago,

Johnathan built us two new studios. Now we have four studios and each guy's always got a place to work.

AU: What do you do at the studio specifically?

BS: I certainly did my share of engineering, producing, and mixing over the years. About 10 years ago, when I recovered from having that brain tumor, I shifted my focus away from engineering and mixing a little bit and back toward drumming and songwriting. So I split my time between studio work and playing in the Descendents.

AU: There's now a documentary being produced called The Blasting Room. How did that come to be?

BS: The same way the documentary *Filmage: The Story of Descendents/All* did. The people came to us and said they wanted to make a movie and we said, "Okay." It's not something I would ever do myself. I am notoriously poor at reminiscing or nostalgia or bragging about my milestones. I kind of just keep my boat pointed forward. It's nice to have a little bit of a celebration of what we've done and I think people are going to be

interested in it. We just did the Descendents *9th & Walnut* album and those were our very first songs we ever played. That was fun to release and take that little walk down memory lane. I wish I had been more into that stuff when I was younger because I never took a camera on all those Black Flag tours or anything. I don't have a single picture of any of those early days, not one.

AU: The documentary is being crowd funded, is that correct?

BS: Yeah, they've made a Kickstarter. As far as the content of the movie, I can't really speak to it because I'm not hands on with it.

I'm just letting these people do their thing. Like *Filmage*, we had nothing to do with it. They just go "Here's your movie", and we went "Oh, rad!"

AU: Who are some of the bands and albums that have been recorded at Blasting Room Studios?

BS: The elephant in the room is probably Rise Against. We've done essentially their whole catalogue at the studio. Some of my favorites are A Wilhelm Scream, Audio Karate, Shades Apart, Propagandhi, Good Riddance, Lagwagon, and NOFX.

AU: Any Vegas debauchery stories to share from Punk Rock Bowling this year?





BS: I think my debauch days are long behind me but I like Punk Rock Bowling a lot.

AU: After almost 22 years will there ever be a new ALL album?

BS: Jeez, has it been that long? There's no reason not to, we just kind of haven't done it. Everybody is good friends. We didn't break up or anything.

AU: You seem to pull a lot of double duties at these festivals. You'll be drumming in FLAG, ALL, and Descendents.

Sometimes you play three shows in a day. How do you maintain your stamina?

BS: It's more the mental part of it for me. Physically I'm trained to do that. My rehearsal practices are twice as long as one of our shows, so that part is easy. But the part I have trouble with, let's say I got a weekend and I'm going to do a Descendents show, an ALL show, and an Only Crime show. That's 75 songs that I have to keep in my memory and not mess any up. The older I get that part of it becomes trickier.

AU: Do you have different drumming style for each different band?

BS: I pretty much just play like Bill. I have my bag of tricks that only has like 12 things in it. Whether it's Only Crime, Black Flag, Descendents, or ALL. You'll pretty much hear my 12 things that I know how to do. 12 Things that are kind of uniquely mine and that's kind of how I roll. I don't put on different hats when I'm in different bands. When I toured with The Lemonheads there was a lot of criticism from the audience. You'd see people post that I played too aggressively or like a punk or metal guy as opposed to sounding like a college rock guy. But that's what I mean, I just always use the same size sticks. The same size drums. I just kind of do what I do, and I don't know how to do it any other way.

AU: Descendents are full time again. What can we expect after the release of 9th and Walnut?

BS: We're working on new stuff now and we got a bunch of shows next year. We're chugging along.

AU: Any stories to share about the Descendents' artist, Chris Shary? Share your Shary stories.

BS: Oh, he's fun. Funniest one for me is when that Ace Ventura movie came out, I was like, "Whoa, they ripped off Chris Shary" because that's how much energy he has. When I think of Chris I just think of him like this energy dynamo. He's been doing art with us since the dawn of time. The early releases, he wasn't around for those. But nowadays we do all kinds of cool stuff. We'll do a new shirt design for each show. One time we played Cleveland and you know that A Christmas Story leg lamp? We made Milo into a leg lamp. We just do fun stuff, good guy.

AU: And now there's a Milo action figure.

BS: I saw that. I don't have one yet. But I saw.

AU: Describe the other members of the Descendents and what would it say on their dating profiles if they were single?

BS: Stephen, the world's friendliest guy. Can get along with anyone. Complements any situation he is put in. Shreds on the guitar.

Milo, the most genuine friend anyone could ever have, extremely compassionate and selfless. A very genuine and heartfelt singer. One of the smartest people I've ever known.

Karl has read every book ever written. Many of them he has read twice. He's an amazing cook. He always plays the right bass part, no matter what.

AU: Why is Milo always grabbing his butt?

BS: He's not grabbing his butt, he's grabbing the back of his pant leg. It's just a nervous thing in the beginning like, "What do I do with my hand that's not holding the mic?" He just grabs the back of his pants. It's like stabilizing for him.

AU: You mentioned that Milo is a heartfelt singer. I know that emo turned into a bit of a dirty word but I think at the beginning with bands like the Descendents that I would say you were one of the first emo bands in a way, but the good emo.

BS: Those terms are for magazines. Pop punk, metalcore, speedcore, death metal, and doom metal. I don't really think about that stuff. We just play songs. I mean, if we were the first emo band, what were the Beach Boys then?

AU: What makes music so important to you?

BS: I love music. I wake up thinking about it. I like some good dirty guitars in the morning. Ramones guitars, that's what gets me going. I think it gets me going more now than it ever did.

AU: You mention that you wake up with lyrics in your head in the Filmage documentary. Do you write most of the lyrics for the Descendents?

BS: Descendents is a four way street. Each guy tends to write about a quarter of the material.

AU: Any plans for the holidays this year? Have you ever recorded any Christmas songs?

BS: I never have. When we were kids, Milo and I with our group of friends would always go carolling down by the beach. We don't do that anymore. It bums me out that Christmas lasts like the whole month of December now. It takes the fun out of it. It's weird and it didn't used to be like that. I'll just be with my family at Christmas. That's what Christmas means to me, is just kind of reconvening with the family before the new year starts.

AU: What are some newer punk bands you like?

BS: Pears, Iron Chic, and Plasma Canvas. But I know those aren't really new bands anymore. I feel like I run about five years behind. I didn't get into the Pixies until they had been broken up for seven years.

AU: If there was a band interested in recording at The Blasting Room, how do they go about making the magic happen?

BS: They just click on the link on the website and it goes right to my email and I get it organized.

AU: Do you surf, skateboard or snowboard?

BS: I live in a snowboarding haven here, I'm right by the Rocky Mountains, but I don't snowboard.

I went skiing twice but didn't take to it. When I was a little kid my skateboard was my means of transportation. With surfing, I grew up by the beach, so I surfed but I did it so horribly, I mean really horribly. But the thing is, it's fun to just be out there paddling around, you don't have to be great at something to enjoy it.

AU: Final words for Canadian punk rock fans up here in our igloos?

BS: I almost moved up there when Trump got elected. I go up there and go salmon fishing. I love Canada.

Artwork by Chris Shary

theblastingroom.com

blastingroomfilm.com

descendents.store

descendents.tumblr.com

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The Cretin Speaks

Dayglo Abortions to release new album *Hate Speech* on Unrest Records

Interview by Ira Hunter and John Carlow

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

The Cretin: You are talking to Murray Acton, also known as The Cretin from the Dayglo Abortions. I suppose I am most famous/infamous for having absolutely no respect for any kind of authority.

I even have "Fuck you Pig" tattooed on my belly. Nice and big so it's easy to read.

AU: What's the origin of the Dayglo Abortions?

Cretin: Well we started in 1980 as a power trio consisting of Spud on bass, Jesus Bonehead on drums and myself on guitar and vocals. We went through some changes over the years, picked up a few guitar players (Mike Jak, and Nev), then after about 20 years, I quite to work on some other bands I had going. They kept going though. Spud and Bonehead got some new guitar players and a singer, and made two albums. They really weren't the Dayglos, they just used the name. Up to that point I had written all of the music and lyrics, so they now had different people

writing the songs and it was fairly obvious. It was good fast hardcore they were playing, but it wasn't the Dayglos. I think it was in 1999 that I got talked into rejoining the band. I wasn't into kicking anyone out of the band or anything so I split the vocal duties with their singer Gympo. We recorded *Death Race 2000* and I was back at it again. I wrote most of the songs, but Gympo and Hung both wrote a couple each. Hung was a good songwriter and a great bass player which was good because Spud decided to pack it in right after the album was recorded. Apparently I am a band nazi, and I will admit that I have a vision for an album that I want to see realized, and I tend to be quite determined to realize the vision. Anyway we toured for a couple of years then Hung got the boot from Bonehead for doing drugs. I wasn't happy with that and it was very hypocritical of Bonehead. Hung got replaced by Willy Jak before I even found out about it. That was the beginning of some dark years for me. I'm really amazed I didn't quit again. I was essentially an outsider in my own band. It was them against me and I was not happy at all.



Edmonton and recorded with Rob Lawless and Terry Paholek, at The Physics Lab. Rob and Terry are the best guys I've worked with, Rob even played drums on a couple of songs when Marc was away one day. The album sounds perfect. Really heavy without being overproduced. In fact there is only minimal effects used anywhere on it. We even used the room's natural reverb, instead of artificial reverb. For the first time in 40 years, my vision for the album was realized in every detail. All the songs worked out better than I imagined and the story that they tell, well, you could say that it's a bit critical of the state of the world these days. It's called *Hate Speech*, but it's not about the hate that I feel. I don't hate anything except brussels sprouts (Fuck brussels

sprouts). It's about the hate that we all have to face in the world today. The cover is Dr. Seuss characters, but not the ones that got cancelled. It's a few of the others wondering what their future has in store for them.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are extra stoked on?

Cretin: I particularly like "Sacks of Meat" because Mike Jak came in and played a very sweet solo in it. There aren't a lot of solos on the album. They are sort of an artifact of the last century I think. There will always be some, but not the unbridled wank fest of *Two Dogs Fucking*. Another one I really like is the last song "Calling all People." It's the song that ties the whole thing together and contains the message that I hope to share with people. It was also a lot of fun to sing. A sort of tribute to Dave Brockie, (by the way, his middle name was Murray).

AU: Can you take us through more of the tracklist and give us an explanation of the songs?

Cretin: I guess so... Spoiler Alert! It's called *Hate Speech*, and the first song is "White People." I noticed that people are arguing about whether or not it is racist, which is funny on multiple levels. Really I'm making fun of the white guilt, virtue signalling crowd, that I suspect really couldn't give a shit about anyone but themselves. Next is "Kill Kill Kill." That gives a voice to the rage of the angry mob as they realize how bad they have been robbed and who has robbed them. After that comes "God is Love." This is about the institutional God that is absolutely everything but love. Then another of my faves, "Smart Food." It's probably the best example of old Dayglo irreverent humour on the album with a twist buried in the second verse. Then finishing off side one is "Sacks of Meat," complete with Mike Jak solo and token stolen Black Sabbath riff.

AU: Considering how controversial your first albums were, where does this new album stand as far as pushing the envelope?

Cretin: I think you probably get the picture by now. It's going to raise some eyebrows. I have tried to be all inclusive, I don't want anyone to feel left out. Not even my own fans. There is something for everybody on it. Just remember, it's not about the hate we feel, it's about the hate we face.

AU: Who are the current members of the band featured on the album and what would it say on their Tinder or Grindr profiles?

Cretin: Well the band is Blarc, Sketchy, and me, but we had some guests on the album. As I said, Mike played a solo, and Rob Lawless played drums on a couple. But we also got Scott Henderson on bass for "Sacks of Meat" and another song. Scott was actually in and out of the hospital with some serious life threatening illness while we were recording, but he managed to play some killer bass one night when he was at home. He deserves a medal for his efforts considering the condition he was in, but all he will get is his name on a Dayglo album. Pretty measly reward for a musician of his calibre. As far as dating sites go... really... we're fucking rockstars. We don't need a

Well that's enough of that shit, it's another 20 years later and I have the best lineup I've ever had. Blind Marc is one of the best drummers around, and Matt (Sketchy the Clown from Power Clown) Fiorito can play all kinds of instruments at a virtuoso level. Best of all though, we are all on the same team. Everything goes smoothly without continual conflict. The album we just recorded is (I think) the best one of them all, and it's pure Dayglo. Riding the razor edge that separates social commentary from getting your ass cancelled.

AU: Tell us more about the new Dayglo album.

Cretin: We started working on it when we were still in the middle of the Covid (cash grab for the 1%) lockdown. Once we had it all figured out we went to

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fucking dating site.

AU: Who created the album artwork this time around?

Cretin: The art for the front and back covers was painted by Trey Helten (who I still call Ashtrey). Trey is one of my favourite people anywhere. He is very funny, and is a creative genius. It was basically my idea, but I just told him what I wanted and he went to town with it. What he came up with was ten times better than what I had in my head. It is a very important part of the whole package.

AU: What bands are the Dayglos currently into in the local Victoria scene?

Cretin: As far as I can tell, the pandemic has kicked the living fuck out of the music scene, and most of the venues. We've only played a few shows so far so I haven't seen that much. The Gnar Gnars are still going strong, and I've played with a couple of new bands with really young members. We played a show in Vic with The Hex who are a cool quirky punk band with a great singer, and this young band called Standard Issue Pleasure Model. They surprised the hell out of me. They are pretty well playing 70s prog rock, and killing it. Four part harmonies and everything. I was quite impressed.

AU: Message boards with anything to do with the Dayglos are always entertaining at best. Set of lyrics can start fights more entertaining than boots up at a show mosh. Does the band ever get into it with these online gatherings?

Cretin: No, not really. If I get bored, I sometimes go and troll people that I think are idiots but that's about it. I'm quite busy in the real world and already spend too much time on social media, just answering messages and the likes.

AU: Thoughts on losing a home like Logan's The Tavern of the Damned for the punk community.

Cretin: Logan's was the punk bar in town, but to be honest. It wasn't my favourite bar to play in or anything. They were cheapskates. We put a lot of people in that bar that drank a lot of booze and we paid for the PA and sound guy from the door out of our money, and all they could give me was three fucking glasses of PBR piss beer that I don't even like. Weak. To me that is three glasses



of go find yourself somewhere else to play.

AU: Will the Dayglos be releasing a timely song about hoarders and people fighting with each other over toilet paper every time a health or weather event happens?

Cretin: The Dayglos won't because I already have. During the lockdown I recorded and released a solo album called *Covid-19 Nervous Breakdown*. Among other things it has a song on it called "Klein Toilettenpapier." It's a beauty. You can download it for free on my bandcamp page. murraythcretinacton.bandcamp.com

AU: If the band could only ever release one more T-Shirt... what would you want it to say?

Cretin: In memory of Murray "The Cretin" Acton 1960 to the date that I died on stage somewhere. I'll be playing my guitar for all eternity, because there is no place in heaven for the likes of me.

AU: Any tour plans in these apocalyptic times?

Cretin: Yah, we're playing Ontario, Quebec, and hopefully get into the Maritimes

in March. I think we have a guy working on something in the States for us too.

AU: Final words of wisdom to all the punkers reading this.

Cretin: Yah, don't get sucked into the hatred. The shit that is going on is coming straight from the multideath corporations and their neo-liberal slaves. It is designed to divide us into smaller and smaller groups, and getting us to hate each other. We used to be all on the same side, and we all want more or less the same thing. We are being played. Don't follow the narrative. Think for yourself, even if you're wrong.

Be an individual, not a faceless, voiceless, drone.

AU: How do people check out the album?

Cretin: Go to murraythcretinacton.bandcamp.com or visit the DaygloAbortionsHome on FB

www.unrestrecords.com

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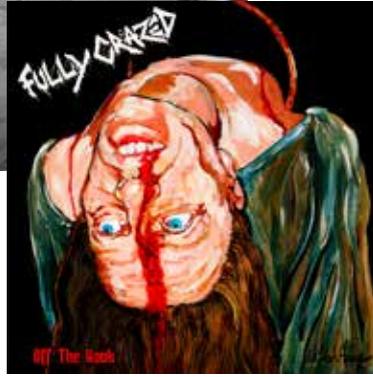


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released, the original plan was to do a 7" and be on a comp. It "snow"-balled from there. We had just completed a mini tour with TSOL in the northwest and we were all fucking cranked up to rock. Then Covid hit us all like a brick so we talked with the label and decided to go full LP and take time to write some content we figured would work in these times. Punk isn't dead yet like they said 40 years ago and Thrash is the most collected form of vinyl now. I know 65-year-olds spending 1500 dollars on HellHammer demos, so it was time to strike while the iron was hot! This isn't a normal label, and it's not like we are touring excessively during these times. But yeah,

they did a great job on the record. They let us have major control and our buddy Linz did the layout for us. AI even popped out for a few days to catch a show, hang with Vic locals and just witness the Animal House lifestyles we are

all notorious for. Luckily it was a suspiciously quiet week in Vic...lol.

JT: AI from Cursed Blessings is a good friend of the band from back in the day and after putting out a 7-inch ourselves we decided it would be nice to have someone else help out with the release. Those guys have done a very good job in a lot of the departments that we're not so good at, like promotion and distribution. So while we are a band who likes to do as much as possible

ourselves, it has been nice to have some help for once.

AU: You just released a full-length album *Off the Hook*. Who put that recording together for you?

RS: *Off The Hook* started out a concept for a 7". I had a painting that local artist and ex-punk singer Tim Hoey (Metronome Cowboys) had given me for my birthday one year. It was a scene from our local Wax Museum Chamber of Horrors; one we had all grown up horrified by since we were 6-7 years of age. A man being hung on a hook in Algiers. Plus we wanted a 1985 Banzai record look which we all felt that had. Merlin and I wanted to break away from Keg Killers and Frostbacks looking art, as those acts are more punk. Willy recorded the album over several months in the back of a weed dispensary. We did lots of takes and switched entire songs around to make shit work. Lots of different solos, lots of different working titles. We would then send it out where Josh from Baptized in Blood (killer metal band on Cursed Blessings) did all of our final mixes. Pretty amazing teamwork from two motherfuckers thousands of miles apart! Hats Off!

JT: The album was recorded by Jak Tripper in his weed store in Victoria British Columbia over the summer of 2020. We went into the studio with about 16 or 17 songs, and we came out with 25.

AU: Who wrote all the tender ballads and love songs for the album?

RS: Willis wrote most of the riffs on the record, but he forced me to come up with a few so "Crabs", "Under Arrest" and part of "Heavy Trip" are mine. I have to play Willy my shitty riff on one string, and he turns it into a riff and chord. Then we add lyrics that makes us fuckin crack your bros right up. We are worshipping the Goat here or ripping chicks in half. We are ripping bowls, smoking bowls and doing Rios throughout, that's for damn sure!

Merlin added his own bass hooks all over the place as well, and Stinky Mark had us rolling on the floor with some of his lyrical content. We all had our hands in the pile, but Willy did the most.

JT: Rent Snorter or myself will come up with the music and bring it into the jam room environment

Fully Crazed

Off The Hook

By John Carlow & Ira Hunter

"Fully Crazed was created to make people want to either skate, get fucked up...or fuck each other up. After years of playing in other bands it was time to do something new yet sticking to the same formulas our old bands displayed. Skateboards. Venom. Drugs. GG Allin. Booze. Poison Idea, smoking dope, yet keeping it heavy. All the members are part of Jaks Team as well with no plans for any future. If you like punk rock and heavy metal mixed with your skateboarding while running from the fuckin cops, then this is the fuckin band for you."

Absolute Underground : We last talked to you

in Issue 92 (Feb/ Mar) of last year. Same lineup, but just quickly introduce the band again.

RS : Willy Martin-Wood a.k.a. Jak Tripper, JT (Ex Dayglos/ Pricks/ Frostbacks) Guitar and Backup vocals Merlin Hind a.k.a. Merl- (Ex Frostbacks/Keg Killers) Bass Guitar and Backup vocals Mark Cambridge aka Stinky (Ex-Banned/Code 19) Vocal Abuse Dustin Schwam aka Rent Snorter - RS (Ex Shutdown, Ex Pricks,Keg Killers) Drums

AU: You signed to Toronto's Cursed Blessings. Tell us about how that came to be and what's been different since becoming a signed band?

RS: I had known AI (Cursed Blessings Partner) since the days I played in Shutdown, so we had always been in touch. He was a huge Dayglos fan, so when he got a hold of our first EP "Willy"

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our audience is usually so out of control of you look up for a split second you can risk breaking out in extreme laughter. You get thrashing drunk vested skate punks covered in their own vomit, chicks releasing their "hostages," and one time I saw a dude actually giving himself a wedgie in the pit! Try staying on beat to that shit!! Also, most people at our shows have no memory of even being at them the next day so it's really hard to say. All I can say is don't wear nice shit to a

where we will work out all the bugs. Next it's whoever has an idea for lyrics, usually Stinky Mark or Rent Snorter. If that doesn't work, then we usually all sit around and laugh our heads off while trying to come up with some rhymes.

AU: Do you think "Piss Jugs" will become a regularly requested wedding song?

RS: "Piss Jugs" is a true story of a man trying to urinate into a milk bottle at high speed. The van hits a pot hole and the man's penis is severely cut causing blood and sprayed urine to decimate the interior of the said van. We got so hammered in the studio peeing into jugs we had to scrap all of the backup vocals and redo them. That may have been the night I was arrested. Some of us actually got arrested making this LP. (not me or Mark)

JT: Fingers crossed. I have played a few weddings over the years, so I suppose it's not outside the realm of possibility

AU: Tell us about the wicked art on the front



Fully Crazyed show. Maybe it's not somewhere you wanna be if you just got outta rehab either. But all jokes aside, we always try to make sure people have a good time and it seems they always do!

AU: Lot of Tavern of the Damned orphans landed at The Phoenix. What's your thoughts on the new punk/metal scene hangout?

RS: I am actually surprised Logan's lasted 20 plus years. I like the Phoenix too. It's close to my place and it's Saanich cops jurisdiction and they are all like 12 years old, so it's a cake walk. It's, "Hey cop how was Chuck E Cheese on your birthday?" Lucky won't fuckin touch us. The Duke only plays blues and Soul or signed major bands, so don't have a ton of choices. We are more concerned with Seattle, Bellingham, Portland Shows coming up in the future.

JT: Back when I was a youngster the Phoenix was called Fridays and Logans was called Thursdays so

I've always considered them to be sister bars. Other than lugging the gear up in the front stairs I think I actually like the Phoenix better. Although we do miss some of the staff from Logans.

AU: Who are you liking in local sounds right now??

RS: I like Skincrawl from Vic (Full HC Crossover Noise Core) and Euthanized (Bathory meets Goatwhore) I have a lot of friends in a lot of great bands in this city so I would need a

cover.

RS: The cover art takes us all back to our growing up in this pissy city we call Victoria. They had tourist attractions all over, but the Wax Museum was fun even if you lived here. The Chamber of Horrors had no age limitation so you could see a man being stretched on the rack at 6 years old. I saw a guy getting flogged, a dude hanging and the famous "Room of Ill-Ease!!!" But the last exhibit as you would exit on your left was like a Coup De Grace to us, The Algerian Hook. When I received the painting as a gift from our bro Cowboy Tim Hoey we just fucking had to use it, no compromise. We had to talk Al into it at first, then he fully dug it.

JT: The cover art is done by Dylan Barstad he has been doing artwork and logos for us since the get-go. We just all really liked his art so when it came time, we hit him up and he did such good work for us that we kept on going with him. We all really love the art he has done for the band.

AU: Noticed all the new merch. There's a ton of it with this release. How do people get a hold of it?

RS: Merch we have patches, shirts, and hoodies. Willy has those and can be reached on Facebook or Instagram. Pint glasses, stickers, records, tapes, and patches can all be ordered from the label Cursed Blessings Records. We are already working on songs for a new LP too.

JT: You could come see us live, that's mostly where we sell our merch but you can also get a hold of us through social media like Instagram or Facebook we sell a lot of merch on there as well.

AU: Describe a live Fully Crazyed show for anyone who hasn't had the pleasure.

RS: Fully Crazyed shows are difficult to play because

separate interview to name them all.

JT: Well we live on an island so there's not a ton of bands that I love here. We played recently with Chain Whip. I thought they were awesome. There's a lot of good bands from across Canada that share the same record label as us. I like No More Moments and Dragged In quite a lot. I've been recording a band from the island tour called Eriksen Brown. They have an album coming out soon. I would describe them more like Crosby stills and Nash which is awesome. A lot of acoustic and vocal harmonies, that kind of thing.

AU: What's next for the band?

RS: Next up we are planning some shows in the Pacific Northwest with our buddies/heroes The Boneless Ones. We are also going back east to play with some of our label mates, Dragged In. I wanna meet up with the Sacrifice and Slaughter Guys too, find Lips and bug the shit out him. Want to go see my buddies in the BUNCHOFFUCKINGOOFS and drive Al up the fuckin wall hahahah.

JT: Work on or 2nd full length album is already under way and hopefully do some shows down the west coast in 2022!!

AU: Your metal influences are in part, self-described as Motorhead driven. What would Lemmy have to say about Fully Crazyed?

RS: Lemmy hated the Dayglo's; so, there is no way in hell he would like Fully Crazyed. Plus he is fuckin pissed his drummer is in the Scorpions now. How rad is that?

JT: Lemmy would take one look at FULLY CRAZED and would say "Which one of you is holding?"

Photos: John Carlow/ Finding Charlotte Photography



TWISTED SISTER

There's four stages to the band's career. There's the club era, which the movie is about. There's the video era with all the hits. Then there's the dark period where the band really wasn't associating with each other for 12 years. And there were the festival years which went from 2003 to 2016. And that was where everything came back together again. There's a rebirth and validation of the band's success and the band becomes a gigantic festival headliner. Then the Twisted Sister Christmas album's success. So the band has gone through

a drug dealer, as a drug addict, and as a hippie revolutionary kid. And then switching gears completely, within a couple of days, and deciding that that life was over. Let's move on to the next one. And the next one was basically a transvestite rock band which became Twisted Sister. So the book's for people who don't know the story. The prequel as well as the sequel to the movie is in this book, it fills in all the gaps.

JJ: It was one of the most expensive videos at the time. And although we loved it, the record label hated it and refused to reimburse us the cost of it. It was banned in every country in the world except one. Imagine that video being banned, especially today. I mean, it's nothing, it's funny. It was considered way too violent, and way too gross and disgusting, which is ridiculous. We had a lot of fun doing that music video though. I remember we had Bobcat Goldthwait, Lainie Kazan, and Alice Cooper in it. When we recorded the song, we had Clarence Clemons playing sax and we had Brian Setzer playing guitar, so that was fun. I only wish the song had become more popular and that the *Come Out And Play* album had done better because it was a comedown from *Stay Hungry*, which was a monumental record, which actually then led to "We're Not Gonna Take It" & "I Wanna Rock" becoming the two most licensed songs in the history of heavy metal. "Be Chrool To Your Scuel" was a special project. I didn't really watch them do all that zombie prosthetic stuff, but Tom Savini did a lot of it and he's brilliant.

Twisted Business

Interview with Jay Jay French
by Ira Hunter and Sheldon Byer

AU: What's new and exciting in your world?

Jay Jay French: Well, I have the book and the fact that I just had my second grandchild two days ago. Today's the 27th anniversary of *Stay Hungry* going platinum, which also coincides with my father's 27th anniversary of his death, which was the day *Stay Hungry* went platinum. So there you go. That's what makes this day so unique. So aren't you happy you asked me that question?

AU: Who are we talking to officially?

JJ: Jay Jay French, I'm most noted for being the founding member/guitar player and manager for the band Twisted Sister.

AU: The Twisted Sister documentary was about when the band was struggling and then it ends right before you finally get successful. I was wondering if there would ever be a part two?

JJ: There had been some discussions with the director Andy Horn, but then the director died suddenly. I think if Andy had lived, there may have been a part two. To me, the interesting story was the first 12 years, not the time after that fact.

many different iterations over the years.

AU: I was at your 40 and Fuck It Tour performance at HellFest in 2016.

JJ: That was a hell of a show, wasn't it?

AU: I ended up backstage somehow and I was on the stage looking out at what you guys see.

JJ: Yeah, that's awesome. That's about 100,000 people at HellFest.

AU: Tell us about the book you just wrote. What prompted you to write your memoirs, or are they business lessons of being in a rock band?

JJ: Well, it's a "bizmoir". I coined that phrase. The business book in the memoir is important because it really tells everybody what it was like to be me growing up in New York City, in the 60s and 70s. It was a really exciting time. It was all about sex, drugs, and rock n' roll. That was what I was immersed in. And politics, it was just an amazing time to be alive. To have the Fillmore East down the street, to be able to go to all these shows and see Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Jeff Beck, Rod Stewart, Jethro Tull, just see all these bands play every week for three bucks. So that fuelled my passion for rock n' roll. So the book really details what my teenage years were like growing up as

AU: When you started a transvestite rock band, were the New York Dolls an inspiration?

JJ: Yeah, it was. I talk about entrepreneurial development in the book. You become an entrepreneur for one of two reasons. Either you want to bring something new to the world or you want to improve an existing model. In our case, there were a lot of rock bands before us but the Dolls was an existing model of a band that looked amazing, but really weren't a good band. And so I decided if you could actually play, it would be a benefit to that image, and to that degree, you had Bowie, Mott the Hoople, and T. Rex, and they're all for Britain, and they're all great musicians, they could play - the Dolls really couldn't.

I thought we should be represented by a band that can actually play. So that's what was the impetus of putting the band together.

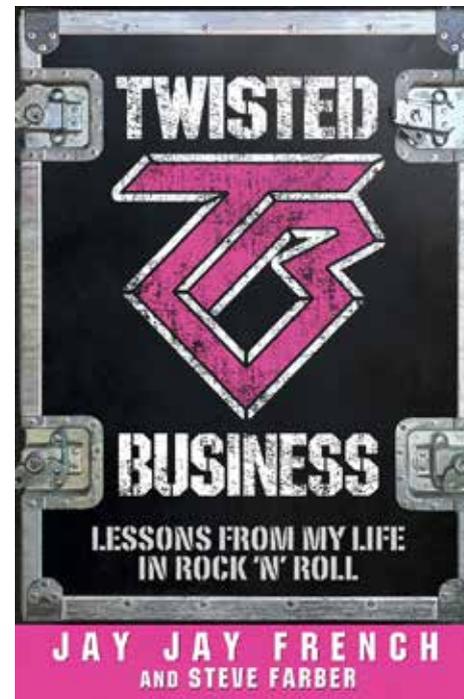
AU: If someone is in a band, what could they learn from this book about business & touring?

JJ: I teach the "Twisted Method of Reinvention." Reinvention is the key to success in any business. The Twisted Method of Reinvention is based upon the word T-W-I-S-T-E-D. Each letter has a meaning. So it's Tenacity for T, Wisdom for W, Inspiration for I, Stability for S, T is for Trust, E for Excellence, D for Discipline that's T.W.I.S.T.E.D. And this book lays it all out in detail. Why every letter matters, what exactly happened to the band along the way, explains our approach to trying to solve it, then putting that approach into reality, and then the end result of what happened when we executed. And that's what the book is about.

AU: What was the idea for making the Twisted Sister Christmas album, *A Twisted Christmas*?

JJ: Well, we were trying to think of something cool to do. And I think in rehearsal, Dee (Snider) mentioned that "We're Not Going To Take It" & "O Come All Ye Faithful" is the same song. So we played "We're Not Going To Take It" as "Come All Ye Faithful" and we realized, "Oh, my God, it's almost the same song." So we decided we should make a record. It was a fun project to do and it became much bigger than we all thought it was going to be. We knew it was going to be good, but we didn't know how big a hit it would be. It turned out to be a smash and we had a lot of fun playing Twisted Sister Twisted Christmas shows as well.

AU: Tom Savini did Special FX on Twisted Sister's video for "Be Chrool To Your Scuel." What do you remember about that video?



AU: It's strange that your video got banned but "Thriller" didn't and it's full of zombies.

JJ: It was a weird time. We were also being accused of destroying the morality of America. They dragged Dee up in front of Congress to testify. It was all that crazy bullshit that went on. So, you know, it's not like we weren't aware that this was the nature of the beast. But I didn't think the backlash would be what it was, that's for sure.

AU: Mark "Weissguy" Weiss did photography for the *Stay Hungry* album cover. Do you have any memories from that photoshoot?

JJ: Mark and I talk all the time. I was with him recently at a book signing. He was also entered into the New Jersey Metal Hall of Fame. You know, he was a young kid, but he was passionate. The *Stay Hungry* cover was his first cover and from there he did a lot of other covers. So we kind of helped make his career. He was very motivated, he took some astonishing pictures of the band.

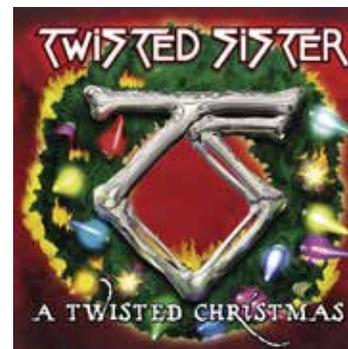
AU: What do you remember about auditioning for Wicked Lester for Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley?

JJ: I remember it well, and the effect of that audition. I enjoyed it, it was a learning experience for me. I felt that Gene was very perceptive in certain things that he did, and you could tell that they knew what they were doing. They had a real handle on where they were going, and it showed.

AU: How did Twisted Sister's bass player Mark "The Animal" Mendoza join the band?

JJ: Mark was our bass tech. He spent six months teching for our bass player, Kenny Neill. And when Kenny had to leave the band, we asked Mark if he would come in. Mark was more than ready and it didn't surprise us how great he was. Mark was made a member of the band Christmas of 1978.

AU: Do you have any plans for Christmas this year?



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JJ: I still refuse to believe another year has gone by. My daughter just had a second grandchild, so I may spend it with him. It's crazy, Christmas is weeks away? Where the hell did 2021 go?

AU: Any memories of touring Canada?

JJ: Canada is a great country and it's always been great with Twisted Sister. I think *Stay Hungry* is owned by every single person between the ages of 30 and 50 in Canada. We're grateful that Canada and MuchMusic really embraced us. On the Twisted tour of Canada we did with Iron Maiden in 1984, we play every city from Halifax to Vancouver. And I never spent a colder night in my life than in Winnipeg. I couldn't believe it when I got out of the bus and it was actually 40 below zero. But we had a great time. In fact, when we did that tour Terry Fox, who ran across Canada to raise money for cancer awareness, we passed his entourage during that tour. Also Johnny Cash came to see us in Toronto during that tour, which is one of my favorite memories of all time.

AU: What was Twisted Sister's stage setup for the *Stay Hungry* tour? Is that when you had the fences in front of the band?

JJ: Yes, we had the pink fences. It wasn't a particularly elaborate stage.

The most expensive elaborate stage was for *Come Out And Play* and we never really got to tour with that stage very long.

AU: Anything too controversial for book?

JJ: I put in everything including drug addiction, my drug dealing, to the breakups of the band, the hostilities that led to them, the conversation between me and Dee that brought the band back together again. It's all in the book. I didn't pull any punches. The book really is a blueprint for life and for business. It's a memoir, and it's a business book, and it's a cautionary tale. We know what Twisted Sister has meant to fans because our songs are sung around the world. "We're Not Gonna Take It" has become a universal rebellion song. Dee wrote it and he should be proud of the fact he wrote one of the great songs of all time.

AU: Do you guys own all the rights to your songs or does a record label own them?

JJ: Well, nobody owns their rights, the record labels owns it. On rare occasions, you may buy it back but for the most part RCA owns Elvis, EMI owns the Beatles, Decca owns the Rolling Stones, and on and on. What you can do is re-record your songs and sell your re-recorded masters. But these are the fucked up nature of record deals. Back in those days, they were pretty much like indentured servitude. And we're all subject to that. So you have to understand how to renegotiate to your benefit. The key to survival in this business is understanding the business, realizing ahead of time what you're getting into and then learning the ropes of how to get in and out of it. That's part of the business and part of the success factors I discuss in the book.

AU: Are you in any new musical projects?

JJ: No, I do motivational speaking and I have a podcast. I retired from live performance in 2016.

AU: When Twisted Sister did the 40 And Fuck It Tour, it seems that you guys really meant it.

JJ: We reunited in 2003 for 14 years. I thought it was gonna last three years, so did Dee. People wanted a reunion - they got it. 14 years more of Twisted. We stopped in '88. We came back in 2003 until 2016. Do I see us doing it again? No. Am I going to tell you it'll never happen again? No.

AU: What is your podcast all about?

JJ: It's "The Jay Jay French Connection." It's on Spotify, Apple, and Podcast One. I have authors, writers, producers, managers, musicians, instrument makers, and all kinds of people on the show. I'm having a hell of a time doing it. It's 50 episodes so far and Rob



Halford is on this week.

AU: Any new Twisted Sister album releases?

JJ: Yes actually, we are releasing a double vinyl album on December 17th. It's a greatest hits studio album on one record and the second LP will be greatest hits performed live. It's called *Tear It Loose* and will be on Rhino and Friday Music.

AU: Anything else to promote?

JJ: The book *Twisted Business* is out. People can email me at askjayjays@gmail.com and I answer all the emails if anyone has a question. I am also available on Cameo, and so is Dee, in case you want a personal greeting. If you would like my book then go to Amazon or to jayjayfrench.com. I'm also doing my motivational speaking.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

JJ: Stay Hungry, Come Out and Play, and please buy my book. *Twisted Business* makes a great Christmas gift so please give a copy to somebody you love. Haha. Also enjoy *A Twisted Christmas* if you haven't bought the Christmas record yet, it's a great Christmas record.



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MICK ROCK

The Man Who Shot The World
November 21, 1948 - November, 18 2021

As 2021 comes to a close and the years pass into the future, it is one of the sadnesses in life that there is the reality that people do pass away and in their light we pay tribute. This year we lost two that made rock and roll history. One was musician/drummer Charlie Watts who drummed for the Rolling Stones for 53 years. The other however, was not a musician but an artist none the less. His name was Mick Rock and he passed this November peacefully in his sleep as his life's shutter closed on him. May him and Charlie rest in forever peace. Mick Rock was 72 and Charlie was 80.

2021 was also the 30th anniversary of the passing of the one and only Freddie Mercury, along with KISS drummer Eric Carr, that same day in November 1991.

Let it be know that Mick Rock was the

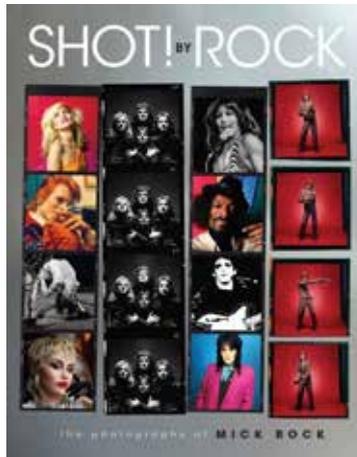


photographer who shot for the band Queen and made the iconic cover to Queen 2, which featured the photo that was recreated live for the Bohemian Rhapsody video. Mick Rock also photographed much of the underground scene from The Stooges

to Lou Reed and the Sex Pistols too. In 1972 he was asked by David Bowie to be David's personal photographer. It's amazing if you look into Mick's portfolios and documentaries. His last book was entitled Exposed. Mick also ventured to New York City in the 70s as is known



as "The Man Who Shot the Seventies" as well. He captured the likes of Blondie and the Ramones among many more from that era. He claims he enjoyed the "Explosion" of the flash bulbs that lit up the room as he drew the shutter open and snapped history in the making. His images



will live on in history. It is life's magic and the viewers blessing that Mick was alive to shoot history for 50 amazing years. I think that his daughter Nathalie, said it best when she announced to the world of the sad passing of her father. Here's her statement:

"The stars seemed to effortlessly align for Mick when he was behind the camera; feeding off of the unique charisma of his subjects electrified and energized him. His intent always intense. A man fascinated with image; he

absorbed visual beings through his lens and

immersed himself in their art, thus creating some of the most magnificent photographs rock music has ever seen. To know Mick was to love him. He was a mystical creature, the likes of which we shall never experience again."



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HoHoHoplessly Devoted To You The Professionals

Tom Spencer's guide to having a professional Xmas celebration

By Billy Hopeless

Ok, as my dad's side of the family was of English blood pudding, when it comes to the holiday season, from the ornaments on my tree to the corned beef in my belly, I've always had a Brit thing this time of year. Now this year I'm lucky to have the ambassador of holly jolly old London himself Mr. Tom Spencer, who is currently front and center with the legendary punk band known as The Professionals, join us. Oh, and as you'll hear later in this column, the cool yule party is at Tom's place and just tell em Billy Hopeless sent ya!

Ello Major Tom, this is Canada calling...

Absolute Underground: First question Tom Spencer, are you at all related to the Thomas Spencer who co founded Marks n Sparks (Marks and Spencer retail chain) back in 1884 ?

TS: Yes of course. Great for Egyptian cotton socks and snazzy underpants. Plus, I'm addicted to their cans of Pina Coladas. Do I get them for free? Do I, fuck. I guess Marks ran off with the money.

AU: Ok, now that we've established that, let's just say you truly are a man about town. You went up and down with The Yo-Yos, lurked with The Lurkers, and still hang with The Men They Couldn't Hang. So, tell us, though your resume clearly states you're no amateur, how did you become a Professional?

TS: My dad was a musician, so it's in my blood. Sounds cliché but it's true. Although I've always been busy I've never won at the music industry game. Yes, I've travelled the world and I'm still in it. That's a success in itself. But if I want to take my kids on holiday it ain't music that pays. I became a Professional through meeting Cookie (Paul Cook) at a Ginger Wildheart birthday show. We met on stage playing Pretty Vacant: Then that old devil called fate stepped in. I kept bumping into him. When they decided to put the Profs together they needed a singer/guitarist while they tried to tempt Jonesy over from the US. By the time it became obvious he wasn't travelling (without a Pistols size cash incentive) I'd become part of the band. When I first went round Cookies house to learn songs, it turns out his back garden backs onto my ex-wife's house. I looked up and saw my teenage son hanging out the window smoking



a joint.

AU: Now some might chalk you lot up to nostalgia but in 2017 this current lineup released the critically acclaimed and Billy Hopeless seal of approval winning What In The World album. How do you feel the job of a career Professional and the work field have changed over the years?

TS: Of course we're playing to the nostalgia market. Us old fuckers want to relive our youth - kind of a backlash against social media driven times. By actually being there rather than staring at there through a screen. That's why I don't get the filming gigs on phones thing. Live the moment for fuck sake - it won't look (or sound) better when you watch it back alone. *What In The World* was our make or break way to move things on. There was a big 'no Jonesy no Professionals' thing online. But Cookie felt he had a right to the band name and the right to continue if he wanted. Hopefully the album proves a band can move on - like The Stranglers or Ruts DC. It helped that Steve Jones guested on the album. It felt a bit like his seal of approval.

AU: When I first witnessed the original line up of the group it was in my youth with the appearance in the punk cult classic film Ladies & Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains about the mythical skunk rock movement. Have any one time skunks shown up at any of your gigs?

TS: The first show we did at The 100 Club was a bit of a who's who of punk, a baptism of fire. I don't think that Paul Simonon was there but I've met him a few times at his art shows - he's so damn cool, but really friendly and down to earth.

AU: Since we're talking about youth youth and teenage kicks let's talk influences. I remember drinking with you downstairs at The Piccadilly Pub here in Vancouver and how excited you were when D.J. Olga upstairs fittingly was playing the Toy Dolls. Who did you guys get excited listening to when you were young ones? Was it Cliff Richard?

TS: I supported the Toy Dolls on a European tour with the band Big Boy Tomato. I still love them. I used to go to Damned gigs when I was 13. It was easy to get in and drink underage in those days. Weird seeing them at The Albert Hall the other year. Who would have thought it? My first gig was a bit earlier. I was 11 or 12 and I went to see Blondie at Hammersmith Odeon. My mum took me. I was so in love with her. Recently the Profs were playing Berlin. So was Debbie Harry promoting her book. I suggested to Cookie to go meet her. I've always wanted to. He said The Pistols offended her in the old days by saying in the NME that she had a really big head. I love her big head! I had a rockabilly phase too,

loved the Stray Cats. And of course all the two-tone stuff. I guess what I'm saying is punk was part of my teens and a massive influence on my mentality, but I loved all sorts of music.

AU: Before this whole world went Viral you were booked to play here in Vancouver. Any word when we'll get to see a make-up gig?

TS: We're looking at doing the cancelled Vegas Punk Bowling gig again. The Vancouver show was tied to that last time.

AU: Speaking of how fucked it became, you have a new album out fittingly entitled S.N.A.F.U. Tell us what's your professional experience been like recording during life in wartime? This ain't no Camden no English disco, this ain't no fuckin' around, right?

TS: It affected the time it took to get the album done. We recorded when various stages of lockdown would allow so it has taken longer than normal. It has kept us sane through mad times though.

AU: Well, the tracks are the Queen's crotch (champagne piss n vinegar) but for me my personal favourite strain in this covid

collection would have to be the infectious number entitled "The Elegant Art Of Falling Apart." Give us a little insight on that one won't cha.

TS: That's a title Cookie got obsessed with. I had some lyrics in one of my many notebooks about my general contempt for the art industry. More specifically, gallery-owning twats.

AU: 'Twas the night before Covid indeed. Oh yes, that reminds me, this is my Xmas column so we better pour some rum in the butter before we say Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night. When I check my list and check it twice the Professionals have never recorded a Noel. Is this true, oh kind spirit? And if not why? What's your personal fave Christmas carol?



TS: Paul and Steve did The Greedies "A Merry Jingle" around the beginning of The Professionals with the Thin Lizzy boys. Personally, I only think of writing a Christmas song too close to Christmas. One of my favourites would be "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" which was written mid-summer by Jewish writers who didn't believe in Christmas.

AU: Well deck my balls with Judy's Garland that's an interesting useless fact. Ok, let's take flight, first stop the present. Oh shite we're already here so let go of my hand and tell us how does a Professional like yourself celebrate the winter holiday of your choice oh Tiny Tom?

TS: I love Christmas and I like hosting too so we generally have an open house for a few days with friends and family coming over getting drunk and

fed.

AU: Ok, grab my hand again and were off to the past. When I was young Christmas was all Rupert Christmas annuals and Iced gems biscuits, now Rupert's a bore and Iced gems are as expensive as Diamonds here in Canada. What old traditions keep a warm fire in your hearth on cold winter nights?

TS: My children and now grandchildren keep Christmas exciting and fresh for me.

AU: So, it's Christmas with the BBC then, is it? Ok pull my finger and we're off to the future like a fly's fart in the wind. Now say if someone wants to get someone, ahem, really nice like me or someone else a copy of the new album to unwrap on the 25th

where should they write to and who's stocking should they stuff the cash in?

TS: For the moment it's only out through our website www.theprofessionalsband.com but as I said earlier were in the process of doing a Canadian record deal. Your version will have an extra track too.

AU: Well thank you good sir and the Merriest of Christmases to you. Do you have any parting words for our readers?

TS: Just to say Merry Christmas to you and let's hope in 2022 the world starts getting back to normal.

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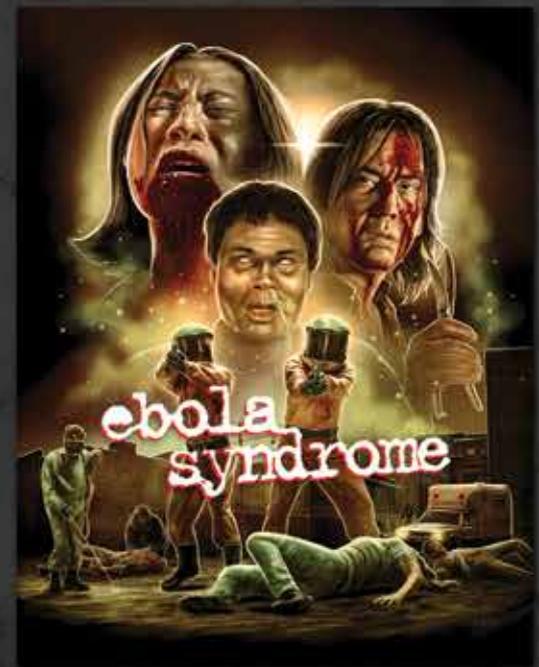
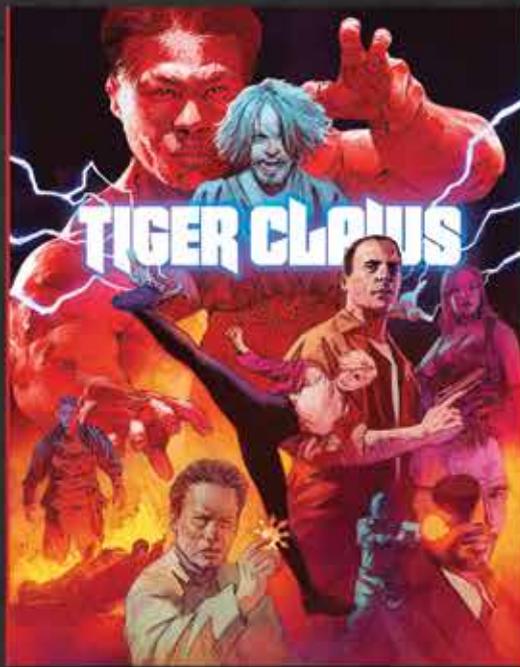
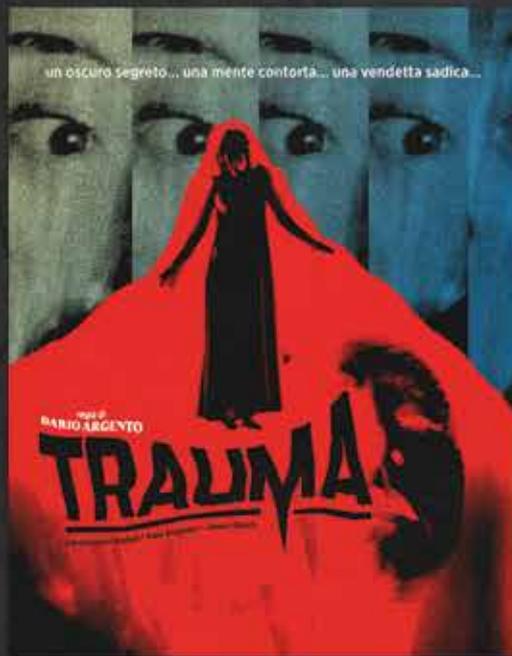
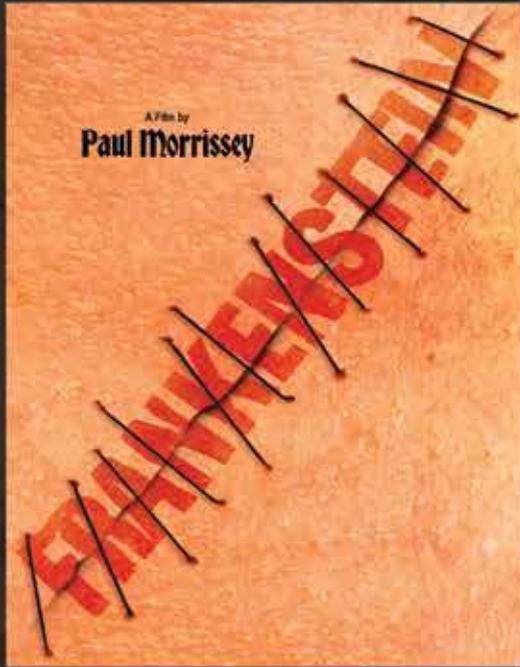
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CURSED BLESSINGS

Cursed Blessings Records Gears Up For A Very Busy 2022

While the year 2021 was plagued by pandemics, arguments about human rights and a lot of political and social unrest, a bright spot for the Canadian music scene, at least, has been the continued growth of Toronto's newest punk rock/hardcore/metal record label, Cursed Blessings Records.

Formed in July 2020 by Al Nolan (Almighty Trigger Happy) & Doug Smart (Figure Four), Cursed Blessings Records spent 2021 amassing a very impressive roster of acts and releases such as Dragged In, Choices Made, Seized Up, The Black Halos, Red Alert, Rough Cuts, Fully Crazy & The Filthy Radicals.

"2021 was definitely a rollercoaster of a year," said label VP Smart. "We have learned so much in such a short amount of time." The final release of 2021 will be from Toronto scene darlings Rules, whose *The Bummer Circus Comes to Truth City* will be available on vinyl for the first time, exclusively



from Cursed Blessings (the band is signed to the excellent Stomp Records, who work very well with their Toronto younger sibling).

The label's fans and supporters repaid the label for such a strong 2021 by voting Cursed Blessings as "Toronto's Best Record Label" in the annual Now Magazine reader's poll, much to the surprise and delight of the CBR staff.

2022 is proving to be a breakout year for the young Ontario label. Scheduled releases from NYHC vets Revival, Canadian Thrash legends Sacrifice & Slaughter, punk rock icon Russ Rankin (two solo albums!), BC punkers Modern Terror, London Ontario's Mvll Crimes (look out for this band!), Almighty Trigger Happy and many many more! "We are very excited about the releases we have out now and what we have coming in 2022" commented label kingpin Al Nolan. "It has been difficult to keep all of the great stuff we have coming out a secret."

In all, Cursed Blessings has over 14 releases slated for the upcoming year with many surprises and big announcements to come in the following months. Keep an eye out for one of the many live events the label will be promoting. To date, since the pandemic restrictions were eased off there has been a Cursed Blessings band playing somewhere in the world almost every weekend.

Recently signing with the awesome Looters PR Firm, things are looking very bright for Cursed Blessings. As they are known to say, "Stay Pinned" to the label's socials and website for news and announcements. 2022 could very well be the "Year of the Pin" if Cursed Blessings Records has anything to say about it.

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Diableries

Stereoscopic Adventures In Hell

AU: Who are we talking to today?

DP: My name is Denis Pellerin. I am a photo historian specialising in nineteenth century stereo photography and currently working as one of the two curators of the Brian May Archive of Stereoscopia. I am also one of the authors of the *Diableries* book. I did the research on the stories behind the images since their original meanings had been lost over the years.

AU: What's the London Stereoscopic Company, and how's Brian May of Queen fame involved?

DP: The London Stereoscopic Company appeared

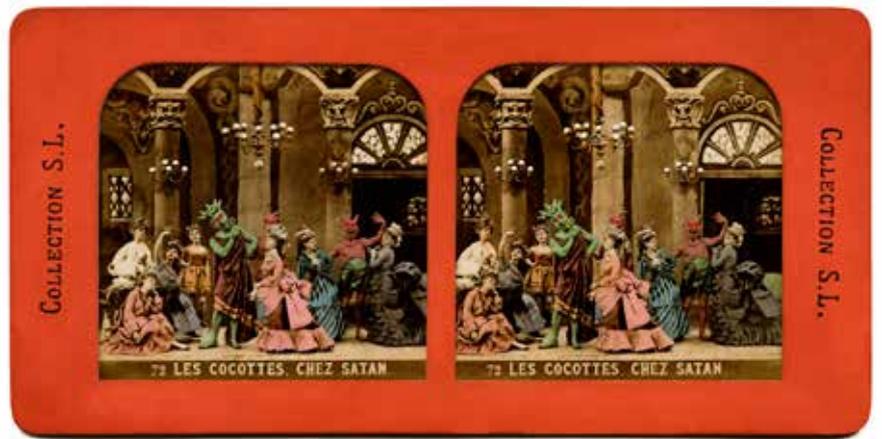


in 1854. Over a relatively short period they became the largest publishers of Stereoscopic views and material in Britain and exported their images and instruments all over the world. The Company disappeared in the early 1920s but in 2006 Dr. Brian May, who had been interested in stereoscopic images since he was ten, bought the name and logo of the defunct firm, which he revived. We are now selling 3-D books, stereoscopic viewers and cards, and doing pretty much the same as our glorious predecessors did. With the publication of *Diableries: Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell*

the LSC also became a publishing company.

AU: Give us a history of Stereoscopic 3-D.

DP: Stereoscopia was actually invented before photography, in 1832 to be precise. It was discovered by British polymath Charles Wheatstone (1802-1875) who was originally from



a family of musical instrument makers. After studying sound and inventing a few instruments (including the concertina) he turned his attention to optics and binocular vision. He was the first to demonstrate that we see two slightly different images of the world with our eyes and that the

brain uses those small differences to fuse these two flat perspectives into a unique three dimensional image which gives us the illusion of depth. Wheatstone drew outlined geometrical figures seen respectively by the left and the right eyes. He then invented an instrument, which he called Stereoscope from two Greek words meaning "I see" and "solid", which used mirrors. This refracting stereoscope allowed him

to present one drawing only to its corresponding eye (left drawing to the left eye and right image to the right one) and the brain fused the two flat images into a single three-dimensional entity, re-creating the illusion of depth. Stereoscopia was born! Even though some progress has been made since 1832 the principle of stereoscopia, or 3-D as we call it now, remains the same.

It took over a decade before the stereoscope was made more user-friendly and the first stereoscopic images started being sold. The lenticular stereoscope, which used lenses instead of mirrors, was introduced in Britain at the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and there was a real craze for stereoscopic images which lasted over a decade. This first "golden age" of stereoscopia saw millions of images being produced. The stereoscope appeared in the parlour of most middle class houses and the original London Stereoscopic Company introduced the slogan "No Home without a Stereoscope".

AU: How did you first become 3-D obsessed?

DP: I personally became hooked on Stereoscopia while visiting a relative in Brittany, France, and observing a strange-looking instrument along

with a stack of photographs mounted side by side on a piece of cardboard. I inserted one of these stereo cards into the instrument – it was the interior of the Tuileries Palace, Paris – and when I looked through the oculars of the stereoscope I was suddenly there (Paris) and then (late 1850s).

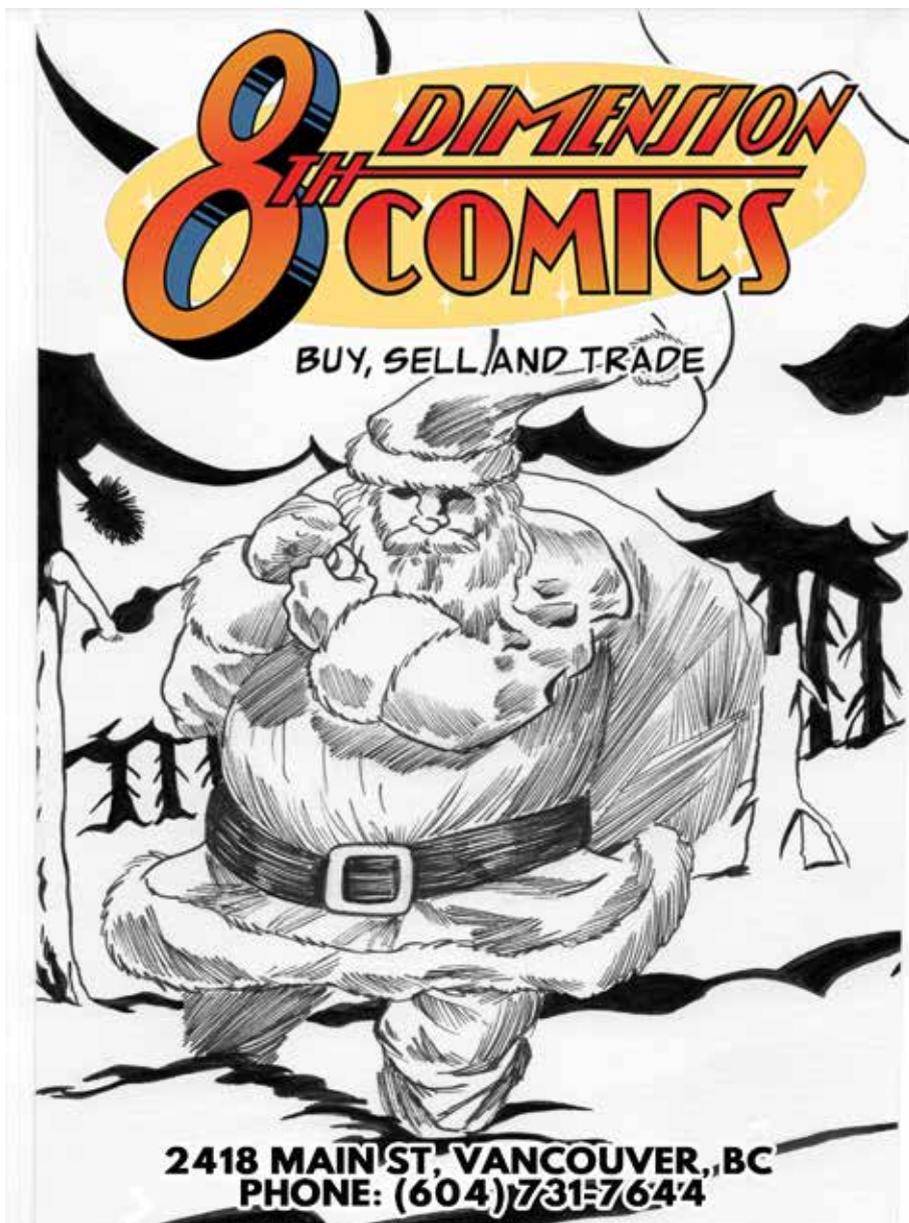
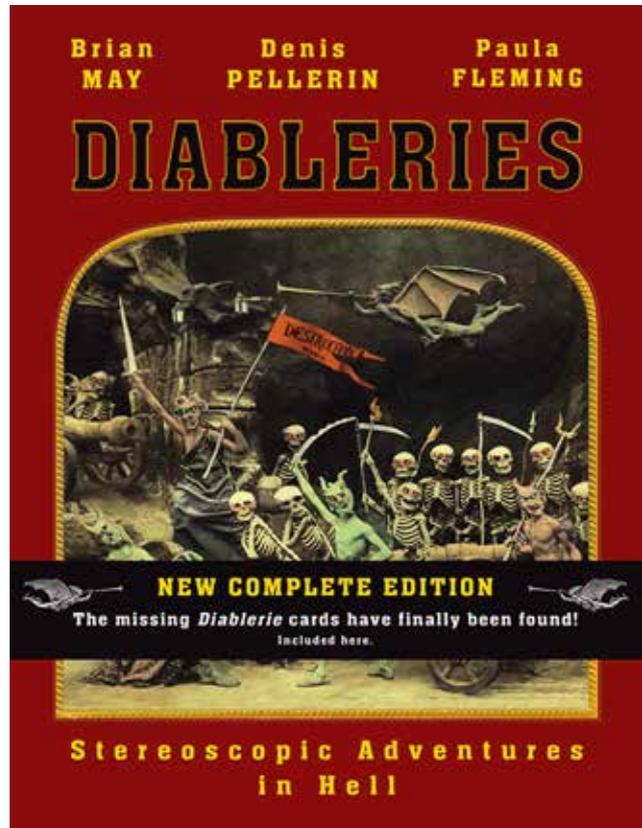
For a whole ten seconds I stood in this room (I knew the Palace had been destroyed by fire in 1871) and I was literally in another time and another dimension. The next day I bought my first stereoscopic images at a flea market. I quickly started researching them and have not stopped for the past forty years. I am still amazed at the things I don't know and at the new images I discover every week. It

is a never-ending quest and I love it! Everything under the sun was photographed for the Stereoscope in the Victorian era. By the end of 1859 people could virtually visit Egypt, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and even the United States, Japan and China. Most people had never travelled outside the boundaries of their native county and the vast majority only knew the

world through the drawn illustrations they could find in magazines. It must have been mind-blowing for the Victorians to see, for the first time, these places, cities, monuments, statues, etc., as they really were, and in 3-D! Hence the craze for the stereoscope. The public wanted more and more images. The thirst for knowledge and discovery of those armchair travellers was endless.

Exhibitions were photographed, famous paintings were re-staged in 3-D, celebrities had their portrait taken for the stereoscope. We can see Queen Victoria, Emperor Napoleon III, President Abraham Lincoln, and many others, as they were. The illusion is often so powerful that you feel you could almost shake their hands. There is no doubt, at the height of its popularity, stereoscopia was the "television" or the virtual reality of the time.

AU: What makes your book *Diableries: Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell* unique?





DP: *Diableries* is a funny, bizarre and sometimes very harsh satire of France during the reign of Napoleon III. They were made of clay for the stereoscope by a handful of artists and were destroyed once they had been photographed. Not a single physical trace of them has survived and the photographs are the only testimony to the genius, imagination and humour of their creators. *Diableries* feature Paris as Hell on earth and if the very early ones were very religious, they soon become more satirical and started making fun of the society of the time. *Diableries* are full of grinning devils and skeletons (the souls of the dead) but there are also lots of pretty maidens and in most of them Hell does not seem like a very scary place. Dr. May collected these images for decades and I spend nearly twenty years trying to understand the stories behind them. When we collated his collection and my research we had enough material for a publication.



AU: What does Diableries mean or translate to?

DP: It translates as "devilments" or "devilish pranks"

AU: Are there 3-D conventions or events?

DP: We attend the National Stereoscopic Association 3D Convention every year.

AU: How many images included in the book?

DP: There are 182 bona fide *Diableries* altogether and they all feature in the book, along with other stereoscopic and flat images. Nobody knew anything about the two missing *Diableries*. The images themselves could not be found anywhere. The first one

turned up a couple of months after the first edition of *Diableries* was published. A collector from the Netherlands contacted me and said he had found one of the missing images. He sent me a scan of it and I realised at once he was right, and it got into Dr. May's collection. The second and last of the missing cards was also bought in the Netherlands but by an American collector. I was a bit dubious

at first but when he sent me a photo of the card I knew the quest for the missing card was over. It was a great and strange feeling at the same time, the end of a nearly lifelong adventure.

AU: Is there a Stereoscope included with book?

DP: Yes. The patented stereoscope included in the book was designed by Dr. May himself and allows the readers to enjoy the images as the Victorians would have done. Few people can suppress a "Wow!" when they see the two flat images suddenly pop up in glorious 3-D.

AU: Even though Diableries was released for Halloween and is full of skeletons and devils, I still think it would make a wicked X-Mas present. Do you agree?

DP: I could not agree more. *Diableries* were created in the 1860s and are not limited to the

period around Halloween. They can be enjoyed all year round. There are so many layers to the *Diableries* and you can spend hours looking at all the details and figures in the compositions.

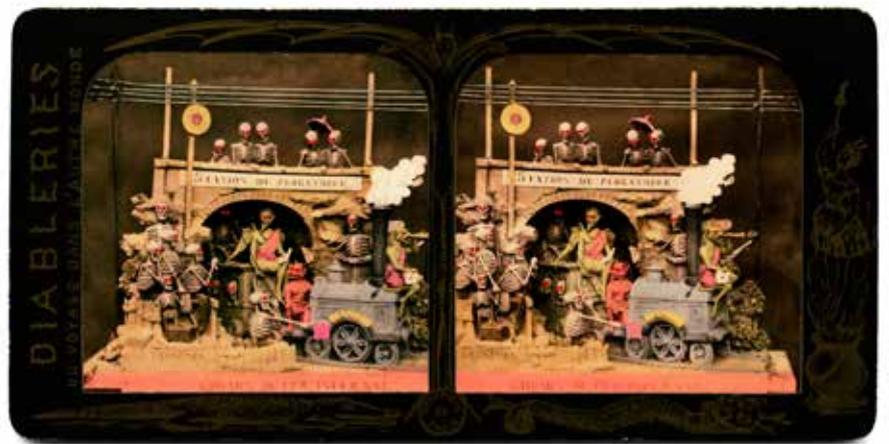
AU: Anything else to promote?

DP: Our latest book, *Stereoscopy: the Dawn of 3-D* has just been released. Edited by Dr. May and written by yours truly, it tells for the first time the real story of the origins and beginnings of Stereoscopy, from 1832 to 1862. It sets right several

major facts and gets rid of some of the myths that have been shrouding and distorting the history of the stereoscopic medium for over a century and a half.

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DIABLERIES

Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell

BRIAN MAY, DENIS PELLERIN
& PAULA FLEMING

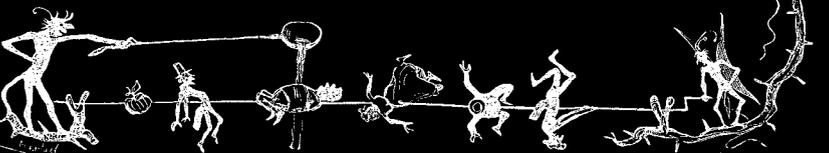
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The Buzzers

Interview by Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Brenno: This is Brenin (AKA Brenno Buzzer), bassist and corrupter of minds.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band, what other bands have the members been in and what are you all about?

Brenno: Ben and I had the idea to start a band way back in 2018 and he happened to have a drum kit so I started on drums with him singing. We found our first guitar player, then another, then another... I stopped playing briefly and someone else stepped in on drums. I rejoined on bass (which I never played before) and we have since had a couple more lineup changes. So basically, we have been through a pretty ridiculous number of members before even playing our first show! Our current lineup is our strongest yet and consists of myself on bass, Benny (Isotopes) on vocals, Mike (Alternate Action, Suede Razors) on guitar, and Steve (Old Derelicts) on drums.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Brenno: Energetic mid tempo Oi!/Punk Rock. We like to keep things simple.

AU: What are some of the influences on The Buzzers?

Brenno: Each member has different influences but as a whole I'd say we are definitely influenced by 1980s UK punk and oi! as well as straight up rock 'n' roll/pub rock.

AU: Any plans to release an album and play some live shows?

Brenno: We have recorded two demo EPs (one Benny did completely solo) which are up on our Bandcamp page. We also re-recorded two of

those songs for a BC punk/oi compilation due out next year on Rebellion Records. Additionally, we just recently recorded a handful of songs (including some new material) which we are hoping to release next year at some point. We are planning on doing some gigs starting early next year.

AU: Do your songs focus on any particular themes or topics?

Brenno: Our songs are based on reality mostly. We write about what we see and experience in our day to day lives without getting overly political.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

Brenno: We are pretty excited about the new tracks we recorded which includes some older songs we've updated.

AU: Any other good Oi!/

Street Punk bands in Vancouver people should check out?

Brenno: Bishops Green is the obvious choice and they're still going strong. Toy Tiger is also local and worth checking out! Victoria has some up-and-coming bands to watch out for as well.

AU: Any plans for an Oi!-Christmas this year?

Brenno: Beers, sneers and holiday cheers

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

Brenno: I don't want to disclose any of the band's dirty secrets quite yet so that's all for now. Keep an eye on our social media pages for updates!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Brenno: It's been another tough year, especially for musicians and live music. Make sure to support bands and venues when you can! Thanks *Absolute Underground!*

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The Old Limp Dicks

Interview by Mal Content

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

Trevor Coles: Well, you are currently speaking at Trevor Coles a.k.a. Yolkmaster-T, the frontman, founder and main writer since starting the band 11 years ago. Living in a small city on an island has a tendency to allow stories to gain traction pretty quickly, truthful or not, and one of my favorites was a group of guys working for my buddy who swore up and down that Trevor Coles was a drug fueled psychopath who had just done four years in jail for eating his ex-girlfriends baby, the truth is im more infamous for my yolk videos and raunchy lyrics, if anything.

AU: What was the origin of your band The Old Limp Dicks? Give us a brief band history.

TC: I have an extreme case of dyslexia and back in 2010 the Olympics were rolling through town and for almost a whole year all I heard was everyone talking about the old-limp-dicks on a daily basis, then when I realized the name could be an acronym for itself, aka The O.L.D. I was sold, not realizing how hard it would be to find talented musicians wanting to have that as their bands label, not to mention every single human with common sense wouldn't want to Google our band name in fear of the flaccid phallic wave of shame that would follow such a search. It started off with just me and a super talented buddy of mine named Justin Bilodeau, we quickly put together a mess of an album

called *Limp & Impotent*, which I managed to get a copy of into the hands of the Dayglo frontman and lead writer Murray Acton, and in keeping in touch with him managed to move to Victoria in an attempt to start recording our next album with Murray on drums as well as producing it, but this was a hectic time in all our lives and with Murray being in four other amazing bands at the time we needed to find a more permanent skin slapper, alas me and Mr. Bilodeau

lost touch with one another and it wouldn't be until three or four years later that i would find myself back at it writing songs and surrounding myself with more members.

AU: Who has the oldest limpest dick in the band and what are the other band members all about? Have you guys been in any other bands before?

TC: I've had three different solid lineups since starting and the current members are handsdown the most talented musicians, with the great Ian "Igor" McKinlay-key on lead guitar and Kyle Mcleod slapping the crap outta his bass, we had on/off again member Daren "hammerman" Baldock (awkward a/c, Daisy Stranglers, Greasy Hombres) hitting skins on those recordings, I would probably call it a draw between Ian and Baldock for the oldest and limpest award, mostly because I myself am a walking talking erection.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

TC: The Ripcordz described us as having that classic island sound but most would probably label it perverted hate-punk if anything, our music is simplistic, fast paced, thrashy and unique if you listen to some of the lyrics close enough you might just be offended hence the name of our newest album.

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear? Does the new album explore any particular subjects?

TC: Our newest EP was recorded and produced by Murray Acton (Dayglo Abortions, LummoX, Fuck You Pigs, Stinkhorn) I decided to call it *Touchy Subjects* in light of the current snowflake

epidemic, also because a few of the songs deal with topics such as drug addiction, abuse, rape, stalking, canine consumption of female waste products, just to list a few topics,

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

TC: I love the guitar work on this one, Ian is a well seasoned musician who has spiced up all of the songs with his intense style of playing. My favourite tracks so far would probably have to be "Greasy" and "I'm Watching You" and the hidden bonus track "Tampax Trash Rat" is sure to tug a few heart strings.

AU: Tell us about working with Murray "The Cretin" Action as producer on the new album?

TC: Working with Murray Acton has been an absolute treat, he knows what he is doing obviously and is also a close personal friend, there will never be a more patient, kind and intelligent human on this earth and I feel honored to have not only a personal idol but also one of the greatest Canadian punk rock legends embedded into my life, not many people can actually say they are friends with one of their favourite bands.

AU: Tell us about Merle Allin endorsing your album.

TC: I have heard more than one person tell me the o.l.d. reminds them of GG Allin and I am personally a huge fan of his music. I sent Merle Allin (GG Allin's brother, bass player for The Murder Junkies) a link to our album and he took a listen and sent back quite a few kind words. I've been in touch with the old bastard for a few years now.

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

TC: We have survived the apocalypse by purchasing a large generator, getting in touch with some wicked local bands and throwing much needed punk shows deep in the forests of Vancouver Island and at secret venues scattered around. We held a beautiful memorial for chi-pig seeing as how his family chose to have a closed door funeral. We have thrown many successful shows and plan to continue them as long as we feel the need to dance.

AU: Any plans for Covid Christmas this year?

TC: Probably gonna circle up alone in our living room and against my bandmate's wishes masturbate to old Christmas movies until we passout un-satisfied and alone.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

TC: I have definitely been naughty, can't really speak for the others but yah I've done a few things worthy of a few spankings.

AU: Do you prefer Santa or Satan?

TC: I much prefer Satan... you don't see him breaking into every person's home just to judge their children, only giving gifts to those he deems worthy, I mean you have to appreciate his ability to watch every kid on earth all at the same time, like some sorta fat jolly super stalker. But Satan will always be #1 in my books.

AU: Any other good bands coming out of the Nanaimo, BC music scene?

TC: There are quite a few wicked bands in our little city, Awkward A/C, Social Silence and Hexenbane just to name a few.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

TC: Well I don't eat babies, abuse women or animals... I am however a pervert, outspoken, immature, and I enjoy making shit tons of art and offending people. Checkout my latest project YOLK-TV on the Youtubes or my experimental electronic album *Yolk & Sodomy*, if you think you can handle it and keep an eyeout for me on an upcoming episode of the kick ass cooking show "Chaos in the Kitchen"

AU: Any final words for our readers?

TC: No matter what you do in life there will always be those who oppose you, fuck them, snowflakes melt away but true perverts are here to stay... and usually live to be dirty old punkers, embrace this.

AU: How do people find you online?

TC: Don't be afraid to Google "The Old Limp Dicks" online because we are always the first thing that pops up. You can check us out on Spotify or the Youtubes or if you're patient enough... don't worry we will most likely find you...

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productions and believes he can do better given his experience. He worked as assistant cameraman in many productions and is sometimes an actor like in *Shotgun Mythos*. The latter was a lighting technician for shows like *The Killing* and *Pirates of the Caribbean 5*; one of his acting credits includes *Gutterballs*. These two had their time when things

Welcome to A Filthy Lot

By Ed Sum

A Filthy Lot is aiming to change the entertainment / streaming scene in Vancouver! This studio encourages content creators from this region to just do it. Whether that's with their own in-house team pitching new ideas to produce for their YouTube channel or helping others with their audio or video podcasts, the skilled folks here aim to be helpful. They have community outreach programs to help new talents improve their trade and plenty of internal workshops so everyone can benefit.

Natasha Wehn, this company's Assistant Director, coordinates and manages all the productions that are produced by the AFL. She's one voice to advise what goes forward or is put on hiatus. She said, "One of the long-term goals is to have a space in Vancouver where people can create content. One idea we have is to help local Youtubers with the resources that we have available and another one would just be providing a positive, alternative, work culture."

CEO Christopher Livingston (pictured right) and CCO Trevor Gemma (left) heard ideas on how a production can be made better during their days as production staff for a TV show/film in this city. The former still watches a lot of YouTube

got rough on the set, and they wanted change. "We are very DIY," the two said, "Part of the ethos of what we founded the company on is that everyone stays in your lane. If you're not above this line on the pay grade, they don't want to hear your ideas. It was a just do your job attitude."

Everyone from this company was hit hard because of the pandemic. When they thought what's happening would be minor, little did they know how it'd affect everything else down the road like falling dominos. The chiefs didn't want to lay off people, and nor did they find lets film it at home and put that on YouTube works.

"When we launched the channel in July of 2020, it was a bumpy ride getting back to filming," said the team. "We banked a bunch of quarantine content, but it wasn't up to the value we can pull off as a team [in a studio]."

Most of the staff at AFL are passionate about the local arts scene—and role playing, tabletop

and video games. For the most part, they all love Dungeons and Dragons, and they have more than one regularly streaming show showing them testing new products they release (like *Dune the RPG*) and playing within their home-brew world of Altera.

This studio also produces, *One Shot or Not*, a live tabletop gameplay that streams on Twitch every other Tuesday. They even have their own talk show on popular culture, "A Filthy Talk" which streams on Twitch (<https://www.twitch.tv/afilthylot>) every Thursday at 5:30pst. Other projects (currently on hold) include a *Leathercraft* and *How to Make Beer* show. They even have their own Comedy Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/AFunnyLot>) where their skits can draw from anything, ranging from *Big Bang Theory* to *The Office*.

Unlike simpler shows that are out there, the prep involved for their in-house productions is tremendous. When not filming in their warehouse location, they are out there around Greater Vancouver, making use of its varied forest or mountain locations for *Ready to Roll* when they can't recreate it in their current space. In this show, a dedicated team of D&D players (list) are acting out

their characters in more ways than one. That is, viewers get to see them at the gaming table and in a fully realized fantasy world. A few episodes in, they don't break character, and to see them as their imagined counterpart will soon be coming. This studio has staff from past productions like *The X-Files* and *Battlestar Galactica* to help fully realize the fantasy, and the plan is to release these

segments as vignettes spiced throughout the regular gameplay. If that's not enough to keep this studio busy, there are plans to move to a better space.



"Yeah, we'll have some downtime," admitted Gemma, "Hopefully it won't be noticeable. But when we get to that point, we'll probably talk about the move itself and how that is affecting us." "We'll bank content as well," added Livingston. "We'll film a couple things ahead of time so

that we can meet release schedules." The team is still hard at work finishing what they've filmed pre-pandemic. Now that some restrictions have eased, they can film additional material and deal with the CGI elements needed so it's ready for release. Gemma and Livingston promise that it won't be cheap, and they're putting in a lot of effort to make the digital elements look right and still include practical effects ala *Jurassic Park*.

On the studio floor, the staff continues to pump out weekly content much like how a news studio handles preparing for their daily broadcast. The chiefs are confident people will like what's coming. They're showing what's produced in Vancouver is not always going to be another Netflix, TV or film production. "The next step is finishing that vignette so that people can see the full vision in the early New Year," said the duo, "And we'll be pumping out more as we release the show over the next year."

Everyone is hopeful season two will materialize. But for now, the crunch is on for them to finish, and prove that not all independent film studios have to target cinematic release. Streaming video programs online is the future.

<https://www.afilthylot.com>





We got our name initially from the Rancid track Roots Radicals. "Give 'em the boot, you know I'm a Radical!" At our high school, the 'cool' kids would call us "DIIIIIRTS" to shame and exile us, so we took it back and pushed it to its logical limit. To me, the Filthy part of our name is us wholeheartedly embracing our 'otherness'. We are The Filthy F*ckin' Radicals and we are not going anywhere.



AU: Describe your sound.
We have quite an eclectic sound that's influenced by almost every sub-genre of punk, but we tend to favor ska punk

when it really comes down to it.

'Imagine' Mischief Brew and Choking Victim were playing on repeat for your entire teenage life and then, just as things were getting a little too dark, Streetlight Manifesto showed up to remind you that life is worth living and get you dancing.

AU: Is there a big ska punk scene in Toronto?

The ska and punk scenes in Toronto are as healthy as ever. There are so many friendly faces out at every show, and everyone is there for the same reason, to enjoy live music and sing and dance!

Bands to watch are The Classy Wrecks, Big Brother, TNB, and Nice Things, with The Nefidovs as the out of town favourites!

AU: Where has the best ska scene?

Without a doubt, Montreal has the best ska scene in Canada. K-Man and The 45's, Planet Smashers, Danny Rebel and the KGB, 2 Stone 2 Skank, Blame The Name and Les Skalpes (RIP).

The Filthy Radicals

AU: Please introduce yourself for our readers
We are The Filthy Radicals and we came to party! A 6-piece ska punk band from Toronto, we've been playing shows across Canada for 13 years.

AU: Who are the members of The Filthy Radicals and what are their super-powers?

We have Kyle Jewitt as our front man, his super power is pizza making and charming the crowd into going crazy!

Andrew DeNure is our lead guitar/vocals/trombone/harmonica player, on top of being an unstoppable multi-instrumentalist he's also a great sound engineer and song writing machine!

Cody Deveaux on bass is a brick shit-house, and holds it down on the low end.

JACKSON SMASH

David Boxenbaum holding down the keys has unlimited puns and he's not afraid to use them!

Miz Molly Mayhem is our trumpetess, her super power is being able to create a dope melody to anything we throw at her. With a long board she can bomb downhill like absolutely no one else.

AU: Where did you guys get your name?

AU: Operation Ivy or Choking Victim?

Each of those bands have one record, and both are monumental and seminal for ska punk, especially heavier style that we have embraced. I think I'd have to go with *Energy over No Gods No Masters* these days, for its undeniable longevity.

AU: Tell us about your latest EP out on Stomp.

We are so incredibly honored to have joined the Stomp Records family! We'd been working out *The Fine Line Between Real and Insane* through some really hard personal sagas, and I think it shows. The EP is serious and heavy, and is a good introduction to what we bring to the table.

Andrew did a fantastic job with the engineering, Scott Middleton brought his mastering magic.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

We are super stoked on the first single, "Scavenger," it's a chaotic skacore track and it's one of the first tracks Molly got to let loose on, and it rips from beginning to end!

The second single is titled "Bug Stepper" and it is really special to us as it features an epic intro by Eric Crowley and one of the final performances of our dearly departed friend Corey Jesse Shields. We are currently working on a video treatment with our good friend Michael Crusty that we hope will be a cathartic sort of tribute to CJ.

AU: You had another EP called "Freedom 45" on Cursed Blessings Records earlier this year?

We released "Freedom 45" on 7", as well as some limited edition merch through Cursed Blessings.

For the title track, our friend Joe Cash helped us film a dope truck smashing video with the Filthy Fam thanks to Eric and Char at Punk Rock House!

AU: What bands have you guys played with that just blew your socks off?

Jerrycan - Ontario Melodic Skate Legends
Ghetto Blaster - Top Shelf Toronto Ska Punk and Hip Hop
Kman and The 45s - MTL Ska and Reggae Bad Boys

Lime Ricky - Fresh AF Toronto Skate Punk
Body Heist - Toronto Skacore Supergroup
The Anti Queens - Toronto Punk Rock and Rollers
Three Impotent Males - Sarnia Skate Punk Heros
Stuck Lucky - Texas Skacore Contract Killers

Mad Conductor - Ex No-Cash Ska Punk and Hip Hop
The Creepshow - Toronto's Flagship Psychobilly



AU: 1st, 2nd or 3rd wave ska? And why?
3rd Wave Ska all day!

That's what drew us in and that's where our hearts lay, however, you can often catch us bumping The Slackers, Aggrolites, Planet Smashers, Chris Murray and countless other ska acts that aren't punk centric.

AU: Who is the toughest ska band going? The band no other band would pick a fight with.

Big Brother is the toughest Ska band out there. Not that they intend to be tough guys but they are TFR's hardcore bigger brothers, so that's definitely saying something.

Any shows planned for the holiday season?

We're opening for Brutal Youth and Creepshow at the Stomp Records 26th Anniversary Shows. Unfortunately there will not be a Filthy Christmas this year, but we've already start planning next year's event and we are making a charitable donation with Cursed Blessings in December for those in need.

AU: What don't you want your mom to know?

Dave is classically trained and he doesn't want his mom to know he plays Ska Punk ;P

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

Go check out our videos for "Scavenger" and "Freedom 45", and stream *The Fine Line Between Real and Insane* wherever you get your music! We're doing a bunch of Podcasts including Backstage With Kennedy, K-Man Don't Know Sh!t, and the Miserable Failure Podcast with Crusty Media. Also make sure you check out the Punk Project with John Tard on YouTube for lots of great Canadian Punk Rock music video programming!

AU: Final words of wisdom.

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Happy Holidays

FROM
The Green Haired Freak

@green_haired_freak_supertreats



Amanita Muscaria
The mushroom that inspired Christmas
 by Julia Veintrop

This Christmas, let's go back to the old ways... we should all do some mushrooms. After all, it's an ancient tradition. That's right. A lot of our Christmas traditions honor the use of psychedelic mushrooms and the proof is visible throughout our current customs. But, it's not about getting high. There is a deeper meaning behind the mushroom use. In fact, it's the true origin story of the spirit of Christmas. In case you have never heard it, here is the story behind our holiday traditions.

Santa was a Koryak Shaman

The Koryak are the indigenous people of the Far East of Siberia. During the winter solstice, a Koryak Shaman would gather the hallucinogenic mushrooms, Amanita Muscaria. Donning red and white regalia to honor the mushrooms, the shaman would look



for them under pine trees. On the eve of the winter solstice, they would use the mushrooms to go on a spiritual journey. The belief was that the mushrooms could answer any of the problems in the village that were still leftover from the previous year. Ultimately, this would wipe the slate clean and allow for a fresh start in the coming year. Now, who wouldn't want that as a Christmas present?

Siberian Koryak Shamans

Amanita Muscaria - A Red and White Mushroom

Amanita muscaria is the mushroom that inspired Christmas and it grows from late summer to early winter. There have been very few reports of human death but Amanita muscaria are classified as poisonous. Noted for their hallucinogenic properties, these mushrooms also contain the natural stimulant ibotenic acid.

Known for increasing adrenaline, ibotenic acid causes increased physical strength and ability. So what does this mean? Eating these mushrooms would literally make you jump around as fast and far as they could, giving them the common name 'fly amanita or fly agaric'. The use of these mushrooms can be seen in traditions such as:

- Red and white Christmas colours.
- Santa's ability to fly around the world in a night.
- Presents under a tree - Amanita muscaria typically can be found growing under pine and birch trees.
- Flying reindeer.

CANNABIS CORNER

Random Reindeer Fact - Reindeer are native to Siberia and they love Amanita muscaria. In

fact, it's their favorite food. We don't know for certain whether the reindeer get high but their behavior is definitely suspicious. There have been numerous reports of prancing, jumping, and frolicking.

Every winter solstice, far in the North, someone dressed in red and white would collect brightly colored mushrooms. Eating the magical fungi would send them on a spiritual journey and they would be gifted with great knowledge.

When their trip had ended, they would share this newfound wisdom with the village; giving people the ability to let go of their troubles for a fresh new year. Today, Christmas has definitely evolved into something else but this year, maybe it's time to bring back tradition. Whether they are psychedelic or just plain delicious, honor the spirit of the holidays and eat some mushrooms.

Happy Mushroom Hunting!

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GETTING HIGH TO SURVIVE

Stories Of Drug Use During Battle

by Julia Veintrop

Every war is full of horror and when you look at the gruesome details of each one, it's hard to imagine how anyone survived. It's not too surprising to hear that there are reports of drug use in almost every conflict. In many cases throughout history, mind-altering substance use was sanctioned by the government. Whether it was to calm down or pump up for a fight, drug use during battle has been documented since the Viking era.

Alcohol - Dutch or Liquid Courage

Alcohol has been a part of a soldier's ration since the substance was invented. A multi-use tool, it was an effective disinfectant, analgesic, and nerve soothing remedy. Have you ever heard of alcohol being referred to as 'liquid or Dutch courage'? If you have, you can thank the British Royal Navy. They coined the term back in 1652, during the First Anglo-Dutch War.

Soldiers on the British side were given alcohol as part of their rations but didn't have a lot to choose from. As a result of the war, malt and other import materials were in short supply, but Jenever could be made locally. Thus, Jenever became the drink of choice for the soldier of the British Navy. Because of its herbal blend, it was known for having a calming effect on the nerves. British soldiers would often drink their ration before going into battle, earning it the nickname 'Dutch or liquid' courage.

Gin and Tonic

Did you know that the classic cocktail 'gin and tonic' has a military origin story? During the 17th century, the Spanish learned about the natural medicine in the cinchona tree. Quecha Tribesmen would grind the bark to help stop fever-related

chills and shivering. By 1869, companies were manufacturing soda water and added the bark to create tonic water. This combination was the ideal choice for colonizing forces in foreign lands. The active ingredient within the cinchona tree is quinine, which can be used to prevent malaria. For a soldier, a gin and tonic was a dose of liquid courage with the added benefit of malaria protection.

Smoking Weed in Vietnam

Next to the war in Iraq, the conflict in Vietnam was America's longest war. Many civilians were drafted and ended up fighting, regardless of what they wanted. Although drug use was not sanctioned by the military, it was prevalent throughout stationed forces. Despite being discouraged, cannabis use was especially popular; to the point where soldiers would use their guns to smoke weed. Anyone caught using cannabis was punished using non-judicial punishments.



According to one study, "From 1967-1971, the proportion of troops having used marijuana peaked at 34% before stabilizing to 18%, while the number of troops who had used cannabis prior to deployment stayed around 8%."

Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War lasted from 1904-1905 and was said to be lost because of Vodka. The Russian army had conscripted the majority of their soldiers, who responded by getting drunk on the battlefield. The Russians expected a quick victory, but thanks to widespread drinking, suffered an embarrassing defeat. According to one Russian newspaper, "The Japanese found

several thousand Russian soldiers so dead drunk they were able to bayonet them like so many pigs."

Mushrooms

Have you ever heard the expression 'going berserk'? Did you know that it refers to viking warriors battling high on mushrooms?

Before going into battle, Vikings known as Berserkers' used to eat hallucinogenic mushrooms. Amanita Muscaria mushrooms grow naturally in the areas that the Vikings used to roam. These mushrooms are known for increasing energy, stamina and causing hallucinations. To a Viking Berserker, mushrooms before combat would not only help with headspace, it would increase physical performance. An ax swinging Viking tweaking hard on mushrooms... Imagine being on a battlefield and seeing that coming at you!

Government Sanctioned Stimulants

Stimulants have been used in battle since they have been around. During both World Wars, drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine were widely used to reduce fatigue and appetite, and increase focus and aggression.

During WW2, the use of methamphetamine was a part of military strategy for both the British and the Nazis. The increased alertness and reduced appetite were extremely useful for troops on all sides. However, the Germans used this drug a lot more. According to reports, from April - July of 1940, Germany distributed thirty-five million methamphetamine tablets to the Western Front. Britain distributed seventy-two million tablets to their troops over the course of the entire war.

CANNABIS CORNER

Aimo Allan Koivunen

Aimo was a Finnish soldier during World War 2. He was assigned to a ski patrol unit and given the task of safeguarding the army-issued methamphetamine for the group. Three days into the assignment, the unit was attacked by Soviet soldiers but Aimo Koivunen managed to escape.

In order to survive, he knew he would have to ski for a long distance but didn't have the energy. While trying to shake out a single pill, he emptied the bottle into his palm and decided to take them all.

According to Aimo Koivunen, he had quick bursts of energy but fell into a state of delirium. He remembered waking up the next morning all alone in the wilderness, without any supplies. For a week, he ate pine buds and managed to evade Soviet forces. He caught a single bird and ate it raw. He skied over 400 km to get to safety. When he was found and taken to a hospital, his heartbeat was measured at 200 BPM and he weighed under 95lbs. Aimo Koivunen made a full recovery and lived to the age of 71. He survived the first documented overdose of methamphetamine during the war.

Final words from the author - I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude and deep respect to all past and present serving men and women. Thank you for fighting for our freedom. Your sacrifice will always be appreciated.

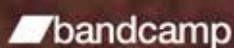
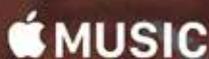


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Kradle: Standing On The Edge Of Fame And Fortune

By Harry Degen

Tod Larkin, lead vocals
Harry Degen, guitars
Steve Courchaine, bass
Claude Erfon - drums

Kradle's early sound was maybe Ozzyish, Sabbath-y, Motley Crüe-like, early Halen-esque. We were already jamming, writing and gigging by the time we heard Motley Crüe's first vinyl release, *Too Fast for Love* on Leathür Records. Steve was a really solid bass player and he played with his fingers and totally dug in, and Claude did a lot of rhythmic double-kick. I had developed a style of chugging on the open strings along with Steve and with Claude's double-kick it was just a huge wall of sound. We really had a sound all our own, a very strong 70s influence even though we were an 80s band.

I remember Shock in 1980, they sounded like Judas Priest. Black Knight was also "safe metal" but very tight and talented. We sprung from

that and brought the filth, degradation and party. There really weren't many metal bands in Van at the time. There was Kradle, Harlot's Webb, Assault, Rival, and Nite Vigil, who opened for us a couple times.

We weren't really prepared for 1984. I remember thinking that this really can't be that easy. Enigma Records, the demos, the incredible sales of the 4-track cassette release and how quickly our early underground demos were duplicated and played on people's car stereos. I remember going to malls with Steve and getting hit up for autographs. We thought we needed a manager. Brian Wadsworth from Headpins was interested, and I met with him a few times. Enigma was the only record label that seemed committed to trying to get our masters. All the other record labels I contacted, and there were many, absolutely sucked!

Enigma loved the first demo from ICA. They told me when they popped our demo into their blaster the whole office was rocking to "Soul

Stripper." Brian had no idea what he had with us and told me not to worry, that there would be other offers, so we slept on the deal waiting for a better offer. Enigma didn't like the newer stuff like "Standing on the Edge" and "Alone Without You," lost interest and picked up Stryper instead. We had tuned up a semitone to A flat and I think we lost that original darkness that people dug. It was like going from Black Sabbath to Van Halen. It was my stupid idea, too.

Sometimes people say that Kradle should have made it or should have signed or whatever but

I played in the coolest band in Vancouver at the coolest time in music history to be in a band. The 80s! Are you kidding me? You've seen those movies about excess - we lived it! We fucking lived it and we backed it up with big-time attitude.

We booked our own venues, studios in New Westminster, the James Cowan Theatre in Burnaby, which also was filmed in its entirety by a CKVU team but really, the New York Theatre. The same New York Theatre where Metallica and W.A.S.P. played AFTER we established it as a metal venue. Meeting Dio was cool. I remember he came to the Kradle house after his Pacific Coliseum show and Steve put on our demo. I felt shy as fuck and small next to Dio and you could tell he had that look in his face like okay, here's another demo to listen to, but wow! When that



intro to "Hunger for Love" hit him I could see his ears perk up and his head turn towards the speakers and you could tell he was honestly right into it! He was infatuated with Steve's girlfriend. Jimmy Bain, his bass player, drank all the Irish Cream I had in the fridge. Oh, Yngwie Malmsteen was there too but who cares - Dio is god.

Kradle's last gig was the monster 1986 New York Theatre show. We did a CFOX promo thing and billed it as bigger than Expo, lol. After that, we just fizzled out. There was no big breakup or anything, it just fizzled out. I can't remember if it was 1987 or 1988. The final nail in the coffin was Tod's passing in 1989. There was no Brian Johnson to our Bon Scott. Tod had so much charisma! He was Elvis and David Lee Roth in one. He was always performing even when not on stage. Women loved him and he was just such a cool guy to be around. As cool as he was, he never lost his small-town charm and he would make everyone around him feel welcome and would always make them feel as if they were his friends.

Editing: Jason Flower

Copy editing: Frank Manley

Archival material & photos: Harry Degen, Steve Courchaine, Joey Brehm



ABSOLUTE SUBCULTURE

subculture

By wendythirteen

Bringbring! Wtf?! It's Maddog calling from his old school landline.

"Hey Wendy, I've got this photographer here that wants to take pictures of old punks. You've gotta meet her, you know, before we die."

During a couple of sweaty photo sessions this heat dome summer, I agreed to be apart of a 17-piece photo exhibition called 'OG Punk' by Dina Goldstein. This is an ongoing exhibition currently at the Polygon Gallery in North Vancouver by the SeaBus terminal until January 3rd 2022. It will travel to Toronto in the spring. She also plans to do an expanded second grouping of photographs.

It was a very punk in a pandemic experience. Inconsistently masked Maddog crashing into shit in my skullcrowded, dimly lit cave while pounding a six pack of beers. Two towering tripods with bright

glaring lights. It was as sweaty as a packed gig. I'm sure my teeth gritting misery came through in those shots.

Later, my grateful carcass was carted down to the cool underground parkade in my building where the actual shot of me she chose was taken against a clean black drop cloth. My hair looks greasy because it was drenched in sweat from earlier.

I was surly, whirlwind exhausted and trying to glue some oddities back together afterwards. I live a very solo homebody life these days. That

was fucking hectic.

Dina came back again another day with an actual assistant to take pictures around my place. I waited in the HVACed building hallway. The lead photo of the show is my menacing wall size shadowbox of oddities. She even brought me a fan for the second go around! Thank you for noticing.

These are no

makeup, no stylist, snaps. She wanted and chose serious.

As writer Michael Turner dictated in a Polygon Gallery promo about the show... "While the portrait of music manager wendythirteen has its subject standing chin out, hands on hips, many more appear sad, pensive, tired, humbled, tentative or lost."

So yeah, the show is a far cry from our natural expected personas. Those snaps lay on the



cutting room floor or in this case accompany the article you're reading now.

Our personalities remain grimly mysterious in the shows chosen pictures. Others that were photographed didn't make it into the sullen adjective riddled collection for the show.

This show has a fair bit of assorted press oomph behind it. There are notable OG's who refused to participate or are already gone sadly so it is a bit incomplete. Hopefully the living will get their camera shy shit together and make round two. It is quite the sight to see life size and giant size punks adorning a clean cut classic gallery. You have a month to catch the Vancouver edition. Get on it.

Photos Courtesy Of Dina Goldstein And Gord Mccaw



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the focus is going to her early slashers: *Prom Night*, *Terror Train*, *Halloween 1 & 2*, and also her famed comedies *Trading Places*, *A Fish Called Wanda*, and *True Lies*. Again, deservedly so, she was fantastic in all of those films. But what about Kathryn Bigelow's *Blue Steel* or the totally batshit *Mother's Boys*? She was pretty stand-out in those films, too, and in the case of *Blue Steel*, this is also a crazily underrated early film from Kathryn Bigelow (the first female director to win the Academy Award), not even gaining traction at any level of cult status even close to *Near Dark* or *Strange Days* (also amazing films in their own right). In 2015-2018 Jamie Lee Curtis was hired as the hilarious matriarch figure as the dean of students in the two seasons of *Scream Queens*, another genre-bending brainchild of the brilliant television team Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, and Ian Brennan (*American Horror Story*, *Ratched*, *The Politician*, and, of course, *Glee* -- and more on that last one a little later down the road), which

Slashy Slashy

By Vince D'Amato

I was actually going to write a double-feature on the 1984 Christmas slasher "classics" *Don't Open 'til Christmas* and *Silent Night, Deadly Night* -- but with *Halloween Kills* out last month and the new *Scream* sequel/reboot out in January, obviously this would be the perfect time to talk about the crazy legacy Wes Craven and seminal scream queen Jamie Lee Curtis, who was one of the very few horror starlets who has always embraced her horror roots through the decades, when every other actress starting out was running screaming from the first horror film(s) they'd participated in. In 1994, when Jamie Lee Curtis won a comedy award for best actress in a feature film, she still thanked John Carpenter and Debra Hill (*Halloween*). True to form, Jamie Lee Curtis, despite massive success in the comedy genre through the 80s and 90s, was still game to return to the *Halloween* series with *Halloween H20* and *Halloween Resurrection*. I have to admit I was quite surprised to learn that actor Jake Gyllenhaal, of all people, was the person who connected Jamie Lee with 2018's *Halloween* and this year's *Halloween Kills* director David Gordon Green, Jake being friends with both parties separately. While Jamie Lee Curtis was extremely busy this *Halloween* promoting and providing interviews for the new film (which we now know is the second part of a planned trilogy), most of



bright a whole other elevated level of meta to Jamie Lee Curtis, and revelled in showing of her 'all-in' comedic skills.

Moving on to the new *Scream* film (weirdly it's just titled *Scream* like Wes Craven's original film, even though it's the fifth one in), this is just the latest indication of the staying power of the late Wes Craven's franchise creations. In the late eighties Craven had also hoped *Shocker* villain Horace Pinker (*The X-Files*' Mitch Pileggi) would inspire a post-*Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise, which obviously didn't happen, much to Wes Craven's admitted disappointment. However, what other wildly commercial horror director/filmmaker can boast coming from some of the most transgressive genre films of the 1970s (*Last House on the Left*, *The Hills Have Eyes* -- and also

more on the influence of these films a little later down the road) only to move onto Hollywood with a genre-defining franchise like *Nightmare on Elm Street* and then having a second hugely successful franchise later on in his career with the *Scream* films. 90s golden boy horror writer Kevin Williamson's script had actually first been offered

to Doug Liman, who didn't actually turn it down, he simply delayed in responding for so long that by the time he got back to his agent with a "yes", the film was already in production with Wes Craven. (Don't worry, Doug Liman was just fine as he went on to direct Matt Damon in the *Bourne* series of action thrillers). Craven put his heart fully into the *Scream* series, and Miramax (the producing studio) had his back, offering each of the sequels to Craven to direct, which he did, despite having worries of his own horror abilities on the first film. He was so worried about the blood and violence in it, thinking to himself that the director of *Last House on the Left* was a long-faded filmmaker. Ultimately, he had nothing to worry about, as Craven delivered so thoroughly on the blood and violence that *Scream* as we know it was indeed censored by the MPAA. To this day the only instance of Craven's uncut version even being released to the public was a LaserDisc release in the late 90s. After that, we all got what we got -- the trimmed theatrical version. Craven had always had an interest in remaining in his own franchises, though -- through the 1980s and 1990s he was involved in producing and co-writing the *Nightmare on Elm Street* squeals up to acting writing the original script for and directing Wes Craven's *New Nightmare*, which to this day is one of the greatest example of pre-*Scream* meta-horror.

For the rest of the *Scream* films, up until his death, Wes Craven would not officially put pen to paper, but he directed each one of the films in the series (1 to 4) and fully immersed himself in the franchise, even actively consulting on and executive-producing the television series reboot in 2015. I also feel compelled at this point to mention the *Freddy's Nightmares* anthology TV series, which actually freaked me out more than the original films, and in which the only other transgressive-horror-turned-mainstream-director of the 1970s, Tobe Hooper, had a creative hand in. In the midst of all this, Wes Craven did go back to writing his own horror film, *My Soul to Take*, which I personally thought was on par with the likes of *Shocker*, and Craven also

took the opportunity to convince the Wienstein brothers to give him a "pedigree film," meaning something he could direct that might make him eligible for an Academy Award; and he ended up directing Meryl Streep and Angela Basset in *Music of the Heart*. It didn't end up winning any awards, but it was actually pretty good for a by-the-number Hollywood awards-style drama, and he'd also directed Basset before in the Eddie

Absolute Horror



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Murphy-produced *Vampire in Brooklyn*, which surprisingly had been produced before, but released after, Wes Craven's *New Nightmare*. In any case, horror auteur Wes Craven and scream queen Jamie Lee Curtis have certainly left deep individual marks both in the horror genre and



in Hollywood itself, although it might be a bit weird that the two of them never actually worked together -- and in saying this, I'm reminded of that immortal line from the original *Scream*: "You're starting to sound like some Wes Carpenter flick." <https://darksidereleasing.com>



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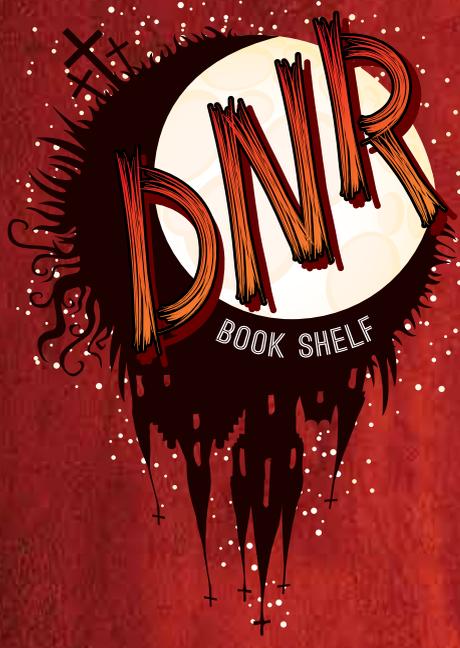
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THE GULP



Alan Baxter

**Independent
January 12th 2021**

This is a collection of five separate bizarre horror stories that are all interconnected.

Alan Baxter basically creates his own Castle Rock where a ton of dark and really weird stuff happens.

Baxter definitely has a ton of talent and potential to be a main player in bizarre fiction. His town, the Gulp, exists down a stretch of highway in the Aussie outback that is fenced in by a huge mountain range on both sides. So you already have a sense of claustrophobia to start off the collection as you realize where exactly you are.

What really sets this collection apart from the others, with myself not being a particularly huge fan of short stories, are both Baxter's talent, and the overall creepy vibe that permeates the entire collection. Each story is fully fleshed out, and just so bloody weird that you really have no idea what's coming next. I thoroughly enjoyed this collection, and I've already bought Baxter's creature feature, *The Roo*, to follow this one.

Michael Cushing

IN DARKNESS DELIGHT : FEAR THE



FUTURE

**Penn Jillette, Evans Light,
Andrew Lennon, Max
Booth III, Eric J. Guignard,
Michael Laimo, Joe &
Joanna Koch, & More
Corpus Press,**

September 14 2021

These IDD anthologies never fail to disappoint. This is the third in the IDD collection that Corpus Press has put out and all of them are so diverse in their type of horror and writing style they contain, it's ideal for a gift for a horror lover. It has something for everyone's tastes.

Fear the Future is particularly frightening as the state of the world today, what we face everyday, and the stories here, are not so far off from what could happen. Government owning your ass and regulating all you do. It's all here, and worse in this terrifying 330 pg compendium. I don't normally read horror like this because sci-fi isn't really my bag, but I really did find how they meshed them together with horror so well done.

The Goodreads synopsis I had to share because it is just so perfect: 'Humankind's greatest fear is and will always be the unknown, dreading whatever gruesome horrors tomorrow may bring. The pain of the past is nothing when the worst is yet to come. The only thing you know for certain: it's going to end badly.' Truly horrifying to the core.

Some that stood out for me were 'Daddy's Girl,' by Ben Eads, a story that could ultimately happen right now with all that is going on which made it even more appalling. Told so well and clear that you feel the ending in your throat.

'Husk' by Marshall J Moore just crept me out to the frigen core as well. The whole idea is so out there, I've read a lot of horror in my life, but this idea is so unique, I've never read such a thing. The inner dialogue from our protagonist is enough to make your skin crawl. You will never think of corn the same way again.

'The Pain Addict' by Penn Jillette (*Yes of Penn and Teller*) is a disturbing short story that was adapted for the hit sci-fi anthology television series, *Black Mirror*. The title says it all.

This book was really chilling simply because of the subject matter. One could simply say to themselves 'I can see this happening' or 'this is not so far off as one might hope'. Probably not as gripping if we were not in the middle of our own atrocious circumstances, but the current climate makes it unbelievably believable.

Demonika

WHEN THE CICADAS STOP SINGING



Zachary Ashford

**Horrific Tales Publishing,
September 8th 2021**

This is a dystopian tale that takes place in the Australian outback.

There is no preamble explaining what exactly happened. There is simply talk about poisonous gas, and that this is when the Lizards arrived.

The first time we meet Cora, she is on the run from one of these humanoid lizard creatures. Cora decided to escape the city and headed into the remote outback as she thought her and her son, Barney, would have a better chance of survival.

When the story starts, Barney is already dead and Cora is mourning him as she tries to survive in this new world. That's when Sarah and Darren show up. What follows next is both a battle against the Australian outback and this dystopian world that we've been introduced to; it's also a battle against man and his base natures.

While I thought that the author did have some writing talent, there simply wasn't enough meat to the story to get me hooked.

Michael Cushing

MAN, FUCK THIS HOUSE



Brian Asman

**Mutated Media,
October 19th 2021**

This book was a simple enjoyment from beginning to end. Brian Asman seems to have written this as if it was candy for the brain with many breaks

provided with views for each character including the house (yes, I said house).

Do you like Stephen King but his build-ups are too long? Do you want horror but not a gore fest? Like smart-ass kids and good one-liners? This is the book for you.

Dick Kaupf

IN THE HANDS OF THE HEATHENS



Aron Beauregard

**Independently Published,
May 19th 2021**

This is definitely something different when compared to Aron's previous work as this one is a serious slow burn.

The writing, the suspense, and the tension in this book practically drips off the pages so you will have a lot of trouble putting this one down. I would describe this as a combination between *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Friday the 13th*. While there isn't as much gore and depravity in this story as in the remainder of Aron's catalog, there is definitely enough to keep my appetite sated.

Michael Cushing

THE HOUSE OF DAEMON



**John Wagner, Alan Grant,
José Ortiz (Artist)
Hibernia Comics,
August 2015**

'The House of Daemon', written by two of the all-time

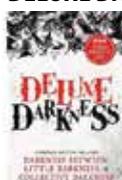
greats, John Wagner and Alan Grant, and illustrated by Jose Ortiz. 'The House of Daemon' is an excellent high concept action/horror story. Elliot Aldrich builds a dream home for his wife Cassandra. But aforementioned Daemon turns the house into a hell, where every room is a new dimension of horror. The artwork is superb, and the storytelling, from two of the all time greats, is a master class. I love how Ortiz uses his black and white artwork is to awesome effect. I was not surprised to read in the introduction to 'The Tower King' by Leigh Gallagher (the artist on 'Defoe', and a superb talent in his own right, a proper mater of story-telling with beautifully detailed artwork, I couldn't recommend Leigh's work enough).

In some respects, and I mean this as a compliment, 'The House of Daemon' could easily have appeared in the much loved *Misty* comic.

A stone cold classic, and Hibernia have more than done it justice. I'd love to see Hibernia republish more work that appeared in the new Eagle comic in the 80s, such as 'the Fifth Horseman', again illustrated by Ortiz.

Steve Earles

DELUXE DARKNESS: THREE HORROR



ANTHOLOGIES IN ONE

**Elizabeth Suggs, Jonathan
Reddoch, Sara Brunner, D.A.
Butcher, Alex Child, Jess
Rougeau, Becca Rose, B.
Todd Orgill, & More
Independently Published**

September 6th 2021

Deluxe Darkness is the combination of *Collective Darkness*, *Little Darkness* and *The Darkness Between*, plus two bonus stories.

I had the chance to review *Collective Darkness* when it first came out, it's an Amazon bestselling horror anthology that features 12 macabre stories. When I had read it last time, I had enjoyed 'Padula's Eyes', 'Brisket Please', and 'Red Flag', so it was a good refresh and also an epic line I had missed the first time around from Edward Suggs 'Feast' ...I pushed away from the sticky, stringy thoughts in my brain and followed the dried river of bile around the counter. I got down onto my knees before the vomit as if it were my very own god... reminding me why I love the horror genre so much.

Little Darkness is a companion book and I thought this section was the strongest of all three because it had quite a few of my favorites such as 'Lonely Hills' by Edward Suggs, 'The Call of the Sea' by Austin Slade Perry featuring horrifying siren songs, 'Eyes' by Becca Rose, a wronged woman's tale.

Darkness Between is the brand new section that features poetry, flash fiction and short stories. The best story of the whole book, the one that stood out the most over-all was the fully creepy 'The Green Window' by Sophie Queen about a window that glows green in an apartment. 'Only Darkness Remains' by Jonathan Reddoch is a quick little thrill as well.

As I mentioned the first go around with *Collective Darkness*, great care was taken in putting together this book with the community of writers and everyone who contributes to the success of this anthology. A really great stepping stone book for young soon-to-be horror fans.

Hatchetface

THE THIRTEENTH KOYOTE



Kristopher Triana

**Death's Head Press,
December 29th 2020**

Kristopher Triana is one of my favorite modern horror authors. If you're picking a book up and his name is on the cover, you're pretty much

guaranteed an incredible read. This one, though, is probably his strongest and most adventurous works yet.

I've read a handful of the splatter westerns so far. And they run the gamut from being pretty good to being absolutely dreadful. So I had put off on reading this one for a little bit because I wasn't sure what reading Triana's entry into this genre would be like.

What I was presented with is a retelling of the classic werewolf mythology, tied in together with a western and a high fantasy novel.

The gore factor is fast and heavy throughout. The battle scenes, where you have Werewolves VS Cowboys and Natives, with the odd WereBear tossed into the mix, are truly legendary. And the characters that Triana draws up here are fully fleshed, living and breathing.

There is simply too many reasons to list as for why you need to read this one.

But one word of advice: the book is almost 500 pages. And once you start, you're going to be sucked in. The only time you're going to be able to really put this book down is once the story is over. And, at that point, it's going to be made with regret that the story ended.

Michael Cushing

'EVERYBODY IS A BOOK OF BLOOD: WHEREVER WE'RE OPENED, WE'RE RED.'

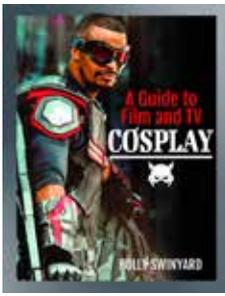
CLIVE BARKER, BOOKS OF BLOOD: VOLUMES ONE TO THREE

Submit your inquires or reviews to demonika@absoluteunderground.ca

THANK
YOU TO



Absolute Book Reviews



A Guide To Film and TV Cosplay
By Holly Swinyard
Published by Pen And Sword

Holly Rose Swinyard is an expert on cosplay, and has produced a book that is equal parts history of cosplay and how to do cosplay manual.

Holly knows the subject inside out, and manages to pass on this enthusiasm with great gusto.

I found the history of cosplay section particularly fascinating, as I had (wrongly) assumed that cosplay was very much a recent phenomenon.

This is almost like a book in its own right. The next two sections of the book are highly informative guides to such things as getting into character, and making and your own costume. Believe me, no stone is left unturned here. It paints an appealing portrait of a cultural phenomenon.

The book is beautifully bound and illustrated which makes good sense as the reader will be referring back to it many times in years to come and it helps that it's a robust hardback.

As I've said, a big part of this book is Holly's knowledge and ability to impart that knowledge in an entertaining fashion.

Highly recommended!

www.penandswordbooks.com

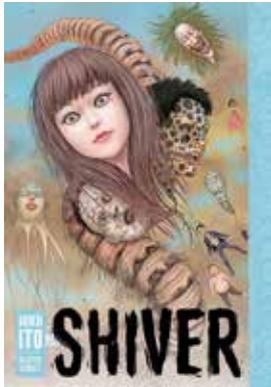
- Steve Earles

Shiver - Junji Ito VIZ Media

Junji Ito single-handedly brought horror manga into the mainstream with stories like *Tomie*, *Gyo* and *Uzumaki*. This form of horror storytelling is finally getting the respect it deserves as being a medium which

is arguably more effective than film - but the magic lies with Ito himself - his storytelling and panel drawing give way to feelings of dread and suspense, which culminate in a shocking, horrific revelation. VIZ Media has made it so you don't have to search online and get bombarded with equally horrifying pop-up ads to read

Ito's work, as they've published several collections of the Japanese Lovecraft's best stories in collections such as this. *Shiver* includes nine short stories presented with accompanying



notes and commentary by Ito. This Japanese *Creepshow* often has no moral value attached to the tale, but each story here will at least have one panel to stick in your mind before setting off into dreamland.

"Fashion Model" tells of a strange, horrifying looking magazine model and a man's interest in why she keeps getting jobs, "Hanging Blimp" features severed head balloons, "Marionette Mansion" looks at the horrifying nature of puppets and their even more horrifying puppeteers, "The Long Dream" goes into body horror territory with the idea that a dream lasting hundreds of years can warp the mind and body of the dreamer, "Honored Ancestors" continues the body horror trend with family members refusing to rest peacefully and forming a sort of scalp-centipede and the most repulsive story of the lot is "Greased." If there is one image that will stay in your mind after reading *Shiver*, it will probably be the protagonist's brother in "Greased" - after drinking cooking oil day and night, his body has been filled to the brim in yellow grease. He then squeezes his face and a shower of slow-moving grease starts to pour on her face. I'll have fries with that...

- Ryan Dyer

Absolute Comic Reviews

Hibernia Graphic Novel Reviews by Steve Earles

David McDonald's Hibernia continues to do a splendid job of reprinting classic comics from the 60s, 70s, and 80s. These latest graphic novel releases exemplify Hibernia's high quality output in terms of storytelling, artwork and the sheer love and hard work that has gone into producing the best possible version of these fine tales.

Firstly we have 'The Tower King', written by British comics great Alan Hebden (a master class in how to tell an exciting and interesting story well), and illustrated by Jose Ortiz, one of the all-time great artists, justly famed for his Vampirella artwork,



'The Tower King' tells the tale of the splendidly named Mick Tempest, who following a huge EMP disaster that sends the world cascading into a new Dark Age. Tempest takes command of a band of survivors, taking refuge in the Tower of London.

So, we basically have *Escape From New York* set in a post-apocalyptic London, as *Escape From New York* is my all-time favourite film, what's not to like?

Thus, *The Tower King* battles the subway dwelling *Crazies* (See *Escape From New York!*) the *Plague*, and the *Wreckers*, manic survivors in Chieftain tanks, hellbent on finishing off what's left of

society...and more.

I love it, this is how comics should be, not for fanatics, but for general readers, because the beauty of this graphic novel is, it's suitable for everyone who loves a good story. This is one Pat Mills' great ideas: that comics should be for readers everywhere, and *The Tower King* lives up to this dictum very well. Which is as it should be.



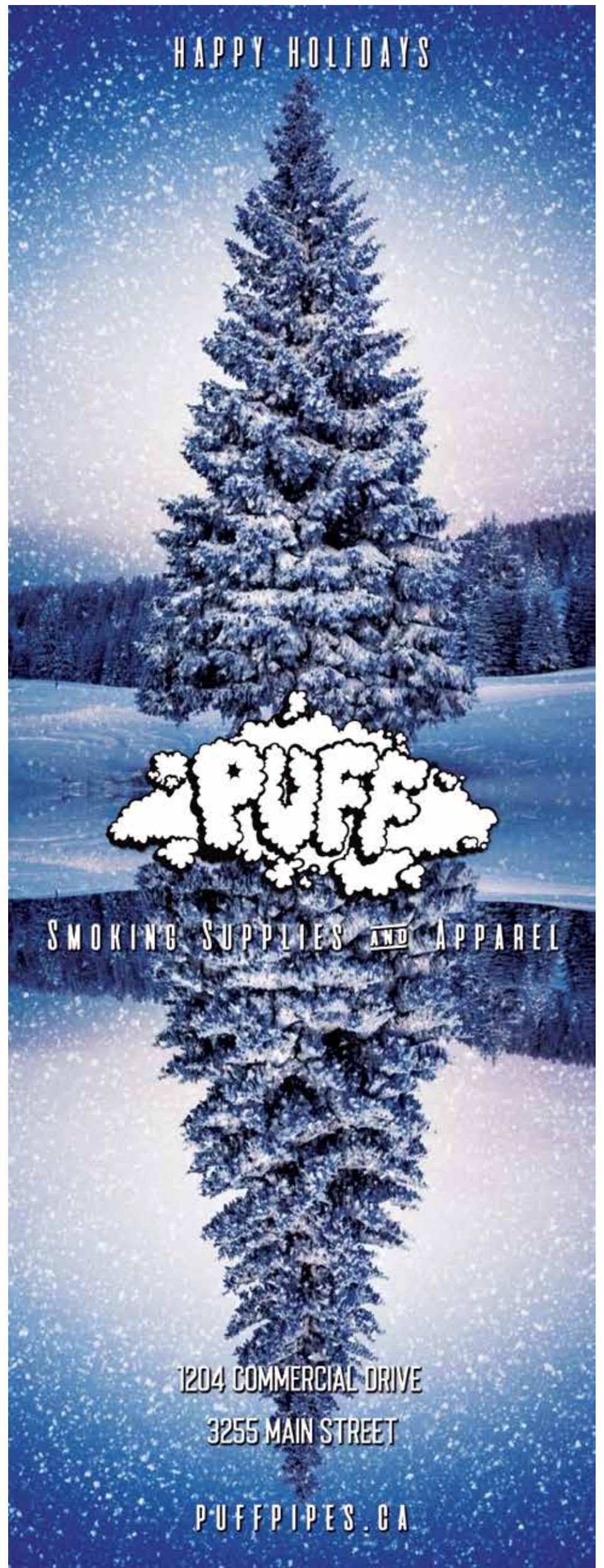
We also have 'The Angry Planet' by Alan Hebden and Massimo Bellardinelli. By strange coincidence, I read some of the episodes of this story as a young lad, in the original *Tornado* comic it appeared in, while on holiday with my late, much-missed Dad in Co. Mayo, where this graphic novel was published. A strange but happy coincidence!

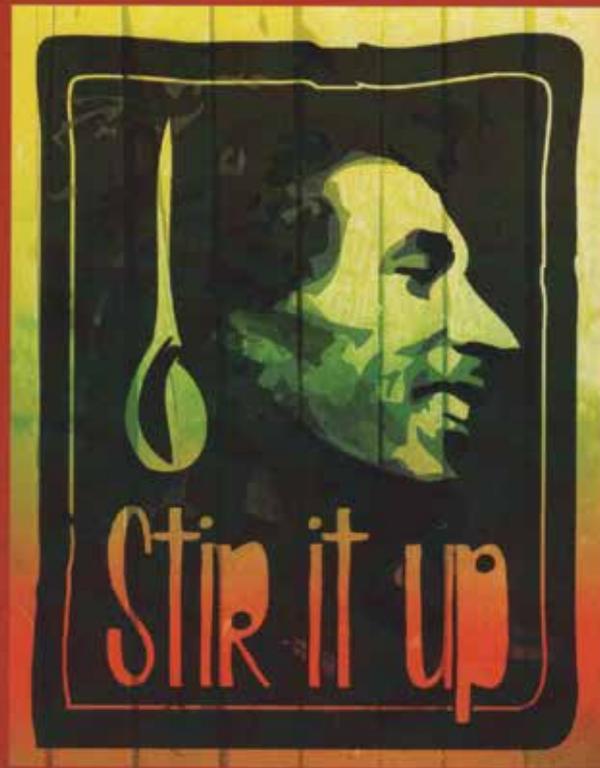
'The Angry Planet' is set on a future Mars, terra-formed and colonised by Earth. Now, the first generation of native-born Martians battle against the tyrannical mega-corporation Mars Incorporated.

It's an excellent story, great script from Hebden, and you have to see Bellardinelli's artwork to believe it, sublime and beautiful, the more people that see his work, the better.

To sum up, two wonderful graphic novels that should take pride of place in anyone's collection.

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Absolute Album Reviews



Orange Goblin - Healing Through Fire

Cherry Red Records

I truly feel there is nothing to compare to music in its physical form as opposed to digital. I liken it to the difference between meeting the real Emma Peel and watching an episode of *The Avengers*.

And this excellent 2CD reissue of *Healing Through Fire* proves my point. I interviewed Ben Ward for *Zero Tolerance* magazine (a splendid fellow!) and I mentioned to him that the character of Solomon Eagle in the *Defoe* graphic novels is named after one of the songs on this album ('The Ballad Of Solomon Eagle'), he was dead chuffed. I later met Ben at a Bad Reputation gig at Dolans in Limerick where Orange Goblin were headlining, and again, he was just the nicest chap, and Orange Goblin played a blinding set, they are truly one of the great British heavy metal bands. Hopefully we'll see them live in Limerick again as the world recovered from our own recent plague.

And nowhere is that more apparent on *Healing Through Fire* (something of a concept album inspired by the Great Fire of London in 1666 [at that time people believed the Apocalypse would come that year, with both plague and fire, they were disappointed]).

Tracks like 'Cities of Frost' (a nod to Celtic Frost there, which is as it should be), 'They Come Back (Harvest Of Skull)' and 'Hounds Ditch', are terrific heavy metal anthems, played with love. This expanded edition includes some excellent demos, tracks from Radio One's Rock Show, and an excellent live set from The Mean Fiddler in London in 1006.

An excellent album in an excellent expanded form.

- Steve Earles



Marta Gabriel - Metal Queens

Listenable Records

In this case, in the best possible way, you truly can judge an album by its sleeve. It features a fabulous painting of metal legend Marta Gabriel in all her leather clad glory.

We need more metal ladies in leather, especially after the misery of the pandemic, and escapism is what this album is all about. And I like escapism, I've had enough reality for several lifetimes, I also firmly believe that art has a positive effect on reality. Life imitating art.

Marta is the singer with excellent metal band Crystal Viper, and this is her first solo album, and it's a genius idea, covers of classic songs by other Metal Queens. The first thing that strikes you, is these are great songs. Marta's fantastic voice adds a uniformity to the sound of this album, which is to say it sounds like her album. The musicianship is first class and Marta herself plays a mean bass. Production by Bart Gabriel is just perfect, it has that great eighties vibe. I'm writing a comic series set in the 1980s, and if it's ever made into a film, any song off this album could go on the soundtrack.

Highlights? I like all the songs, but I'd say Lee Arron's 'Metal Queen', 'Goin' Wild' by Wendy O' Williams and 'My Angel' by Rock Goddess are favourites of mine. A non-musical highlight of *Metal Queens* are the informative, enthusiastic and intelligent sleeve notes Marta contributes about the artists she has covered. I'd love to read a whole book on '80s metal by her, such is her enthusiasm.

Marta herself asks in her sleeve notes, would we like a *Metal Queens II*.

Hell Yeah!

www.facebook.com/martagabrielofficial

- Steve Earles



Cauldron - Into The Cauldron

Cherry Red Records

This is an expanded CD reissue of the debut EP from Canadian heavy metal legends Cauldron.

Cauldron draw their influences from the metal Vahalla that is the '80s, a splendid time of ladies in skin tight lycra (I'm thinking fellow Canadian legend Lee Arron here!), it would be lovely to see that become a fashion again, mullets (too many to list), and a love of heavy metal music that will eternally be a joy and influences to generations to come. This is as it should be!

Listening to *Into The Cauldron* now, I'm struck by how mature the band sound, all the songs are catchy as hell, blending their influences into their own unique identity. Well worth listening to, to hear the birth of a true Canadian Metal legend!

Not for nothing did Darkthrone write 'Canadian Metal'!

- Steve Earles



Orange Goblin - Rough & Ready, Live & Loud

Dissonance Productions

Previously only available as a digital album, Dissonance have made the splendid decision to release this fine live album on CD and vinyl!

Listening to this album reminds me

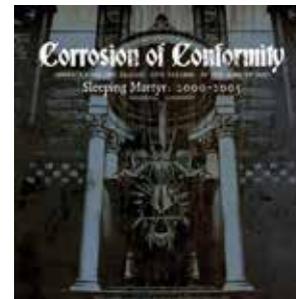
of how much I've missed live music during the pandemic. I saw Orange Goblin headline Siege of Limerick and they are just one of the great live metal acts. I interviewed Ben Ward for *Zero Tolerance* magazine and he really is a splendid fellow, as much a fan as performer.

This is very much a greatest hits set (kind of 'Now That's What I Call Orange Goblin'). What strikes me is how seamlessly songs from different periods jell together so well.

There's the John Carpenter-referencing 'The Fog' (and who doesn't love John Carpenter?), the excellent 'Made of Rats' and 'Sons of Salem'. Really, the listener is spoilt for choice.

Essential for those who love what is best in metal- uplifting and life-affirming, the way it should be.

- Steve Earles



Corrosion Of Conformity - Sleeping Martyr: 2000-2005

One of life's great injustices is the inexplicable fact that *Corrosion of Conformity* aren't Metallica-huge. It's not through want of trying, live shows (as the *Live Volume* album included in this 3CD set proves) are incendiary, I've seen C.O.C five times, and they are one of the all-time great live bands), and their albums are superb, great heartfelt performances, great songs: C.O.C have something important to say. Their 'it's better to die on your feet, than live on your knees' mantra has always struck a cord with me, as has the line: 'they cannot crush you if you don't crawl'. And so, I never have, and never will.

Disc one of 2000's *America's Volume Dealer*, a very underrated C.O.C album. I love it, it's got a great production, and great songs like 'Sleeping Martyr', 'Who's Got The Fire', 'Over Me', and 'Doublewide'. Love the bonus track 'Rather See You Dead', savage!

The second disc 2001's *Live Volume* captures the power of C.O.C's live show.

The final disc, 2006's *In The Arms Of God* is excellent, showcasing a more mature C.O.C.

An excellent collection, and I'd like to dedicate this to the late great Reed Mullin. Rest In Peace.

- Steve Earles



Warfare - The Songbook of Filth

Cherry Red Records

Since the 1980's *Warfare* main man Evo has forged his own unique path, melding punk, metal and anything else that takes his fancy to great effect. Make no mistake, Evo is his own man, and that's something few can say.

So, this compilation is lovingly put together by Evo, and it shows. I love this album, it has the purest spirit, music made with complete sincerity.

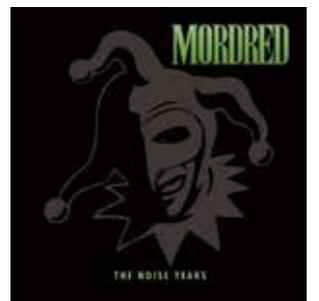
Evo said a true thing in an interview I read with him that resonates with me to this day, he said: 'Shy bairns get nowt'. Meaning that if you don't ask, you'll never get. Thus, Evo managed to achieve much, working with the likes of Lemmy, Nik Turner from Hawkwind, and many others.

He is a living testimony to the value of following your own vision.

I love all the photos of Warfare with such bands as the legendary Venom too. What truly speaks volumes for this is the talent featured with Evo on the album, Cronos from Venom, the late lamented Pete Way from UFO/Fastway (one of music's great characters), Fred Purser, Tom Angelripper, and another much missed legend, 'Fast' Eddie Clarke of Motorhead.

Musical mayhem...the way it should be!

- Steve Earles



Mordred - The Noise Years

Cherry Red Records

This an excellent three CD package of the three albums Mordred recorded for Noise Records between 1984 and 1994.

Noise always had interesting acts, the likes of Celtic Frost, Voivod, Sabbath and so forth all bear testimony to this. All these bands had their own unique identity and Mordred were no exception. We see this on Disc One, the excellent debut album *Fool's Game*. While you could call this a thrash metal album, with most of the tracks Bay Area thrash, honed to razor sharp perfection over years of gigging, Mordred also incorporated rap and thrash influences. For instance on the album's breakout song, the uplifting 'Every Day's A Holiday' or the cover of Rick James' 'Super Freak'. It's worth getting this package just for this album.

On the follow-up, the rap and funk influences are far more to the fore, with pleasing effect, it a smart uplifting album, I love it and the love the bonus tracks as one of them is a cover of Tin Lizzy's 'Johnny The Fox Meets Jimmy The Weed' (off the excellent and underrated *Johnny The Fox* album, which also features lovely Celtic artwork from the incomparable Jim Fitzpatrick).

Final disc, *The Next Room* continues the musical progression.

Overall an excellent collection of an underrated band's work.

- Steve Earles

Absolute Film Reviews



Death To Metal

Death To Metal is one of those "We're not gonna take it" type movies where, as the title implies, shows how one zany Father Killborn (Dan Flannery), does everything he can to put a stop to a local heavy metal concert. How he became part of the diocese is put into question. All we need to know is that he was bullied by them once. Add on top the fact he falls into a bunch of radioactive waste, we have the beginnings of a new Joker.

Much of the film runs wild between two stories. Zane (Alex Stein) is a metalhead who's been dumped by his girlfriend and band. He sort of has Mariah (Grace Melon) to help,

but that's the least of his worries. Killborn's transition to bad guy is complete, and he's on a hell bent mission to kill anyone whom he feels was wronged by.

It's rare to have a movie that understands the heavy metal subculture. To understand it gets into the crux of why Killborn is actually one of them rather than a crusader against; writer/director Tim Connery gets the discourse right, but sometimes the exposition feels tacked on rather than integrated.

This film is primarily a slasher, and it has a few cute moments where Killborn dispatches his enemies. He's funny when trying to preach the gospel like how Pinhead does it. This cenobite's gospel can't be surpassed; what's presented is very B-Movie grade.

Overall, *Death to Metal* combines the best of what horror and hooch can put together. There's some great music and as for how this killer loses, that's when the comedy kicks in. The way he goes is perfect and unexpected, and without it, this film would not really stand a chance to be recognized.

- Ed Sum



Black Friday

Shopping at All-Mart on Black Friday (the name of this movie) is dangerous. I hate to think of what would happen should this horror comedy get a sequel titled *Cyber Monday*. This first film sees people turn into mindless zombies. In the sequel, I can see the *Star Trek Borg* equation coming in for assimilation.

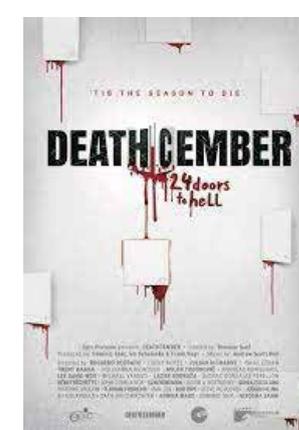
It's hard to say whether the blob is a triffid. All they do is consume and destroy. The commentary on rabid consumerism is not new. George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* nailed it as the first, but instead of dealing with an invasion upon a mall, it's a big box operation.

With Bruce Campbell playing Jonathan Wexler, the store manager, I can't help but wonder if an early draft was considering an *Army of Darkness* sequel where Ash lost his fire over the years and he has to rally a new generation to fight the deadites. His character in *Black Friday* isn't the same, but I'm sure writer Andy Greskoviak wanted to try his hand at what could've been. Plus, a recent interview on Screen Rant said the man with the chin retired from that series.

Bruce gets the best lines in this film, though. The best stabs are in saying how these Black Friday sales work. Even the creature design effects and gore takes inspiration from an EC Comic. But as for what this invasion means, nobody knows. This movie sets up a potential to go further with this story. We know little about why these invaders have targeted these big box stores. This story is like *Zombieland* in that we have a gang of nobodies attempting to survive. Whether that's in tending to the till or keeping shelves well stocked, it all goes to naught when the beasts are after them and they are forced to abandon their post.

The commentary is perfect. I found the watch worthwhile since it debuted on that day too. Should there be more films, I have to wonder what Boxing Day would entail. Now that's the day to dread because of the lineups!

- Ed Sum



Deathcember

Deathcember is an anthology presented like an advent calendar, and as we progress through the days leading up to the big 25, we are introduced to works by a diverse group of directors with some off-the-wall short films. It's currently available to purchase through Raven Banner (Canada), or stream via Peacock (USA). In the UK, it can be found on Amazon Prime, Virgin Media and iTunes.

The fact this movie is 145 minutes long is daunting. Die-hards will eat this up faster than the kid who can't stop nibbling on chocolate in the cheap advent calendars he's stolen in one of the early shorts. The orchestral score is grandiose; it's very inspired as we navigate through a CGI mansion filled with objects that

soon open up to reveal the stories tucked within.

"The Hunchback" recalls the silent films of yore. There's sympathy for the person deemed ugly, and it's a well-meaning tale to contrast how people see others. However, a twist needs to be presented, and it's onebest not spoiled. The most notable is "Villancicos," an interesting tale where a boy's only chance for survival is through a group of carollers. It's only through their music that he continues to have a heartbeat (he's in a coma) until the end of days. It's an amusing tale such that it suggests he awakens when Revelation is here.

Not every tale makes the grade, though. I'd say half are good and the other average. I'm surprised only one animated piece was offered. "Crappy Christmas: Operation Christmas Child" is a stop-motion piece that is simple in design—using the style from *Gumby* as possible inspiration—but empowering. It sees a boy deal with a corrupt church. It's no more graphic than the visceral segments, but as a toon, it's easy to get away with more goo.

Thankfully, there's more beyond the end credits. Had this film played at theatres, the bonuses would've been missed. The best is saved for last, and we get a different take on how Rudolph earned his red nose.

A full list of where it can be streamed is at <https://linktr.ee/Deathcember>

- Ed Sum

Absolute Live Reviews



DAFA Club 3rd Anniversary November 13, 2021, Tianjin, China

The big, shitty baby has finally turned three, and on this occasion, it has presented a diarrhea-filled diaper of bands representing the best Tianjin has to offer in terms of punk - with a few guests from neighboring cities, as is the custom.

For this edition, eight bands were advertised on the poster, though due to the ongoing uncertain nature of

your favorite virus, a few could not attend. Thankfully, highly anticipated acts Gum Bleed and Rectal Wench made it to the show, as they are only a train ride away, being from Beijing.

The show started with local psychos Teddy. It's always a mystery as to what Teddy's singer will be wearing on stage. I have seen him don butterfly wings and a pink ballerina dress, underwear and a gimp mask. This show nearly outdid all of those in terms of creativity, as Teddy - The Boys, as they like to be called became Teddy - "The Good Boys" with the vocalist coming through the crowd with sneakers on his hands, on all fours, with a new gimp mask on his face - literally a human dog. Their set was equally rabid, with songs like "Masturbation Master" and "Noisemaker" allowing mosh pits to open up early and the temperature in the chilly DAFA bar to heat up significantly.



The heat kept rising with the Beijing-based three-piece band Shochu Legion. The heavily tattooed frontman brought the heavy, crusty riffs which the crowd ate up - now in addition to skanking, started jumping on the stage and shouting lyrics into the mic to favorites like "Mask" - which wouldn't be the last time this would happen.

The next few bands acted more as breathers after the barrage of Teddy and Shochu Legion. Kids Factory played

a fairly typical set. This band has been opening a lot of shows at DAFA and are improving with each performance.

Up next were Gum Bleed, whom this crowd is not shy about showing their ever-loving support to. The classic Beijing punk band broke into "Kiss Me, I'm Punk" with the whole floor becoming a moving entity. The microphone was passed along generously, with many fans belting out to songs like "Punk Save the Human Race." Every Gum Bleed show at DAFA is a huge event, and this was perhaps their biggest showing, with many fans

leaving the venue to go home, after, completely satisfied.

Those who did stick around, though, as the clock went beyond midnight, were the filthy followers of Rectal Wench. The sickest band in China brought the blow-up dolls and even blow-up dinosaurs for this special appearance - not being at one of their own Filthy Parties, but still being filthy enough to want to shower afterwards. The overlord of filth first took the stage with a ski-mask and thong on his head before taking off his pants,



unveiling fishnet tights. He put a cute little dress on and then got the fuck off the stage so Rectal Wench could take it. Without a drummer for this show, their sound was similar to when I first saw them back in 2013 in Beijing. This was a rougher, uglier Wench than usual. The blow-up doll was soon degraded and deflated, a shell of her former self. But as the story with their album goes, that is the point - the doll was trying to enslave mankind! The band played a new song this time entitled "Furry" or maybe "Furry Fucker." It's good to know the nasty boys are writing in between Filthy Parties. A cake was brought onstage for the big birthday finale after Wench finished. Hours of punk and gore really brought out the appetite in people, and the patrons feasted while reminiscing about the good time they had. As they say, here's to a few. Here's to a few more.

- Ryan Dyer



Black Pestilence

Balrogath

Naitaka

Death Machine

Dickens, Calgary, AB, Oct 1st 2021

To see bands venture out from BC without being on tour is becoming a more regular occurrence and I welcome it with open arms. Death Machine kicked off the show with a crash course in some damn good death metal. With piles of riffs coming in fast and heavy this band is reminiscent of early Cannibal Corpse with some Chuck Schuldiner peppered in for flavor. Its a good flavor. This band hails from Kelowna BC and I would definitely like to see and hear more from them in the future.

Naitaka is another great band to come from Kelowna their set was thrash mixed with traditional metal and they all play their parts incredibly well, Cara McCutcheon is a vocal veteran having performed with Mortillery for a number of years. I can't recommend this band enough. I had the pleasure of interviewing them for my show so if you would like a deeper dive into the band that video can be found on youtube.com/TrashTalkwNate Trash

Balrogath always provides a certain ambience when they play and this night was no different. Their new vocalist Gray Panchuk is a monumental singer, with highs like Cam Pipes he continues to earn my respect every time he performs. They keep pushing themselves with every show and after losing a guitarist they're still bringing the heat as a 4 piece. Chris (guitars) showed me a riff last summer that has now grown into a full song and it was a treat to see it live in its full realization. Balrogath has just uploaded their music to streaming services so go have a listen.

The night was capped off by blackened punk champions Black Pestilence. I've seen this band a number of times and performed with them as well and they always put on a heart pounding, fist pumping show. Although studded out and masked up in black leather and bondage clothes this crew is easy going and always down to chat with fans. Their songs are monstrous and enjoyable and their live show is aggressive and consistent. If this band comes to your town you owe it to yourself to get out there.

-Nate Trash

Penguin Bowl

Inglewood, Calgary

Oct 16, 2021

What an absolutely insane afternoon rager in one of the oldest neighborhoods in Calgary. Welcome to The Penguin Bowl! An entirely DIY built pool/soon to be mini skatepark located just off the beaten path in Inglewood! Gord put up a post looking for bands to play a fundraiser and of course I had to put the word out to help. This show consisted of some better known punk bands playing with some brand new kids that killed it nonetheless. Bogue Brigade are masters of the crossover genre and they showed these kids what's up as well as put on a skate comp and brought their own prizes to give out.

Mandible Klaw is an elusive group that I can rarely line up my schedule to see. They always go 1000% and their vocalist looks like he was in a car accident by the end of the set. Fantastic. I highly suggest getting your hands on some MK. Thank me later.

Pearl Malé was a 3 piece D Beat band that kicked ass from start to finish. Super aggressive and primal. Their set packed a punch with every song and I hope to see them pop up more often.

Silly Bike is a group of high-school kids with a chip on their shoulders and I couldn't be more pleased. They played their asses off and their 15 year old vocalist puts 90% of Calgary's aggressive performers completely to shame. Mark my words this band is gonna pop the fuck off if they play their cards right!

Hockey Moms from Lethbridge kept the energy at an all time high by dropping cover after cover of punk rock classics and a couple of their own originals as well. Their performance of "Drunk On A Bike" by SNFU was spot on and I had to jump in for a chance at the mic on that one! Great work!

Unfortunately I showed up late and didn't get to catch the first two bands in their entirety but I will give them shout outs regardless because what I did catch of them was still killer.

Go check out Liquor Store for some real deal DIY street punk,

A Pact Between Strangers. I heard this while I was trying to find my way to the show. What I heard was one person electronic and I was fuckin stoked. I'm gonna be hunting for this person cause that shit was killer!

If you wish to donate to the ongoing project at The Penguin Bowl send an e-transfer to Gord Stewart at

gordstewart2010@hotmail.com All monies go to concrete and supplies for the ever developing build.

-Nate Trash

Stench

Genizah

Snakepit

Wake

The anticipation for this show was palpable to say the least! A true blaster of an extreme metal show that won't soon be forgotten. There was a sea of black long-sleeve shirts and hair from one end of the bar to the other. Except my buddy Ted, he's bald as shit.

Stench Of Death started the show with some real deal OSDM. Super low muddy gutters like a troll grumbling with every breath. They got the crowd moving and were definitely a sight to see, I've tried to book them but their bassist is 17 and we weren't able to contact the AGLC in Time to get permission. Very pleased I got to see them at this show. You can find this band on all social platforms.

Genizah. Fuckin deadly. This is a super new band from Red Deer Alberta and this power trio brings the heat. Pieter (guitar) says Old Man Gloom is their biggest influence but they take

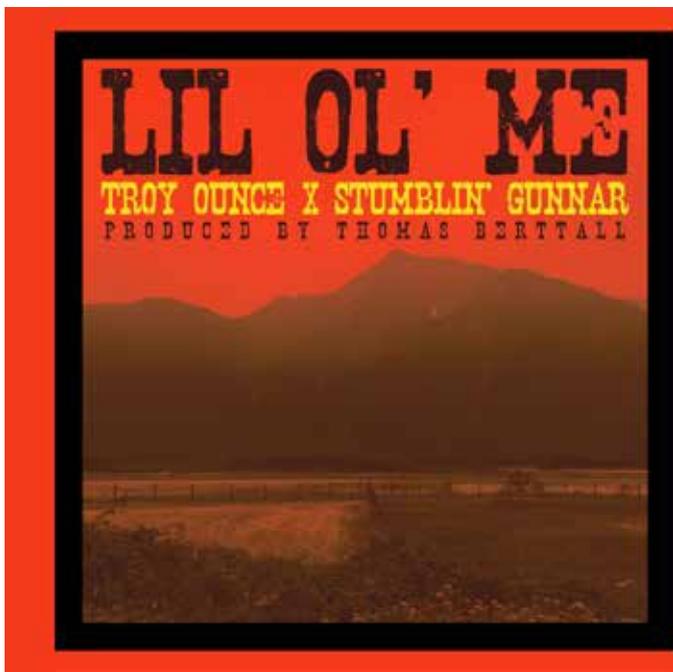
inspiration from bands like Kowloon Walled City and Mouth Of The Architect as well. Their set was loud and eclectic and at times even grating. The crowd responded very well to this new blood and if they continue on this pace they have a very good future. They just released a single on bandcamp go check it out!

Snakepit are Calgary locals and they are very close to my heart. Powerful blast beat driven grind, with the best elements of extreme hardcore. They are super fun and impressive to watch! Cole Hadley is an incredible vocalist and his skills get sharper every show. The set they played for this show kept the energy up and the pits were running circles. I love circle pits. The absolutely killed it as direct support for Wake and I hope to see them again very soon!

Wake is a band that I considered grindcore when I first heard them. It's very hard to describe what kind of extreme music they play now. It's vicious and brutal, oppressive and transformative. This band is on the cutting edge of their genre and they blaze new trails with every release. They just wrapped up their latest release with Dave Otero who has produced bands the likes of Cattle Decapitation, Archspire, and Primitive Man. When they started their set

the whole room stopped. No head-banging, no moshing, no slamming. Their dark sermon had commenced and they had the full attention of everyone therein. The stage was bathed in red light and smoke. The lights didn't move or change. Just blood red. The set was a mix of their old releases with one or two new ones thrown in. I can't stress enough how this band will sculpt the way we listen to "metal". Like Archspire, they're carving a new frontier at any cost and I'm more than here for it. Wake just signed to Metal Blade records and will be releasing their next efforts through the label in the coming months. They can be found on all social and music platforms.

-Nate Trash



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ACROSS

1. *All grrl pop-Punk from Osaka, with 73-across
6. Sounds from a pound
10. *Dusseldorf's Die Toten _____
14. Question to a trip organizer
15. Word repeated in a kid's game
16. Role for Fonda
17. He's famous for his razor
18. *Eddie's Pub Rock band
20. *Celtic Punk from Kingston
22. Kefauver who tried to ban Bettie Page (and others)
23. Tolkien tree
24. Impressive business deg.
26. *LA band with a whole lotta Love
29. Incentive attached to a boot
32. Crass's home town
37. Upper back muscle
38. You can dig it
39. Glider pilot?
40. What Santa said when asked if it was the right playlist
44. TV's Remington
45. 3D image
46. They like Remingtons
47. _____ less
48. Vegetarian staple
50. We ____ game
51. Snake's warning
53. "Snakes ___ Plane"
55. Punk community
59. *Thrash from Antwerp
65. *Psychobilly from Copenhagen
67. War's "Sun _____"
68. GNR's "November _____"
69. Canadian soft drink with Italian roots
70. Oscar winner for "Cleopatra"
71. Duelling sword
72. Canadian whiskeys
73. See 1-across

DOWN

1. Chicago rapper aka Dotarachi
2. 72-across, sometimes
3. Stranglers' "____ 'n Sleazy"
4. Online competition
5. _____ land (desolation)
6. Home of "Mohawk Girls"
7. Architect Mies van der _____
8. Idol's "_____ for Fantasy"

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CROSSWORD NO. 57

XMAS, 2021

9. Lower Manhattan 'hood
10. Some say there's not enough of these in a day
11. Gambling machine
12. Cutting Crew singer
13. He brought down Capone
19. It might be covered by a cozy
21. Implements of torture
25. Comp with The Business, Blitz, Sham 69 and others
26. Psychological system
27. Milk: prefix
28. Old anesthetic
30. Ultravox frontman
31. *Chili Peppers, but only if they're _____
33. Animal hand
34. Making angry
35. Corpse: prefix
36. "The _____ Rock 'n Roll Swindle"
41. Shoe size for Bigfoot?
42. Kyra Sedgwick TV series (with "The")
43. Workers'rights UN org.
49. Open (a wine bottle)
52. Tale
54. Pale
55. Singer Dinah
56. "Cut the _____"
57. Canal that crosses New York
58. _____ of your business
60. Mayberry kid
61. They're used in tic-tac-toe
62. Anwar's successor
63. Do
64. It has a cap
66. Beer of choice for many Punks

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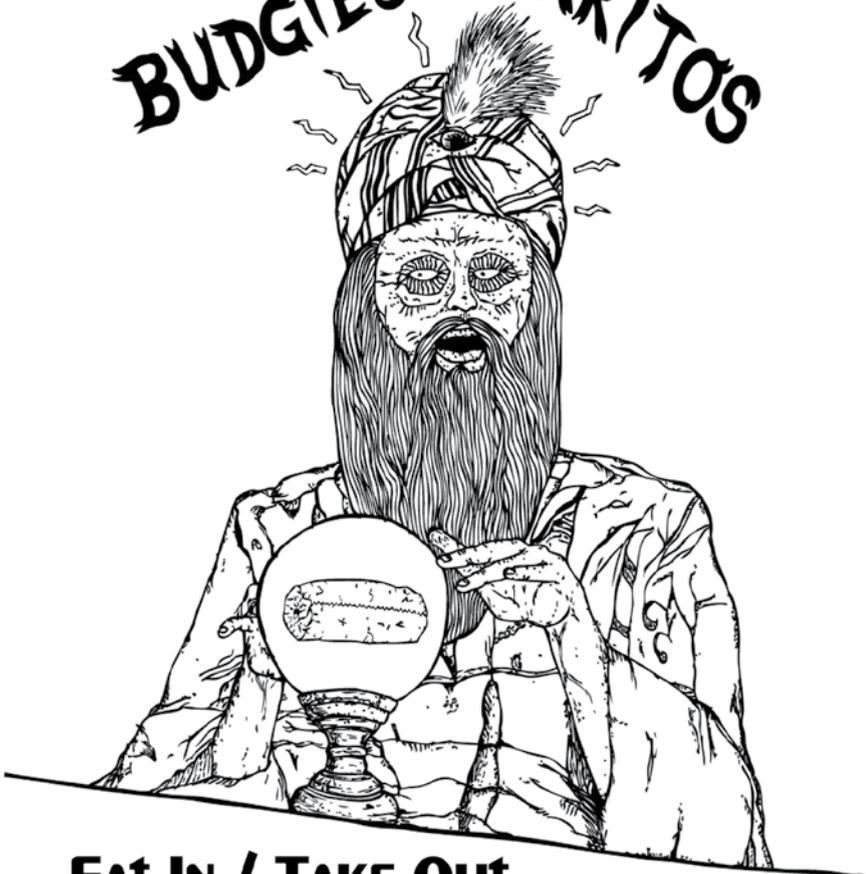
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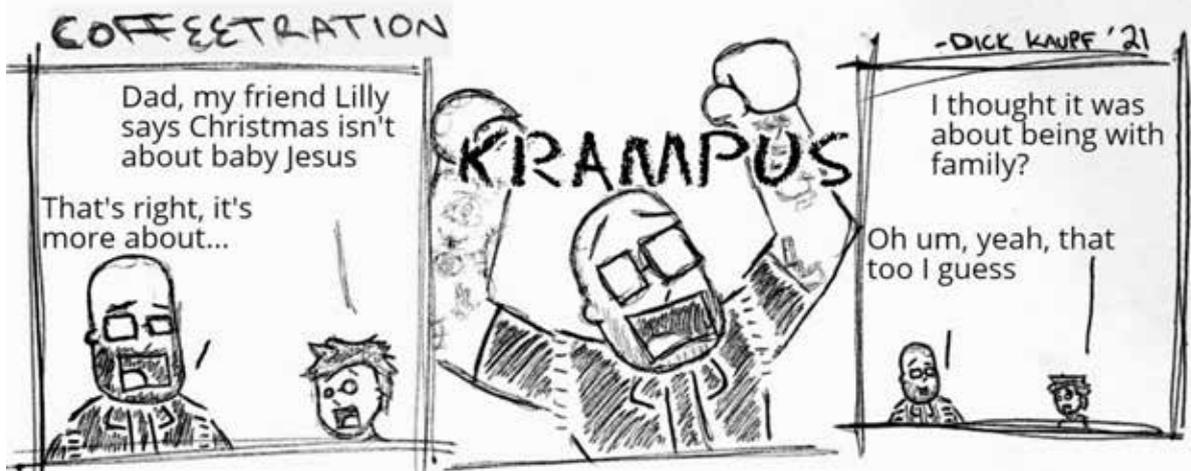
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CROSSWORD NO. 57 XMAS 2021

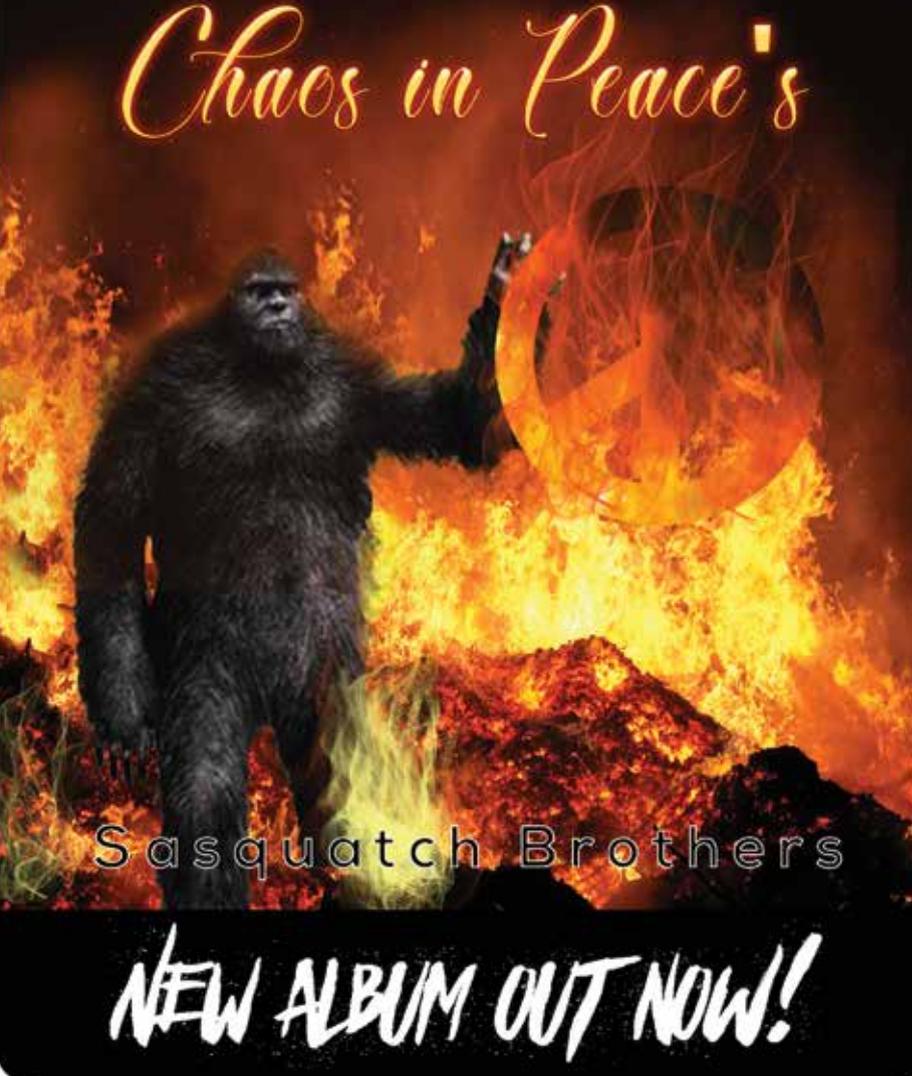
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COMIC-GEDDON

Holiday Reading Picks for the 2021/22 Year

By Ed Sum

The holidays are almost here. Whether you're celebrating on the 20th or the 25th, the pickings are rather amusing and not always going to be themed for the horror genre enthusiast. Besides the holiday specials coming out for select series—namely *Firefly*, *Red Sonja*, *Stranger Things* and *Vampirella*—what's offered includes:

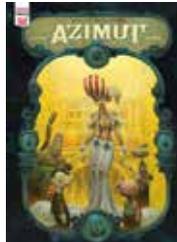
The Three Stooges Stocking Stuffer #1 American Mythology
In Shops: Dec 22, 2021

It's Christmas with The Three Stooges! The holidays are a time to enjoy with family and friends. And if your friends are knuckleheads, you know the slapstick hijinks they can get up to! Join Moe, Larry, Curly, and even Shemp with tales that will fill your Christmas with chuckles and your Hanukkah with hilarity! In this issue our own Stooge-tastic story tellers have The Boys as guardian angels, screwing up Santa's assembly line, and even celebrating with their first Hanukkah tale! It's a Three Stooges milestone in their storied career! So, hang your stocking with care, because you never know when Shempy Claus is coming to town! *The Three Stooges Stocking Stuffer* is the perfect holiday gift for Dad and comes with four covers - Main by Philip Murphy, Painted Variant by Jorge Pacheco, Color Photo, and Limited Edition Black & White Photo Cover!



Azimut Hardcover
Titan Books
In Shops: Mar 02, 2022

This Crayon d'Or prize-winning graphic novel is an incredible Terry Gilliam-esque fantasy tale, penned by the award-winning author of the acclaimed *Valerian* spin-off. Azimut features a host of quirky characters in a colourful fantasy world whose lives are turned upside down when the magnetic North pole simply disappears!



Black Solstice One Shot
Dark Horse Comics
In Shops: Jan 26, 2022

On the night of winter solstice in 2020, the world was caught by surprise as every black person suddenly gained a set of superpowers they did not have the day before. As winter solstice 2021 approaches everyone anxiously awaits whether their superpowers will come back. Meanwhile, a group of siblings have conceived the ultimate plan to use their powers—which they're sure will come back—for the greater good even as everyone else tries to stop them. The comic debut of critically-acclaimed writers Martin Desmond Roe and Travon Free, the minds behind *Two Distant Strangers*.





Rest in Peace Eric Greif

June 19, 1962—October 29, 2021

By Derek Petro

On October 29 2021 the world lost a true champion of heavy metal music and a defender and protector to the musicians that he took under his wing... Eric Greif.



Born in Kingston Ontario in 1962 ,Eric grew up in Calgary, Alberta where he attended school and played in local bands. After graduation in the summer of 1980 Eric knew he needed to leave Calgary to fulfill his dream of working in the music business and becoming either a recording engineer

"Eric's the perfect person for this business... He knows how to get things done. When it calls for going easy, he can go easy. When the time comes to be brutal, he can be as brutal as it takes."

-Chuck Schuldiner.

or a manager. A dual Canadian/American citizenship gave Eric the opportunity to move to the Sunset strip in Los Angeles California where he knew had a thriving music scene and all the record labels. Within a year he became a student at the University of Sound Arts in Hollywood, where he learned production.

Shortly thereafter Eric was introduced to Tommy Lee and began to co-manage up and coming LA rockers Motley Crue. After taking them to the Canadian prairies for their first ever tour and securing the re-release of *Too Fast for Love* for a major label Canadian release, Eric left the band and eventually moved to Wisconsin and began producing bands like Numskull, Morbid Saint, Realm and Viogression.

He started promoting concerts like the Day of Death Festival in Milwaukee which included bands like Autopsy, Immolation, Atheist, Broken Hope, and Cynic, eventually co-founding the Milwaukee Metal Fest.



At that festival in 1987 is where Eric began a friendship with Chuck Schuldiner from the Florida band Death. Eric started managing Death in 1988 with the release of *Leprosy* through to *Human* and joined the band on many tours throughout the world.

Eric returned the Canada to attend the University of Calgary where he obtained a law degree to which he became an entertainment lawyer representing bands like Massacre, Cynic, Obituary, ex-Mercyful Fate guitarist Hank Shermann and Vancouver's Ancients, whom he also managed.

Eric moved back to Calgary and became a staple in the local scene, promoting shows and helping out bands like Divinity, Into Eternity, Cauldron and Mortillery to name just a few. Eric looked out for all the bands he felt needed help with contracts and any advice he could give. He loved being there to mentor young bands.

Eric was a professor at Mount Royal University in

FALLEN SOLDIERS



Calgary in the justice studies department.

Most notably Eric was known for his partnership with the family of the late Chuck Schuldiner with the creation of Perseverance Holdings Ltd., which oversees Chuck Schuldiner's estate. Eric secured the record deal with Relapse Records ensuring future generations will be able to know and hear Chuck's legacy. Eric was determined to keep Chuck's music alive. He was heavily involved in



the touring tribute to Death called DTA Death Tours, in which he seldom travelled with and engaged in the meeting of Death fans around the world which he loved. He was able to take his children on a few trips and that made him very happy.



Eric was a devoted father to his two children Teega and Sam, a loving son, a loyal brother to Carla and Paul, a proud uncle to his niece Kyra, a true and dear friend to Carlos and a dedicated mentor to Collin.

Eric was an insulin-dependent diabetic for much of his life, although he struggled with his health he never lost the will or determination that made him the man he was. Eric was a fighter for himself, for his family and for his friends. The legacy of Eric's music career will live on and the love and joy that he put in the hearts of his family and friends will forever shine bright.

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Made in BC Health Order Hurting Venues

So here we are, it's December 2021, and the live music industry in British Columbia is still hamstrung by health orders that defy logic, especially in light of what's happening elsewhere in Canada and in the US. Specifically, it appears that Vancouver is the only major metropolitan city in North America that is still not allowed full capacity standing room shows at indoor concert venues. This begs the question: what does our provincial health officer know that has eluded her counterparts in every other jurisdiction? Our health orders are especially confounding

given that Vancouver has, arguably, one of the highest (if not the highest) numbers of adults who are fully vaccinated in North America. And the Vancouver Coast Health region has consistently had few cases of Covid-19 infections - most of whom are unvaccinated.

The common refrain we keep hearing from the health authorities these days is that this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated. So, why is it that those of us who have followed all of the health orders and mandates and who have been fully vaccinated for quite some time now are being made to suffer for the few who still have not been vaccinated. Remember, it's only the fully vaccinated who are allowed to attend shows. And in the case of the Rickshaw, our staff is fully vaccinated and we insist that performers also be fully vaccinated. There is no compelling reason why, especially in the Vancouver Coastal Health region, live music venues should not be allowed to operate at full standing room capacity. These spaces are inherently safer than most other settings where proof of vaccination is not mandatory.

A major repercussion of our unique health orders is that tours are now skipping Vancouver

altogether. Booking agents around the world feel that it's too risky to send acts here, lest the show gets cancelled as has happened all too frequently lately. Commercially owned venues need to run at full capacity in order to cover the costs of touring acts. The Rickshaw itself has had to cancel around 20 shows this fall with many more, no doubt, that will need to be cancelled in early 2022. This is also extremely disruptive to performing artists who have to change their itinerary, incurring not only loss of income but also incurring unnecessary additional costs. The ripple effect of our BC health orders is also being felt by our neighbouring provinces, especially in Alberta. Bands often add Calgary and Edmonton in their routing if they have a show in Vancouver. However, if they are not able to secure a date in Vancouver due to ongoing capacity issues in BC, Edmonton and Calgary are also very likely to lose those shows, which is grossly unfair to those cities.

Another one of the unintended consequences of our health orders is the increasing number of underground DIY venues that have popped up that have no controls in place. Vaccine cards are not being checked, nor are patrons required to wear masks. At least with commercial and regulated venues like ours, we have the proper infrastructure and systems in place to ensure compliance and proper crowd management. But perhaps the most egregious impact of our nonsensical made-in-BC health orders is being felt by our cultural workers who have faced the brunt of the recent rash of cancelled shows. These workers (tech crew, security, venue staff) have had little to no employment over the past 20 months. While businesses, like ours, have received

sufficient grants and subsidies to cover most of our fixed costs, thereby ensuring that we remain viable, cultural workers in BC are still being denied employment that's being afforded to cultural workers in every other province in Canada. The psychological and monetary toil this is having on these workers cannot be understated.

We are asking the PHO is to:

- * show us data that clearly demonstrates that standing to watch a concert in an indoor setting with fully vaccinated and masked people is more risky than sitting and watching the same show
- * explain to us why it is that the Vancouver Coastal Health region with nearly 95% of the adults fully vaccinated and with very low cases of Covid-19 are being denied full capacity at live music venues whereas everywhere else in Canada it is being allowed. What is so unique about our circumstances?

- * what exactly are the metrics that you are looking for to allow full capacity shows at indoor venues? Surely, you can't be waiting for 100% of BC's population to be fully vaccinated and zero case counts? We already have extremely high numbers of adults vaccinated in Vancouver and very low cases of infected people. So, what are the numbers?

Yes, we fully acknowledge that there are still people in ICUs with Covid, but it's predominantly those folks who chose to remain unvaccinated. All we want is to let the fully vaccinated get on with their lives and enjoy going to live music events at full capacity while still adhering to common sense precautions.

- Mo Tarmohamed



ABSOLUTE X-MAS VHS MIXTAPE

The 13 Nights of Christmas

By Dustin Jak

- 1) Silent Night, Deadly Night
- 2) Black Christmas (1974)
- 3) Gremlins
- 4) National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation
- 5) A Christmas Story
- 6) Santa's Slay
- 7) Bad Santa
- 8) Office Christmas Party
- 9) Scrooged
- 10) Elf
- 11) The Robot Chicken Christmas Special: X-Mas United
- 12) A Charlie Brown Christmas
- 13) Black Christmas (2019)

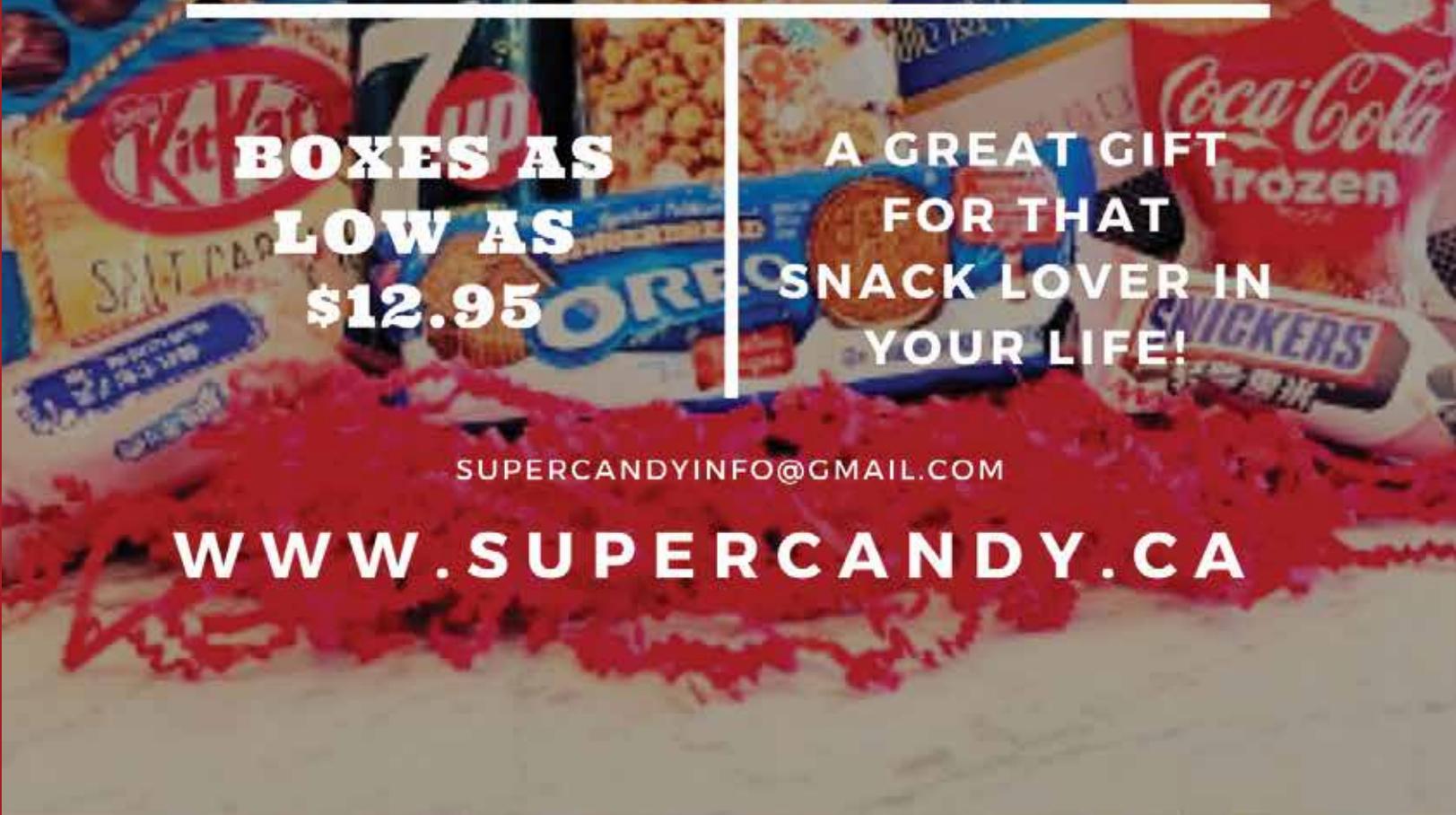




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