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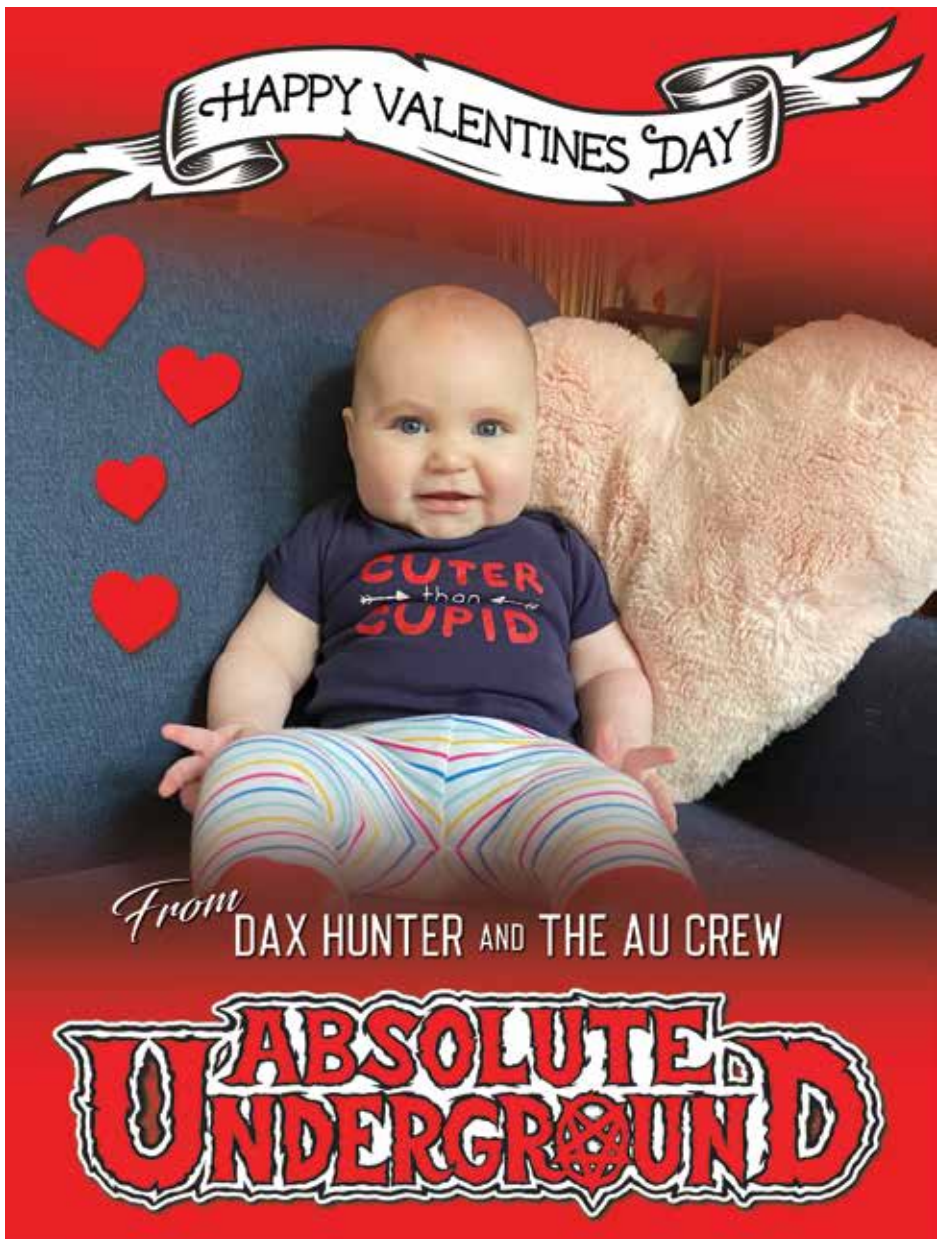
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VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY



the two of us. We've been playing around writing songs for fun on the side for a little while. Nothing serious, as our main focus at the time was Bonnuut. So, when that door closed, we decided to open a new one and continuing to play music together felt logical and natural. Everything really started in September of 2023 when we recorded our EP and started to play shows.

AU: Does your music fit an existing genre?

SP: Our music is very post-punk, with an element of shoegaze and darkwave.

AU: What is darkwave?

SP: Not sure how to describe it in simple terms... other than hypnotic drumbeats and bass lines with warm synth tones and verb to complement minimalistic vocal melodies.

AU: What bands would you say have a similar sound?

SP: Joy Division, The Jesus and Mary Chain, Grauzone.

AU: Who are you inspired by creatively?

SP: Definitely those bands are a big influence. Viny loves late-70s/early-80s post-punk and is a huge fan of The Cure, and for me, Brian Eno, The Gun Club and The Buzzcocks are big inspirations.

During all that alone time I learned and wrote some songs.

Neither of us have a music theory background. We play how we feel!

AU: From what I understand, its important what people see as well as hear when they come to see one of your live shows?

SP: When the venue allows it, we like to have a screen on the background projecting videos that Nevada puts together using footage from trips or just random weird things that we come across.

AU: What is ahead for this project?

SP: More writing for sure! We would like to release an album by the summer. And more shows of course! Touring is a big goal as well! With shows coming across Canada and France.

AU: Any outstanding shows to date?

SP: We are incredibly grateful that during our first three months as a band we got to play seven shows, including a show in Nanaimo, a showcase in Vancouver at The Red Gate and a show in Calgary at The Palomino which was quite special to us. We also played with touring bands here in Victoria and got to meet a lot of awesome people. So, each show in it's own way was outstanding.

AU: You have an EP out. Tell us about that.

SP: So, after starting writing in the summer of 2023, a few songs came up fairly quickly and in September of 2023 we recorded our first five song EP with Colin Stewart at The Hive (Black Mountain, New Pornographers). Our single "New Year" was written on New Year's Eve of 2022 and in a way was a milestone for this new band! It was a significant event that helped propel the band forward in terms of writing and sound.

AU: How important is the format with the music you have and will release?

SP: Our EP is only a digital release but when we have an album out, we will have physical copies for sure!

AU: Where can people find you?

SP: We are on Bandcamp, Spotify and iTunes. We are on Instagram and Facebook for socials.

AU: Any last thoughts?

SP: Thanks to Absolute Underground for the feature and to everyone who has been supportive and encouraging us to continue on this fun adventure.

smallpleasuresmusic.bandcamp.com

Photo by Finding Charlotte Photography

New Doors Open

A Darkwave Journey with Small Pleasures

By John Carlow

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

Small Pleasures: Hi, my name is Viny, I play bass and do vocals.

Hi, my name is Nevada, I play drums, synth noise and vocals as well. We both were in a band called Bonnuut before this new project.

AU: How/when did the band come together?

SP: When our previous band ended last June, we decided to try something new and to just work

AU: When did you learn how to play?

Nevada: When I was five years old I received a drum kit and a tape of The Who for Christmas and taught myself to play ever since.

Viny: It was just over three years ago for me, so definitely not as long, haha! I was casually playing around with a friend's bass for few months until the day Nevada bought me a bass and left for a three-month trip to China.



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VANCOUVER VENGEANCE



Wuji

Vancouver Psychedelic Rock

Interview by AU Editorial

Embrace the cosmic vibrations of Wuji, the ethereal psychedelic rock phenomenon hailing from Vancouver, Canada. Drawing inspiration from an eclectic mix of musical influences, they have crafted a genre-bending sound that transcends time and space.

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

Andrew Kashak: You are talking to Andrew Kashak, I'm the founding member of Wuji, which started out as a solo project in 2019. Our biggest claim to fame is that Simon Le Bon from Duran Duran played our single "Slipping" on his Sirius XM podcast WHOOSH! and gave us a stellar review.

AU: Tell us about Wuji. Who's in the band and what are you all about?

AK: Wuji is a rock band with influences ranging all the way from 60s psychedelic to grunge, shoegaze and post-punk. Wuji is currently

composed of Andrew Kashak, who is the principal songwriter, guitarist and vocalist, Jeremy Krenbrink who is our bassist and soon to be lead guitarist, Michael Broddy, who handles drums and percussion. Previously, Tyler Dallas was our lead guitarist and Brian Maudsley was our keyboard/synth player but they've recently moved on to other projects.

AU: Where does your name come from?

AK: So I'm a practitioner of Daoism and in my studies I learned that it's a cosmological concept. It translates

to "primordial void," the state of non-existence before Taiji (Yin - negative and Yang - positive) came into being.

AU: How would you describe your sound?

AK: I would describe our sound as an equal split of being punchy, angsty and catchy jangle poppy. Some of our audience have compared us to bands and artists like Pink Floyd, Tame Impala, The Beatles, Nirvana, Alice in Chains and Placebo. Once, somebody said we sound like a combination of Black Sabbath and Radiohead. All great bands, so we'll take it!

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

AK: We just dropped our debut LP *Transcendence* back in November. It's 10 tracks long and it is a mix of all of our favourite influences and sounds.

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

AK: It is a concept album about coming of age, duality, the principle of Yin and Yang and the tracks (hopefully) reflect those ideas and feelings sonically.

AU: Who are your strongest influences?

AK: For influences, I'd say Nirvana was the reason I picked up the guitar but what really broadened my horizons on what music could do as a medium was Cream's *Disraeli Gears*. That would probably be my desert island album if I had to choose just one. Pink Floyd's early stuff and *Dark Side of the Moon* are huge influences. All those 90s alternative rock acts as well. I was a pre-teen right around the time that nu-metal was winding down and emo rock was burgeoning. MCR, The Used, AFI and all that stuff. Later on, I got huge into metal and metalcore, with one of my favourite bands being Black Dahlia Murders. I was near the end of high school when I heard Tame Impala's *Innerspeaker* right when it dropped. That totally rocked my world and made me feel things I can't properly describe. In the last few years though, I'd have to say my biggest influence is Nine Inch Nails.

AU: What are some of the inspirations you draw on while writing your music?

AK: When I'm writing music, I usually wait for it to come to me. As much as doing and practicing is important, often some of the best melodies pop into my head when I'm walking out in nature or sitting around playing video games. Sometimes lyrics just pop into my head the same time the melodies do and that's just the greatest but it's not always like that.



AU: Any songs you are stoked on?

AK: For *Transcendence*, I'm very stoked with how the title track turned out, "Fish Tank", "Miss Muck" and "Ghost". Those are all bangers. I have to say I'm even more stoked for our newer material. Whereas with our older stuff, sonically, each song had a very different feel. With our new songs, they all fit really well together without compromising on our principles of having punchy heavy pop songs.

AU: Anything for fans to look forward to?

AK: We have some shows booked in the Greater Vancouver area but no tours lined up as of yet. I'm excited that we have fully recorded another EP with five gnarly tracks that is currently in the post-production phase. We'll likely drop that around summertime!

AU: Final words for our readers?

AK: I just wanna say, thanks for reading this. It means the world to me that there are such die-hard fans for music like ours. Musicians and bands like us that are off the beaten path. Cheers to all the weirdos and misfits!

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Tebby and the Heavy Psych Rock Lovers in Space Interview with Tebby Curtis

By Ryan Dyer

Surf's up. Grab your board and hit the blue and purple waves with Edmonton's Tebby and the Heavy. Since emerging in the summer of 2022, the heavy ones have been steadily making their presence known in the Western Canadian scene. Their shoegaze/psychedelic rock/surf style lends itself to fitting in well with bands of differing genres, leading to Tebby and the Heavy being a part of several major festivals in the area. Tebby Curtis speaks on the musical surf session so far, and Tebby and the Heavy's future plans.

Absolute Underground: What is the latest scoop on Tebby and the Heavy?

Tebby: We took a break from playing live shows to work on new material and mix our EP! We have a ton of material, but unfortunately not the funds to record fast enough. Things got a bit sidetracked as our drummer left the band, so we are looking for a new permanent drummer. Thankfully, we have a sub to play shows in the interim.

AU: The band was born in the summer of 2022. How did it all come together?

Tebby: Louis, Joel and I all knew each other from playing shows in different bands many moons ago. I left another band at the start of the pandemic and during lockdown wrote an album's worth of material and made demo recordings of it. I sent Joel and Louis the demos and asked them to jam. We played our first show in June of 2022 at the Blakbar Tavern here in Edmonton.

AU: You are Tebby. Tell me about the Heavy.

Tebby: Louis is our bassist, but his main instrument is guitar. He fronts a grunge/power-pop band called Vomb and has previously been in other bands Borscht and Noisy Colours. This is his first time playing bass in a band. His influences are QOTSA, Blur, The Mars Volta, Interpol, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Muse— which he insisted on specifying only their first four albums. Once I called Muse "Radiohead Junior" and to this day he won't let me live it down! He

is, unfortunately, allergic to cats and hates onions so much he got a tattoo about it!

AU: What is your personal music history?

Tebby: I started playing guitar in high school, where I had a few lessons and jumped into jamming with friends, then forming bands. My third guitar pedal (after a Boss distortion and EHX Chorus) was a multi-effects pedal and that's when I first started experimenting with effects—modulations, reverb and delays. I now have quite the pedal and gear collection! Music gear hoarding has become quite the obsession! I grew up listening to a lot of genres like grunge, punk, industrial, indie rock, and electronica. When I attended university, I incessantly listened to Sonic Youth, which led me to a lot more noisy, experimental, and psychedelic bands like the Boredoms, MBV, Black Angels, Autolux, Brian Jonestown Massacre, etc. I love music and am always looking for the latest and greatest stuff to listen to— I am really digging DAIISTAR, Peel

Dream Magazine, and Gift right now.

AU: Were you in any previous bands?

Tebby: Before Tebby and the Heavy, I was fronting a band called Vertigo which is a dream pop band here in Edmonton. Previous to that, I was in bands that were mainly for fun with friends and didn't play a lot of gigs or ever apply to festivals. For the longest time, I never really had the money to afford a lot of gear and didn't own a vehicle. It was hard to play shows or invest in what is needed to pursue music appropriately or at least the way I envision it should be approached. One was a grunge band called Solipsism. and another was a dance punk (Rapture and Moving units inspired) band called Shiza Maliza— there are a few EPs on YouTube if anyone is curious.

AU: Your bio states: "One night, not long ago, an intrepid trio broke into the vaults at

Creation Records, and by the murky light of a blood moon physically absorbed the back catalogue. Making their escape, the group was involved in a psychedelic surfing incident." First, which Creation Records bands are you most inspired by?

Tebby: My Bloody Valentine, The Jesus & Mary Chain, Telescopes, Ride and Slowdive!

AU: Secondly, what was this psychedelic surfing incident?

Tebby: During the pandemic, surf music was (and still is) my happy place! I am into way too many psychedelic bands to name, but a few faves are the Cult of Dom Keller, Black Angels, and Moon Duo.

AU: What are some of your non-musical influences?

Tebby: I am a huge horror fan— both movies and video games! I try to see any intriguing horror movie that comes out. I love body horror, vampire movies, slashers, found footage, and the Cronenbergs! I read *Rue Morgue* religiously. I'd say my favorite horror movie this year was *When Evil Lurks* followed by *Infinity Pool*. Right now I am playing the *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* video game and ghost hunting in *Phasmophobia*. I'm also big into Puppet Combo's video games.

AU: I first saw you at Electric Highway in Calgary. You played early in the day but made a great impression. What do you recall of your experience at the festival?

Tebby: Thank you! The Electric Highway festival is amazing! The team works extremely hard and promotes everyone so well. They are very welcoming and inclusive. We could not ask for a better experience. We are very happy to announce we are playing again this year on Saturday, April 5th!

AU: A few months later, I caught you opening for the Osees at Sled Island. I imagined that this show would have increased your currency in the local scene, having a lot of eyes on you at The Palace. Would you say it did, and do you have any anecdotes from that show of interacting with John Dwyer?

Tebby: Just being invited to play Sled Island last year really helped our cred I would say! We love the festival and are very grateful and fortunate to have been included. We weren't super familiar with Calgary or The Palace Theatre, so we got a bit lost on our drive there. We didn't realize until we got there that the Sled Island block party had closed all the roads to the back entrance so we couldn't find a way to load in! After frantically driving around in circles, and getting pulled over



on the CTrain line (whoops!), we found a parking spot and checked to see if there was anyone around who could help us. Suddenly, John Dwyer opened the door asking if we needed help, and he told us how to get our gear into the venue! He was absolutely hilarious and relieving! Then he wished us luck and left to relax before the show started. It was definitely a surreal experience to start the night. At the end of the show, we got a picture with him and tried to show him how cool we were by recognizing his awesome Totalitär t-shirt (an amazing hardcore band from Sweden). He was super rad and nice!

AU: Then you opened for Frankie and the Witch Fingers— a band that is on a similar level to the Osees, at the Purple City Music Festival. How was that?

Tebby: Frankie and the Witch Fingers are a wild band! I love them to death! I actually had a hard time tracking down their re-release of Zam for Record Store Day. I got them to sign that which is my favorite memento from the show. We also got to open for Ringo Deathstarr and I have been a huge fan of theirs for forever. It was literally a dream come true and very intense with all that talent— Sunglaciers, Hot Garbage and Dead Friends— in the building all at once. I tripped up the Starlite Room stairs while loading in gear and fell flat on my face in front of RDS and FATWF. I think all in all I made a good first impression! Purple City Festival is such an amazing festival and very well curated!

AU: If you could write a soundtrack to a film by any director, who would that be?

Tebby: Maybe *Mandy* by Panos Cosmatos, *Come True* by Anthony Scott Burns or any film by Jim Jarmusch or Alejandro Jodorowsky.

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

Band photo by Levi Manchuk

Live photo by Ryan Dyer



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L4ZR GR1D

Electro Trash Fire Ignited

Interview with Alix Au and Peter Tyukasz
By Ryan Dyer

From the depths of the Den of Evil in Calgary, Alberta emerges a new electronic depravity in L4ZR GR1D. The duo of Alix Au and Peter Tyukasz have put their minds together to create a noisy, destructive embodiment of expression. Influenced by Death Grips, Aphex Twin, Atari Teenage Riot, Pig Destroyer and more, L4ZR GR1D have, on the strength of their few releases (including a split with Kyle Ball's Lysergic), been smashing firewalls by adding a harsh electronic imprint on metal shows as of late. I caught up with the band for some L4ZR eye surgery.

Absolute Underground: When and how was it decided to start L4ZR GR1D?

Peter Tyukasz: Around 2018, I don't really remember how it came about, but we dabbled with the idea of making a digital hardcore band, similar to our influences. Alix was doing vocals for a band called Saw Lung at the time, and I figured it would be a cool idea to mix harsh grind vocals with electronic music.

Alix Au: Covid/life hit pretty hard for me and I wasn't feeling very inspired to create music. Last summer, my roommate Sarah and I flew to Utah to see Death Grips and something in my brain broke and I knew what needed to happen. I got home and we got to it right away.

AU: What influences have been tossed into this psychedelic electro trash fire?

PT: Psychedelia, weird satirical art like a video game called Cruelty Squad has been a big influence on me as well as the Adult Swim show *Xavier: Renegade Angel*. Also, anything that is musically (or non musically) aggressive and hateful. Aphex Twin, Death Grips and Machine Girl

are sonically what I take influence from.

AA: Vocally and lyrically, I am very inspired by older Pig Destroyer and Carcass. The poetic patterns in Piggy D's lyrics speak to me and sometimes I gotta bust out the medical textbooks to research for a track (Carcass-style word vomit). I write often though, not just specifically for L4ZR songs. Often, things I will write will come from watching an emotional movie or thinking about a current or past experience, which I can then arrange over the weird shit Peter produces. Sometimes, it's digging deep into an acid haze or chasing a feeling.

AU: What is the process involved in producing a single song?

PT: I will produce the song in Ableton, usually not knowing where it's going to go, but I will have a very vague idea of what I want it to sound like. The rest of the process is experimenting with samples, synth plugins and different production techniques until something hits right for me. Alix will write lyrics; we'll get together and record her vocals. I go back to the Den of Evil and rework the song to add effects and warp her vocals as well as adjust the instrumentals, it's actually a very quick process. We have a very sporadic system that could only work in this project I think. We both are fast and don't second guess too much about what we're writing.

AU: The marriage of harsh noise and metal is something I've seen in other regions, like China with Torturing Nurse (noise) performing with metal and punk bands. L4ZR GR1D is doing this now, which I think is great in exposing these different styles to fans who wouldn't normally go out of their way to listen to it. What do you think?

PT: Personally, I didn't even know if this project was going hit with anyone – it was a bit of a gamble to expose this to the scene we're a part of, but now I feel like some metal heads/punks etc. are secret ravers at heart, and I'm grateful that the merging of these worlds has had a positive response on people who see/hear us.

AA: I think it's wild that so far we are being

well-received by the metal crowd, especially war metal. I had no idea our music would be put out by NWN/Ixiol or we would be playing with death metal and grind bands, but here we are. We are excited to play all kinds of weird shows and hopefully see more weird projects pop up in Calgary. I love seeing diversity and being here for the true freaks.

AU: How do you generally approach the live presentation? Do you cull any spiritual influence from any other electronic acts (Throbbing Gristle, Skinny Puppy, Machine Girl, Crystal Castles, etc.)?

PT: It's pretty bare bones right now, we'd like to make our live presentation more in-your-face and spectacular, but for now it's just me with my MPC and laptop, while I mess with Alix's vocals live with effects and whatnot.

AA: I have always been a fan of outrageous theatrics. Anything from blood, face paint, to stupid shaped guitars. Skulls and flames. We strive to nod to the music we are inspired by, which is something raw and primal. But also, rave.

AU: Do you see the live show progressing as time goes on?

PT: Of course, we're in the process of figuring out how to make our live shows more interesting. Lights, banners, props (maybe male gogo dancers) will be a thing in the future.

AU: Kyle Ball has been an ally to L4ZR GR1D, doing guest vocals on "Haxan" and his new Lysergic project doing a split with you. How does the Ball connection inspire L4ZR GR1D?

PT: Kyle is The Alchemist of Bullshit, a real one. He saw something in us that I couldn't see at first, but his support for us has been very motivating. He's helped us record vocals, lent us gear – to me he's the big brother I never had. Alix and Kyle live together and we've had good talks about our



projects, we are old heads making new shit; he understood what we were going for right off the bat. He's a man with a vision.

AA: He is *The Alchemist of Bullshit*, absolutely. The DMT demon. But he is my roommate and we both make music in our household and punish each other with our projects. Peter, Kyle and I all know each other very well and it is easy for us all to get into each other's headspace. The Lysergic split was birthed from wanting to do something that purely interested all of our visions.

None of us were sure how it would be received but we didn't care. We love blast beats, riffs, acid and techno. The two projects are very different but come from a similar void.

AU: Alix, you are known for your sick artistic offerings. In creating music, is a blank canvas similar to a blank music sheet?

AA: Very much so. I take inspiration from the same things that I apply to my illustrations and tattoos. If I am not drawing, I need to be writing. If I am not writing, I need to be drawing. My part in the band is what my drawings and tattoos would sound like if they could make noise.

AU: It seems L4ZR GR1D is progressing quickly, with *Client Pleasures* released last July and *Coffin Slide* released in October. Will there be something new soon?

PT: There will be a compilation CD release through Phantom Lure from Belgium. We're currently in the process of designing the artwork and layout for a DVD style case.

AA: Yup, we have another EP on the way we are currently recording between jams and gigs. Maybe a few sneaky collabs and covers. It's going to be weird.

l4zgr1d.bandcamp.com

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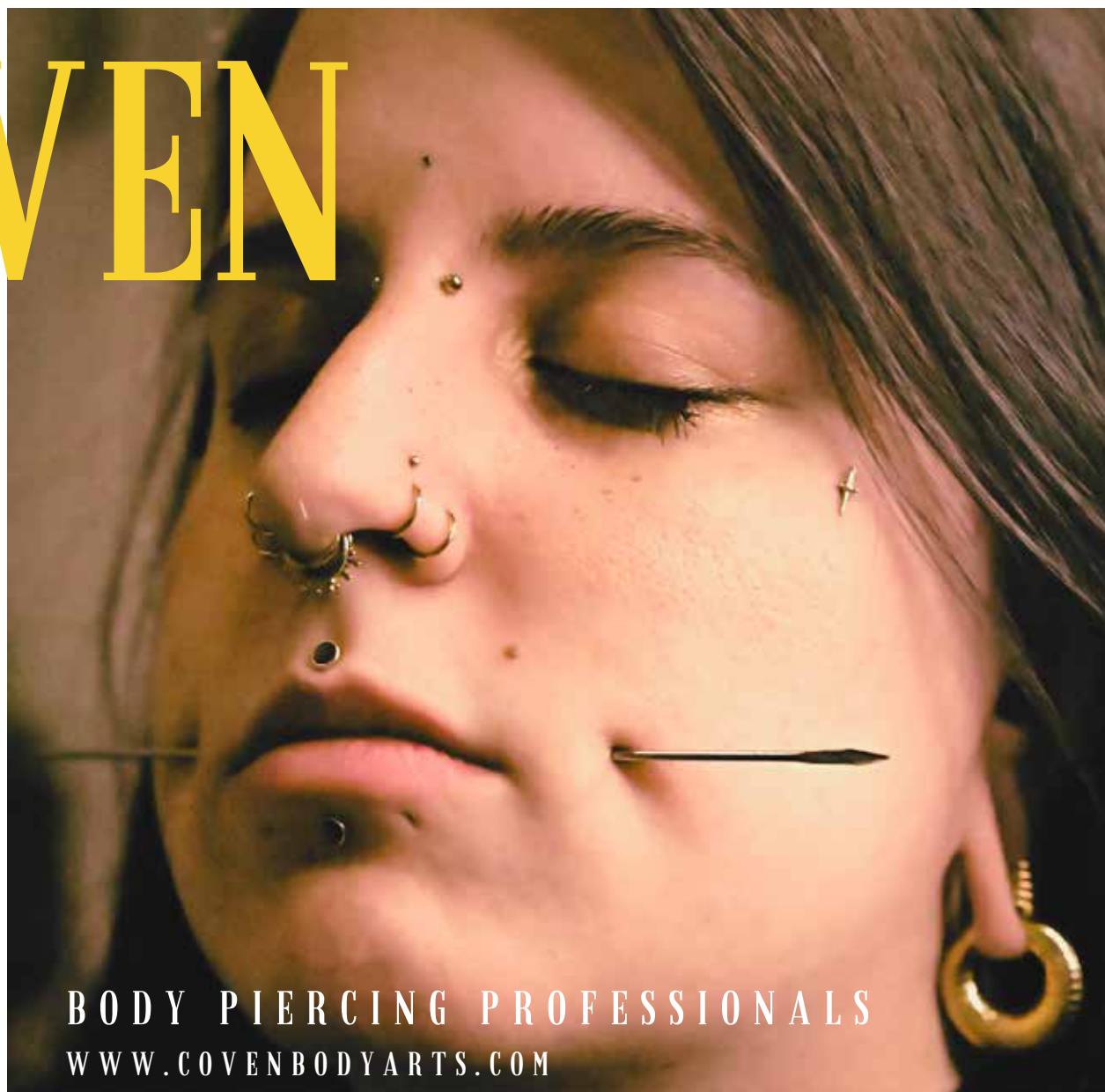
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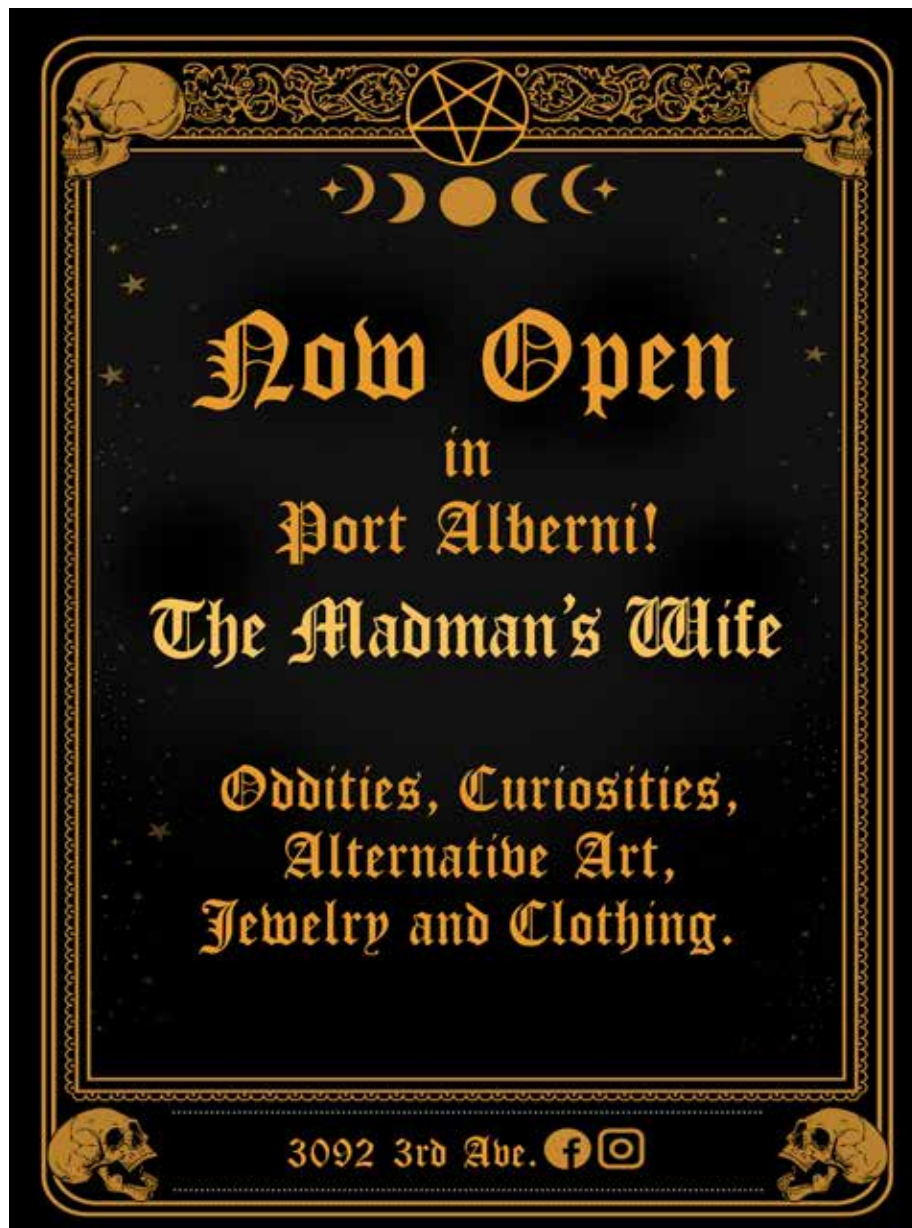
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Cell Press

Interview with vocalist PQ

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with Cell Press, who are you?

PQ: Thanks for having us back! It's great to speak with a magazine that has been supporting underground artists for so many years. This is PQ and I am the vocalist of Cell Press.

AU: Last time we spoke to the band, you released your self-titled EP in 2020, during the Covid era. What can you tell fans about this first full-length *Cages* out on March 8th on The Ghost Is Clear Records (Vinyl), Ancient Temple Recordings (Vinyl), No List Records (Cassette)?

PQ: This is something we have been chipping away at since early 2021, for many reasons, we were not able to consistently grind at it. We took about a year to write it, then another year or so to re-write, polish and refine it. The last year has just been spent recording, mixing, mastering and finding the right partners to work with to release it. We have been anxious to get this thing out

there, but we were also in no rush and had no deadlines to work with. We wanted to do it the right way so we took our time to make sure we did.

AU: *Cages* as a whole album is a collection of songs with different themes and vibes. Written over the span of two years (2021-2022), you've said "Certain peaks and valleys through those years influenced

the songs and the songwriting." Could you describe what those peaks and valleys were that influenced the record?

PQ: There were a lot of challenges making this record from illness, to securing the funds, to not being able to settle on certain individual parts, to replacing a member, to travel, etc., etc., etc. It was hard, but in a first-world type of way. I can't sit here complaining about our problems making a record when there are people all over the world suffering real problems. Yes, this record was hard to make, but it was made, we are all alive, we have food on our plates, drinks in our cups and beds to sleep in.

AU: The album was engineered by Sean Pearson (Cursed, Shallow ND, Fiftywatthead) at Boxcar Sound Recording and additional guitars tracked at Unfamous Audio; engineered by Paul Edwards, mixed by Scott Evans (Kowloon Walled City, Town Portal, Great Falls) at Antisleep Audio and mastered by Carl Saff (Ken Mode, Blacklisters, Fu Manchu, Childbite) at Saff Mastering, how was it recruiting and working with all these fantastic people?

PQ: We consider ourselves very lucky to be able to work with all of these amazingly talented people. The way each one of them is able to enhance us sonically and pull sounds out of us that even we couldn't have imagined is a true testament to all of their experience and natural talent alike. We can't be grateful enough for having the opportunity to work with all of them.

AU: The album cover art is a painting made by guitarist Sean (aka Wurmzilla), what was the inspiration for it? Has Sean designed any other band album art we might know of?

PQ: Sean's great work on this cover was an expression of his view of how he sees the collective mental health of our city being tenuous at best right now. The pressures on our faculties since the pandemic also drew inspiration for him. Sean has done work for dozens of bands over the years including a ton of work for his other band The Great Sabatini.

AU: Cell Press has been categorized as so many different subgenres in the metal world from, noise, sludge, hardcore... From the horse's mouth, what does Cell Press like to call itself?

PQ: We call ourselves Cell Press, that's it. We don't follow any particular formula or mold when we write our music and we are influenced a lot by music that doesn't sound anything like us, so it's really hard to claim a genre. Personally, I think if you are striving to make original music, the

MONTREAL MASSACRE

genre is nothing but a cage that will keep you locked into a certain aesthetic, genre is not only just bands that sound like one another. Genre is primarily a sales tool so that record companies can say, "Hey! You like this record?? Well, you will for sure love this one then, please give us your money."

AU: Any notable upcoming shows?

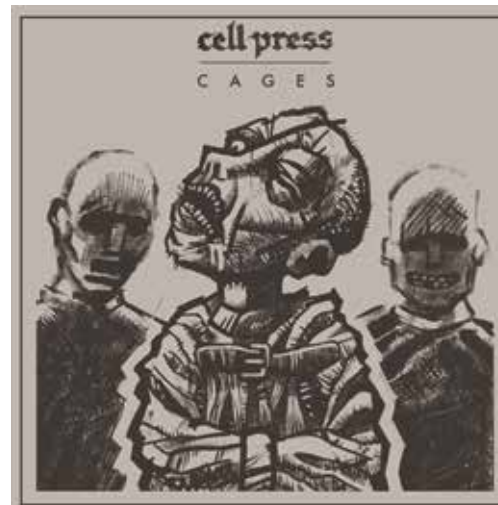
PQ: We will be having a small intimate release party here in Montréal for *Cages* close to the end of February and are committed to playing a cool fest here in Montréal in April, but besides that, we have nothing booked. We are not in a rush to just take every show that is offered to us right now, we would rather only play cool situations that we know will be a super fun night for us and most importantly, the audience.

AU: Anything else you would like to

add for our readers to check out?

PQ: Check out our social media pages for upcoming news and content. We also all play in a bunch of other bands so check them out, and I know this is random as fuck but def check out Golden Tenders in Hamilton, you will not regret it. Love yourselves and each other, fuck war and equality for all!

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Shit Happens

Punks of Aggression

Interview by AU Editorial

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

Kayla: I'm Kayla, the vocalist. I'm probably most famous for never making a nice face in photos and engaging in energetic crowd interactions during our sets. We love getting people involved.

AU: Tell us about the band. What are you all about? When did Shit Happen?

Kayla: We're a four-piece female-fronted punk band formed in 2018. Originally a joke inspired by the phrase "shit happens," it evolved when our drummer, Dustin, suggested it as a band name. Despite the initial intention of just having fun, we started writing and found our unique voice.

AU: What's the music scene like in Winnipeg?

Kayla: The Winnipeg music scene boasts incredible talent and strong mutual support among artists. There's always something happening every weekend, making it tough to choose which show to attend.

AU: Can you describe your sound for our readers? What are some of your influences?

Kayla: Our sound, often labeled as drunk punk, cuntcore, or pure punk, is a product of doing what we want. Influenced by punk legends like Jello Biafra and Johnny Rotten, we create music with catchy melodies and clever language.

AU: What's something unique that each member brings to the table?

Bill (Bass): Technical bass lines and social media expertise.

Sheldon (Guitar): Metal background, great riffs, quick adaptation to our songs.

Noah (Drums): Impressive drumming skills,



seamlessly filled in on short notice.

AU: How do you approach writing music? Do you touch on any themes with your songs?

Kayla: Mostly, our lyrics come first, conveying social and political satire. We also address serious topics, such as "hands up, don't shoot," highlighting injustices towards Canada's Indigenous culture.

AU: Anything new on the horizon?

Kayla: We'll be in the recording studio in February, working on diverse songs that excite us. Fans can expect a range of contexts and vibes, showcasing our enthusiasm for the creative process.

AU: Valentine's Day is coming up. Do you have any plans?

Kayla: No plans for Valentine's Day; our February is packed with recording and tour preparations.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

Kayla: Yes! We have an East Coast tour from March 13th to March 24th, covering Chicago, London, Toronto, Hamilton, Welland, Ottawa, Montréal, Quebec City, Cornwall, and Belleville.

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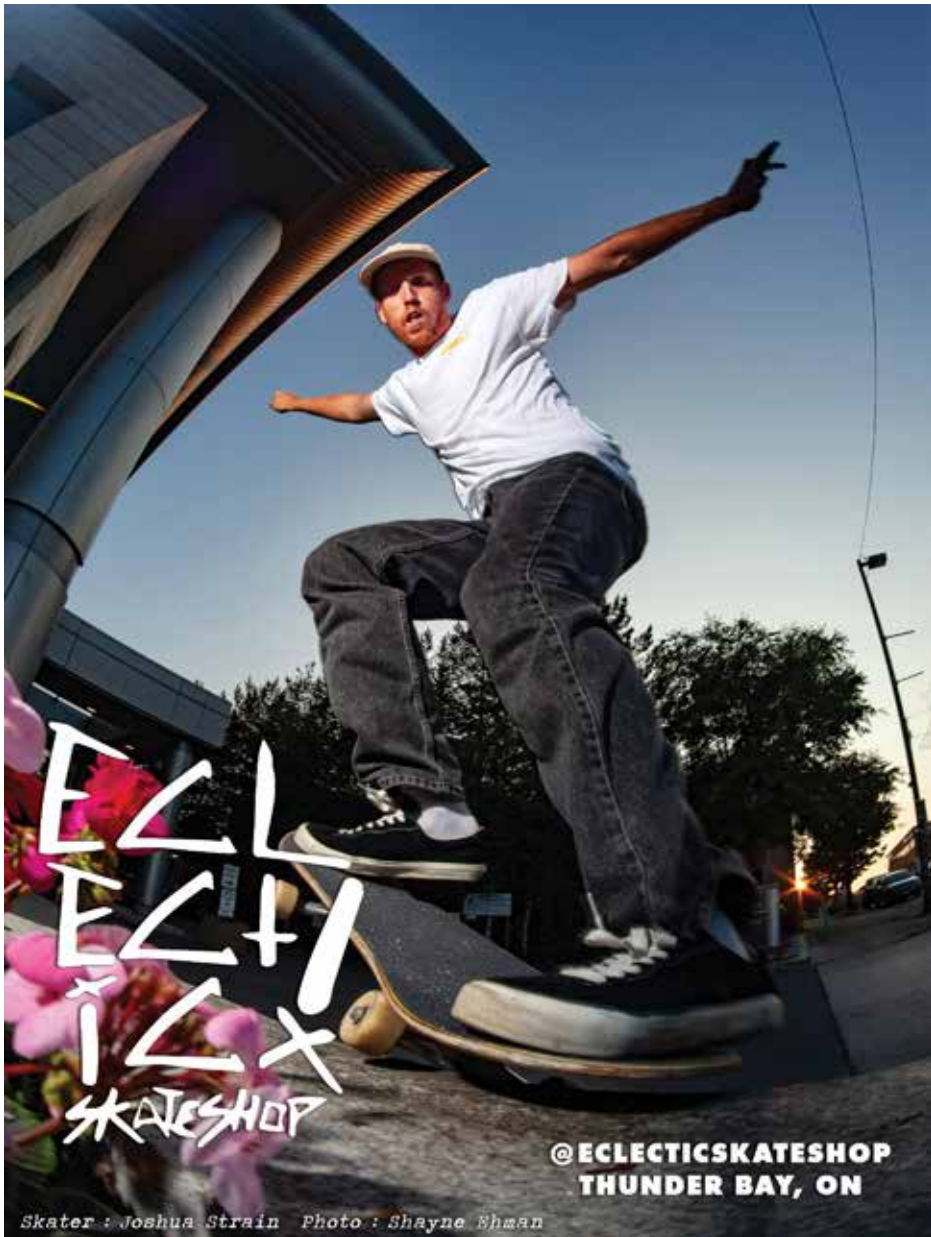
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Kelevra

Interview with Bassist Adrienne Mahoney

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with Kelevra, who are you what do you do?

Adrienne Mahoney: We are a long-standing Regina, Saskatchewan metal band that has honed a pretty unique sound and vision after many years of playing together. Our music is a blend of progressive textures, crushing brutality and technical skill – but remaining at the forefront is always groove, melody and songwriting.

AU: You have your first full-length album *Oneiric* out on March 8th to follow EPs *Lividity* (2016) and *Overthrown* (2013), what can you tell us about this album?

AM: I think fans will be really excited when they hear this album because it shows all band members ripping and stretching out on their instruments! I think *Oneiric* delivers a conceptual work that is both fresh and mature sounding – presenting with so much atmosphere. I think people will get to hear Kelevra showing a really wide range of riffing and sounds – showcasing so much emotional range!

AU: How was working with Sean Folk at Odin Sound for this record?

AM: Sean has been a longtime friend and former member of Kelevra, so it was a logical decision to

work together at Odin Sound in Regina, SK for this album. We wanted to support and collaborate with a fellow local musician/audio engineer who understood the music we were seeking to present, and who spoke the same language in that regard. It was also great to utilize our own home studio spaces, explore gear and be able to easily collaborate with Sean to realize the fuller vision of the album.

AU: What would you like fans to take away from this album?

AM: It would be so nice if fans could sit back and listen to this album, and walk away remembering melodic motifs or find themselves humming lines that are memorable! I think despite the blasting BPMs, frenzied fretwork, and intricate parts, at the core of this album there is a human and emotional quality that I think a lot of our fans will

appreciate. Most importantly, there are some breakdowns and riffs that will still get longtime Kelevra fans going hard in the pit – there will be much stinkface!

AU: Any standout songs you want fans to check out?

AM: It's so hard for me to pick one song, because they all hold such a soft spot for different reasons. I think both "Self-Extinct" and "Lifeblood" are songs off of the album that fans should dig into a bit more to see how intricate and mature Kelevra's sound has evolved. "Lifeblood" for me, personally, really shows the level of passion and feeling this band has when we are all locked in as a unit. I think it's such a great collision of all of our musical styles merging, as well as raw and honest lyrics that I hope our fans can see as a rally cry and tribute to brotherhood.

AU: How's the metal scene in Regina, SK these days?

AM: Hard for me to comment personally, as I live in Edmonton AB, but I can say that overall, I see a rebirth in the Saskatchewan music scene happening that is very refreshing. Metal, hardcore, and punk shows seem to be coming back stronger than ever – due largely to some very key promoters and ambitious new production teams breathing life into the scene. I hope it can continue to grow with more time, and hopefully, Regina's metal scene will see more new blood coming up! I think all-ages venues like The Exchange are vital in enabling that to happen – in both offering a local place to play, and also showcasing prime touring metal for our scene to thrive and be inspired by!

AU: Any plans to tour Western Canada this year to support the album?

AM: We are currently booking multiple runs out with a number of Western Canadian bands this year to support *Oneiric*. That's about all of the details we can spill at this time, but we can say that we are very excited to get out there and play some gigs. Networking with fellow bands and meeting new fans is what it is all about, so summer touring is something we always look forward to. With a new record to promote, it makes this time out extra special.

AU: You have performed alongside bands such as The Faceless, Job for a Cowboy, Carnifex, Dying Fetus, Rivers of Nihil, Devin Townsend, Death Angel, Cryptopsy and more, who was one of your favourite to share the stage with?

AM: The bands/shows mentioned were almost all before I started with the band so it's a bit tough to say for sure, but I was at nearly all of those shows in the audience watching Kelevra. Even back then, I felt like they could hang with the big boys on those touring packages. Before I was in Kelevra, and watched their opening slots, they always seemed dialed in professionally, and brought so much rowdy energy to the night! Truly legendary. We sometimes reminisce about these opportunities and all agree it's hard to pinpoint a favourite band to share the stage with. We loved sharing the stage with Threat Signal and All Shall Perish. These shows were special because they are both bands we enjoyed, but have since disbanded. Death Angel is also a band that comes to mind. Sharing the stage with them sticks out because we did it twice! You can appreciate it when a bigger band makes an effort to continually swing through your hometown. Finally, it was truly amazing to share the stage with Devin Townsend. Just saying that kind of speaks for itself, but it was a very special opportunity. Devin is a musician who's always carved his own path. He is not afraid to be different, especially when it comes to his music. This is what makes him so inspirational and sharing the stage with him was nothing short of that.

AU: The personal health of all members of a band can always be influential on how it works as a unit. What have been your constant thoughts of perseverance while you've dealt with the extremely rare autoimmune disorder known as EGPA (Eosinophilic Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis) or Churg-Strauss Syndrome? I think most band members with such issues

would move away from a band, but you have pushed forward. What wise words can you share for others dealing with similar issues?

AM: I think it is an incredible gift that I play in a band with four of the most loving brothers anyone could ask for. I will say wholeheartedly that not every band could make this issue work, so I count myself amongst the luckiest. Their patience and support with my health challenges have been

inspiring to witness. I give them all of the credit in the world for making this flexible arrangement work; allowing me time and space to recover, and never giving up on me along the way. They trust that I will put in the work and show up ready. That's a big deal, not every band could execute that level of trust. My advice to anyone out there who is struggling with their own medical issues or health battles is to surround yourself with the right homies who see you, respect you, and support you. If you want to continue to feel this magic of music and creation bad enough, nothing will stop you. Just try to work with what you do have and modify things to make it work for yourself, despite whatever deficit you are encountering. Work with what you can bring to the table in that moment, not focusing on your limits. If your heart wants it bad enough, you will find a way to make it sing. But most importantly – surround yourself with bandmates and musical mentors who can creatively problem-solve with you to make it happen! DIY ethos and sheer dedication will carry you a long way.

AU: Anything else you would like to add for our readers?

AM: Thank you for checking out the new LP and we hope to see you out at one of our shows sometime soon! Please come say hi at merch and stay locked on our social for more coming videos, playthroughs and info!

kelevrasask.bandcamp.com



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March 21 Barrie ON @ Queens	April 23 Lethbridge AB @ OWL
March 22 Niagara Falls ON @ Camp Cataract	April 24 Golden BC @ Rockwater
w/ The Electric Dead	April 25 Calgary AB @ Ship and Anchor
March 23 Peterborough ON @ Pigs Ear Tavern	w/ Denim Daddies
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Voivod Interview with Guitarist Dan "Chewy" Mongrain

By Jason Flower, Claude Montreuil & Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: What music do you like to listen to?

DM: These days, I'm into Miles Davis (*Kind of Blue*), a very exciting band from Poland called LXMP, Jaco Pastorius' first album, prog rock band from Québec from the 70s called Sloche and also Morse Code which recently reformed. I always have a Cardiacs album not so far from my turntable. I also recently got back to listening to classical music, especially Bach, *The Art of Fugue* interpreted by Glen Gould.

AU: Who inspired you to make music?

DM: Personally, movie soundtracks (John Williams, Alan Silvestri, Danny Elfman, Jerry Goldsmith, Lalo Shifrin, Gerard Calvi and many more composers who wrote scores for movies). Stravinsky, Mussorgsky, Bartok, Allan Holdsworth, John Scofield, Scott Henderson. Metal bands like Testament, Megadeth, Coroner, Cynic, Meshuggah, Death, Jason Becker. I also still listen to Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (Quincy Jones) once or twice a year, the arrangements of Quincy Jones are just perfect. The Police, James Brown, Elvis Presley. Actually, I was a fan of Voivod before I was in the band from age 11, which was unexpectedly pretty helpful when I would join 20 years later.

AU: What show or movie do you think has the best soundtrack?

DM: *Planet of the Apes* (1968, Jerry Goldsmith), *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977, John Williams). In my opinion, it is the best Star Wars music out of all the other movies. I really enjoy all of it though, when it's Williams. *Nightmare before Christmas* (1993) and *Batman* (1989) (both Danny Elfman). *Ultraman* (1966, Kunio Myauchi), *UFO Robot Grendizer* (1983, Hirosaki Aomori). *Back to the Future* (1985, Alan Silvestri). Many others, but my memory fails me.

AU: Your music had become rather progressive in the late 80s. Did you consider going further down the prog-path?

DM: I think since the album *Target Earth*, we're really into the prog side of the band. Listen to songs like "Sonic Mycelium", "Holographic Thinking", "Mechanical Mind", "Spherical Perspective", "Paranormalium"... they're super proggy! Labels are only good for clothes.

AU: What can you tell us about your 40th anniversary album, *Morgöth Tales* that was released last summer?

DM: The idea was to have songs from the career span of 40 years, some classics and some hidden gems so to speak, or one may say "less obvious choices". It would have been a complicated

thing to gather the original recordings from different era, labels, etc... so the best solution was to re-record the songs with the actual line-up, in the same studio we went to record our last two albums (*The Wake* and *Synchro Anarchy*) at the Radicart Studio with our friend Francis Perron at the wheel.

We also wrote a new song for the 40th anniversary, tried to include a bit of each album's vibe to it musically and lyrically. Lots of Easter eggs in the lyrics. It also features Jason Newsted (ex-Ozzy, ex-Metallica, Voivod) on bass on the song "Rebel Robot" which is from one of the three Voivod albums he was involved in. It also features Eric Forest (former bass player/singer/frontman) of Voivod for "Rise" from *Phobos*. We're very happy they accepted!

AU: How was the experience of winning the 2023 Juno Award for Best Hard Rock/Metal Album in Canada for your album *Synchro Anarchy*?

DM: Totally surreal. I remember our flight was at 7 am from Montreal to Edmonton, we were super busy with our individual lives but we didn't want to miss the Junos. We arrived in the afternoon, just had time to check in at the hotel, splash water in our faces and up we went! We were super tired but really enjoyed being there and meet a lot of people from the industry, friends, artists. You try not to think about the award, but of course it's in the back of your mind; trying to keep expectations low and just enjoy the moment. We pretty much managed to do that. We were getting maybe a bit too

comfortable, after dinner and a glass of wine we were getting sleepy, haha! Then I realized after a couple hours since we got there and the show started, that our category was coming up soon, I told the guys, hey guys we better be ready and be sharp, let's get a grip. We were just very tired, like when jetlag hits you in Tokyo a day after you arrived, it's like a baseball bat in the head haha.

So we talked a bit and figured we had to prepare something to say just in case we would win, we had no clue and not much perspective on the whole thing, our album, the other artists in the same category, I thought we had a chance to win but nothing more. I think it's better to be in that kind of mindset too – anything goes, wishing luck to our peers and hoping for the best!

Then co-host Andrew Phung was about to announce to winner of the Best Metal/Hard Music Album of the Year. He tried to pronounce the



name and had to try twice so that gave it away as we know it's hard to pronounce "Voivod" when you're not used to it. We all looked at each other with big smiles, not really understanding that we won a second Juno, it was really a mix of being very grateful, very happy, surprised and being on a cloud, but super tired at the same time haha! We had a blast though, we kept that smile for hours, our close ones were super proud. We all have the privilege to have our moms still around, so we all thought about them and how they were supportive from our birth to this point.

It's a moment where you feel appreciated for all the work you put into something. All the rough times in a career and in life kind of disappear for a split second and you feel a

warm pat on the back from the industry but also your peers and you can feel pride from your fans and you family, friends and loved ones. It's only positive.

AU: Tell us about your performance at Wacken Open Air in 2023 and the video for the song "Rise" you recorded there?

DM: It was only our second time at Wacken and it was a tough year for the festival due to poor weather. We got lucky, as we arrived on the last day and the flood was under control, so we could enjoy the experience. It was still a bit muddy, but I could walk around the site pretty easily.

The show went really well, the crowd was really into it. We had a lots of friends from bands side stage, which always adds an extra edge on your performance – you don't want to look like an idiot, haha! So the energy was there and we performed really well. I was recorded and filmed so we could use some of the footage to release a live video of a song that is featured on the 40th anniversary album *Morgöth Tales*. The original version of the song "Rise" is from the album *Phobos* (1997) and is originally sang by Voivod's then frontman Eric Forest. It's one of my favorite Voivod songs, so I'm really glad Snake accepted to sing it! It's one I really enjoy performing live.

AU: Where did you play the best show of your life?

DM: I can't pinpoint which one really, but the most impressive stage to play was probably opening for Metallica in Québec City in front of 100,000 people. I think the best show is yet to come, probably always the next one.

Another great memory for me was the first time we played in Japan, it was very deep, fans waited 30 years to see the band and it was very emotional. It's really hard to define "best show;" it can be the performance, the vibe, the context. I also remember playing a surprise gig during a festival in a small street, with a very minimal setup, and people had no idea it would happen. It was great!

Roadburn Festival was a great one too, and the International Jazz Festival of Montréal where I wrote a brass quintet arrangement for the song "The End of Dormancy" and we invited the brass section to come and play with us. It was a bucketlist moment for sure!

AU: I always notice Ivan Doroschuk from Men Without Hats always comes out to your shows

when you play in Victoria. Is he an old friend of the band?

DM: Ivan [has been] friends with Away (drums) and Piggy (guitar, R.I.P.) for decades. Also, Ivan played some keyboard parts on *Angel Rat* and *Phobos*. Away played the drums in Men Without Hats on the album *Sideways* and was in the band for that tour. You can see him in the video for "Sideways". They [have been] very good friends for a long time, so it's great to meet with Ivan when we play near him or when he tours near us. Maybe we'll cross paths on the road.

AU: What city has the best food?

DM: For me, Japanese food (pretty much anywhere in Japan but I really like the little fishing villages).

AU: Do you read any books? If so, what is the coolest book you've read lately?

DM: I'm reading two books at the moment, Shane Embury's autobiography (Napalm Death). I met Shane while touring with Voivod. He is a great guy, very talented, beyond [what] you can imagine, and his book triggered some memories of my own path into the music world. Sacrifices, passion, ambition, tough times, good times... it's a good read. I'm also reading a book called *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn which is a very interesting philosophical novel about modern civilization. I'm also in the middle of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which is a 1300s Italian narrative poem about the after life, the journey toward God, travelling through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. It's quite a challenge because of the historical references from that period in the Italian history. I read a book in Japanese as well, it's called *Akaikutsuaita*. It's about the tragedy of Hiroshima and the nuclear explosion, I actually bought it in Hiroshima a few years back after visiting the City and the Peace Memorial Museum... Something not to forget, life changing.

AU: Tell us about your latest tour with Prong. What can people expect from your live show?

DM: It is very exciting to tour with Prong, as they are such a unique band from the beginning. When I first heard them I got curious right away, they always had their own musical identity. It's definitely a great match to be on tour together, as the crowd of both bands has a similar taste in music, they don't want the "already digested pre-formed predictable" kind of music. Plus their latest album is kicking! We also refreshed the entire set-list for this tour, and since we haven't played the west coast and these cities since 2019, we can't wait to meet up with our friends and fans again. We're very excited about this, it's gonna be a great run! And we'll both deliver a hell of a show.

AU: Is Vancouver on March 6th at the Commodore Ballroom your only Canadian date this time around?

DM: This time around, yes, unfortunately. We're very happy to play the Commodore again, I think we haven't played this venue since our Canadian tour with Down in (2009-2010?).

AU: Any final words?

DM: Thanx a lot for keeping the scene alive! See you on tour!

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Photo by Catherine Deslauriers



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Fortyfuckingyears of Bunchofuckingoofs

By Eric Carr

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

Bunch of Fucking Goofs: Steve Goof, original singer for the BFGs – probably most infamous for fucking your girlfriend before you did or having what Archie from Son of Bronto describes as “the hardest punch in punk rock.”

Airock Goof, lead guitar – most infamous for playing in many other bands, like The 3Tards, Politikill Incorrect, and Shitloads of Fuck-all.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band and what are you all about?

BFG: The Bunchofuckingoofs (BFG) was born in Nov 1983 in Kensington Market in Toronto, playing their first show was at the legendary

Larry's Hideaway. The band was founded by Crazy Steve on vocals, Scrag on bass, Maddog on drums, and Bambi on guitar, who all lived together and practiced at their 24 hours a day, seven days a week boozecan called Fort Goof... 40 years and almost 40 Goofs later, the BFG is now Goose on drums, Jay Plo on bass, Airock on lead guitar, Mike Adaptive on rhythm and still Crazy Steve on vocals.



If you want to get a real idea about where the Bunchofuckingoofs are at, check out Jennifer Morton's book, *Dirty, Drunk, and Punk: The Twisted Crazy Story of the Bunchofuckingoofs*. You won't find a copy for sale too often and if you do, it could cost you a grand, but most Toronto libraries have a copy.

Along the way, we have unfortunately lost six good friends and band mates that will never be forgotten, Bambi, John Grove, Stompin' Al Miller, Godzilla, Cisco and Dirt.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

BFG: It's a heavy, hardcore, punk sound that

will kick your attention away from your stupid phones and TVs, with lyrics that are guaranteed to push all your buttons. We cannot say that we sound like this band or that band, but other bands can say that they sound like us if they want to.

AU: Take us through the band's discography if possible.

BFG: In 1985, BFG released three songs: “Destroy All Automobiles”, “Alcoholholiday Turned Alcoholocaust”, and “KAL007” on Jonestown Records' *Questionable, the Compilation* with three other Toronto bands, Living Proof, Animal Stags and Madhouse.

Our first solo release happened in 1986 when we put together a double 7" with eight songs on it, Back Alley Records' *There's No Solution, So There's No Problem*.

Later that year, we put out a seven song cassette titled, *Drunk, Destroyed, Demolished, The Demo* also on Back Alley Records.

In 1992 we hooked up with Fringe Records and in association with the Dayglo Abortion's label, God Records, and Back Alley and released the 16-song CD, *Carnival of Chaos + Carnage* which was also available on cassette.

We decided to try for a Factor grant in 1997 to help pay for the production of another CD and when Factor heard the demo, they sent the Goofs a letter saying they weren't interested in forking over any cash, calling the demo “totally unmarketable” which was released with Back Alley, on cassette, as *Totally Unmarketable*.

Then in 2000, BFG released 14 tracks of *Barrage of Battery and Brutality* on God Records working with Back Alley.

AU: What's the current punk and metal scene like in Toronto? Are there any other bands our readers should check out?

BFG: Yes, the scene seems to come back to life a bit after being stomped into the ground by the scandemic. There are always good bands coming out of T.O., and a lot of shitty ones, too, unfortunately. Toronto will never be as good as BC, especially the Van/Vic area, for producing so many of this country's heaviest bands

AU: BFG has always been a band people were scared to mess with. Is that reputation earned, or are you guys actually big teddy bears?

BFG: We've never been afraid to speak our minds and say what matters to us or back it up. Opposition and big mouths, combined with a lot of drinking can, unfortunately, get you hurt. We can be big teddy bears if you don't piss us off, but you probably will.

AU: How will BFG be celebrating their 40th Anniversary?

BFG: Well, you missed round one on the first of December, last year. With the help of Inertia Entertainment (the greatest metal promoter in Toronto), we celebrated our 14,610th day, [that's 40 years in case anyone wants to do the math] of drinking, fighting and fucking at Lee's Palace in Toronto. The celebration will continue in April, on April Goofs Day at the Bovine Sex Club in Toronto (T.B.C.) and in May with another show at Lee's Palace, the Warehouse in St. Catherines and Le Foufoune Electric in Montréal and whatever else we can put together before the 14,975th day of our fiscal party year.

AU: Any stand-out tracks from over the years you are extra stoked on?

BFG: Yes, there are a few songs that won't be leaving the setlist any time soon, like “In Dog We Trust”, “Alcoholholiday Turned Alcoholocaust” and “Get a Bike Asshole”.

AU: Are you guys working on any new tunes or a new album possibly?

BFG: We're gonna first finish the last tracks that are missing from our Assaulting Average Assholes recording and will be working on some new songs very soon. Not sure if it will be a full album but we'll be putting the first batch up online as we complete them so stay put.

Airock: I have a lot of guitar riffs recorded on my phone and Crazy has a stack of lyrics waiting to be devoured, so I'm pretty sure it won't be long before that falls together.

AU: Any chance you guys will be doing any touring to the West Coast?

BFG: Yes, we are planning an other side of the Rockies tour with some of our accomplices from Vic in July or August. Stay tuned. We will let AU know when that's all solidified.

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, which of your songs would be the best one to make sweet love to?

BFG: Yes, any and all of our songs, but especially

“Pink Track Pants” to remind you to be careful about where you squirt that load and while you are getting it on, you should both be wearing a Bunchofuckingoofs TEAMWORK shirt that you can use to mop up the mess afterwards If you don't have one, get one. Dustin Jak did the design.

AU: Hard and fast, or slow and romantic?

BFG: Hard and fast, or hard and slow. Lets save romantic for something else, like dying a starving artist, in a back alleyway.

AU: What does it say on the dating profiles of the band members?

BFG: They all say the same thing, if you wanna try and fuck any of these guys, just say “Hi.”

AU: Any special plans for V-Day this year?

BFG: Drinking, smoking weed, getting our dicks sucked and fighting the world, just the same as any other day.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything that might surprise our readers about you or the band?

BFG: We make incredibly civilized house guests while we are on the road! Are you surprised? I'll bet you thought we'd trash the place.

AU: Anything else to promote?

BFG: Just the four shows that I mentioned already and a strong dislike for nazi idiots, hahaha. Lots of new merch and shit will be happening soon, and when it does, you'll hear about it.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Crazy Steve: Yeah, remember, all the rumours you heard about us are true and we'll be seeing you soon.

Airock: Watch out, we are coming to your town. We are the band that everyone including your parents warned you about.

FB: Bunchofuckingoofs
backalley@tutamail.com



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Marble Ghosts

Hard Rock from the Capitol

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with Marble Ghosts, who are you what do you do?

Marble Ghosts: We are Marble Ghosts, and we play hard rock/metal out of Ottawa, Canada.

AU: You're releasing your debut EP on March 1st, what can you tell us about the five tracks?

MG: They are all different! "Old School", the EP's opening track, is a thrash punk medley with a biting, unforgettable chorus, while "Lie to Me" and "Alone" are more mainstream radio-friendly. However, both tracks still bring the heavy. "False Heroes" mixes a sludgy verse, a soaring chorus and a powerful, thundering instrumental finish that gets pits started when we play it live. Lastly, "End of the World", the most unique track on the EP, takes the quiet-to-loud verse-chorus formula

of 90s grunge and turns it on its head. The quiet verse with its almost detached vocals transitions into deafening double bass and heavy toms over desperate angry screams, and then it transitions into a powerful, melodic chorus.

AU: First records are always the toughest to make noise with for the band, how do you think new listeners will receive it?

MG: Based on how our first few singles have been received, we think that it will definitely make an impression on listeners. By mixing powerful messaging and really well-crafted songs, we think there is an audience for this kind of social justice heavy rock/metal.

AU: Your lyrics have many political messages about injustices. Would you like to go into detail about what messages you want to get across to new fans?

MG: We are trying to empower those who in more recent years have felt weakened by damaging politics and ideologies. Through our lyrics we speak truth to power, pushing the idea of rallying against outmoded views. "Old School" is the

perfect example of this. Despite representing a vocal minority, hateful religious groups have pushed their beliefs on others, impacting lives in countless ways. We know we won't change their minds, so the song is really a rallying cry against these types of hateful groups that think they can tell others who they can love and what women can do with their bodies, especially the chorus!

AU: The visual cover artwork has a broken statue of Canada's first Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, what's the story behind that?

MG: You are the first to notice this! While John A. is Canada's first Prime Minister, a father of confederation, and a person who was instrumental in connecting Canada through the railway system, he was also the architect of a cultural genocide against the Indigenous people of this country through a system of residential schools. Through this artwork and the lyrics in "False Heroes", we are warning against romanticizing and celebrating figures whose mindsets were at their core harmful and led in many cases to abusive and criminal acts. We aren't saying don't teach the history or ignore the successes of controversial historical figures. We are saying that they should be judged with a present-day lens and their legacy should reflect this. The artwork by Edith Fluet is



inspired by the real-life dismantling of John A.'s statue in Montréal, Québec.

AU: How's the music scene in Ottawa?

MG: Going strong! At our last show, the Dominion Tavern was packed, despite it being -20°C. The crowd was really into it too, with a pit forming and most people staying around for the other bands. This was our experience at Café Dekcuf, where we played our first show in November. Again, the place was packed! Ottawa gets called the

most boring town in Canada or the place where fun goes to die, but overall, that hasn't been our experience. The bands really want to help each other out. The promoters are great, ensuring that the bands are paid fairly. Overall, we would say, the scene is going strong.

AU: Any plans for the band to tour this year? Any upcoming shows?

MG: We are opening for The Lazys at The 27 Club in Ottawa on February 29th. We'll be joined by Taming

Sari. After that, we'll start working on the next EP and book some festivals for the summer.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

MG: Please support local! Every band, even the biggest in the world, had to start somewhere.

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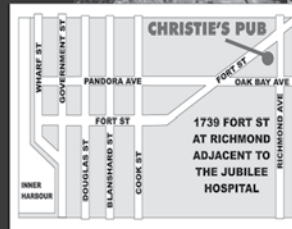


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Omnivide Metal from Moncton, NB

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with Omnivide, who are you and what do you do?

Omnivide: We are a progressive metal band from Moncton, NB, Canada. We formed in 2020 and have been playing live since 2022. We make proggy/techy metal with symphonic elements.

AU: You have your debut album *A Tale of Fire* out on March 22nd, what can you tell us about this album?

Omnivide: It's an album that we've been working on since the inception of the band, and some of the songs are even older than that. We tried to bring in all of our favorite influences into it to create something that is heavy at its core but has variety in terms of intensity, style and songwriting. There are elements of death metal, prog, symphonic elements, classical guitar and more. We're big fans of progressive music in general, so creating an album that's multifaceted musically was something we really wanted to do. It doesn't stick to one specific genre of metal but instead explores many and puts them all together in a progressive melting pot.

AU: First albums are always the toughest to make noise with for the band, how do you think new listeners will receive it?

Omnivide: It's really difficult for us to predict, but our hope is that people will find it original and interesting at least. We tried to make something unique inspired by all the music we love without emulating any of our influences too closely. We hope people who listen

to the album from start to finish will experience it as a journey that goes to various places musically, exploring various facets of metal, with many highs and lows in intensity.

AU: How was it self-producing/doing everything in-house for the record?

Omnivide: It was a very challenging experience that was very gratifying in the end. We started off with very little recording or audio engineering knowledge at the beginning of the project and learned everything as we went. It was intense and at times frustrating, we re-recorded some of the songs three times because we realized that we had made a technical mistake during tracking. We did outsource for a few things, as the drums were recorded with François Fortin from Studio La Boîte Noire, and he also mixed/mastered the album. Those were difficult and crucial elements that we wanted to make sure were done well by a professional.

AU: What drew the band to the symbolism of fire on the album cover and in the album title?

Omnivide: The symbolism of fire was something we came up with after writing some of the lyrics for the album. We realized that death was a common theme across the songs and that fire was used to represent it a few times. It came together by itself to some extent, and once we realized that we honed in on the concept with

the album art and in the rest of the lyrics. The presence of fire throughout the artwork and lyrics symbolizes death in all of its forms, whether it be the death of a person, a relationship, a period of one's life or a belief, because of fire's destructive power. It's also a reference to the cycle of death and rebirth, with how fire destroys but also leaves a blank slate for new life to take place. It also represents life, and how the inner flame of an individual can burn brightly or weakly. It's an all-encompassing metaphor for life and death, in all its positive and negative aspects.

AU: You have a choice of one song to show the biggest rockstar you're a fan of to hear your music, what track would it be?

Omnivide: The title track of our upcoming album is a really good all-around representation of our sound, having a symphonic intro, heavy/techy sections, and a very progressive structure, so I would probably go with that one!

AU: Omnivide first began as an Opeth Tribute band called Sunbird, do you find being in a tribute can strengthen a band's musicianship? What is it about Opeth that drew most of the members to start a cover band?

Omnivide: I think it was a good experience for us at the time. It built us up as musicians and strengthened the chemistry between the members. On a personal level, I was intentionally doing that project to work on my vocals and ability to sing while playing. The plan from the beginning was to do the tribute thing first and then transition to our own material.

MARITIME MAELSTROM

AU: How's the metal scene in the Maritimes?
Omnivide: We have a really good scene overall. Bands from all over the Maritimes will play shows together and there's a strong sense of community that can be felt throughout the scene, with lots of shows happening all the time. New bands get opportunities to join the scene as well which I think is really important. The only thing is that it's a bit self-contained and more difficult to break out from towards other Canadian provinces.

AU: Any shoutouts to other Maritime bands our readers should also check out?

Omnivide: We've played shows with many great bands from the Maritimes, a few that we love would be Necrohol, Ancient Thrones, Elevate the Virus, Tactus, Zach Leger, Exulted... There's a bunch more that I'm missing here but all of these are definitely worth checking out!

AU: Any plans to tour Eastern Canada or beyond this year to support the album?

Omnivide: Most definitely, we currently have a tour planned to support our album release in April that will take us to Ontario and back, We'll play four shows in the Maritimes and then 11 or so shows in Québec and Ontario. It was a lot of work to book that all by ourselves as a band with no music out yet, but it's starting to shape up and we're really excited to share our music beyond our little corner of the world!

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Bayonet Dismemberment Vancouver Brutal Death

Interview by AU Editorial

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

Bayonet Dismemberment: Landon Furoy, Christian Frizzelle and Aslan Shomakhov of Bayonet Dismemberment – the west coast avengers of slamming, brutal death metal.

AU: Do you feel like each band member brings something unique to the table? How so?

Landon: Bayonet Dismemberment consists of many unique individuals. Aside from each [person] bringing our own flair to the way we play our instruments and perform, coming from different backgrounds/sub-genres [means] each member has their own style visually.

Christian: Our vocalist Landon brings the windmills to the stage. He has an extensive background in hip-hop production and marketing. Our guitarist Andre is an amazing sound engineer, producer and shredder. Our drummer Aslan is a walking encyclopedia. He has played in many hardcore bands previously, which contributes a lot to the band's grooves. Myself, I am extremely dedicated to the dream and bringing back solos in the death metal scene

AU: How would you describe Bayonet Dismemberment's sound?

BD: A cave-dwelling, terror-inducing auditory assault.

AU: Who are your strongest musical influences?

Landon and Christian: Cannibal Corpse, Dying Fetus, Suffocation, Sanguisugabogg, Nile, 200 Stab Wounds, Vomit Forth.

Aslan: One Second Thought, Recon.

AU: Tell us about your new album! What can we expect to hear?

BD: Landmine bass drops and cave-dwelling riffs. Our new EP *Carnage of War* is our debut three song EP featuring some of our favourite death metal vocals in the new wave of brutal death metal from Vomit Forth and Sanguisugabogg.

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

BD: *Carnage of War* explores themes of war and torture with pop culture references based in the Desert Storm 90s era.

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

Landon: My personal favourite to play live is "Seared" which we recently released a full length music video for, but overall "Engulfed in Oil Fire" (ft. Devin Swank of Sanguisugabogg) is my favourite. I have been a huge fan of them for a very long time and I am so stoked to see how big they are getting! Devin is a very humble and down to earth

vocalist and a big influence of mine.

Christian: "Carnage of War" (ft. Kane Gelaznik of Vomit Forth) is personally my favourite track on the EP. There is a SICK "Dying Fetus-esque" guitar trade off at the end of the song with tapping. I think the song really captures what we are trying to portray as a band."

Aslan: "Carnage of War"

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

Landon: Tall glass of wine, *Evil Dead* (1983) and *Mortician's Hacked Up For Barbecue* (1997) on repeat.

Christian: Sitting here in my Aquajet 9000 enjoying, well, my usual meal of steak, waffles, french fries and of course, scotch.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

BD: We are playing at the Rickshaw Theater on February 20th opening for death metal veterans Vader, Origin and Inhuman Condition on the 20th. Hoping to get some shows going across Canada/USA this year.

bandcamp.bayonetedismemberment.com
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The Rights

The Rights One-Man Black Metal

Interview by AU Editorial



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

Ramona Jones: I'm Ramona Jones, the one behind the solo project called The Rights.

AU: How would you describe your sound?

RJ: The music in the project is quite computer-made, like midi and with digital effects put on. It's quite interesting to hear.

AU: Who influences you musically?

RJ: My influences are The Clash, The Jam, David Bowie, Mayhem and Dawn Ray'd. I'm quite diverse in musical genres, I don't tend to stick to one. I love old songs. Modern day songs are so capitalistic.

AU: How do you approach writing music?

RJ: I don't come up with any music sheets or write an idea of what I want in it, I tend to make it up as you go. I do have general ideas but nothing too in-depth. I don't practice music theory either.

AU: Does your music explore any particular themes or topics?

RJ: It's all instrumental, so my music tends to have an angry, sad or creepy vibe. If you need to look at what a song generally represents? Look at the song title and come up with your own meaning.

AU: Any current songs in the making that you're stoked on?

RJ: I already finished with an upcoming album, but I'm stoked for the release of it. It's different from my other black metal songs. I took a heavy dose of Nirvana, 90s grunge and Foo Fighters and imbued it into my style of black metal.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

RJ: Not much, I don't really have any significant other to hang out with.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

RJ: Don't believe in what the higher-ups say about your future. It's yours to make, rise up and make that future better off. Believe in revolutionary socialism. It's the true way to be a human. Screw the capitalists, fake social democrats and fascists. Workers: rise and fight the class war.

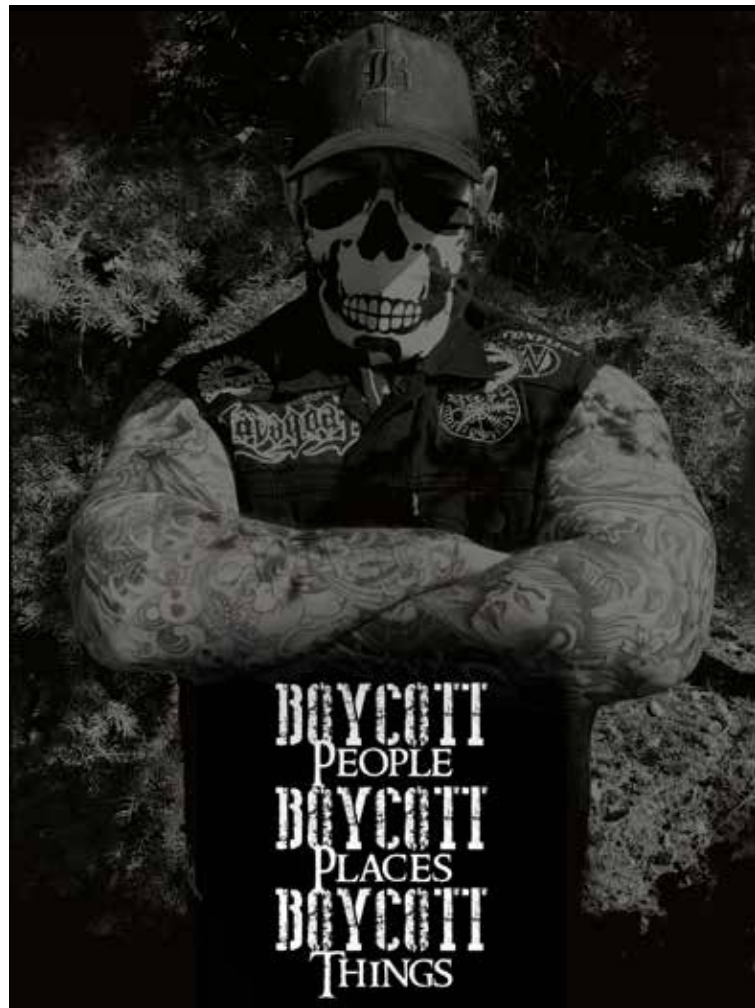
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What is the Program?

Absolute Underground: Who are you? What do you do?

Pat Horinawa: My name is Pat Horinawa and I founded Dragon Slayer Recovery. I operate two tattoo studios in central Canada, and have been drug-free about 20 years now, and sober for about 17. My partner and I founded DSR as a registered nonprofit with the mandate of helping youth at risk and advocating for positive community development.

AU: What is the program?

PH: The program is a set of non-denominational lifestyle activities we compiled to help people steer away from toxic coping mechanisms, towards more positive lifestyle choices. We try to encourage people to make choices today they will be proud of tomorrow. People don't need to be part of DSR to utilize the program for their own benefit though.

AU: Why did you put the program together?

PH: I was hardcore punk for years, with a history of childhood trauma, interference, and abuse. I eventually got into gang activity, run-ins with the law, etc. I got hooked on methamphetamine and alcohol in my 20s, but would use anything I could get my hands on for almost a decade. I almost died a couple of times. I've seen a lot

of arrests and deaths from drug abuse in my circle; friends getting really lost in toxic lifestyle choices. Unhealthy pastimes that were really damaging, whether they knew it or not. After a serious suicide attempt, doctors told me I would likely need psych meds for life. I didn't like the sound of that. The 12 step "higher power" program wasn't really working for me either. A lot of people in that scene didn't want to be accountable for their own actions. So many acted like cult members with the prayer and monotone chants. I became close friends with a couple NA veterans, and we agreed that an

alternative, modern, self-work program needed to be developed for people more like us.

I had been attending meditation at temple and therapy for my PTSD. I had read on Indigenous medicine traditions, yoga, and therapy strategies. I eventually organized a fairly hardcore little

lifestyle manual for myself to follow: fitness, diet, philosophy and personal cultural ceremonies. I passed it to friends. It worked pretty good for me, and the proof was that my life and recovery had become fairly successful! So my partner and I decided compile it into a zine, and started publishing it for free. We also printed some shirts, and sold them to fund the zine.

AU: Who is the program designed for?

PH: The program is for anybody wanting to make real changes towards a better life. It advocates a more hardcore DIY self-work model, with an emphasis on self-accountability. Nobody is going to hold your hand. The program is for people that are actually willing to battle themselves to revise potentially toxic life choices, regardless of circumstances that led them there. If you can't change your environment, you definitely *can* change yourself. I really dig Gandhi's idea of "being the change you want to see in the world". Thinking globally and acting locally.

AU: Is there any cost involved in participating?

PH: The website is always up for free, and our zines are always free to anyone that wants to send us a self-addressed, stamped

manila envelope. We usually throw in some free stickers, or patches, or other stuff if people go through the effort to send an envelope big enough. Maybe a shirt if they write a nice enough letter, or toss in a well-hidden \$10-\$20 bill. Everything we do is donation based, or privately-funded. It's not a pyramid scheme or cash grab. I have a job.

AU: What is expected from individuals working in the program?

PH: Potentially difficult self work. Saying no to your next high, exercising, eating healthier... these are the last things the dopamine-seeking mind wants to do. Nobody else will save us from ourselves. These are facts. Nobody else will lift our weight for us. Addiction is a profitable business, whether it is tobacco, gambling, fast food, or porn. There are a lot of industries dedicated to keeping folks hooked and sedated on whatever trip gets them high. We have to do our own work.



PUNKS IN RECOVERY



We encourage people to try to find a few people that share common values and goals, and start working a program with them. A few friends can quickly turn into a small accountability squad. That's what DSR is more about; a war against toxicity. Accountability squads can keep you on track with fitness or sobriety, offer a network of support when things are getting tough, or people to go to gigs with that aren't just looking to get loaded.

AU: How would a person get more info?

PH: Our mailing address is:

PO Box 21032, Grosvenor park, Saskatoon, SK, Canada S7H-5N9.

Our email is StandardBearerDSR@gmail.com, but take a minute, write us a physical letter.

whatistheprogram.com



RIPCORDZ

A LITTLE BIT EXTRA

ACROSS

1. 60's rug or sexual activity
5. Nail salon service
9. Goes across
14. Reid of "Sharknado"
15. Word before Chef or Man
16. Horse race winnings
17. Modern Persia
18. L7's "Shit ____"
19. First name in beauty
20. *Vancouver band helps correct your writing?
23. ____ shanty
24. Letters for a grandson
25. *Vancouver band goes pop?
34. Tolkein baddie
35. Partner of aches
36. Sao Paolo hello
37. ____ Speedwagon
38. Cow houses
39. Actress Godot
40. "Wheel of Fortune" request
41. Actors Lahr and Convey
42. Hospital test
43. *Hamilton band gaslights someone?
48. Award in England: Abbr.
49. Pooh's pal
50. *Toronto band invites others to take the stage?
59. (Have) lots of fun
60. Cell phone company that went to the dogs?
61. Ramones' first label
62. "Exactly!"
63. "The ____ Dead"
64. At least one was terrible
65. Kill switch
66. Pot
67. Skin

DOWN

1. Can or cooler
2. Bugs Bunny, for example
3. 90% of Egypt
4. Elephant God
5. Country music's Ronnie
6. Give it ____
7. You may win by one of these
8. Global: Abbr.
9. 1995 sci-fi/horror film

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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CROSSWORD NO. 102

FEBRUARY, 2024

10. The Seeds' "_____" 'Too Hard"
11. European cultural network
12. Tiny time interval
13. Metallica's "____ and Destroy"
21. Lion sign
22. Legal claims
25. Sacha Baron Cohen character
26. Jim Carrey film "Me, Myself and ____"
27. Soundtrack
28. Most cars have one
29. Wayne's best friend
30. Washing machine cycle
31. Affleck/Damon comedy
32. Raise the ____
33. Certain Ivy League student
38. Sire
41. Onesie follow-up
44. Anti-globalization book
45. Golfer with an army
46. Part of modern addresses
47. TV series "____ Girl"
50. "I Got You ____"
51. Eye part
52. It may be found in a belly button
53. Not very many
54. Many albums
55. Sedgwick who hung out with The Velvet Underground
56. Centre of activity
57. Type of test
58. Travelled to

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Prince Albert Scene Report

By Clay Cott

It's Valentine's in Prince Albert and there is love in the air... along with snow mold and the sound of chainsaws from the Winter Festival (February 9th-25). We are taking a break from the regular to sit down with a few bands as they prep for episode one of Scream Stream Blood on the Snow, an online event showcasing Prince Albert's talented punk, metal and all things in between.

We have with us today The Dirty Sanchez Orchestra (DSO), TV Casualties (TVC), Burning Pallets (BP) and Viscous Turbidity (VT).

We having burning questions and possibly loins.

Absolute Underground:
First off, if your band could marry another band and have babies... who would your significant other be and what would your baby sound like?

DSO: Here's a weird one; as a band we've been doing a deep listen to the album *Amperland, NY* by Pinegrove. I think right now, we'd like to be pregnant and barefoot in Pinegrove's kitchen. Our babies would be fast, aggressive and melodic, with a dramatic, measured patience... lyrically, very personal, wistful and narrative.

TVC: I used to try and get Saskatoon's Old Tolerated to spend the night at Prince Albert's National Hotel with me, followed by an early morning breakfast at the downtown A&W (R.I.P), proclaiming we could create sounds that would make the world believe Kurt Cobain was still alive



and had joined the Misfits. These days, I settle for trying to get their bass player Ernie alone in my trailer in the woods.

BP: I wanted Derek from Meet the Guts to sing a big sexy hook for a Burning Pallets track. Micheal Bolton-style.

VT: I'm in lust with Lutheran. Their sound is like a priest dying in a nun's arms, so I imagine our offspring would sound like slowly roasting a baby while it suckled on an undead bison.

AU: When you are courting bands for possible dates, A.K.A. gigging together, what are some red flags that just stop the show?

DSO: We've been really lucky to have played almost exclusively with easy-going and professional bands. Hard partying would be a big red flag and I don't think we'd be going on a second date with anyone who had a rider, took an encore or generally came across as a paycheck

player. Standard first date red flags such as poor hygiene, lack of style or sexual deviance are probably OK.

TVC: Zero band members wearing Chuck Taylors. The term "elder emo". "What do you mean no meal comp!?"

BP: If you're a rapper, don't stream the song from your set off of Spotify. Trust me when I say nobodies coming out for rap karaoke twice. Oh, and rap-attacking merch guys.

VT: If you can't set up and tear down in 15 mins. Fix your hair and get chlamydia on your own time.

AU: Finally, what is your ideal spot for a date besides drinking tall boys on the river?

DSO: Prince Albert is full of great spots to spend Valentine's Day. Long drives with two coffees and

SASKATCHEWAN SLAUGHTER

a playlist are always sweet – driving west past the federal penitentiary will take you through rolling hills and poplar bluffs, while driving north past the women's jail and juvenile detention center is a sea of dark, romantic pine. If your date is the outdoor type, hiking down to the rotting ruins of the half-finished-then-abandoned hydro dam is nice. Throwing shopping carts off the old train bridge is physical fun for sporty couples. If things start to heat up, the woods around the sewage treatment plant are a great place to fog up those car windows, though we also like the gravel parking lot between the bingo hall and the cemetery. The only two rules for dating in Prince Albert: keep moving to avoid a loitering charge and the public library pretty much *has* to let you

use their bathroom.

TVC: A dingy basement in the east end with Kris Mailbag cooking outdated cans of ravioli on a rusted cast iron pan.

BP: Spice Trail – Prince Albert's finest cuisine.

VT: It's been so long, I can't have roast beef without getting worked up. So, umm, not Arby's.

dirtysanchezorchestra.bandcamp.com

tvcasualties.bandcamp.com

burningpallets.bandcamp.com

viscousturbidity.bandcamp.com

Prince Albert Punk and Metal events:

threadbare-productions.com/events

Photos by Will Yannacoulis, TJ Mickleborough

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Rules

Interview by B.A. Johnston and Ira Hunter

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

Ben Rispin: My name is Ben Rispin and I'm probably the most infamous for speaking my mind when no one asks. I play in a band called Rules with my best buds.

AU: Who else is in the band and what does it say on their Tinder profiles?

BR: I get to be in a band with Chuck Coles, Adam Michael and Alex Standen. We all have wives and partners so I don't think anyone has a Tinder profile. It would probably say "will stay up late talking about nonsense" for all of us though.

AU: Give us a brief history of your band.

BR: We've all been friends and collaborators forever. Rules started in the Penske Files' basement in 2013 or 2014. We've been borrowing their gear ever since. We put out our first full



BR: I have a gluten thing so it's been a minute but if I were to recommend a cold cut sandwich in Hamilton I'd go with Bonanza Bakery in the North End.

AU: You ever wear shorts on stage? If not, why not? How hot would it have to be to get you to wear them on stage?

BR: I used to wear shorts on stage. I don't have the legs for it. It would have to be hot enough for me to not have gross legs.

AU: You are trapped in a hotel for 24 hours alone with a VCR. What tapes are you bringing?

BR: The Burbs. Weird Science. Evil Dead 2. Star Wars (ANH), Spider-Man 2. Rocky Horror Picture Show. Stripes. Mad Dog and Englishmen. I might bring Nightmare too. That weird game in case I got bored.

length in 2020 on Stomp and Cursed Blessings called *The Bummer Circus Comes To Truth City*. It was recorded in 3 takes live off the floor while a bunch of the band were on acid. We're really proud of it.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

BR: I get to play with the craziest dudes I could find in the craziest band I could

AU: How do you goobers get to shows? Describe your band ride.

BR: Anyway we can right now. It looks like our pals in Ghost Drops might be helping us out with this in April.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

BR: We're playing a few shows in April with our friends' Lee Reed and hip-hop producer and July Talk drummer Danny Miles. It's in support of a project we're collaborating on called *Endless Bummer*. It's Danny's reimagining of our record *The Bummer Circus Comes To Truth City* with Lee Reed on main vocals and a ton of guests. It's been super fun working with these guys and Marcone from Halo Studios again. Super creative dudes.

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

BR: Our last record was *The Bummer Circus Comes To Truth City* but we're going to start writing together soon which is very exciting. The working title for whatever comes next is *Worse Things Happen To Better People*.

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

BR: We haven't really discussed that kind of stuff yet and I'm not sure if we will. I imagine it will be largely focused on subjects that upset us.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you're stoked on?

BR: I'd love people to check out Lee Reed and Danny Miles' *Endless Bummer* mix of our song "God Hates Flags." So rad.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

BR: I hope to neck m'lady.

AU: Any dating/marriage advice for this post-pandemic world?

BR: I accidentally pooped in the shower last year and could have gotten away with it. I didn't want to live a lie though and I knew my partner Hayley would think it was gross but funny. I got my friend

HAM JAMMERS



Michie Mee to tell her and now Hayley brags about it. I guess my advice is if you accidentally poop in the shower, get the Canadian Queen of Hip-Hop to tell your partner.

AU: Any fetishes to share?

BR: Lisa Vanderpump is my elevator pass? Is that good?

AU: Any final words for our readers?

BR: Be excellent to each other

@rulesareaband

Colour photo by Devin Meisner

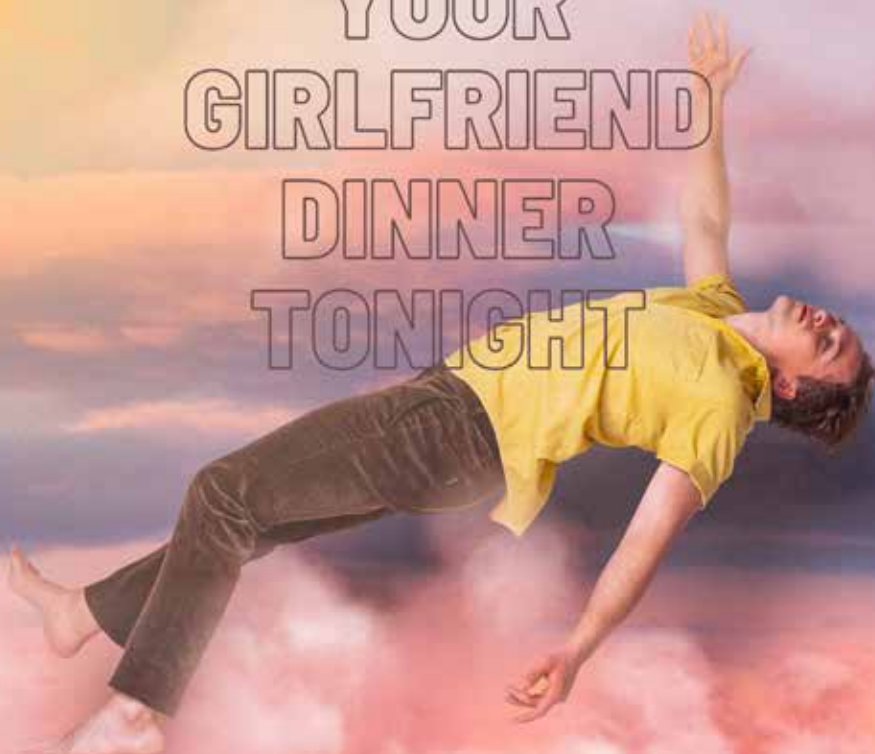
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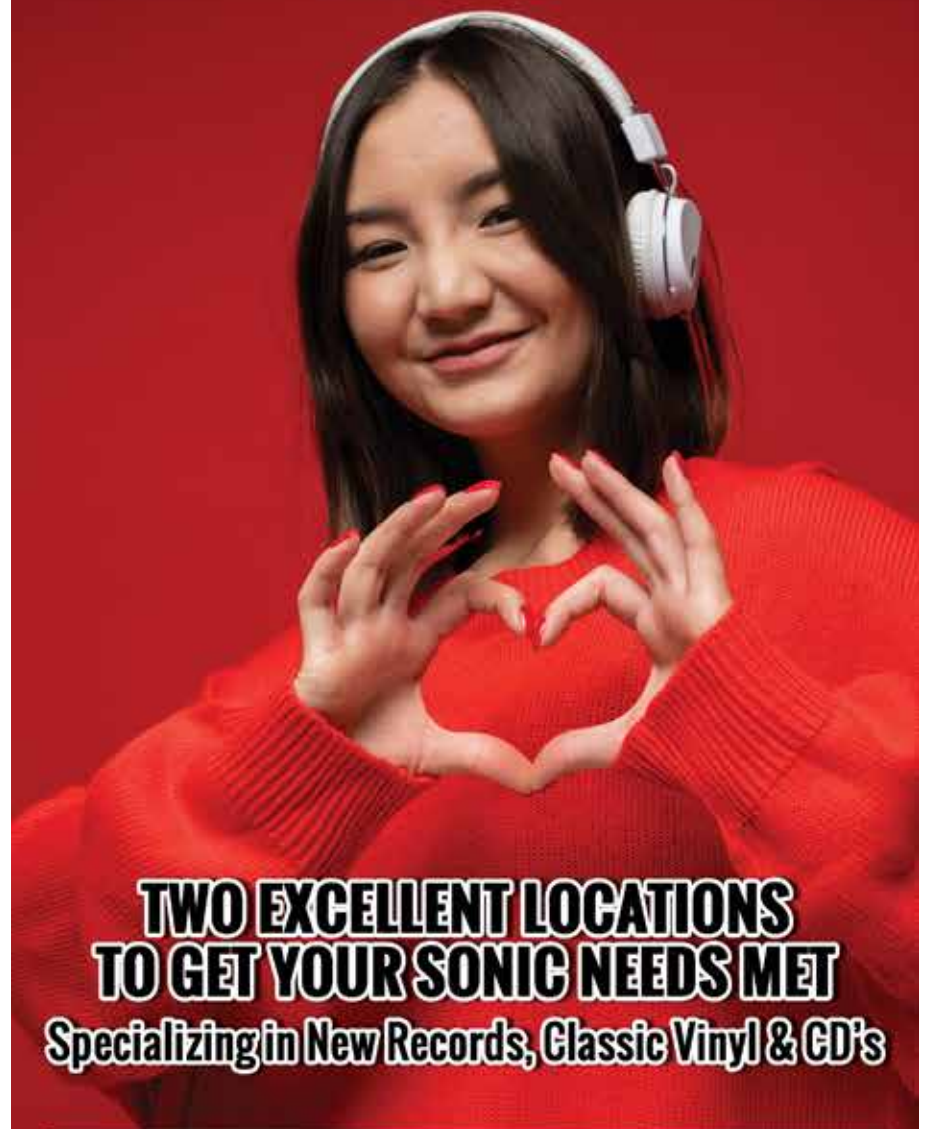
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Locality Brewing

Interview with Owner Melanie MacInnes

By Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: How long have you been involved in the brewing world?

Melanie MacInnes: In 2016 we kicked off a new farming journey on [our] family Farm. Over the years, the family farm was a dairy farm, horse ranch, apple orchard and tree plantation, Andrew (Maltster and Co-Owner) and I wanted to find a farm operation that really resonated with us and could combine our family life with farming and business and decided to try planting barley and hops. At the time, our friend Erik had a 50L homebrew kit and we would test out some our locally grown ingredients. Iain, owner of Strange Fellow, also came out and collaborated with The Farm on a 100 Mile Beer using our Malted Barley. That was really cool to see our beer at such a highly regarded brewery!



AU: How did Locality Brewing get its start?

MM: We started malting in 2017. Malting is a step to prepare the locally grown barley, rye and wheat for the brewhouse. There were no processing facilities in the Lower Mainland so we signed up for courses and conferences in Winnipeg and Montana and started to learn the trade. The obvious next step was to get a licence so we could sell locally grown beer. The permit process was llooonnggg. Some folks don't like change and putting a brewery in a old dairy parlour did not make "John" as happy as it makes our community.

AU: What types of beer do you brew?

MM: We try to have a style on tap for everyone. We are known more for traditional and clean

styles that suit and highlight the ingredients we can grow here. Karen, our Head Brewer, is an avid tea drinker and designed a recipe for our Black Tea Lager – people love it! Our Assistant Brewer Emily designed a recipe that we did in collaboration with Barn Owl Brewing called Farm to Barn Dirty Chai. Our Thank You Honey Lager showcases not only the malted barley and fuggle hops from the farm but also the wildflower honey and delicately highlights the season subtleties of the honey.

AU: What sets Locality apart?

MM: We are grateful for the OG craft breweries that paved the way for all of us to do what we love. Although these trail blazers opened the door for us, it would not be polite to cookie cut or encroach on their dream. Locality is okay with staying 'off-road'. The slow beer journey allows us to connect with passionate artisans and farmers, allowing us to showcase the carefully-grown, locally-grown ingredients. We are inspired by the likes of Whistle Buoy and Small Gods on Van Island, Sidekick in Chilliwack, Crannog in Sorrento, and others who appear to be following their heart. 'Dream-it-do-it', building a space with all things they enjoy in life and not necessarily doing what gets likes on Instagram. The adventure is where or who you are lucky enough to share the beer with that elevates the journey.

AU: Where are you located? Can people stop by to sample your beer?

MM: We are hard to find in the farmland of the Township of Langley and you have to leave the pavement (literally). It's possible to find us without a GPS but your senses would need to be dialed (so please use a GPS) – just type in Locality Brewing. Look for the hop yards, listen to the sounds of people being silly by the lagoon or skateboarding on the indoor bowl. Smell the malt roasting and wort brewing, taste the local terroir. Feel more connected (but not to your phone) even though you are only 15 minutes from Langley and 5 minutes off Highway 1.

AU: Where can Locality beer currently be found on tap?

MM: Salmon n' Bannock on Broadway and at the Airport - International Departures. Craft Market in Olympic Village, The Tap House, The Delta Hotel Downtown, The Barley Merchant, Fitzsimmons Pub in Whistler, The Churchill in Victoria, Beatnik's, Saba, The Raving Gamer, Omni...

We are in select Liquor stores – if you live in Vancouver, we are at Legacy Liquor Store.

AU: Any seasonal brews to look forward to?

MM: If you prefer to connect with the mountains, keep a look out for our Pow Day Locality X Thirtytwo Collab. It's a Vienna Lager that uses traditional floor malted barley. Looks like a lift ticket... just with a more affordable price tag.

AU: Do you plan to attend any events this summer?

MM: We try our very best to bring the farm to off-site events, however, our beer (and soon our locally-grown cider) is best paired in nature or on-farm. We want to reconnect people with the land in this beautiful part of our delicate planet. On-farm events kick off in March, starting with a skateboard contest hosted by Hippie Mike, followed by a few April Fools shenanigans, Mothers/Fathers Day, Métis Festival, a Summer Solstice music event literally on the lagoon, antique market, anniversary, barley harvest, fresh hop pick... We will be part of the Pink Boots Brew that will be showcased with all the Langley Breweries at Farm Country Brewing on March 8th. We will also be at The Vancouver Beer Festival, Langley's Brewhalla, Whistler Beer Festival and Victoria's Beer Festival.

AU: You mentioned launching a beer next week in collaboration with ThirtyTwo and Timebomb Apparel. How did that come about and what can beer lovers expect from the brew?

MM: The Vienna Lager that we did in collaboration with Thirtytwo and Timebomb apparel and came about because of Andy and my love of snowboard, we actually met in Whistler while Andy was on a one year work visa from Australia. Thirtytwo boots were my first ever snowboard boots and those boots were on my

feet when I fell madly in love with the sport. Timebomb has been super supportive of us and we are excited to showcase Our floor malted – just like back in the day – Vienna Lager.

AU: I heard you have a "Super Skate Bowl", can you tell us about that?

MM: The Bowl started as a little halfpipe and then slowly evolved into a bowl, we ended up getting a tent cover and Gator skin keeping the bowl skateable all year round. Being landlocked, we wanted to bring our joys and passions to the farm. Andy loves skating and I have fallen in LOVE with surfskating. Just last weekend, we hosted The GrlSwirl crew – a Worldwide network of passionate skate and surfskate people. We are hoping to team up with some of the skate and snow groups like Sister Shredders and Shred Catz. Also 5.0 skateshop hosts a drop in skate night once a week here.

AU: What's it like being a woman in the industry?

MM: We are part of the Langley Loop which is all the breweries in Langley, including a cidery and distillery. The majority are owned by men, but this group in particular have been amazing to work with. I feel so lucky and supported. Both our brewers are female as well. We have endured "not so cool" statements before or customers who will ask any male in the room, what is the best beer, to avoid asking me. Or people will pop their head in the brewery while our brewers are literally adding hops to the boil and ask where "the brewer is". At Locality we are trying to use our voice, as anyone that has a platform has that privilege, and we are trying to use it to help dissolve biases and create a space where people feel safe, heard and seen.

localitybrewing.ca

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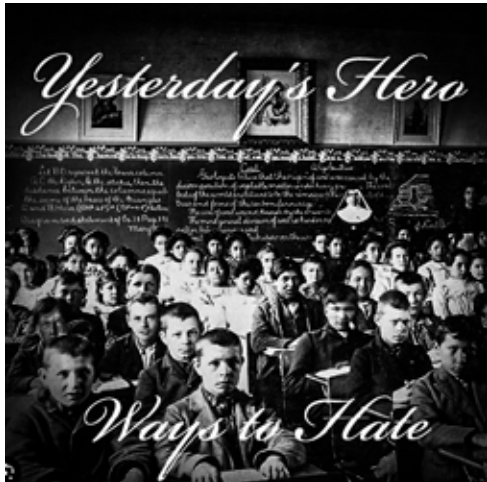
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Yesterday's Hero

Interview with Guitarist Tony Smith

AU: For those unfamiliar with Yesterday's Hero, what can you tell us about the band?

TS: We are a hard rock/alt metal band from Ohio. We use a combination of groove and drive to lay a foundation for smooth melodies. The result is something new, yet familiar enough to bring back some numetal memories.

AU: You dropped your debut album *Ways To Hate* back in November 2023, what can you tell us about this album?

TS: This album is the direct result of toxic relationships! A divorce brought us together. Another love went sour and influenced the lyrics. We grew together as a band and the songs evolved with us. Each song represents a different stage of relationships.

AU: What would you like fans to take away from the album?

TS: That regardless of the situation, look for the positives. Learn from your mistakes, know your

worth and grow! Sometimes you need to "Bounce" and other times you need to realize when "Life's so Good".

AU: Why do you think that relationships always make for great lyrical content in songs?

TS: The best songs grab you with relatable emotions. Heartfelt lyrics transcend. Everyone has fallen in love. Everyone has had their heart broken. It makes for a very relatable song. Writing is therapy and nothing has caused more need for therapy!

AU: Your track "Life's so Good" has a great hook and guitar solo. Do you think these two elements capture a new fan's attention or more is needed? What do you think makes Yesterday's Hero today's new music hero?

TS: Interesting question. So here we are a straight-forward analog five-piece. Lugging tube heads to shows. Not doing anything fancy in the studio, everything is a single track except a couple vocal melodies. Meanwhile, we are surrounded by bands using DSP's and backing tracks. Yes, using tracks is the "it" thing to do right now. We have had talks about using some. No denying you can do some amazing things with them. That said, is it not all about the song? Melody will always prevail. Melody is timeless. So yeah, we hit you with a good hook and we still believe in guitar solos. We lay back in the shadows paying respect to the melody and ignoring trends... that's what makes a hero, especially to the underground.

AU: You build high-end custom cars, what's the most notable car you've ever built? Have you built the band a tour bus yet? Was the car in the background of your "Bounce" music video one of his custom jobs?

TS: As far as notable goes, that's debatable. We have built anything from two Great 8 Ridler-winning cars to championship-winning race cars. We have had several magazine covers (July '23 Hot Rod Mag most recent) and probably around 50 magazine features, multiple TV appearances

as well. One of my personal favorites is a car called Chevicious. It's a '71 Chevelle. There are so many subtle, yet extreme changes to this car, I could talk all day! Google it! The main Caddy in the background is owned by a friend. The rest of the cars are actually in their build process! I feel cars have a unique connection to music. Cars and guitars 'til I die! As far as the bus goes, we do have a small bus. I put a couple couches in it and it's perfectly not nice, haha. No worries about messes, just hose it out! We call it the litter box - follow the band to know why, haha.

AU: How's the metal scene in Ohio these days?

TS: Heavy! We live in NW Ohio. We are usually

AMERICAN IMPORT

called a rock band around here, haha. There are countless killer heavy vocal bands in our area.

AU: Any upcoming tour plans?

TS: Nothing locked in yet but we are trying to do a small run late summer/early fall.

AU: Anything else you would like for our readers?

TS: Thank you for supporting this magazine! Magazines and live music are struggling in this chaotic digital world. Read some articles and go to a show!

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RIPCORDZ TOUR TIPS

As we've been driving back and forth across Canada for more than three decades, we've come up with some guidelines that help us on the road. Figured we'd share.

They're tips, not rules. Everyone has their own way of touring, but some of these may help younger bands on their way.



PART SIX

TOUR TIP NUMBER 31



CAN'T FIND THE LOCAL PUNK HOUSE? ASK AT THE LOCAL BEER STORE.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 32



APPRECIATE EVERYONE WHO WEARS YOUR COLOURS

TOUR TIP NUMBER 33



NO STAGE + GOOD PIT = CHIPPED TEETH

It'll happen no matter how you position the microphone. The price you pay for Punk.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 34



ALWAYS STAND AT THE T-SHIRT TABLE

Everyone at the same level.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 35



EACH MEMBER SHOULD HAVE A SEALABLE PLASTIC BAG FOR DIRTY LAUNDRY

...to be opened directly into a washing machine.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 36



THE COOLER THE VAN, THE GREATER THE CHANCE OF GETTING A TICKET

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Ectoplasm Disgraceful Celebration in the *Land of Thieves*

Interview by Ryan Dyer

The new era of extreme Taiwanese metal is upon us, and it is up to the youth to show the way. Deathcore band Ectoplasm features three musicians who have already made their rounds in the scene, with guitarist Matt Lee and drummer Murray Chen hooking up with "big boss" Larry Wang in his band Emasculated Vituperation (with Chen also drumming in Wang's Ferocious Fetal Formula). Ectoplasm, then, is guitarist Matt Lee's creation. Teaming up with vocalist Kai Ian, Lee and Chen created a ferocious deathcore assault with their debut album *Land of Thieves* taking on themes that are more familiar in the Western Hemisphere than sunny Taiwan, namely the American Frontier Wars. Lee speaks about the history of the project, future live shows and if the next album will continue the theme seen on *Land of Thieves*.

AU: What is the history of Ectoplasm? How did you hook up with vocalist Kai Ian?

Matt Lee: The first time we talked was around 2015. I wasn't really capable of writing anything at the time so we exchanged a few ideas here

and there and that was about it. Then after I got done writing the EP for my band Abyss Of Gehenna, I thought why not come up with another track with a slightly different feel than I usually do and maybe just release it for fun? I asked Kai if he was interested and that's basically how Ectoplasm started. The first demo later became the title track of our debut album and it was written quite early on around the start of 2021, so it's quite an old track for us. I hope my writing has improved since then!

AU: You play in a few other bands with Murray Chen. How long have you known each other and have been playing together?

ML: I'm not entirely sure but we go way back. We first met when I was playing guitar for this post hardcore band back when I was a sophomore in University if I remember correctly. We lost our drummer and he was the guy that replaced him! Unfortunately, I quit the band not too long after to focus on Abyss. He did the same after a while and I managed to persuade him into joining Abyss!



AU: Your first release is *Land of Thieves*. Tell me about the writing and recording of it.

ML: *Land of Thieves* as an album was a tough road to cross. I encountered so many hardships during the time of writing and I'm just really glad it gets to see the light of day! For our writing process I'll usually come up with tracks fully written, then Murray hops on to refine the drums and add his flares to it, so that song sounds more cohesive, complete and more interesting! Kai usually gives it a few listens to get an idea of what the particular song is going to be about and the lyrical content is 100% him. After they're done with their parts, I'll edit everything and refine them. I'll also see if I get to put more cool effects in to sort of further enrich the song.

AU: With Kai, you have a US/Taiwan connection. This is also felt with the theme of the album, which is an alternate telling of the American Frontier Wars. How did the idea for this theme come about?

ML: Kai had this idea and the basic concept of this album before Ectoplasm, so when I approached him with the demo, everything just fell into place. Kai had been exposed to information regarding the subject since childhood but as time went on, he started to question the authenticity of said information, and that's why he started doing his own research and formed his opinion around the subject. It is also influenced by *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* a lot; the main protagonist on our album art has a few of these qualities and Easter eggs that hint towards Turok.

AU: The artwork was done by Aziz Blcstry - which fits the theme perfectly. How did you motivate his creation?

ML: Aziz is an amazing artist! We had a lot of ideas and references ready; we basically did our best to convey our ideas and he did his research as well. After we agreed on the basic elements, we just let him work his magic! He is also responsible for our second piece of artwork for our next album that has yet to be revealed.

AU: What themes will your follow-up album take on?

ML: I'd say it's almost a follow up but at the same time there are some different elements. This upcoming one is a bit more fictional and also highly influenced by Turok. There is way more to it instrumentally as well - it is far more detailed, a lot of techy fast riffs, melodies that really complement the theme and it is structured much better. I tried to make all of the songs connect in a way that it could be a giant piece of music. I also have a few really interesting guest spots done by some good friends that I look up to, so yeah, can't wait to get it out. You can probably expect a single off of this release to be out soon, too!

AU: What is the state of Ectoplasm performing live?

ML: We're definitely trying to play live! Being able to perform live opens up so many opportunities, but most of all we just really want to be able to perform together and present the music the way we intended to. But financially speaking, it's not quite possible at the moment, unless a bigger label decides to help us out. The plane ticket alone is going to cost us a kidney from each member!

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is our extensive genetic library. We have a massive collection of old school strains as well as the latest hot strains entering the market. Variety has been a key factor for us, as we are constantly changing things up and bringing new, in-house genetics to market.

Breeding is a strong passion for everyone on the team and it's something that's always been a part of what we do. At this moment, we have eight strains available with many more on the way for 2024. The other biggest factor is our "craft". Although [we are] very up-to-date on all things industry, we have always done things our own way. We don't follow trends or hype brands. We continue to do the same things that made us successful enough to be here. We still use living soil as a substrate, we still hand mix and water our nutrients,

do all our processing by hand, etc. There is no other facility in the world that does everything exactly the way we do from start to finish. Our processes are completely custom to us and always changing ever so slightly in search of constant improvement. We're craft by definition, not by size. (Although we are by that metric too!)

AU: Do you prefer Sativas or Indicas?

CL: It really depends on the situation for me. I'm a nightly smoker, so I start the evening with a hybrid, something like our Cocobamba or Atomic Berry and finish with a heavy indica before bed – maybe our Critical Condition, Peyote Kush Cake, or

our Forum cut GSC.

AU: What is your favorite all-time strain to smoke?

CL: Being into breeding and genetics as much as am, it would be impossible to choose just one. However, I tend to frequent a lot of our exotic, candy or fruit heavy hybrid lines such as Atomic Berry, Shockwave or Critical Jam for my personal smoke.

AU: What is it like being a Licensed Producer in BC?

CL: It's extremely difficult, but so are the rest of the markets. We are extremely proud to be where we are. With all the over-regulation and red tape, we have fought tooth and nail to get to this point and are proud to be part of the vibrant cannabis community here in BC. Our province has always had a great reputation for world-famous BC bud! Legalization framework has caused progress to slow, but I feel with time BC can easily be back at the forefront!

AU: Why is it important to support local growers?

CL: The most common complaint we hear in the legal market is the lack of quality that was found in the medical or "grey" market days. As someone who has years of actual experience in and around that sector, if you know where to look – the quality is not only still there but, in

my opinion, has greatly improved for the real operators who transitioned.

Don't be bamboozled by high-dollar marketing campaigns and targeted ads, do your own research, investigate the details. There are a lot of true craft growers out there in every area who have been perfecting their art form in the shadows for years, not just stamping craft on things because they shrunk the size of grow rooms in their 1500-light facility. Supporting your local grower will ensure the industry doesn't get lost to huge corporations who do not have the passion it takes to produce the best cannabis!

AU: What makes an expert grower in your opinion?

CL: The only thing that can make you an expert in any field... hard work, time and experience. These days it's easy to be a "really good" grower. Information is easily accessible and abundant for anyone who cares to search for it. The real talent in my opinion comes from the failures experienced over time. Anyone can follow a feed program or use their phone or computer to crop steer a grow through an entire cycle. It's how you react to the non-stop continual challenges or issues that arise daily in a grow facility. How quickly and effectively you respond and react to these issues constitutes being an expert grower.

AU: What are some growing secrets or tips you can share with our readers?

CL: Keep learning and asking questions, no matter how long you have been growing, there is always room for improvement and technology is always changing. There is no one right way, find what works for you and keeps you passionate!

AU: What are all of your sub brands and what is the difference between them?

CL: At the moment, our one and only brand is PureFire. Although many of our genetics come from our legacy brand BC Smokehouse, so you might see that pop up in the description from time to time as a nod to the old days.

Being a Micro license holder with a small team of only four people, there are several other



awesome brands we work with to help distribute our product across Canada. Including BC Weed Co., BC Black and even a collab with Canada's first snowboard gold medal winner – Ross Rebagliati of Ross' Gold cannabis. Plus many more collabs in the works.

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, is there any truth to the statement that Cannabis is an aphrodisiac?

CL: Personally, I can't speak to that for fear of my wife's wrath, but I will say there's very few things I find as peaceful or romantic as winding down an evening sharing a smoke sesh with your partner.

AU: What are some other uses for Cannabis products that might surprise our readers?

CL: Cannabis research has increased exponentially in the time since legalization occurred. There are tons of theories and believers that cannabis is a true all-encompassing medicine and as a patient myself, I'm excited to see what the future holds for medical opportunities.

AU: Where are your products available?

CL: Currently, PureFire products are mostly available at retailers across BC, and even a couple of products in Ontario. As we continue to grow and expand, we hope to be available in all provinces across the country. More specifically, Evergreen in Kitsilano always carries our flower and they deliver anywhere in BC from ecsvan.ca!

AU: How can people find you online?

CL: purefireco.ca or on socials @[purefirecompany](https://www.instagram.com/purefirecompany). Our main account was deleted thanks to the insta narcs. But you can still reach us there!

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PureFire Cannabis Generations of Genetics

Over 40 years in the making, PureFire was established to bring legacy genetics and expertise to today's market. Founder Cody Lewis has inherited a wealth of knowledge from his father Bill who has been involved in the legacy cannabis industry since the early 1980s. With Bill's knowledge and Cody's drive for excellence, PureFire is more than just a family affair – it is a passion project built on tradition, quality, and a pursuit of the finest cannabis experience.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are your skills to pay the bills?

Cody Lewis: Cody Lewis, CEO, Master grower and Co-Founder of Purefire Co., a family-owned and operated craft cannabis company based out the Okanagan region of BC, with our current micro facility located in Penticton, BC.

AU: When did you first start growing Cannabis?

CL: I joined the family business around 2014. A medical patient myself, I was in trades for a while after school. Eventually though, after my father purchased a new grow facility to build out in 2014, he was injured skateboarding, of all things, at 50 years old. I came on board to help get the build completed. It was supposed to be a temporary position and I'm still here!

AU: What first drew you to the Cannabis industry?

CL: As I had mentioned, it was somewhat of a family endeavor. We have strong legacy ties going back to the 80s. Being a third generation grower brought up in the ranching community, farming for a career was never out of the question – I just never expected to be doing most of it indoors! It started as nothing more than helping with a buildout, but it turned into an obsession with the plant and all things growing.

AU: What strains do you currently produce and what makes them unique?

CL: One of the things that makes Purefire unique



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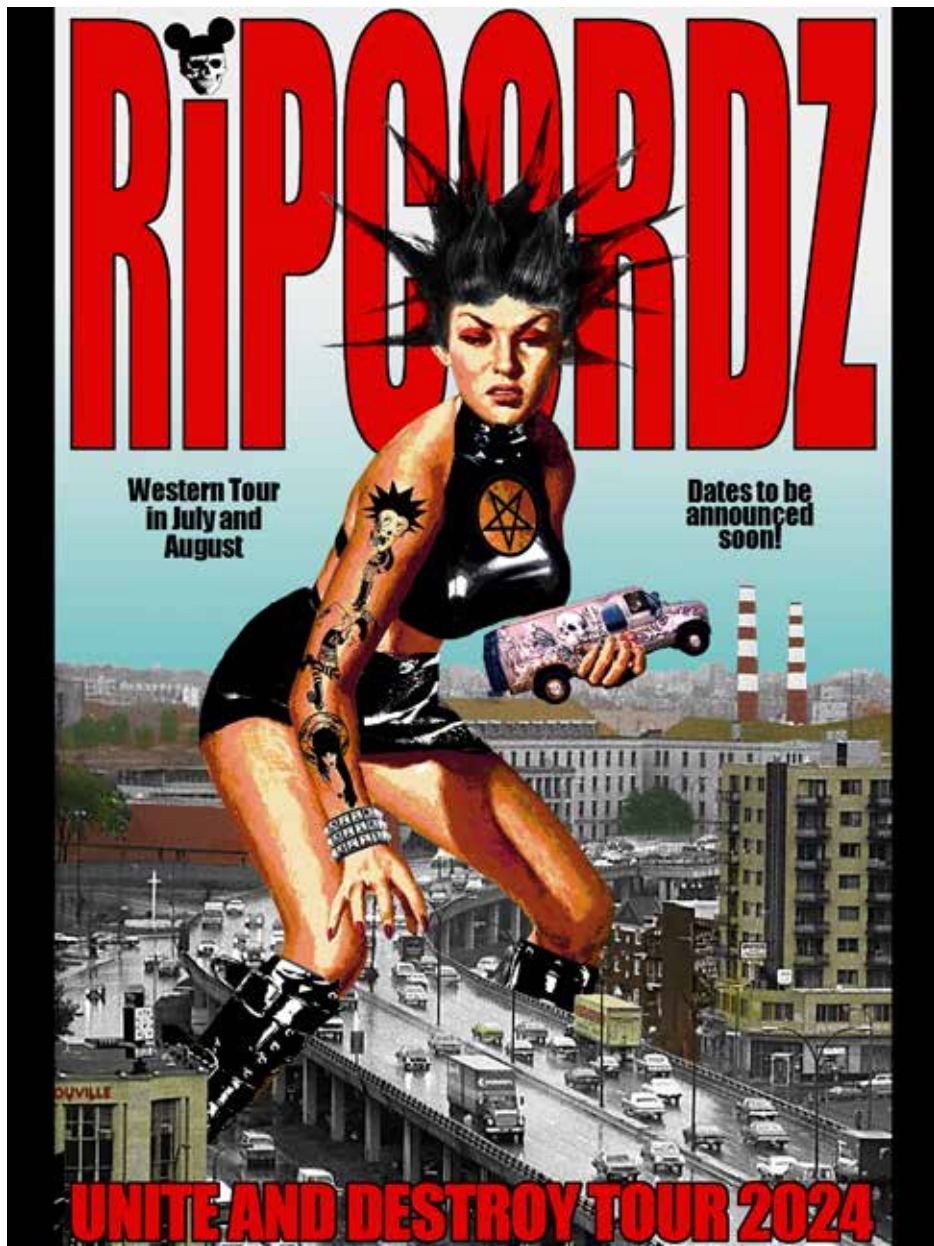
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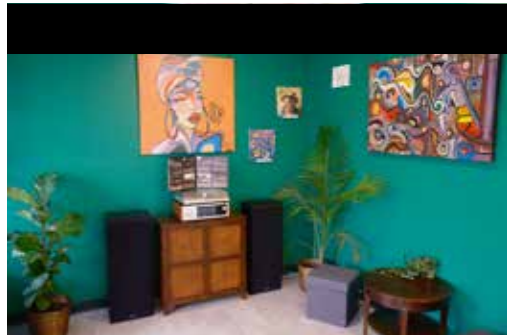




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Fernwood Green Cannabis Interview with GM Max Gil

By Iree-I

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

Max Gil: Max Gil, General Manager at Fernwood Green Cannabis. I'm the guy who sells you that pretty green flower.

AU: What is your association with the world of Cannabis? How did you first become involved?

MG: Cannabis was first introduced to me after being diagnosed with thyroid cancer at the age of 17. I came across Phoenix Tears oil for the first time after being recommended to me by my local dispensary at the time, and was told it was known to help fight cancer cells. I swore by it during my recovery and never looked back. I was cancer free after two years; after opting out of traditional methods, I started to look at cannabis in a new way. I've been consuming it ever since and the rest is history.

AU: Where are you located?

MG: We are located in Fernwood, a vibrant neighbourhood with a strong sense of community located just outside of downtown Victoria. You can find us on the border of Fernwood beside some other great local shops



like Jones BBQ, Mount Royal Bagels and Patisserie Daniel.

AU: What makes Fernwood Green unique in your opinion?

MG: Being the only dispensary in Fernwood means we know the locals. We aren't just a pot shop, we're your stop on your walk home when it's raining and you need to get dry for a second, or if you just want to chat to any of our awesome humans who work here. If there's something we don't carry that you enjoy or there's something new you've heard of, we do our best to bring that product in. We want to share our passion with the community, and having that connection with our neighbourhood makes the people a part of the store as much as we are.

AU: What are some of your most popular strains and products?

MG: Being on Vancouver Island, Pink Kush is something we get asked about a lot, which we carry in many formats! We try and focus on BC products as much as possible, as well as local brands like Victoria Cannabis Company, 18twelve, or Good Buds. We also have all kinds of edibles that are super popular.

AU: Are you a Sativa or an Indica person?

MG: It depends on the strain. If I have to be

productive, I usually stick to a few strains like Sherbet Cookies or Gelato, I like to smoke those typically before a workout or sports. At night, I really enjoy something heavy, like a Bubba cross or a Purple cross.

AU: What is the best 420 experience you can remember?

MG: Probably my first one. My best friend and I at 17 had some very strong edibles and watched Lord of the Rings, we must have had some of Gandalf's stash cause we did not know what was going on. At one point we thought we had the ring in our pocket.

AU: What's your favorite stoner movie of all time?

MG: Both *Superbad* and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* are classics in my opinion. I have to throw in any of the Lord of the Rings trilogy in there as well for obvious reasons.

CANNABIS CORNER

AU: What are your favourite flower strains to enjoy?

MG: My favourite strains of all time are Gelato #41 by 1964, and Apple Toffee by Simply Bare. Some of my other current favourites are Death Bubba, Purple Gushers, and Zookies. Which you can currently get at the shop.

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Ripping the Alps part Deux (That's French for Two)

by Brydo "Powderhound" Parker

Moutiers is where we detrained. This is a small mountain village that has been host to Canadian soldiers during WW1 and WW2. We were welcomed as liberators and treated very well when they found out we were Canadian and not German. We had moved into a very small Airbnb and went for a fancy French dinner at a resort with hot springs. After a loud night of snoring, we groggily boarded a bus to take us up the 2572 meter height of the parking lot at Val Thorens, which is the biggest of the 7 resorts in Les 3 Vallées (The Three Valleys). This is the biggest ski area in the world and rated number 1 in the world with 600 km of trails and endless amounts of snow and places to eat, Tonow's favourite pastime. I had a Nutella and cream crepe that was 70cm long and delicious.

Now getting all this riding and good times was

basically free but not at a cost. After getting up the mountain we started to descend looking for powder stashes and ducking ropes (not a great idea in unfamiliar terrain). Ira jumped off a rock outcropping and landed on his ass on a big rock which tore him a new one. Now hurting yourself on the first day, first run, is usually my thing but Ira got bit by my first day curse. We continued to ride. Ira was in a lot of pain but after a few "safety meetings" rode hard all day. He is super tough and wasn't prepared to not ride.

I would highly recommend this ski area. Great snow, great food. We rated it number one in all of the Alps for food and number two for terrain accessibility and 4th in Après-ski, but to be fair we were so tired after riding and Ira's ass issue we did not give Val Thorens a fair shake in the Après department. Also super nice people. We were in a small restaurant that served up euros aka gyro, donair or



souvlaki depending on where you are eating it. The owner of the restaurant asked where we were from and we said Canada. The moment I said that another customer got up, went to his car and got three bottles of rosé champagne.



He placed a bottle on our table and said with compliments from France. He opened another bottle and we all toasted. That is when we found out Moutiers was liberated in each Great War by Canadians. I packed that bottle for the rest of the trip as a prized souvenir.

We boarded the Euro express train for Basel, Switzerland. This is when we discovered the results of a terrorist attack in the capital of France would



play out in every train station. The trains and stations were packed with cops and military with automatic weapons ready for anything. I fell asleep on the train and when I awoke Tonow said "Good you are awake. The cops and dogs were all over your gear sniffing around." I replied "What cops and dogs?" Tonow replied "Those ones right over there" as the dogs were sniffing my luggage. In my bag I had cash,

fireworks, weed, hash, mushrooms and the sniffer dog did not sit down indicating a bag of interest. Super lucky or not a real sniffer dog.

Arriving in Basel, we met Jai and Daniel who picked us up in the van and we went to a abandoned



restaurant along the Rhine river. Now this restaurant is a exact copy of one in the Jungfrau region the mountain of Grindelwald and had a total abandoned ski resort vibe, including ghost chairlifts to sit in. We smoked a huge piece of hash at a outdoor fire pit that was stocked with fire wood then we made dinner and walked around the town of Basel. We came

across a zoo that was closed for renovations. Jai suggested we sneak in! We did and it was super fun wandering around in a zoo in the dark. We saw a pack of hyenas with their shifty eyes glowing in the dark, and a gang of meerkats. As we continued exploring we found a man-made lake with a big flock of flamingos that started with one that let out a warning squawk and very soon they were all squawking their heads off. They made a huge racket so we decided to exit the zoo Remo Williams style as we scaled the construction site to escape before we got busted.



stayed in a Raddison Blu hotel that was very fancy. In the morning we visited my neighbour's sister who had ordered up some good Swiss weed for us and sent us on our happy way with a big bag of Swiss groceries for the journey. There was a package of Raclette cheese that she said we needed to cook and was not for sandwiches. Back to Ira's ass... he was developing a very nasty bruise and was using the small pillow he got from the airplane as an ass pad pillow to protect his rump from more damage. The next morning we parked the van and got on another train that worked its way up the mountain passes to a height of 4158 meters. The marketing lady who supplied our passes welcomed us with a "You're late!" and a handful of Jungfrau and Grindelwald stickers and free ski passes. We boarded another train that is a special



mountain train that can hook onto a third track that chains and sprockets the train up very steep passes and tunnels that Magic Mountain in Disneyland is modelled after. Up and up we went to the top. Now Switzerland is the most expensive place to ski in the world but so far we had not spent a single Euro. There was a restaurant at the top that had a lunch special, a bratwurst and a big beer for 100 Canadian dollars. Yikes! Thankfully Tonow had made us sandwiches before we left the van.

The Swiss military was up the mountain preparing a World Cup race course. We ducked the rope and poached the freshly groomed racecourse. As we ripped by the military guys were waving and yelling and cheering us on. So we did it again and that's when we found out that they were not cheering, they were simply yelling at us to get off the course. Lost in translation, ignorance is bliss, and powder seeking is a lifestyle choice.

Next issue... Ripping the Alps part Drü (That's Three in Swiss) we take on the mighty mountain in Engelberg called Mt Titlis.

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POWDER SEEKERS



Skull Skates x Endeavor Snowboard Design Collaboration Interview with Crystal Ocean/Skull Skates founder P.D.

By Ira "Abominable Snow" Hunter

Originally pioneering snowboarding design in Canada since 1983, Skull Skates Crystal Ocean has partnered with Endeavor snowboards to offer the most killer snowboard on planet Earth. Combining the O.G. Bomber Skeleton graphic from 1988 along with the highly innovative Crystal Ocean wide shape and design from 1993. Together with Endeavor's advanced tech manufacturing capability to form a synthesis unmatched in the world of shredding. You got it Jack; the stars have aligned in space and time to create a machine that screams down hills and turns on a dime. This board will be offered as an extremely limited edition pressing.

AU: What was your first involvement with snowboarding and snowboard creation?

PD: We started Skull Skates Crystal Ocean in 1983. In kind of the same way we got into skateboarding, we wanted to just make a better snowboard. I wanted to ride a better snowboard than what was available. We did a pretty serious for 15 years. Our official production of snowboards went from '83 to '98 and then we pretty much stopped making them. But we've done a couple of limited releases since then. We did one collaboration with Endeavor several years ago and now this is our second collab that we're doing with Endeavor.

AU: I remember on your older Crystal Ocean boards there were some really cool graphics. I have one that has a Star Wars Tauntaun on it.

PD: This graphic that we're using now for this Endeavor collab is from 1988 and it's a full length skeleton. Which doesn't seem like a big deal, but actually snowboards didn't really look like that back then. They had more like ski graphics on them, splashes of color and stripes and things.

So when that first skeleton board came out in the 80s it was pretty wild. We basically made it look more like a skateboard graphic. It was very different.

AU: What's the history of Endeavor, where are they from?

PD: Endeavor is a Vancouver based company. It's run by a couple of people that have been involved in other brands in Vancouver like Option and Never. They're just hardcore snowboarders. But I think they make relatively limited runs of stuff. It's just a nice fit because we're both sort of Vancouver based brands and I think they're kind of fans of us.

Skull Crystal Ocean has kind of an underground following because it was around for a relatively short time, but made some pretty neat boards. Those Star Wars ones that you mentioned were from the 90s. We were doing really cool stuff in the 90s which included a lot of full blown graffiti style lettering and stuff on the boards. Again, eventually that became slightly more common but I think when we were doing it was just sort of somewhat unheard of. I was writing graffiti myself and some of my friends were real skilled writers. So we employed them to come up with some graphics. So I guess that Endeavor is sort of familiar with all

that history with those boards and with some of the innovating that we had done.

AU: What set the Crystal Ocean snowboards apart from the others back in the day?

PD: They were bomb proof. We didn't make our own boards. We always contracted to other people. But we did our homework and really found the people who are making good boards and who were willing to do our own designs for us in small quantities, which has always sort of been our thing. The number one thing is hooking up with somebody who really knows how to make a good snowboard. The number two is that we don't just take someone else's board and put our art work on it. We've always designed

"We worked closely with Endeavor Snowboards to design this board from the inside out, from scratch, to create a snowboard that is agile for manoeuvrability and also stable at high speeds. Essentially one all mountain design that works for everything, creating my personal favourite snowboarding machine."

-P.D. (Owner & Founder of Skull Skates)

everything from the inside out. So that starts with the core and then goes on to everything else. It doesn't seem like a big deal but there's a fair amount of thought and work that goes into designing a good snowboard deck. We're involved in absolutely every step of the process. So although we're not physically making them ourselves, we're directing the people making them to do them precisely to our own specifications.

AU: So you mentioned that you had Endeavor make you a board a few years ago. What are the differences going to be between that model and this new one that's just in the prototype stage right now?

PD: It's funny that you mentioned that. That is the one example where we didn't get involved in design and unfortunately, that's my fault.

Because I just sort of went on an assumption that they'd have a cool board and they would put our graphic on it. I probably was just busy, which is a shitty excuse, but it ended up being flat and soft and not the kind of board that I would want to ride. It turns out I didn't know that snowboard design had changed since we'd stopped making them. Boards essentially started to get rockers or flat and they got quite soft and that's just not my preference. I want one board that's short enough that you can fling it around, but sturdy enough that you can point it downhill and it will be stable at high speeds. So basically one board for everything. That's not what happened when we worked with Endeavor the first time. They were kind of hassling us to do another one and I didn't have the heart to tell them I didn't really like the original one. At a certain point when they sort of kept bugging us, I just said look, "We'll do one, but it's got to be our design from the inside out or else we can't do it." That's the good news with this one is that everything is very specific.

AU: What were the features you ask for this time around?

PD: Some of the features of the shape are based on a board that we did in the early 90s. Which had these kind of Japanese anime eyes and graffiti graphics lettering on the base. It's sort of loosely placed based on that shape. For me, one of the really important things about a snowboard deck is torsional integrity, which means that the board should not twist. So that means even if you have a soft board that flexes up and down a lot, it should have an integrity on the torsional part. Meaning if you grab it by the tip of the tail and try to twist it, it shouldn't twist, it should keep its shape. That's more the angle we're going with on this modern board. What we've been saying is that it handles like a 154 in the air but it handles like a 158 on the snow. Part of that has to do with the steeper shorter shovels and the longer surface contact and part of that has to do with a stiffer flex pattern. It's a varied flex pattern. Softer in the tip and in the tail, and stiffer from binding to binding.

AU: It will be good in the powder as well?

PD: Yes. The concept is it's one board that will work for everything. So it doesn't matter if it's slush, it doesn't matter if you're in a park or jumping or if you're just cranking high speed turns on corduroy. The idea is that it's a true all mountain board.

AU: It is in the prototype stage but there's a pre-order, is that correct?

PD: Yeah, we're pre-booking. You can go through Skullskates.com to our product section and search Crystal Ocean in products and that will take you to the pre-book page. It looks like it's going to be \$700 for a deck, we're taking a \$350 deposit and the drop date is September of this year.

AU: So is there a board that you've tried out yourself yet? Or is it still in the design stages?

PD: We have prototypes. The prototypes need to be stiffened up a little bit. I think some of the Endeavor riders have been demoing it. I haven't actually personally ridden one but I've ridden enough boards and designed enough boards to know that we're very close. We essentially just need to stiffen it up a little bit in the midsection. But as far as surface contact and overall shape and finish it's good. Endeavor has a really cool thing where they do the sidewalls in polyurethane like a skateboard wheel. Which is a really smart material to make a sidewall out of, and that part I was really impressed with. They look really clean and smooth and you can tell they're durable unlike ABS which is what most people were using for a lot of years and it's a little bit more brittle. So the first protos look really clean and really tight but like I said, we just need to fine tune the flex patterns a little bit.

AU: Where's the best place you've ever been snowboarding?

PD: I localized Cypress Mountain for years, so that was kind of my joint. My thing was I would be there for first chair. If I wasn't standing in the lineup when the ski patrol came down and opened the mountain I'd be pissed. That was always kind of my goal, to be first chair up. So I shredded the shit out of Cypress for about 15 or 20 years. I also had a good time in Japan snowboarding in '96 in Nagano. That was pretty bitchin'.

AU: Now that you've got the shop up in Qualicum Beach do you go up to snowboard Mount Washington ever?

PD: I haven't been just because of the shit conditions. But there's two places on my to do list and one is Washington and the other is Mount Cain. So once we get some proper snow, I'll be hitting both of those up.

AU: It always snows in February, so there is still hope. Just remember to throw your roaches to Ullr the Norse god of snow.

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TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE



along with three features from the prolifically button-pushing Italian auteur Domiziano Cristopharo (who has now retired from filmmaking), which included *Dark Waves* (the Director's Cut re-release), *Tales to Tell in the Dark*, and the totally

passion, and who seek to survive beyond the grave. ...Brazilian filmmaker Larissa Anzoategui created a film inspired by authors Lord Byron and the Brazilian Álvares de Azevedo and Anzoategui's passion for expressionist aesthetics. The cast and crew was composed completely of women under the direction of Larissa Anzoategui (Astaroth) in her sophomore film."



darksidereleasing.com/larissa-anzoategui

Tales from the Darkside: A Demonic Follow-Up

By Vince D'Amato

Last issue, I spoke about the series of High-Octane horror that we released over Halloween 2023, and as a follow-up, we also released more than half a dozen pretty crazy and imaginative indie horror films that came to us from all over the world – the far-out Italian horror anthology *Terror Zone*, from the same filmmakers who brought you *Extreme Jukebox* (released by Troma), and the utterly stunning cerebral horror movie *Katernica* from James Edward Newton in the UK. Darkside Releasing also distributes James Newton's first movie *Black Lizard Tales*, but *Terror Zone* and *Katernica* recently came out this past October



bonkers *Doll Syndrome*.

Rounding out the October releases was the erotic Brazilian comedy-horror anthology *Helldose*, the latest from the *Domina Nocturna* filmmaker Larissa Anzoategui. While *Helldose* does lean on comedy more than her previous horror/metal films, fans of her Danzig-esque visionary trip through the Jean Rollin-style horrorscape *Domina Nocturna* should not be disappointed– all of the sexy-horror trappings are there and firmly in place... although admittedly, *Domina Nocturna* might just be her masterpiece.



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ABSOLUTE HORROR Streaming and Screaming (Part I)

By Vince D'Amato

This winter, (it was shortly after Christmas, in fact), I ended up laid up with a cold for nearly three days, stuck in bed (terrible, I know) and turning my attention to streaming services like YouTube and Netflix, where I inadvertently ended up doing a bit of a deep dive into streaming horror (as well as watching a string of Stephen King lectures for the 80s, 90s, and 2000s – but that's actually going to come up again in the next article, so I'll leave that for now). Earlier in December, I had been getting into Mike Flanagan's newest series *The Fall of the House of Usher*, based on the works of Edgar Allan Poe, but I had one more episode to go, so I decided to start there – but this soon ballooned into exploring the latest works of Mike Flanagan's creative peers, who are creating some pretty damn good horror films these days, including Zak Hilditch, John Lee Hancock, and Canadian genre filmmaker Vincenzo Natali (*Cube*). But here, we'll start at the start...

The Fall of the House of Usher (2023 miniseries)



This was one of Netflix's most talked-about and anticipated horror series from last year, and to me it was Mike Flanagan's second-best creation (series-wise, but we'll get into a couple of his features shortly). The updated idea based on Poe's titular story was used strictly as the framework for eight episodes that each concerned one-to-two other Poe stories, so in this regard the series was actually a cleverly disguised horror anthology. Some of the episodes were definite slow-burns, but some went all-out on the horror spectacle ("The Black Cat" and "Goldbug" come to mind immediately), and the final episode, "The Raven", was hands-down the best thing I'd seen in a while and a real showstopper for the limited series. And throughout, you won't believe Mark Hamill's turn as the Usher family's attorney Arthur Pym. But honestly, all the performances are awesome, with Bruce Greenwood, Willa Fitzgerald, and Carla Gugino real standouts.

Rattlesnake (2019)



After witnessing the *Fall of the House of Usher*, my mind went back to some of the truly good horror films and series that creator/director Flanagan has produced over the last few short years, including Stephen King's *Gerald's Game* and *Doctor Sleep*, and probably my all-time favorite, *Midnight Mass* – but it was those Stephen King connections that brought my mind over to *In the Tall Grass* and *1922*, which then actually led me to director Zak Hilditch's *Rattlesnake*, a film that had admittedly been in my "to-watch" list on Netflix for a lot longer than I'd care to tell. *Rattlesnake* is a lot smaller in scope than *1922*, but no less effective, with our leading heroine under the massive burden of an extremely rapidly ticking clock running down against the death of her young daughter, which forces her into some extreme measures, thanks to a horrifying curse put upon her by a deceiving stranger, after the stranger saves the daughter from a poisonous snakebite. It's one of those no-way-out scenarios that pushes the lead character into a proverbial

vice that creates such palpable suspense. *Rattlesnake* was probably one of my two biggest, and most pleasing, horror surprises of my little three-day horror binge-slash-journey.

Mr. Harrigan's Phone (2022)



Based on the first story from Stephen King's recent(-ish) novella collection *If It Bleeds*, John Lee Hancock's take on this richly layered and ghostly tale of tragic loss and revenge is shockingly good, considering that it's coming from the same director who brought us the criminally, and unfathomably, forgettable Denzel Washington/Jared Leto serial killer movie *The Little Things*. I think it would be safe to skip that one and go straight to *Mr. Harrigan's Phone* instead, which co-stars Donald Sutherland in a quiet but largely effective role as the titular character, who received his first smartphone as a gift.

Haunter (2013)

This one is a bit of an earlier one (i.e. mid-career) from Vincenzo Natali, from 2013, starring a young Abigail Breslin (*Zombieland*, *Scream Queens*), who is the only one in her family who realizes that they're all living the same day over and over again trapped in their own house. When she reaches out via a Ouija board and starts receiving clues from the dead, she then realizes that her entire family are being held captive in some sort of looping purgatory by a deeply evil entity bent solely on his own perverse agenda, possibly involving other victims as well.

Smile (2022)



The take on this one is somewhat similar to the cult favourite *It Follows*, but I have to say that this one was even more intense to me, and it was able to hold on to that strangulating tension right to the bitter end. A really wild, horrifying, and original take on the body-jumping theme prevalent in several other past (and classic) horror films, *Smile* ups the ante by putting that ol' ticking clock on each of the victims that the utterly terrifying, terrorizing and bloodthirsty entity possesses. *Smile* kicks off with a really bloody bang and only amps up the volume of horror

as it barrels along to its intense conclusion when psychiatrist Rose catches the horrid entity, much like a virus being passed to her, from a patient who kills herself in front of her. You might need to take a bit of a breather after this one's over.

In the Tall Grass (2019)



A more recent horror outing from Vincenzo Natali, this one is based on a story co-written by Stephen King and his popular-horror-author son Joe Hill. *In the Tall Grass* did not get a lot of great reviews when it first came out, and to be truthful, I can see why – the story of two families who become trapped in an endless field of tall grass that has a life (and an intelligent agenda) of its own is seriously complex, bordering on complicated, but if you like your horror *Hereditary*-style, then this one might be right up your alley. Personally, I loved it, and thought that the arduous horror was well worth the exchange of getting such a memorable, stand-out modern horror movie; something quite a bit more sophisticated than

Children of the Corn (although I did love that original short story, too – which can be found in the 1978 book *Night Shift*).

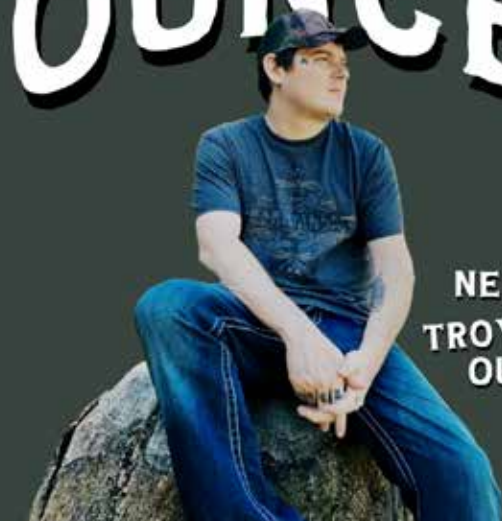
Battleground (episode from the Nightmares & Dreamscapes series)

...And speaking of *Night Shift*, I absolutely have to mention that while I was sequestered to my own bed getting over my cold this winter, I did inadvertently find this stand-alone episode available on YouTube, where I gave this utterly brilliant short story adaptation a re-watch. *I Am Legend* author Richard Matheson's son Richard Christian Matheson adapted this Stephen King story for the small screen nearly 20 years ago now; it stars the late William Hurt (*Altered States*, *A History of Violence*) as an anonymous hitman who becomes the target of revenge from his latest victim via a mysteriously-delivered toy set of mini G.I. Joe action figures to his private hotel room. What's truly thrilling about this hour-long adaptation is that it plays out entirely without dialogue and manages to keep up the crazy pace and humorous action of the original short story.

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An Ode to NoMeansNo Moments with author Jason Lamb

By John Carlow

In the midst of what's predictably been a popular book launch, I took a few minutes to chat with Jason Lamb about not so much his book itself, as much as the creation process and how it has affected him.

Absolute Underground: What was the basic reason for taking on the endeavour of releasing this book?

JL: I had always thought it would be cool to write a book of some sort in my life, but I never had any ideas for anything. Then I realized that a proper biography, an 'anthology' of my favourite band did not exist. So, I thought I would give it a shot. I didn't think the members of NoMeansNo would ever agree to it, and I wasn't going to do it if they didn't. To my continuing shock and surprise, they all said yes!

AU: How has the process of creating this book changed you as a person?

JL: Hoo-boy! In many, many ways. My personal life went through the biggest change of all during the process. That wasn't NMN's fault, haha, but it was part and parcel of my experience of being exposed to hundreds of amazing people with amazing outlooks on life. Freedom, happiness and creativity became something I realized I needed in a real way in my life. So I made some major changes.

AU: Was it advantageous during this project being a media personality?

JL: Oh absolutely. First of all, I had over a decade of interviewing experience which was invaluable. Plus, I had access to professional recording studios and equipment to record interviews, edit, etc. And my 10+ years doing the Punk Show on The Zone @91-3 provided me with a lot of established connections, and possibly just a little bit of 'clout'.

AU: I'm sure there's been some great behind

the scenes stories that have happened during this process.

JL: Oh for sure – some I can tell, others I most certainly cannot. I met a wide range of very interesting and eccentric people. Drank a lot of beer with John Wright.

AU: Have you heard from others that have done NMN projects (other books, fan pages, etc.)?

JL: Yes – I keep in touch a bit with Mark Black, who wrote a small book called *NoMeansNo: Going Nowhere* about 10 years ago. I was also made an admin on the NMN Facebook fan group called NoMeansNo - We're So Wright We're Wrong. It started more than 10 years ago by a group of Americans and there are nearly 12,000 members on there now.

AU: What is the most priceless NMN item you own or perhaps got to handle during the source of making this book?

JL: I got to see the original stamp used to stamp

NMN's first single in 1980... the original *Sex Mad* pencil crayon painting that Andy Kerr did for the cover art... I have seen Tom Holliston in his underwear.

AU: Were there points where you wanted to put the whole thing on hold and reconsider?

JL: Oh yes. There were moments when it felt overwhelming. But friends, especially folks like Paul Prescott, kept my head above water and kept me going.

AU: Who do you feel you are most indebted to for making this all be so successful?

JL: In no particular order: Scott Henderson, Paul Prescott, Melanie Kaye, Rob, John, Tom and Andy and the literally hundreds of NMN fans who helped with transcribing interviews, sending me photos, posters and stories and of course every single person who agreed to an interview. It was a massive community effort.

AU: Have you been inspired enough to consider taking on another project like this?

JL: I haven't put much thought into that yet. This book and the promotion of it is going to take up at least the next year or so of my life. But if another idea comes to me, I'd probably be down to do it again.

AU: Ever think of doing a book on Scott Henderson? That man is amazing.

JL: Fuck no. I don't write encyclopedias.

AU: Ever thought you'd be at a point in your life where you'd be signing your name so many times?

JL: No, but as an autograph-collecting nerd my whole life, it's awesome.

AU: Has it ended up as you envisioned it at the beginning?

JL: It has completely exceeded my expectations at pretty much every single turn.

NoMeansNo: From Obscurity To Oblivion - PM Press is now available wherever the best of books are sold. Watch for book release related events.

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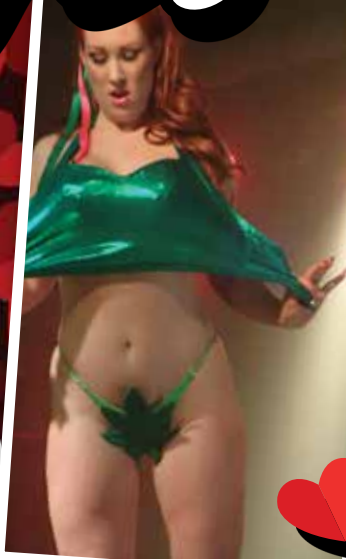


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AU: Anything else we should know about you that might surprise our readers?

DR: I'm obsessed with music. I'm a home rock and blues fan. I love punk, metal, old school hip hop. Classic rock is top of my list.

say content. Star Wars or just about anything colour, animated, or very classic traditional.

AU: Any other hidden talents unrelated to tattooing?

DR: I can crack my jaw. And fart on command. (Most times) I also pay guitar and sign paint.



Derek Royal Tattoo Artist at Scarecrow Ink

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

Derek Royal: My name is Derek Royal. Most famous for being infamous.

AU: How long have you been a tattoo artist? What got you started?

DR: I've been tapping for nine years. I've always been around the industry and I started getting tattooed at a pretty young age (15). I've always been fascinated by it, it was just a matter of right time and place for me.



and tattoo was a sick fish swimming into a vagina clam inside of a Wu-Tang clam W logo.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year? Any kinks or fetishes to share?

DR: I have a low key pee kink lol. No actual kinds of fetishes. I'm almost 50, I'm pretty vanilla these days.

AU: Where can we find your shop?

DR: These days you can find me at Scarecrow Ink Tattoo in Chilliwack.

IG: @derekroyaltattooer

FB: facebook.com/dfrrtattoos



AU: How would you describe your style?

DR: I wouldn't say I have a particular style, I'd say I'm more versatile. I was taught traditional and neo-traditional, I love solid bright colour. So, if I could stay busy tattooing either of those styles, I'd be a happy man child.

AU: What are some of your influences?

DR: My tattoo influence is probably Myke Chambers out of Philly. Sailor Jerry Swallow out of Nova

Scotia. I really like Jimmy Snaz out of somewhere in the US. I'm a big fan of traditional sign painting as well, so I follow a lot those guys. No one particular stands out.

AU: Does your art tend to lean towards the side of good or evil?

DR: I think of you ask any tattoo artist 9 out of 10 will say evil. Evil shit is much more fun to tattoo, hands down. We're all a little evil.



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

DR: The music in the shop is usually punk or metal, but we have emo Mondays.

AU: What's the strangest thing you've ever been asked to draw?

DR: The strangest thing I've been asked to draw




AU: What are some of your favorite projects you've done?

DR: My favourite projects change so much, it's hard to land one or two. I'd

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LIAM VS THE WORLD



The Spirit of Art Bell Ever Lingers

By Liam Crocker

"It feels like you're losing a book that nobody has copies of" - Theo Von

Sometimes, for a brief moment, people of great charisma and force of personality are also graced with the ability to touch the lives of millions of people around the world. They ride with glory across the plains of life, visible to the naked eye from miles and miles away because they are so absolutely unique. They're magnetic, they are magical, and they are beautiful. The quote above was about comedian Norm Macdonald. I am, though, speaking now about another entertainer who also embodies this category: Art Bell. I won't bore you with biographical details about who Art Bell is - I invite you to pause reading and do a quick search to get the gist if you don't already know who he is. For my readers who are also lazy morons, to put it succinctly, he was an American late night paranormal radio talk show host who died



in 2018. His most famous programs were *Coast 2 Coast AM* and *Midnight in the Desert*. There, you really didn't need to search him up - sorry for calling you lazy morons. I love Art Bell, and since childhood, this man's voice and character have reverberated in my soul.

It must be a common movie trope, or it may just be my

experience, but there is something integral about the idea of a spooky late night radio show. *Coast 2 Coast AM*, if I remember correctly, would air on CFAX, Victoria's local AM radio station, at 10 pm and run until 2 am. I distinctly remember staying up late, a feat at that age, to listen to it and have my poor, feeble little mind fill with nightmare fuel. It was awesome. Alien abductions, ghosts,

self-proclaimed vampires, pyramid-building aquatic alien civilizations, chupacabras - nothing was off the table. I've always been into that stuff, and I think that's probably where it started.

It was your own personal campfire; Art knew how to harness the spirit of radio (Rush reference) to its maximum. That distinct crackle of the crappy bedside alarm clock radio, the rush of staying up late as a kid, keeping the volume down so my parents didn't know I was awake, and Art's booming, powerful but also

calming voice all made for something special. I'd always imagine myself as a long haul trucker, somewhere deep on the interstate barreling along in the pitch blackness, listening and seeing things in the dark (in reality it was the truck stop bath salts and gas station spice). Ain't nothing

like it.

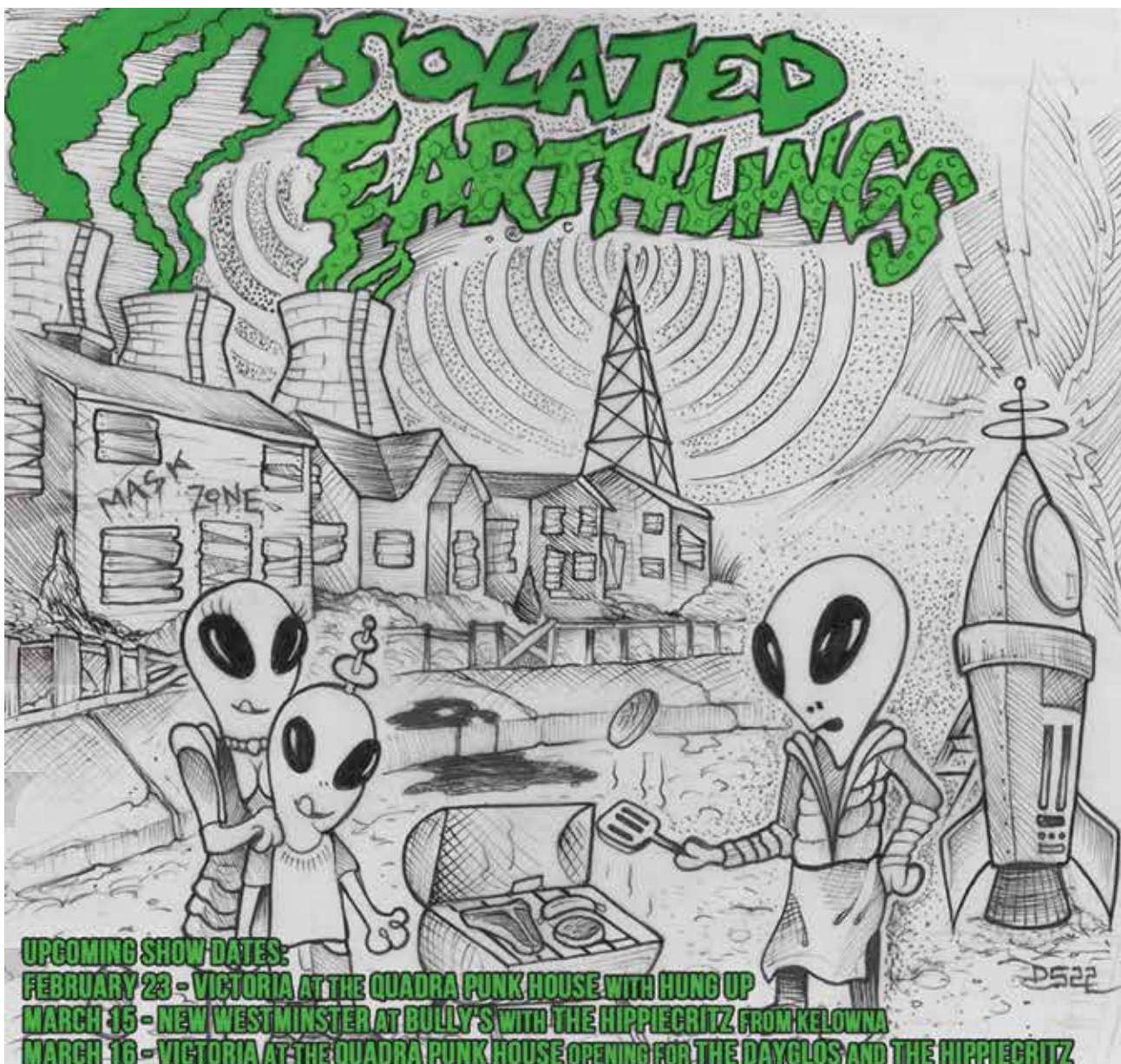
A few years ago I went through a re-discovery of Art's archives, voraciously listening to anything I could find. The open lines shows were always my favourite. Every weirdo in America was listening to that show and calling in, and Art loved them weird. Most were funny, some were stupid, and some were truly chilling. I remember some calls where you just knew the person was telling the truth, you could hear it in their voice. Nothing on the internet today can recreate that experience of hearing someone tell a story about something unbelievable - your senses can't tell truth from fiction when you're reading text, but they sure can when you hear it coming from a radio. Art was a perfect host - he only believed what really felt real, or what had proof. He treated everything with skepticism and he wasn't easily fooled. He had little patience for bullshit, but he had an open heart, open mind and you could tell he absolutely loved to scare the shit out of us.

Art is a special person because he used his fame to do something that is magical in the truest sense of the word. He created magic by allowing us to feel that it was real, to speak into our consciousness and allow us to believe in the paranormal, in other worlds, in demons, in angels, in God, in the devil, in aliens, in cryptids, in shadow people. It was all real when you were there with him, and that is the world I always want to and will exist in. It's a world where anything is possible. That's both terrifying and endlessly interesting. He was a hierophant of enchantment, but always tempered our fears and spiralling sanity with his strong, fatherly skepticism. When we lost him, we lost the book. Luckily we've got copies of the pages on the



internet in the form of show archives. But nothing will ever be the same as hurtling down the interstate blasted on trucker meth and hearing that voice boom out the radio - or gripping your covers, ready to hide as you keep the bedside alarm clock radio turned down so your parents won't wake up and make you turn it off. I'm so thankful I got to experience at least one of those things.

In the words of one of his famous bumpers: *Wanna take a ride?*



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with brutal occult acts, both these influences lend themselves well to Necron's First Nations themes. Musically though, its tremolo riffing and blast beat, some riff and time changes just to be jarring and keep some punk edge – think Skitsystem and Darkthrone.

AU: Does your music explore any particular themes or topics?

Necron: Yes, mainly indigenous folklore, First Nations issues, death and suicide, but also a bit of sword and sorcery and classic Satanic panic stuff too.

AU: You talked about incorporating First Nations themes into your music. What does that look like and how has that been received?

Necron: When you're a coming-of-age metal head and you stumble upon black metal, what's the first things you learn? It's from cold evergreen mountains with fjords and inlets, its anti-colonial and often about being fucked by the church, and it's isolated. Well, that's B.C. from my half-breed perspective. The look of that perspective

in the lyrics which are heavily influenced by west coast folk ore and theology. In the demos, the First Nations scope is widened to include Pawnee and Lakota legends and events, as well.

As for how this is received, I'm not so sure. Certainly, the general public is more curious about Indigenous issues these last few years, and I think there is a big overlap with that and the metal community. Thus far, the feedback has been positive; I've had a lot of inquiries for a live

show and the first two demos are sold out, so I'm glad people seem to like it.

AU: If you could hire anyone to do your album art, who would you pick?

Necron: Probably Adam Burke or Derek Noble.

AU: Any recent or upcoming releases? What can we expect to hear?

Necron: The new Ibum *Kulus* is out now on

Bandcamp and cassette tape. It's a nine-track album made up mostly of three-minute headbangers.

AU: What was the last band you saw live?

Necron: I went to the Vogue to see Blackbraid and Dark Funeral. Blackbraid was sick and the new members of Dark Funeral are awesome.

AU: Valentine's Day is coming up. Do you have any plans?

Necron: Supper with my wife, watch wrestling and eat seafood.

AU: If Necron had a Tinder profile, what would it say?

Necron: The best Tinder profiles are always

Simpsons quotes, so Necron's profile would read "I'm a man of few words, any questions?"

AU: Do you have anything else you'd like to promote?

Necron: *Kulus* is out everywhere now, but if you get the tape on Bandcamp, you could get a mini poster as well as the digital download. If any distributors want a bulk deal, they can message me on Instagram.

AU: Famous last words?

Necron: "Brad out," and then I cross my arms on my chest and stick my tongue out and die.

necronbc.bandcamp.com

IG: @necron.bc

Necron

BC Black Metal

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

Necron: My name is Kasalas and my English name is Brad, by day I'm a tattooer and I am the sole member of Necron.

AU: Can you describe your sound for us?



Necron: The focus is on raw black metal, with some crust influence.

AU: Who or what are your biggest musical influences?

Necron: When it comes to lyrics, At The Gates has the introspective doom that I try to fold in, but a band like Skeletonwitch offers more ideas



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Skull Cultist

Brain-Melting Industrial/EBM

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?

Steve: I'm Steve, a weirdo immigrant from Freedomland™, and I do all kinds of things. Music, writing, film, DJ, Zoat enthusiast, cat dad – you name it. I guess I'm most lately known for doing the project Skull Cultist.

AU: How would you describe Skull Cultist to someone who's never heard it before?

Steve: Electro-industrial. Electronic body music. Dark synth. Industrial techno. If you combine *Hardware*, *Black Death*, *The Void* and *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* into a band, I suppose that would come close to what Skull Cultist is supposed to be. Dark, hard, weaponized hyper-focused kick drums, and brutal basslines. Describing it as hardcore grim-ritual cyberpunk works, too.

AU: Who or what are your biggest influences?

Steve: I have so, so many. Certainly life itself and the world in which we live. Bands like Front 242, Numb, Nitzer Ebb, Front Line Assembly, Leæther

Strip, Laibach, Godflesh and Bolt Thrower. Fantasy/sci-fi books, horror and cyberpunk films, *The Outer Limits* and *The Twilight Zone*, Thomas Ligotti, Wendy Carlos, Slavoj Žižek, Warhammer, Judge Dredd, *Darklands* (a video game)... wow, holy shit. I should stop there.

AU: Do you have any other musical projects?

Steve: Mr. Zoth and the Werespiders (soundtrack, dark ambient, industrial ambient, etc), Klubovader (synth-riot cyberpunk), Orthokeras (dark ambient, etc), and 40 Watt Range (techno, synthwave).

AU: Who would be a dream-come-true to share a stage with?

Steve: Without any hesitation: Leæther Strip and Front 242! Both bands are a big part of who I am today as a musician.

AU: How do you approach writing music?

Steve: I just go with whatever I feel like doing. Normally, I open up Reaper and lay in beats and a bassline, adding samples and synths from there. Sometimes I create things from scratch, or I go to folders of loops I've constructed for future use. Sometimes, I'll actually have a general or specific idea of what I'd like to do and go from there. Sometimes, I'll hear a line or sound from a movie, sample it, and then compose a track around that or whatever. And then there's the times my partner in life-crimes will give me an idea to run with. We do Orthokeras together, but she's also come up with some killer Skull Cultist ideas.

AU: How do you feel about music being used to platform political/social beliefs?

Steve: Music has always been a way to express discontent, beliefs, rebellion, and much more. It doesn't always have to be political/etc, of course, but I feel it's a great way to have a voice in an ultimately uncaring universe that only seeks to eventually consume you. With this in mind, I wear my beliefs with Skull Cultist on my grimy, blood-soaked sleeves. I will always use Skull Cultist to platform my social ideals, the horrors of the world



in which we live, and, most importantly, my love for Warhammer, skulls and our cats.

AU: Tell us about the album you just released. What can we expect to hear?

Steve: *HOPEGRINDER* is a bombastic, churning, EBM crusher that will blow your fucking ears off. Fans can expect to hear 100-110 bpm floor-destroyers, with some faster stuff encouraging unionisation. There's also three remixes. You know, for funsies.

AU: Does HOPEGRINDER explore any particular themes or topics?

Steve: Oh, yes. The title track is very personal, and I explore my feelings on being an existential nihilist. We just see hope ground down, every day, forever. And we just fuel that with more hope. Very depressing, I know. But it felt good to do. Otherwise, the other tracks explore death, darkness, and madness. Or they just sound cool. "Classcade" is a straight up a call to arms to organize and socialize. The vocals I added to "Soultrudge" make it into what you pretty much expect it to be based on the name. You trudge. You can't have everything. You can't have anything. I'll add that one of the tracks might be a love letter to a particular grimdark millennium.

AU: Do you have any plans for V-Day?

Steve: My partner and I are super chill. We don't usually make VD plans. I mean, we'll probably hit up a bistro in the neighbourhood and have some foods. We'll watch a movie with Azrael and Mothra.

They'll get delicious treats. Then we'll hit up Beacon Hill Park, talk to the ducks, geese, and peacocks, and confuse the shit out of them when we don our weird masks and make TikTok videos. You know, the usual middle-aged VD fare.

AU: Do you like to suck? Tootsie Pops, I mean.

Steve: Kinda. I don't suck for long, as I'll start crawing on that fucker. I'll immediately regret my actions, as that shit gets stuck in my teeth and I'll whine to Mothra. She's a very compassionate



fuzzball. She'll tell me it's okay and sniff my feet or something.

AU: Any dating or marriage advice?

Steve: Patience, communication, and understanding. Don't be a selfish asshole. Be upfront, but kind. Also, be dorks together. Find something you can geek out over together. Be yourself, but know it's okay to adjust as a form of compromise. Being unbending will break you. You're not the fucker you want to break, and you certainly don't want to break your partner.

AU: Any upcoming shows?

Steve: I'll be playing with Eva X and The Bifurcated in Vancouver, March 10th. It's at Bully's Studios, and you can find more information looking up Essential Diversity Productions on Facebook or Instagram.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Steve: I have a new Skull Cultist release coming out around the end of February, called *HARDCORE RITUALS*.

AU: Famous last words?

Steve: You'd be surprised at the things you find... when you go looking. (Usually Zoats. They're under your bed, waiting for you.)

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TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH



TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH

Interview with Ring Announcer Sidney Strode

By Mike "You Call That a Submission Hold?" Croy

Welcome back to another edition of Turnbuckle Sandwich. In this edition I had the distinct pleasure of sitting down with local wrestling ring announcer and horror filmmaker/producer Sidney Strode.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with?

Sidney: Your local Métis matriarch and pro wrestling ring announcer, Sidney Strode.

AU: How did you get into professional wrestling?

Sidney: I went to a 365 Pro Wrestling live show and was hooked after seeing Eddie Osbourne and Lak Siddartha throw each other into barbed wire. Krofton befriended me when I started going to shows as a girls' night ritual and I trained at Pro Wrestling Academy for a hot minute. I'm in a career where I shouldn't risk injury so I dropped out. I'm an RN and when I worked at the hospital, I was on the rapid response team. I got out of bedside nursing but missed the adrenaline rush of managing emergencies. I kept going to 365 shows and always brought a fanny pack full of first aid supplies, so they kept pulling me into the locker room when people got hurt. I started doing interviews with the talent and Kayfabe Korner recaps at home, though I think Karen the intern has more of a natural knack for that. The opportunity to announce came up and I jumped at it; what other wrestling promotion puts a mic in an Indigenous woman's hand and lets her say whatever she wants? I open every show by honouring the First Nations lands and peoples



who make pro wrestling possible. I get to help everyone have fun, feel safe, and let our athletes and fans shine.

AU: What are some highlights of your career so far?

Sidney: I wrote, produced, directed, edited and acted in a YouTube mini-series for 365 called *Chop*, based on *Scream*. I had to put it on hiatus as I'm working two jobs and in grad school. I didn't think anyone was paying attention, [but] one of our fans approached me after I'd asked to take a photo with his daughter who was wearing a homemade Devon Shooter shirt. It turns out the kid had been watching the series on loop and waiting for the next episode! I'll do anything for young fans, so I need to restart production. Sometimes fans ask me to sign things – the strangest so far was a sock. I never saw myself as a role model or someone who would be giving out autographs. Our fans' respect means more to me than I could ever say. Being accepted in the pro wrestling community feels like coming home.

AU: What's your most memorable match or moment?

Sidney: Every wrestling show is special. Before Nolan James became such a bad influence, Max Benson was a sweet kid. He was up against Devon Shooter for a title shot and I thought Max had a serious neck injury, and Shooter wouldn't stop working his neck. Ref Tim wasn't doing anything, so I jumped into the ring and shoved Shooter off Max so I could see if he had a spinal injury. Luckily Max was okay, but I'm always keeping an eye out for my wrestling nephew, even if he's got a bad attitude lately. The first night I ring announced, I was so nervous. I didn't have a script and had to improvise in front of a sold-out crowd. During my intro, I did a land acknowledgement

and spoke about Indigenous contributions to pro wrestling. I didn't think to ask permission to do that beforehand, and it was a huge shift from what is done at most indie shows. The crowd reaction was positive, but I asked the promoter afterward if what I'd said was okay and if I should speak less about cultural stuff, and got an enthusiastic "That was great, we want more of that!" and knew I was surrounded by the right people. I am learning to take up space as an Indigenous woman, and it meant the world to feel accepted somewhere that there didn't used to be room for people like me

AU: Any words of wisdom for our lady readers out there considering getting into wrestling?

Sidney: There is no safer or more powerful

feeling than being surrounded by wrestlers who have your back. Nobody will make you laugh harder or look out for you as loyally as the wrestling community. If you feel out of place or like you aren't seen, the wrestling world will welcome you, build you up, and celebrate whatever makes you different. Any combat sport will humble you, but it will also build confidence, as you learn to trust your body and the people sharing the ring. I am evidence that you don't need to know anything about wrestling to fall in love with it at any age.

AU: What do you enjoy the most about wrestling?

Sidney: It's the people: the athletes and crew who put on a breathtaking show every time, and the fans that have become my friends. Watching the regular kids who come out to shows with their big personalities always makes my night.

AU: What's the funniest thing that has happened to you or you've seen at a live show?

Sidney: Indie wrestlers at their core are the fun aunts or uncles who are always trying to get the bigger laugh at the kitchen table, so it's hard to choose a favourite. Artemis Spencer clotheslining Krofton on an electric scooter as he motored around the ring comes to mind. Something that was not funny at the time but is now hilarious was when our venue's bathrooms all stopped working and we still had two matches to get through. We had a full house, 350 people or more, and the beer was flowing. I breezed through announcing as quickly as possible. Somehow, we didn't get kicked out, nobody had any accidents, and as I walked to my car afterward, I got to see a lineup of folks watering the bushes outside the venue.

AU: What skills do you possess outside of wrestling that pays the bills?

Sidney: I've been a registered nurse for six years. I'm proud to work for First Nations Health Authority as the advisor for STBBIs and sexual health for BC, plus I pick up shifts at the Vancouver Island Women's Clinic as an abortion provider. I am a bleeding heart and feel like I have the best jobs in the world.

AU: Who trained you to wrestle or perform?

Sidney: Eddie Osbourne put the mic in my hand. He lets me completely do my own thing and I ask for feedback from our team to stay on track. Before my first show I asked for guidance from Manda Cat, my ring announcer counterpart in the Ontario arm of our promotion. She taught me that if it's clear I'm having a good time, the crowd is having a good time.

AU: What's your favourite venue to perform in?

Sidney: Every summer our sponsors at Whistler Buoy Brewery host Whistlemania; it's a huge outdoor space, full of people having fun in the sun who are mostly new to indie wrestling. It's always a highlight to be part of that show as the



beer flows and newcomers' minds are blown.

AU: What town has the toughest or most lively crowd?

Sidney: I usually stick to the South Island shows; the crowd in Sooke can be counted on to be rowdy and engaged. The Victoria crowd knows how to make some noise.

AU: Who's your favourite musical artist?

Sidney: I've been trying to go to more local concerts in Victoria, and 365 Pro Wrestling's own Dane Loucks (wrestling fans know him as the Damien Caines) puts on a hell of a show. He's in a few bands: The Purrvverts, Evil!, Danezig and Start with the Cobra.

AU: What can our readers at Absolute Underground look forward to in the coming year?

Sidney: My wrestling goals are pretty humble: I want to get better on mic every show and get the crowd more involved. We keep selling out in Victoria so we've booked a new, massive venue, so our shows will be bigger and better than ever. Keep an eye out for more episodes of *Chop* and other YouTube shorts on 365 Combat too.

AU: Has wrestling for women changed much since you've become involved?

Sidney: I'm a bit of a newcomer, though I'll say the women on our roster get more talented every show and continually impress me. It feels like yesterday I was at Rose's first show as a student, and she just debuted on Ring of Honour against Athena! The thing I've noticed more is our crowd composition;



it used to be mostly men, and now it's a pretty even split. Women have some of my favourite heckles for the bad guys - I once heard a woman yelling "ick, look at those yucky yucky muscles!" repeatedly at Devon Shooter and he was shaken.

AU: Any parting words for our readers at Absolute Underground?

Sidney: If you've never been to a local wrestling show, you're missing out! There is something for everyone. Don't be shy at shows; wrestling folks are almost always happy to take photos, sign stuff and chat with people.

You can catch Sidney Strode live at local Vancouver Island wrestling shows announcing all the high-flying action or on the 365 Pro wrestling YouTube channel.

[youtube.com/@365ProWrestling](https://www.youtube.com/@365ProWrestling)

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DIAXIANG FAMILY



Paddy Waggin'

Interview with Aidan Carroll

By Mal Content

Well, it's that time of year again and with Saint Patrick's day just around the corner we had a chance to catch up with the lead singer/songwriter Aidan Carroll, AKA Paddy, from East Van's very own Celtpunks Paddy Waggin'.

AU: So what's the craic, Paddy?

Paddy: Howiya? As usual this time of year, we are busy rehearsing and preparing shenanigans for our annual Paddy's Day party.

AU: For our readers that may not have heard of Paddy Waggin', give us a quick description.

Paddy: Paddy Waggin' is a Celtic party band that plays loads of traditional, originals, covers, rebel and drinking songs. This year we have added electric guitar, so we will be an eight-piece, however, we have a few players that play multiple instruments. You can expect to hear: acoustic guitar, bass, electric guitar, banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, accordion, bodhrán, harmonica, drums

and of course the PW lads singing their hearts out.

AU: Sounds killer, where is the party this year and what's in store for the lucky folks attending the show?

Paddy: This year we are playing on Saturday March 16th. So it's St Patrick's Eve I suppose, or St Practice Day. It's turned into a fun tradition for us to play at LanaLou's Rock'n'Roll Eatery. I believe this will be the fourth year now. It's great since we pack the place with friends and family and have an absolute blast. The crowd is lit and on the dance floor singing along at the top of their lungs. Loads of folks wearing green but no green beer because that's just wrong.

AU: So what's your set going to look like?

Paddy: We will be playing two sets with all our original Paddy Waggin' tunes and we will do covers from the greats in the Celtic genre like Flogging Molly, The Dropkick Murphys, The Mahones. Trad tunes and songs from The Dubliners, Christy Moore and of course the legendary Pogues.



AU: You mentioned The Pogues and we noticed your gig poster seems to have a familiar face disguised as St. Patrick?

Paddy: The poster was made well in advance of Shane MacGowan's passing. The world lost a good few legendary Irish musician's last year: dear Christy Dignam from Aslan, the lovely Sinead O'Connor and the loss of our favorite Shane MacGowan, who was a big influence on our band and most bands in the genre. While it's very sad, it has been absolutely amazing to see how many people his music affected and how it will be played for generations to come.

AU: Any opening acts?

Paddy: Well that brings me back to the poster with our Saint MacGowan. He really should be given sainthood and the day after St Patrick's should be a national holiday so we can rest our heads, haha. Seriously though, we are very excited to announce that we have the amazing Sinead X Sanders joining us this year to not only open the evening but she will be singing with me and the lads on a tribute to the late great Shane MacGowan and Kirsty MacColl. Sinead is well known in Vancouver and is a must see if you haven't seen her perform yet. It's going to be great, like Christmas Eve babe.

AU: Everyone loves that song.

Paddy: I don't want to give too much away, eh.



AU: Have you played any cool gigs in the last year?

Paddy: We had a great time last summer when we played The Irish Fusion Festival in False Creek. We got to play with some great acts like The Black Donnellys from Ireland who were fantastic and

The Paperboys. We also played with The Mahones from Kingston on their Farewell tour in Vancouver.

AU: Any other shows planned?

Paddy: We might play two shows at this rate, since tickets are selling fast and there are only about 85 tickets for sale. So if you are interested in coming, tickets are available on eventbrite.ca and the details are on the gig poster. We will be having a Countdown to Paddy's day at midnight and it's also

our seventh year playing with this particular line up, so we have loads to celebrate. In closing, have a safe and wonderful Paddy's Day and keeper lit folks. Cheers!

paddywaggin.ca

Photos by Eoghan McDonnell, Jaye Riske and Ryan Johnson





Just Give'r Western Canada Tour Interview with Fubar's Terry Cahill AKA Dave Lawrence By Trevor Tweet Reid, Ray "Mac Jacket" MacKay, and Irocker

Questions for Terry Cahill:

AU: Absolute Underground: Nice to see you, are a free man again? Are you on probation, or have they got a tracker on you or anything?

Terry Cahill: Sunnyvale Correctional services don't even know I'm gone. They ain't got jurisdiction out west. Prolly don't even know I'm gone.

AU: What did the cops get you for?

TC: Drivin' a pregnant lady to the hospital. I stole a cop car.

AU: East Coast jail vs West Coast jail? Do you prefer one to the other? What's one thing you miss about being in jail?

TC: Never been to West Coast jail. Don't plan to.

AU: You must be a bit of a celeb here in Alberta, is it harder out east or are the Trailer Park Boys looking out for you back there?

TC: Ya, no one knows me out there, hence gettin' nailed for doin' a good deed. Ricky's been havin' my back fer sure. He's got a tight fuse but he's a beauty.

AU: Trish must be so glad to have you home. Did she do anything special?

TC: Ya, she gave me her good mood button all night.

AU: You're going on a big rip out west. Hitting bars and cool venues all over Western Canada in March and April. Taking Shank along too. A bit of a celebration of getting back home? You driving? Watch for those cops.

TC: Ya, I'm super stoked to meet all the doppelbangers. It's gonna be buses, trains and ten speeds all the way, eh.

AU: How did you first meet Shank and what does it say on his dating profile? How's his Airbnb doing?

TC: Shank's my second blood cousin. He got evicted from that place.

AU: Are you an Indica or a Sativa guy, or more of a Hash guy? What's your favorite way to smoke weed?

TC: All of the above... uhh ways to smoke... also all of the above.

AU: Any pros and cons of Cannabis Legalization to comment on?

TC: I grow my own, so not much change really.

AU: What's the highest you've ever been? Was it when you huffed ant poison in jail with Ricky?

TC: Yes.

AU: How old is your boy now, what was his name again? What sorts of things do you two do together father/son style? Does Deaner have visitation rights?

TC: Not sure how old Deano is, but he's helpin' me get my back taxes sorted. Deaner lives in Quebec, and don't travel much no more. He ain't the dad so no need for visitations.

AU: How is Dean doing these days? I haven't seen you guys together in a while.

TC: See above. He's makin' a solo flick with Eagle Vision and the Indigenous Screen Office called Deaner 89. Ain't seen it yet but heard where he's seventeen again.

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, which is the best song to bang to?

TC: "Pour Some Sugar on Me" by Def Leppard

AU: Hard and fast, or slow and romantic?

TC: All of the above.

AU: Can you tell us the story of how Valentine's day started?

TC: An angel fell from Heaven and decided to fix all the broken hearts just for one day.

AU: How long have you and Trish been together?

TC: Well, we got married at the end of *Fubar II* there, so about fifteen years ago. We been broken up a bunch too. I'm bad at math so like seven?

AU: Any big plans for Valentine's Day, just you and her?

TC: Don't tell Trish but we're gonna go tailgatin'. I'm bringin' the barbecue.

AU: What's the secret to being together as long as you have? Do you have any advice for Valentine's Day?

TC: The couple that blades together stays together.

AU: Any fetishes to share? Do you have a safe word?

TC: Givner and giver.

AU: How about Trish? I bet she's wild.

TC: Like a fox.

AU: Can I get her number? You know, just to follow up. Maybe ask her a few questions?

TC: No. Take five.

Questions for David Lawrence:

AU: Who are you and what are your skills to pay the bills?

DL: I'm a writer, producer, improviser out of Calgary, Alberta. I've been freelancing and mostly work on my own projects.

AU: What first drew you to comedy and acting?

DL: I'm dyslexic, so I never did well in school. When I was 15 years old, I joined the Loose Moose Theatre where I learned how to improvise. It totally changed my life and informs all I do. Improv taught me how to tell stories and create characters.

AU: How did you get the role of Terry in Fubar?

DL: The Loose Moose was founded by a guy called Keith Johnstone, who created a competitive format of team-on-team improvisation called Theatresports. In the 90s, we'd often play teams that had themes like "white trash or bangers", and I created Terry. Terry was kinda like the Paul Schaffer of a late night show called *Hot Nuts and Popcorn*. I was getting frustrated with the few acting roles available, and I wasn't great at auditions, so I decided to create my own film around the character and his best bud.

AU: What about the film and the concept appealed to you?

DL: We wanted to make a film, and had no money, and knew a fake documentary was all we could afford. We could improvise all our dialogue, and use friends and family to play roles. The guidance counselor, for example, is my dad, and Trixie is my sister-in law, so it was incredibly fun and free, to just run and gun, and make each other laugh.

AU: Any fun stories from the sets of the two movies and television series?

DL: Well, we just shot a new series, and flooded our basement. We didn't realize the hairdryer was still plugged in and almost electrocuted ourselves.

AU: What do you think the legacy of Fubar is? How has it impacted you and your career?

DL: It's one of a handful of Canadian films that are known, and for that I will be forever grateful.

AU: In your opinion, what does it truly mean to be a "Headbanger"?

DL: Never say die. Keep givner.

AU: What's your quickest time to shotgun a beer? What's the key to a speedy shotgun?

DL: 3.69 seconds - true story. The key is to always use ice cold beers, and it helps to be thirsty.



AU: What other projects have you worked on that you'd like to tell our readers about?

DL: We've done a few custom replica Mac jackets. There's only a few left, but they're warm as hell. There's another season of *Trailer Park Boys Jail* coming out soon, and Terry's in it. We're also shopping around a new television series starring Trish, Shank and myself called *TNT*.

AU: How did it come about that you got to play Terry on the Trailer Park Boys: Jail TV Series.

DL: I'm originally from Nova Scotia. My friend from Loose Moose, Norm Hiscock, introduced me to the boys when he was working on their animated series. The first time I met the three boys we were all in character on their podcast, *Park After Dark*. You can find it on swearnet.com

AU: What do you consider the funniest movie ever made?

DL: *Superbad's* not bad.

AU: What can you tell us about your acting future?

DL: Gonna keep givner, that's for sure. And you should too.

AU: Anything else to promote? Where can people find you online?

DL: We're doing a tour and coming to lots of cool spots out west from the end of March to mid-April. It's gonna be good times, we do an improvised true story form me and Trish's life. Plus we give away free prizes and giver on the karaoke box. Fubar in the bar! Also keep an eye out for our new series and Jail season two.

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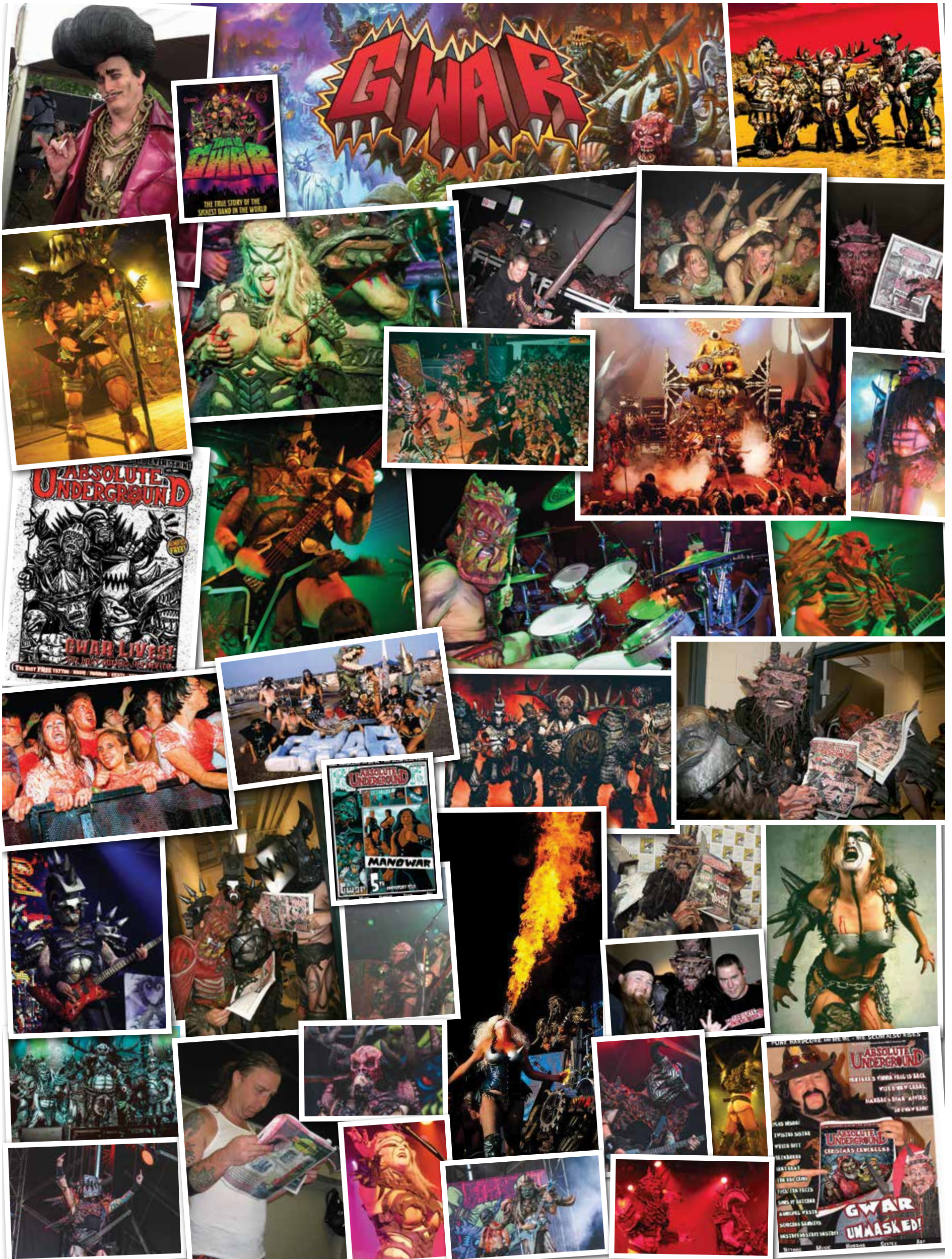
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GWAR

Age of Befuddlement

Interview with The Berserker Blöthar (Vocals)

by Ira "Gor-Gor" Hunter and Ray "Slaughterama" MacKay

AU: You ready to rock an interview today? We're a Canadian mag that's been around almost 20 years and we've had GWAR on the cover like 10 times. GWAR definitely holds the world record for being on the cover of Absolute Underground the most times. I guess that makes you world famous in Canada, eh?

Blöthar: This is Blöthar the Berserker. People think that I'm most famous as the lead singer of GWAR. But in fact, I gained my reputation as a busy dancer in New York. So it's not well known, but I prefer to be known as a busy dancer.

AU: What is a busy dancer?

Blöthar: It's just a dancer who is very busy, got a lot of business going on. I did *The Nutcracker Suite*.

AU: That sounds like something that GWAR would do on stage, crack some nuts.

Blöthar: It is yeah. My interpretation of *The Nutcracker Suite* was not very popular.

AU: I assume no one from the audience wanted to volunteer for that?

Blöthar: No, even though there are people that will pay you to step on their nuts.

AU: When you arrived on the planet, how were you first introduced to Heavy Metal?

Blöthar: Well, initially what happened is that Sleazy P. Martini discovered us locked in ice. He thawed us out and instantly realized that we were so stupid that we should probably form a Heavy Metal band. So he put us in front of a television set that was playing a smorgasbord of American culture. Professional wrestling, Heavy Metal videos, Punk Rock, horror movies and that's really the ingredients of GWAR.

AU: Tell us about the upcoming Age of Befuddlement Tour. Anything special planned?

Who's going to be decapitated?

Blöthar: I can't reveal who's on the hit list for the tour but it's going to be an extremely bloody adventure. We're coming to Canada, so usually what we do when we get to the border is dig a big hole and put all of our drugs in it. Then once we cross back over the border again, we can never find them. So that's a drag. But I do know that on this tour, we're going to play some tunes we haven't played for a long time. Which is exciting. Probably the most interesting thing for people is that the guitar player Pustulus Maximus is no longer with us. That doesn't mean he's dead. He's just went out to get a pack of cigarettes and we never saw him again. So we're going to have a surprise fill in guitar player, a new member of the Maximus clan, that people will have to come see.

We also have some surprises planned. Usually former President Trump makes an appearance. But I'm not sure if that's going to happen on this trip. It being election season. Can Trump even get into Canada with all of the crimes he's charged with? Might not let him across the border.

AU: When you're trying to hide your drugs, I heard that Pig Champion from the band Poison Idea, he was a real big dude, and he used to just hide the drugs in his belly button. Because no one would dare dig around in there.

Blöthar: Can you imagine Pig Champions belly button? Christ's sake. What I remember about Pig Champion is that he broke people's toilets a lot. I don't mean that he overflowed them. He sat on them and dislodged them from the floor. He was a great musician though.

AU: What's Age of Befuddlement mean to you?

Blöthar: It's the season of stupidity in the world. It really is. It just gets worse and worse. I don't think

anybody knows what to do anymore. GWAR is just reminding people of how absolutely absurd the world has gotten. That's what we've always done. So we decided it's not just the new *Dark Ages* but also things have just gotten more and more confusing. So you can look for a particularly confusing performance from GWAR this year.

AU: Who are the supporting acts?

Blöthar: Well, we have Cancer Bats and in some locations we're going to have X-Cops. People consider it as a side project of GWAR. But it's actually a band of crazy ex-police officers. We've got all of the types of police officers that you could want. There's Tubb Tucker, who's the southern sheriff and we've got a bicycle cop and there's a homicide detective, all of the police stereotypes. They're all retired former policemen



Photo Credit: Colin Smith Takes Pics

that have a rock band. It's interesting because actual cops love X-Cops. X-Cops is sort of their Spinal Tap. We don't have a Mountie though. But I bet in Canada we have a Mountie.

AU: Who else is in the band

and what does it say on their Tinder or Grindr profiles?

Blöthar: Well, I know Beefcake's Tinder profile just says "I'm sorry." Balsac is really the hit with the ladies and I don't know why. You look at Balsac and you think what's he going to do with those jaws? I mean, it's not like cunnilingus is in your future if you're dating Balsac. I hear Balsac's profile says "Out of work, heavy smoker, will move in."

AU: Is there a Mrs Blöthar?

Blöthar: No, there isn't unfortunately. So Blöthar actually has, and I speak about myself in the third person because that's the kind of person that I am. You know, a person everybody likes. Blöthar has four penises which are also kind of

mammaries. So he has dick titties if you will, or tittie dicks. He has also a sideways vagina. So my pronoun is, "It".

AU: Can you reproduce asexually?

Blöthar: Absolutely, I mean, the whole way that Beefcake came into existence is through mitosis. That's how Blöthar reproduces. You know about mitosis? Of course you do, you're Canadian. You've got good schools. I split in two on a cellular level.

AU: Any dating advice?

Blöthar: My recommendation is glory holes. There's a lot of optimism in putting your dick in a hole in a wall. It's like when you go fishing and you take a big net with you. Pretty sure you're going to catch something.

AU: Does Blöthar need a custom multi-holed glory hole?

Blöthar: Yeah, he does. Blöthar mistakes things for glory holes quite frequently. Anything that has a similar configuration like a recycling bin that has four holes in it. I also like to fuck coke machines.

AU: What's the most sexy erotic GWAR song to make sweet love to?

Blöthar: Make sweet love to! The song "Pepperoni" is pretty sexy. That's off of *This Toilet Earth*. It's the one that goes "In Out, In Out." I like that one. Also on our album *The New Dark Ages* the song "New Dark Age" that's pretty sexy.

AU: It was just the 10th anniversary of the album Battle Maximus. Will this tour feature songs from that release?

Blöthar: It will actually. We re-released that and there's going to be some *Battle Maximus* songs on the tour. We always play some older tunes.

AU: Working on anything for a new album?

Blöthar: Well, we're breaking in this guitar player right now, which is a complicated process of hazing and ritual abuse. We are going to work on a new record and we have ideas for it.

AU: The new guy is totally fresh meat? It's not someone that's been in the band before?

Blöthar: Yeah, he's fresh meat. Fresh organ meat.

AU: What's your opinion on the This Is GWAR documentary?

Blöthar: I think it's great. I am as proud of that as anything we've done and we didn't even do it. It represents the story of GWAR very well and it's the most interesting story of GWAR. The story of how it functions in reality.

AU: I felt like Techno Destructo was just so cold when talking about the passing of Oderus. It was a strange moment in the movie when he didn't show any emotion at all.

Blöthar: There's something about GWAR that not a lot of people realize. Which is the past or inner turmoil of the band, that's how the band makes meaning. The dynamics influence the narrative directly. So Techno Destructo running around saying "GWAR Must Die!" because he really, really hates GWAR. Is not that far from reality, right? Yes, Hunter Jackson and Dave Brockie started GWAR but they also had a very fraught relationship and that relationship played out on stage and the story of the characters. But you're right, Hunter has to deal with being the guy that said that stuff.

AU: What are some of your favourite pastimes, besides hunting Moon moose?

Blöthar: I've always liked mahjong, so I play that a lot. Gambling is my passion. That's why I'm interested in glory holes. It's a gamble. It's how I



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meet people. So I'm going to say that glory holes is probably one of my main interests.

AU: Tell us about the unearthed Oderus Urungus song called "Tammy, Queen Of Dirt".

Blöthar: It's the last song that they recorded with Oderus singing. It tells a story about a character named Tammy that is sort of a locus of disease. It's got great classic Oderus lyrics.

AU: Did you thaw out later after the original members of GWAR? Were you part of the original Scumdogs of the Universe?

Blöthar: There are a lot of Scumdogs that were frozen in ice and basically it's like how your parents might have a big old terrestrials sized freezer in the garage that's full of frozen burritos. That's what GWAR is. When we need a new one they just thaw him out. We had all known each other in outer space as Scumdogs, basically like old army buddies. I was among the shock troops that were frozen here on Earth and when Oderus passed, I simply popped out of the freezer.

AU: How did you become known as The Berserker?

Blöthar: I was already that before coming to Earth. Blöthar comes from a planet called The World of Mist, it is essentially Valhalla. Except it's got both the light side and the dark side. That's where Blöthar's origins are and it wound up being very influential on Norse culture. Blöthar is a shamanic warrior. So I answered the call that young shamanic warriors get. I had to live out in the woods and rub myself

with mud and take a bunch of psychedelics and become who I was.

AU: Do you have any plans for Valentine's Day?

Blöthar: I do actually. I'm a big fan of hearts, and by that I mean actual human hearts. So I'm going to go to CVS at the last possible minute and I'm going to buy one of those roses that they sell at the checkout counter. Then I'm going to reach into the chest of the clerk and rip out their heart and give that to my loved one. So those are my Valentine plans. The same thing happens every year. I just forget, I'm a busy guy, and then the last minute I have to run down to the drugstore and get things together.

AU: When you're in Vancouver they have that bar made special for you called The Moose.

Blöthar: The Moose, yeah man. Vancouver, I love it. There is a lot of venereal disease there. It's great.

AU: Do you consider GWAR to be a punk band or a metal band? Or was it a punk band parodying a metal band? What was it originally, and what is it now?

Blöthar: That's a good question. GWAR definitely started as a punk band. That's what it was. It was a punk band not even necessarily parodying metal but parodying the idea of Rock music period. I guess metal but also bands like Led Zeppelin and just the sort of attitudes and aesthetic of Rock music. That's how it started. To me, because it's the same people



pretty much, that's still what it is. But along the way the band did start playing music that made a little more sense as a metal band. But GWAR has always been eclectic and that has kind of cost the band commercially. We're not interested in putting records out that all sound the same. To us that feels very confining.

AU: I know you guys play Riot Fest but I'm wondering can GWAR play Punk Rock Bowling? Or does it have to be a Metal Festival? Is there some sort of line there?

Blöthar: The lines exist commercially. But we've worked on trying to bust out of that. Where I think GWAR sits, were GWAR needs to be positioned, is as a legendary Shock Rock band. GWAR's a band that pushed the boundaries in a way like no other band, there isn't an equivalent.

AU: Yeah, I don't think any other band has the balls to chop Hillary Clinton's tits off on stage.

Blöthar: They don't, and they also don't even have the balls to be funny. They don't have the balls to do anything but pose. To me GWAR poses as the ultimate posers. We have an allergy to sincerity and that's just fine.

AU: I kind of feel like a first time fan might just go to see the spectacle but underneath the costumes you guys are really good musicians.

Blöthar: Well, thank you. We try to be really good musicians and I would agree with you. I think that the band is very underrated in a lot of ways. Musically, I think that's true but I even think that the underrating goes a little further than that. Because GWAR really isn't included in those conversations about the history of Shock Rock. That sucks, man. Because there's no question about it. I think if you ask anybody, and everybody knows who the band is. But the band can't get played on radio, the band can't get included in particular festival lineups. A lot of that is because the band does things that no other band has ever, ever done. Even if it's just spraying liquids into the audience, just that simple fact has kept the band off stages. It's kept the band out of the way from exposure. There are people like Eddie Trunk, that's a classic example. This is the guy who is one of the metal tastemakers who decided a long time ago that he doesn't like GWAR. Why? Because he knows that GWAR doesn't like him. There are other people like Kerry King, anybody who's invested in the idea that their toughness is important is not going to like GWAR. Unfortunately that makes up a lot of heavy metal. Like a lot of it is about this kind of posturing masculinity that's just a bunch of fucking bullshit and GWAR attacks that.

AU: I notice he was on your "Outs" list. What's the beef with Slayer's Kerry King?

Blöthar: No beef. Chicken. He's fine. Just serious. Cool. I didn't get into Metal to be cool. I didn't get into Metal. Fuck Metal. Punk Rock, man.



2024's "In and Out" List by Gwar's Blöthar the Berserker

In:

- Procrastinating
- Tickets to Age of Befuddlement Tour
- Wieners
- Nursing home sex
- Inhalants
- Pepperoni pasties
- Jamie Spears' leg

Out:

- Humans
- Handjobs
- Lane Bryant
- The moon
- Doing anything
- Kerry King

AU: How do you like playing in Canada?

Blöthar: I know that Canada was always really accepting of GWAR. I'm talking about from the old days when we would ride around in a school bus on those icy roads. We usually play Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, sometimes Calgary, and we play Vancouver. There are a lot of other places to play and I'm glad that this time around we are playing in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and we're playing in some other places we haven't played in a while.

AU: Is GWAR aiming to out-merchandise KISS? Will there be GWAR condoms or caskets?

Blöthar: GWAR out everything's KISS. There is no limit to how much, how often, and how brazenly we will prostitute ourselves. Caskets and condoms make perfect sense to me. How about adult diapers and wine in a box? GWAR's Shitty Day Chardonnay.

AU: How does GWAR celebrate Valentine's Day?

Blöthar: We don't have Hallmark holidays in outer space. But any excuse to eat dollar store chocolate and buy silk roses.

AU: Favourite non-punk album?

Blöthar: Jesus Christ Superstar.

AU: Any parenting advice from Blöthar?

Blöthar: The best advice I can give you is to have a vasectomy.

AU: Any final words for Canadians up here on the frozen tundra eagerly awaiting your arrival for The Age Of Befuddlement tour?

Blöthar: We are coming and we're going to make it hurt. Come see GWAR, you might regret it, but you won't forget it.

GWAR.NET





STRIKER

Interview with John Simon Fallon

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with STRIKER, who are you and what do you do?

John Simon Fallon: We are a heavy metal band from Edmonton, Canada and we love to shred.

AU: Congrats on your second album *ULTRAPOW* which just dropped this past Feb 2nd. What can you tell your readers about this record?

JSF: Thank you! It's actually our seventh full-length album. *ULTRAPOW* was recorded in February and March 2023, with Josh Schroeder at Random Awesome Studios in Midland, Michigan. This is the first full-length album to feature Pete Klassen on bass, and our most recent addition, John Simon Fallon, on guitar. We had an amazing time making this album and living together for five weeks. It was a lot of fun and a great experience for all of us, which we think translates directly into the overall vibe of the album. The album features 11 selected tracks out of nearly 60 ideas, which highlight a variety of our influences from AOR to thrash metal and beyond.

AU: You are quoted as saying *ULTRAPOW* is the amalgamation of five years of writing and exploring music. How was it working with Josh Schroeder, a producer more known for working with heavier bands (Lorna Shore, Tallah, King 810)?

JSF: We can't say enough about how great it was to work with Josh. He is first and foremost an amazing human, and is a great producer, musician,

mediator and has the sickest pinball machine collection. He is also a Canadian and is originally from Manitoba. After self-producing *Play to Win*, and the singles "Deathwish" and "Strange Love", we decided that it would be in our best interests to record away from home with a producer so we could fully immerse ourselves in the songwriting and recording process, and not have the technical burden of tracking things ourselves. We decided to work with Josh because we wanted to know what our brand of metal would sound like in the hands of someone who has created some of the heaviest productions on the planet. The end result is *ULTRAPOW*.

AU: How does it feel to finally release an album after winning a Juno for your full-length *Play To Win*?

JSF: Like a much-needed breath of fresh air. After the widespread success of *Play to Win*, came the pandemic, and the wind got taken out of our (and everyone's) sails a bit. So, this feels like a new beginning for the band, a new era of STRIKER, and we are so excited to see where the future takes us.

AU: STRIKER really hits the note on this album for 80s nostalgia metal and having a signature tone... what's the secret to capturing that sound?

JSF: That's a really hard question to answer. There really isn't a secret to the songwriting element. We just write the types of songs we enjoy listening to and have fun playing, singing and performing. That's what keeps us authentically STRIKER. It's so easy for us to deliver the songs with conviction because we are huge fans of the styles of music we incorporate into our sound. With regard to the signature tone... shout-out to Jackson Guitars, Vigilant Guitars and Bareknuckle Pickups.

AU: What's up with the saxophone? We love the track and video for "Give It All" and its retro nod to the 80s sax. Where did the idea come from for this? And who's playing the saxophone on the album track?

JSF: Who doesn't love some saxophone? Some of our listeners may remember that we first added sax on the *Stand in the Fire* album, on a track called "Out For Blood." When we got around to writing/recording "Give it All", we quickly realized that the song was an opportunity to incorporate the instrument again. So we replaced what was originally a guitar layer, with sax! The saxophone was performed by Randy Villars, a renowned musician, composer and instructor, who toured with Bootsie Collins, and played for several orchestras and symphonies. He also did some session work for New Kids on the Block back in the day.

AU: Who makes The Best of The Best of The Best 80s style sunglasses?

JSF: Pit Viper Sunglasses.

AU: We read that drummer Jono Webster left STRIKER after recording the album. Will the band be taking applications for a new drummer, or is there someone in the pipeline already?

JSF: We have been talking to a few different drummers to ensure we have options for touring, but have yet to solidify a permanent member. We're not in any rush, it's a big commitment and there are so many variables to being in a professional band, so we want to make sure

we take the time to make the right decision. Any drummers out there reading this, feel free to reach out to us if you feel like you have the chops, love to shred, can survive life on the killing road and want to embark on the never-ending quest for shred glory.

AU: Where can fans see STRIKER play this year?

JSF: As of now, we are confirmed to play at Legions of Metal Festival in Chicago on May 3rd 2024, and at ProgPower USA in Atlanta on September 6th 2024. We have some other opportunities coming down the pipeline, including our

hometown and regional CD release parties, and other tour possibilities, for which we will make formal announcements in the future.

AU: Anything else you would like to add for our readers?

JSF: Our new album *ULTRAPOW* is available on CD and vinyl. Feel free to hit us up on social media and let us know what you think of the music! We are certainly proud of what we have created.

You can order your copy of the new album and other band swag at STRIKER-metal.com



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ARTIST PROFILE



Skinner

Interview by Ira "Hellborn" Hunter

Oakland, CA based artist Skinner's wild, graphic explorations take form in multiple media. He's known for his psychedelic nightmare paintings, otherworldly animation, toys and murals, and has worked with industry giants such as Warner Bros, Adult Swim, Vans, Quentin Tarantino, Fender guitars, among others.

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

Skinner: I'm Skinner, I'm known for my psychedelic nightmare art and monsters and stuff.

AU: Describe your art style if possible. How would you describe the art you create?

Skinner: Psychedelic fantasy art? I don't know. Uh, crazy demon art?

AU: Does your work tend to lean to the side of good or evil?

Skinner: Oh, it's not in a binary like that, but I guess it looks scary to people sometimes. To lame nerds!

AU: Give us a history of your rise to artistic legendary if possible. What sort of stuff did you start out doing when you were first getting started?

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

Skinner: I have always done the stuff I'm [doing] now, I just wasn't as good. My first break? Maybe a skateboard for Creature Skateboards.

AU: Any career highlights or lowlights to share since then?

Skinner: All the stuff I've done for Mastodon, my

music videos, the *Drawing with Skinner* show, any finished project makes me happy! Lowlights? There's so many but I try to see them as important also.

AU: What/who are some of your greatest artistic inspirations?

Skinner: True weirdos or outsiders but also like Frank Frazetta or Bernie Wrightson.

AU: Describe your artistic approach if possible.

Skinner: Nonstop just going for it and seeing possibilities in everything.

AU: What are some of your favourite projects you've been involved with?

Skinner: Mastodon music video ("Asleep in the Deep"), High on Fire music video ("The Black Plot"), *Budfoot* horror film and the movie I'm working on, *Shrine of Abominations*.

AU: What mediums do you work in? Is there something new you've always wanted to try?

Skinner: I do so many mediums. All painted ones, illustration, music, sculptures... acting... I guess I'd like to try dancing like a psycho.

AU: Any other hidden talents unrelated to art?

Skinner: Comedy? I try to be funny. Might not be too funny, but I try! Also, I play basketball kinda good sometimes? Writing.

AU: Where are you based out of? Where can people see some murals you've done? When you work on your murals, are you using spray paint or other materials and techniques as well?

Skinner: I'm out of Oakland, CA. I do some murals sometimes. I have a badass one at Ghost Town Brewing of a big ass death knight. It's cool and tough. I use spray paint and acrylics!

AU: Tell us about your comic book project called *Skin Crawl*. What makes it unique in your opinion? Is there a third issue planned?

Skinner: It's unique because its stories I wrote and drew... it's a deluxe and fancy magazine! I'm working on issue 3 right now! There's a cool radio drama of *Skin Crawl* on bloodyfm.com

AU: What can you tell us about your stop-motion horror fantasy project *Shrine Of Abominations*? What was the inspiration? What's the storyline about?

Skinner: It's a bad ass stop motion horror/fantasy film about monsters and the story is a revelation of traumas and power and destruction. The inspiration is that it was possible and Ross Kennedy, my partner in this, and I love Ray Harryhausen. People can go to my website and buy posters and stuff. We're wrapping up the last scenes!

AU: Tell us about some of the toys and masks you have worked on? How do you approach their creation?

Skinner: Oh I just draw crazy stuff I want to see made or a company will want to make a specific drawing I've done into a statue or toy.

AU: What are some of the commercial projects you have worked on that you were extra stoked to be involved with?

Skinner: I'd say some Adult Swim projects have been fun. I've done a ton of *Rick and Morty* stuff, *Dethklok*, Tony Hawk video game board designs, just did some Mountain Dew stuff that was kinda cool but I wouldn't recommend drinking Mountain Dew.

AU: How were you able to start working for some of the real deal comic publishers? What are some of the killer comic covers you have worked on so far?

Skinner: Oh I was referred by some people that liked my art. That's how a lot of stuff happens. I haven't done anything for Marvel or DC but that's fine. I only want to do a Hulk cover. I've done stuff for *Creepshow*, Boris Karloff Gold Key comics, *Head Lopper*, *ORCS!* Random crap!

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

Skinner: Perturbator or Red Fang or like dungeon synth. Ministry.

AU: Do you take commissions? What's the strangest thing you've ever been asked to draw?

Skinner: I don't take commissions, usually. I did do one of the Tick in that famous Batman Dark Knight pose for some nice lady who wanted it for her husband's birthday.

AU: What's the latest thing you have been working on?

Skinner: My board game, *Realm Runners*, video game, *Flesh Haunted Lords*, *Shrine of Abominations*, *Skin Crawl* Issue 3, my movie, *Dungeon Crawl*, and other weird-ass paintings.

AU: Have you ever seen your art tattooed on people?

Skinner: All the time!

AU: Are you a fan of Gwar? Have you ever done any Gwar-related art?

Skinner: I like Gwar! I saw them on *Beavis and Butt-head* when I was 17. I haven't done any Gwar art!

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, which song is the best one to make sweet love to in your opinion?

Skinner: "Bohemian Rhapsody"! Confuse them and make it memorable!

AU: Hard and fast, or slow and romantic?



Skinner: Whatever keeps you from busting too fast, I guess.

AU: What does it say on your dating profile?

Skinner: I've been together with my wife for 20 years but I'll let you suck my toes.

AU: Any special plans for Valentine's Day this year?

Skinner: Try not to bust too fast.

AU: Who is the sexiest artist alive, other than yourself?

Skinner: There's so many sexy artists but I'll never tell! Tehehehe

AU: Have you done any erotic art pieces?

Skinner: No, but I should. Or maybe I did but I can't recall. My mind is destroyed from all the butt rock blasting through my AirPods.

AU: Dream project you are still dying to do.

Skinner: I guess a full-length fantasy horror film. Or a better *NeverEnding Story* sequel could be cool.

AU: Have you ever had a booth at San Diego Comic-Con? Anything crazy fun happen to you when you've been down there?

Skinner: Yeah, I have! It's really fun. The crazy thing is you can meet a lot of your heroes down there.

AU: Who are some other artists you are friends with that people should check out?

Skinner: Martin Ontiveros, Justine Jones, Mike Sutfin, Jeanne D'Angelo, Dave Correia, Amol Ray, @thecreepfromsixfeetdeep - there's a couple!

AU: Any upcoming events you'd like to tell us about?

Skinner: I'll be at Monsterpalooza!

AU: Do you read comics? If so, what comics do you read?

Skinner: I like horror or weird shit. Right now I am loving *The Deviant*, *Immortal Hulk*, anything in the Hellboy universe. Independent stuff. Anything imaginative and weird.

AU: If you could do art for any character or brand, what would you pick?

Skinner: Probably Shin Godzilla or Inhumanoids or Lord of the Rings.

AU: Any words of wisdom for our readers or aspiring artists?

Skinner: Do your best!

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

Skinner: That I'm all about therapy.

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Sasquatch Brothers

Interview with INK.D

By Matt Norris

Absolute Underground: What style of music best fits your group?

SB: It changes momentarily like an attention deficit disorder victim, but basically any genre that makes your momma want to blow me.

AU: You have a new album, *Long Lost Lone Wolves And Low Riders Of The Storm Clouds*, any song you'd like our readers to check out?



SB: Every song is different. 24 songs all featuring guest appearances from the Sasquatch Sisters.

AU: What inspires your songs lyrically?

SB: Anything and everything. The exquisiteness of human existence. Sins in the darkness. Intermissions of love, blood and savagery. Unparalleled beauty. The depths of depravity and insanity. Love and hate, peace and war. Our bloated egos and more.

AU: Stuck on a deserted island with one album to listen to for the rest of time, what album would it be?

SB: Shameless self promotion aside, I'd say the best album ever made in the history of humankind

is... Sasquatch Brothers, any album. Leaps and bounds better than the rest of the garbage out there, haha. Put a heart shaped box around that shove it up the music industry's phat fat ass.

AU: What style of music do you hate the most?

SB: I can't judge other people's garbage, but I pick through it sometimes.

AU: If you weren't a musician, what would you spend your time doing?

SB: Cocktail connoisseur by day, perfectly proportioned porn star by night.

AU: Do you believe Sasquatches are real?

SB: Imagine looking down the barrel of a gun, would you think to yourself, "Are bullets real?"

AU: What's the best buzz?

SB: Is that a trick question? Definitely, possibly, maybe, a bee.

AU: How do you celebrate Valentine's day?

Sasquatch Brothers: Women, wine, weed, whiskey, watermelons.

AU: Sounds fun, what about heart shaped chocolates and roses?

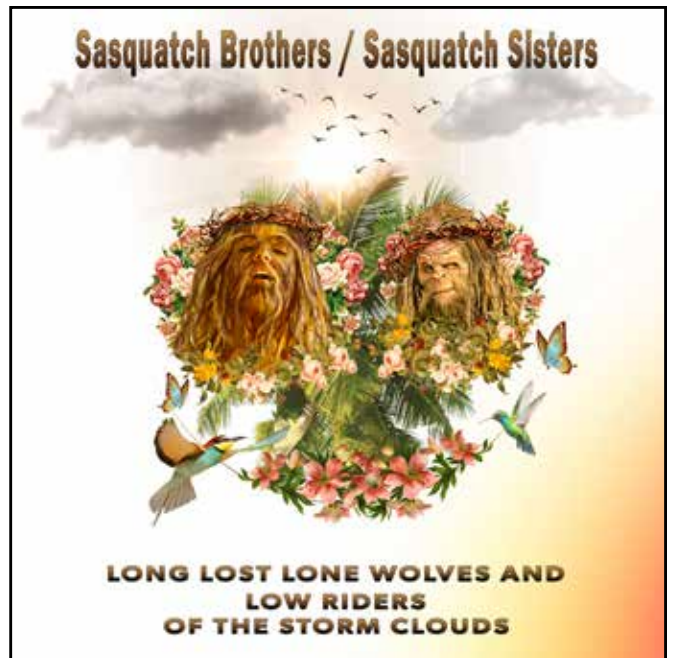
SB: We make luxuriously divine cakes that look like roses for all the ladies.

AU: Since we are talking about Valentine's Day, what is love?

SB: A mentally sick state of mind, a poetically readjusted spiritually intertwined obsession with the best intent. Your counterpart.

AU: Any words of wisdom to the readers?

SB: Be smarter, work harder, be nicer, listen better, shut the hell up for once, spread positivity



and hope and compassion and quit being jerks, creeps, thieves and tweakers. I don't really know, I'd say do something positive that inspires you, thus making yourself feel good, and possibly others.

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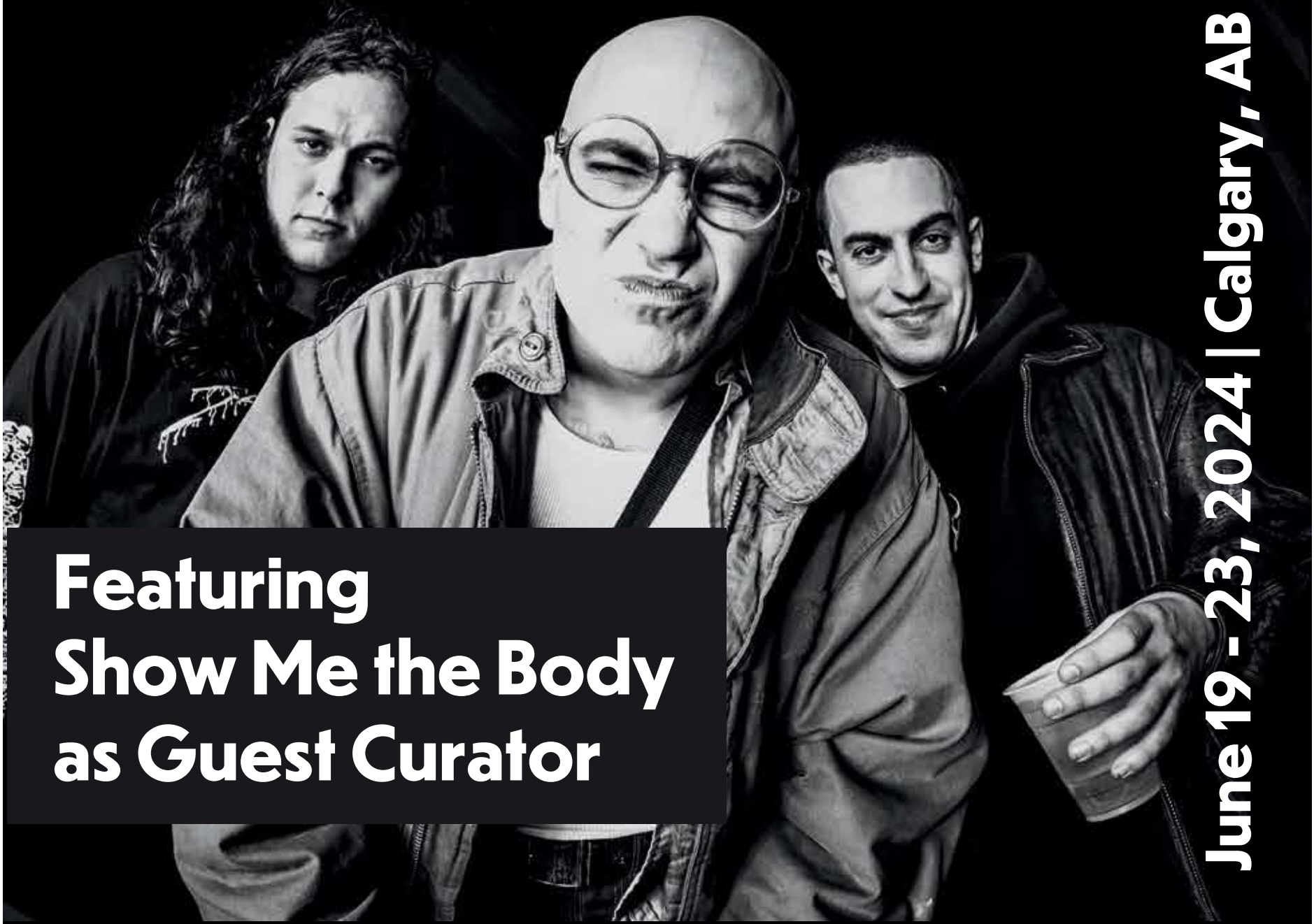
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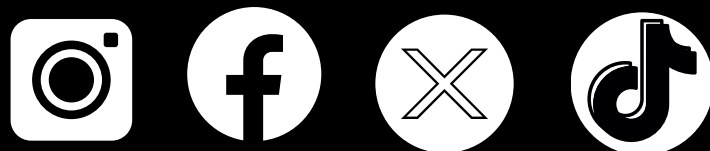
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pMad

Irish Gothic Post-Punk

Interview by AU Editorial

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

Paul Dillon: My name is Paul Dillon, [and I'm in] the solo music project pMad. Neither famous nor infamous, just an ordinary guy who makes music for himself and in the hopes that other people around the world will enjoy the music also.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

PD: I'm from Portumna, Co. Galway, Ireland. The music scene in Ireland is massive... Well, massive as in there is a huge amount of great music in all genres being made. Underground music such as pMad and the like is being made, but not as easily found. The live gigging scene is not what it used to be either, with the smaller feeder venues dying every day. So sad. Something needs to change. I



also have a radio show *The Best of Irish Indie* which goes out on some radio station somewhere in the world each day, showcasing the best of new and classic Irish indie music. It just shows the talent we have in this country and not just the world-famous names!

AU: Can you describe your sound for anyone who hasn't heard you before?

PD: It's funny, as most people hear what they hear. pMad crosses a lot of genres so people hear influences from all sorts. The main ones are The Sisters of Mercy, Depeche Mode, New Order, Killing Joke, The Cure and the like, but I would even say it is even more varied than that. People hear a lot of influences from the 80s in certain tracks along with darkwave, but generally, it is post-punk Gothic indie rock.

AU: Where does your name come from?

PD: People do wonder "is Paul Mad" and according to my last psychological report, if I ever had one, it may be true! I am losing a lot of likes and follows to the Pakistan Military Accounts Department, I presume there a lot of Pakistani Soldiers liking pMad the band and wondering, "What the hell does this have to do with my salary?!" After all that, the long and the short of it is that pMad is my name Paul Martin Anthony Dillon, with the big M for branding and mystique!

AU: Who influences you creatively?

PD: I am a music fan, first and foremost. [There is lots of] amazing new music being made out there. In Ireland for example, the likes of Def Nettle, Big Boy Foolish, NewDad and Just Mustard. Around the world, Odvojena Stvarnost, IndifferentMonKeY, Bag Head, Patient 404, Soleil noiR and so many more artists. Over time I am widening my musical landscape, but I still can't escape my love for The The, The Cure, The Smiths, Dinosaur Jr., Public Enemy, A House and the music of my adolescence.

AU: How do you approach writing music?

PD: It's all a jigsaw for albums *Who Why Where What* and *I in Power* – piecing together a bassline here and there, guitar riffs and lyrics that matched. Together with Dominik from Protonaut Studios, we came up with a collection of songs

which are genre-crossing. For album three, which we are demoing and recording at present, it is a new approach of completely new music and lyrics. I still have the same influences music-wise but have grown up and am open to more varied music genres. I want to create music that I will enjoy listening to! It is for me, pMad is great therapy for me and hopefully others will enjoy too!

AU: You just released a new single; can you tell us about it? Any other recent or upcoming releases?

PD: The new single "Opinion" is to coincide with the release of my second album *I in Power*. "Opinion" is about listening to other opinions

whether we agree with them or not, to see where the other side is coming from. We end up in bubbles, listening to only to our side of the argument. The new album, *I in Power* is available to buy on CD or download on Bandcamp only at the moment. The singles can be heard in all the usual places, but the full album won't be available to stream until all the tracks have been released later in 2024.

AU: Final words of

wisdom?

PD: As long as you're not hurting yourself or others, you're perfect the way you are. Don't be waiting for it to be perfect, it never will be! Just get out there and do it!

linktr.ee/pMadtheband



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Mad Caddies

Interview with Chuck Robertson

By Chuck Andrews and Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who am I speaking with, and what's your role in the Mad Caddies?

Chuck Robertson: This is Chuck Robertson – singer, and guitar player for Mad Caddies.

AU: Where are you guys from? What's the local scene like there these days?

CR: We are from a small town on the central coast of California called Solvang. It is the Danish capital of America, born and raised. There is no scene here there never has been. It's a small farming community with a tourist economy because of the Danish town and all the pastries and wine country. We had to travel to find culture when we were young to see good music.

AU: Who are the biggest influences on the sound of the Mad Caddies?

CR: I was born in 78 so I grew up on classic rock, and then metal followed by grunge, and then discovering Ska punk and reggae in my early teens. The band has been influenced by so many sounds you couldn't just pin one down.

AU: What's been the Mad Caddies mission statement throughout the years? Is there a message in your music?

CR: Very simple. Peace, love and respect

AU: Is there a story behind your name? Were you guys all into golf or something?

CR: Not at that time, but later in life, I did partake in a lot of the sports ball called golf. We were originally called the Ivy League. When we got signed to Fat Wreck Chords, we had to change the name because apparently another band had it. So we just came up with Mad Caddies on the spot.

AU: How did you get your "Big Break"?

CR: We all borrowed money from our parents to record our demo in Santa Barbara at Orange Whip studios in 1996. It would later be released as our debut record called *Quality Soft Core*. We recorded it in three or four days, I believe. Joey Cape from Lagwagon heard it and he sent it up to Fat Mike at Fat Wreck Chords because he was looking to sign a ska band. He called us a couple days later, and the rest is history



AU: Do you have a new album in the works? Or any plans for one?

CR: Our new album *Arrows Room 117* will be out in March 15th.

AU: How often do you guys tour Canada?

CR: We have been touring in Canada every year or two since 1999. We will be doing a full Canadian tour starting on 2/20/24 in Victoria and ending in Ottawa on 3/9/24. We love Canada!!!!

AU: What's your favorite thing about coming to Canada?

CR: Seeing my Girlfriend... big shout out to Saskatchewan.

AU: What has been your experience performing at the Victoria Ska and Reggae Fest in the past?

CR: Beautiful vibes, beautiful venue, beautiful people, beautiful day.

AU: What can people look forward to when they come

to see you perform live?

CR: Dance party hundred percent.

AU: What were the Mad Caddies mad about when first starting out?

CR: We never got paid for our first gigs like any young band.

AU: What are the Mad Caddies mad about these days in the present?

CR: Dude, I'm a middle-aged dad, I don't think you want to hear my truck rant, haha. I like to think about what I'm grateful for instead and the Roman empire, at least a couple times a week.

AU: What are the Mad Caddies happy about these days?

SKANK IT UP

CR: Peace, love, family, playing music with friends, traveling the world, still living the dream

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, which of your songs would be the best one to make sweet love to?

CR: Funny, you should ask there is a love song on the record for couples in love it's called Beautiful Bed.

AU: Hard and fast, or slow and romantic?

CR: Slow and romantic.

AU: Any special plans for Valentine's Day this year?

CR: Solo home alone and I don't eat chocolate, so maybe I'll go for a walk on the beach and look for whalebone and cool arrowheads

AU: Any strange hobbies or collections that might surprise people?

CR: I'm an amateur geologist and archaeologist. I collect fossils, Native American artifacts, rocks, crystals. I find the time alone out in nature looking for memories of the past brings me great joy and I love gifting things I find to the people I love.

AU: Anything else to promote?

CR: Come out to our show at Wicket Hall on 2/20. New Mad Caddies record out 3/1 – *Arrows Room 117*. Two singles are already out on the streaming platforms, "Palm Trees" and "Pines and Baby", check them out!

AU: How do people find you online?

Just use your silly fingers and check out Mad Caddies, you will find us everywhere.

Just remember guys, it's cold out there don't forget to wear your toque. Peace, love and respect. Thank you so much.

madcaddies.bandcamp.com

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BackStabber

Québec Death Metal Quatuor

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with BackStabber, who are you and what do you do?

BackStabber: We are a Canadian death metal quartet from a small industrial town up north called Rouyn-Noranda in Québec. The project has been around since 2012, but it was not until 2016 that it really took off as a live band with the release of the *Revenge* demo. Although we definitely have solid roots in death metal, we have various influences that find their way into our music.

AU: The band is back with its follow-up EP *Patterns of Domination* to follow your 2018 break-out debut album *Conspiracy Theorist*. What can you tell us about these four headbanging tracks?

BackStabber: Loosely based off of James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy*, *Patterns of*

Domination explores what the author calls the control dramas which are, basically, ways to drain attention from people. It is a handy guide on how to be a narcissist and make it all about yourself! There are four different patterns, and so the EP had to reflect that in some way. Not only is each song about a different pattern, but we have also tried to explore different subgenres musically and incorporate that into the writing process to give each song a life of its own.

AU: What inspired the band to make a record influenced by *The Celestine Prophecy*? What was it that drew you to the four patterns of attention and energy?

BackStabber: We have always been curious about different topics and sometimes inspiration comes when you expect it the least! There is something about that part of the book that inspired us, it is both interesting and can be presented in a sarcastic way to exploit both the idea and the stereotypes of the metal genre by promoting those domination patterns as a way of life. We had that in the back of our heads for

a long time and the timing after CT was perfect for us to get in that direction before going for another full-length album.

AU: What about this EP has you fired up the most to get new music out there to fans new and old alike?

BackStabber: I hope its variety will appeal to both older and younger metalheads. We feel like there is a little something for everyone in there, it is musically consistent with our previous works as much as there are new ideas chiming in here and there throughout the EP. As our fans already know, these are live bangers as well so we can't wait to bring these songs to life in a live setting!

AU: How was it working with Christan Donaldson (Cryptopsy) to produce the album?

BackStabber: We all are fans of both Chris' music and productions and we were honored to have the opportunity of getting a little bit of his magic on our music! Chris has always been thorough and professional! Since we handled the recording part ourselves, what Chris has done tremendously raised the quality of our work.

AU: How's the Northern Québec metal scene in Rouyn-Noranda? Have you had any well-known bands up there lately?

BackStabber: As surprising as it might seem, the scene here is pretty healthy thanks to Gen from Productions Ça Bûche. She has been doing an amazing job for the last 10+ years! Since we are a small community, having more than one promoter can be a scene-killer and there is a

tacit agreement within the scene where we put our trust in one local promoter and God, she delivers! There are regular shows once every 2-3 months where we have different bands from the Canadian metal scene, sometimes some tours, and then there are the local festivals that call Gen in to book a metal show for them. That's when we get bands like Dying Fetus, Cattle Decapitation, Voivod, etc... last November we had the absolute honor of playing direct support to Kataklysm!

AU: Any plans for the band to tour Québec or beyond this year?

BackStabber: Due to the 800 km separating us from Toronto or Montréal, it has always been a pain in the ass for us to get booked on a regular

basis like bands from the urban areas, but I think this EP will help us get our name out there and hopefully be able to get more shows in the coming year throughout Québec and Ontario. Playing our music to audiences really is the main driving force behind what we do!

AU: Anything else you would like to add for our readers?

BackStabber: Thanks for your

support, we gladly appreciate it! don't hesitate to drop by for a chat, with social media nowadays, we are easily accessible. Keep it up! \m/

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The Getmines

Vancouver Hard Rockers Shimmer in a Post-Pandemic Wasteland on New EP *Gold*

By Christine Leonard

Vancouver, BC hard rock-punk band, The Getmines, are set to unleash their first studio recordings in three years with the release of new EP, *Gold*, available on all major streaming platforms February 2, 2024. *Gold* is the first of two EPs to be released by the band this year, with its companion EP, *Silver*, to be released in March 2024, followed by a vinyl LP release in April (combining the two EPs and adding a thirteenth track).

Gold retains the outfit's distinctive sound and flare for the filthy, and lovers of metallic-hard rock will delight in a litany of melodies that "ride right up the middle between punk and thrash, with a little riff-rock tossed in for good measure," according to Cliff Thiessen. Cliff's vocals parallel seamlessly with Dave Barroqueiro's to create a harmonic accord of rage against the greyness of our post-pandemic dystopia.

The Getmines returned to the lair of audio wizard Michael Kraushaar at Little Red Sounds to commit their compositions to tape. The result is an extended-play that abounds with raucous crowd-pleasers that see the group raise the bar when it comes to sheer musicianship and artistic range.

Gold marks the band's return to the hard-and-fast ethos that informed their 2017 eponymous debut, while embracing some of the pop sensibility and improved recording techniques characteristic of 2021's *Lookin' Cool*. "In a way, [*Gold*] is a bit of a spiritual successor to both of our two previous records in that we've tried to capture the raw energy and punk-rock focus of the first record, while coupling that with the big riffs and improved songcraft of the second," says Dave, guitarist and vocalist.

Broadening their musical scope while consistently cranking out garage rock face-melters, on *Gold*, we find The Getmines effortlessly hopping between the grandiose and back-to-basics hard rock. Tucked under danceable, driving riffs lies an endearing undertone of what it takes to travel a million miles with your friends and never take the grind for granted.

High-octane rhythms buzzing from the field of guitars embody an unapologetic eighties rock vibe that boogies down to the last drop.



There's no such thing as a guilty pleasure in The Getmines' world, and this trio delight in a tongue-in-cheek glamour while looking side-eyed through tales of hair-raising debauchery. "We make rock n' roll with an edge, even when it's upbeat. Just because the house is burning down doesn't mean you can't have a little fun and shake your ass", says drummer, Mike Kott.

The Getmines don't give a shit about what critics think. It's the sort of realization that comes with their (slightly) matured status and evolved perspectives on the finer points of decadent indulgence. Embracing the scuzzy side of rock n' roll (with a nod to catchy compositions), *Gold* works the pocket and propels the action.

It's all in a night's work for a band that swings effortlessly from the obnoxious to the sultry.

Here's a quick rundown of three songs that stand out on the new album:

"Murder Podcast", released digitally on January 5th, is the first single from the *Gold* EP and spares not a single gory detail in the name of cold-blooded rock. A bottom-heavy mistress that hides a 'Red Fang' gnarliness under her riding hood, this track sips violence from a favourite coffee mug. The band playfully observes the pedestrian treatment given to the most menacing aspects of co-existing with your fellow human beings as they run down

normalized entertainment trends. They stare down our societal interest in true crime and point unflinchingly at the necessary sacrifice of one's empathy in our unconscious desire for salacious entertainment. Recalling the raw energy of the 'Dead Kennedys' with a dash of that rebellious 'Black Flag' guitar lag, their feisty incantations will split you from ear to ear with an undeniable

grin. The casually caustic outfit's iconoclastic point of view reminds you to stop minding society's business and become your own private dick.

"Circa '84" sarcastically asserts itself with a chewy bass line that chugs along like a twenty-four of malt liquor. One hot mess of a circle mosh waiting to happen, the track unravels with an ironic thrash-a-billy bent. Breathlessly stirring up the dancefloor with their "SO RETRO" crowd chant, The Getmines recall the roll-in-the-hay days of grunge-metal giants The Smalls. There's no resisting the pull of their smash-and-holler approach to dividing and conquering the genres of rock and metal. They mash influences into a 'Gwar'-ish goulash of sludge-fuzz hooks and pounding thrash-punk percussion, the latter courtesy of Mike Kott's urgent-yet-precise drumming. The Getmines bundle the neon power and coke-fueled hubris of an entire decade, from Satanic panic to Madonna malaise, into one electrified punch with the driving fury of a stepdad's sports coup.

"The Bridge" is a quick-goose-step march down an oh-so-short plank where one might find oneself diving headfirst into a surging crowd of headbanging maniacs. Epic words echo from on high like the voice of some omnipotent pagan god, bellowing commands and bloody curses. Spiraling guitar riffs and shredding rhythms swarm and swirl around the group's most mystical mantra to date. Behold embers of ancient folklore rising with anthemic action as the trio builds a tower of hardened sound and fury. Immortalizing their fates and tattooing the blueprints of destiny with every twist and turn, The Getmines brandish their newly forged steel with a fire in their eyes and an ear for what lies just beyond the visible horizon.

It's all in a night's work for a band that swings effortlessly from the obnoxious to the sultry.

You can catch the Getmines at the upcoming Electric Highway Festival Apr 4 - 6 2024 at Dickens in Calgary, Alberta.

thegetmines.ca



The Electric Highway Festival

First Round of Bands Announced

The Electric Highway Festival has announced the first round of bands for the 2024 edition of the festival being held in Calgary, AB on April 4, 5 and 6 at Dickens.

The festival hosts various genres that range from desert rock, stoner metal, doom, sludge, trippy psychedelic, surf rock, acid rock, noise rock, fuzz rock, space rock, blues rock, heavy psych, heavy blues, southern rock, fuzzy punk, sludgy hardcore bands and variations of any of the previously mentioned styles. Canadian Juno Award-

winning Vancouver band Ancients will headline the whole festival. They will be joined by various Western Canadian bands including Dead Quiet, Empress, Buffalo Bud Buster, Flashback, Pharm, Owls & Eagles, Gnarwhal, Solid Brown, The Getmines, Tebby and the Heavy and more.

The 2023 edition of the festival featured Californian headliners Sasquatch, one of the event's past favorites, laying down their brand of fuzzy, kick-ass Desert Rock & Heavy Psych with direct support from Vancouver's La Chinga who returned for their 4th appearance on the Saturday night. Black Mastiff returned

to headline the Friday night with Calgary's Gone Cosmic and HypnoPilot headlined the Thursday show with support from Citizen Rage. These were just a few of the wicked bands that played at this past year's The Electric Highway.

Limited Early Bird passes are on sale for \$65 until the rest of the bands are announced or the early bird passes sell out. Regular advance passes will be available at that time. There will also be a variety of single-day tickets available as well as 2-day passes.

For a complete list of announced bands and to purchase festival tickets, check out: theelectrichighway.ca

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Father Moon Calgary Doom Metal

Interview by AU Editorial

From the celestial beyond comes the great entity known as Father Moon. Cast out was Mother Earth, as the sun was severed, and now only our Father Moon is here for guidance. The ethereal riffs, the grounding bass, and the plodding drums set the stage for the Father Moons haunting sermons. It casts its gaze upon you, the weary listener. Only the most foolhardy and ardent True Believers amongst you know that Father Moon is here to stay and its clutches are ruthless. Hang on tight, traveler, for your journey has just begun.

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

Father Moon: We are Olek and Smash, and we are most known for being the members of Calgary

doom outfit Father Moon!

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

FM: We are from Calgary, Alberta, a prairie city that has a music scene that ebbs and flows, like our winters. The scene is chock-full of talented musicians and bands and there is always a deep creative presence, no matter the wind chill.

AU: Who is Father Moon and what are you all about?

FM: Father Moon is a progressive power doom band that has changed its sound a few times over the years. We are at our heart about crushing riffs, genre bending and slowing life down.

AU: Describe your sound for us. Who are your influences?

FM: We've been described as cocaine-fueled Black Sabbath to the epic heights of peak Candlemass. Due to line-up changes, we are closer to an instrumental Canadian version of Monolord with a deep nod to the shoegaze aesthetic of My Bloody Valentine and the melodic instrumentation of Rush.

AU: How do you approach writing music?

FM: We've approached songwriting through a number of lenses, but recently it's all been about the chemistry of three people in a room, nodding when the riff hits right and the melding of sounds and echoes with the distinct ring of "yeah man".

AU: Any new releases on the horizon? Tell us about it! What can fans expect to hear?

FM: Yes! We will be releasing our sophomore album *Resurgence*. With a new line-up of just drums, guitar, and bass, it melded into an instrumental sonic exploration of tonal

and rhythmic understanding that was successfully captured live and in the room. No click, no studio tricks, just three musicians in a room playing to each other and knowing that when the last note rings out, that the take was done.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you're stoked on?

FM: "Awake/Unsleep" is a 15 minute opus that begins with a riff that would be a marriage of Metallica and Monolord, but ends in the deep drench of reverb and speed that would perfectly fit in the black-gaze world of Deafheaven and the melodic world of Derek Trucks (no slide guitar though). We are deeply proud of capturing such a sonic journey live-off-the-floor, and hope people can hear every note and beat and know it was made from a place of chemistry and dedication.

AU: Valentine's Day is on the way! Do you have any dating or marriage advice?

FM: Yes! Don't sweat the small stuff, remember to always remind yourself why the person you're with is special to you, and remember to not let the virtues you fell in love with become the flaws you learn to resent. There are two sides to every coin, and familiarity can be the enemy of happiness, so keep it fresh!

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

FM: Listening to some doom metal of course! The world is burning, might as well headbang.



AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

FM: No shows or tours in the works, but we are always working and redefining ourselves. The creative process keeps us going, we hope the music we create from nothing but our imagination makes you almost as happy as we were to make it.

AU: Anything else to promote?

FM: Keep an eye out for more music released next year! We've consistently released something new every year and we plan to keep that going. The siren call will keep us going.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

FM: Roll that boulder up the mountain. Even if it rolls down each and every time, it is worth doing again. The process is the reward in-itself.

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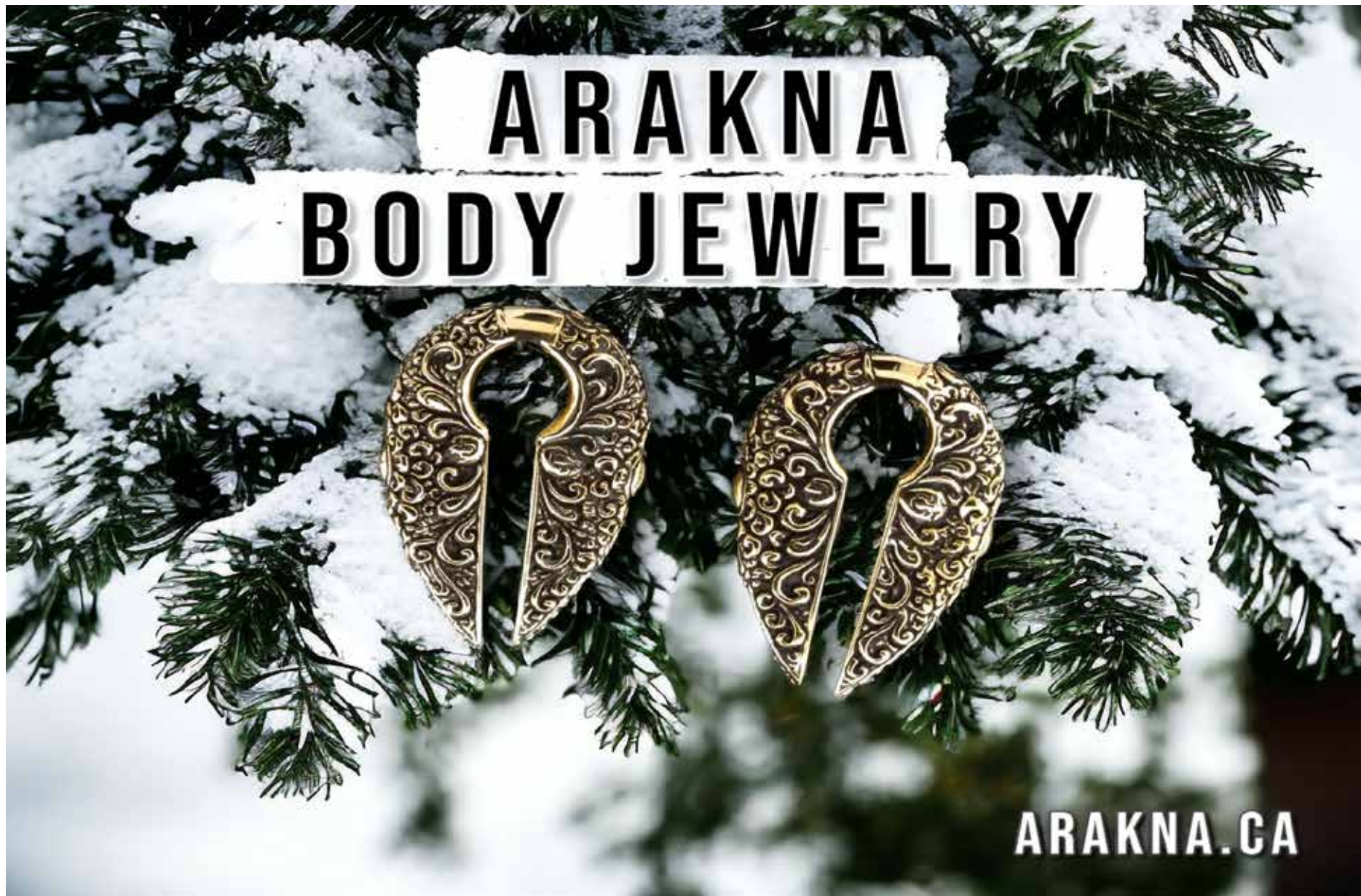
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Pizza Coffin
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Poached Records

"I'm the kind of guy who laughs at a funeral"
– Canadian old school grindcore legends, Barenaked Ladies.

One of Saskatoon's most recent additions to the ever growing extreme music scene, mince + punk + power violence = Pizza Coffin. Formed by Chud and The Egg (members of Twisted System/Axed Up Conformist/Suckcess...) No strangers to playing instruments but never taking music lessons, Pizza Coffin set out in early 2023 to write fast and short songs, heavily seasoned with satire and angst. After a handful of local shows over the spring/summer with friends Exsang, Morgue Breath, Dead Shit Earth, Abuse, and T.O.A.D., Pizza Coffin hit the studio with Toon Town

Savage Henry and Dr. Mike "hold the ponk" LaFrench, to record their first EP *Funeral Di Latte* (available now on Bandcamp.) 5 tracks in under 5 minutes. No filler. 11 songs were recorded during that session, with a few compilation spots coming in 2024 and plans to get back into the basement to record for an LP to be released on Poached Records. Pizza Coffin is just

warming up the oven, so stay tuned for more obnoxious noise from the prairies. Quit your job, play power violence and eat a banana (you don't wanna cramp up.)

Poached Records is a small DIY record label established in 2024 out of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Focusing on punk music and its multiple sub-genres, Poached Records first release is in the works with an international compilation set to see the light of day early spring 2024. The tape consists of 30 bands from all around the world ranging from d-beat, crust, grindcore and beyond. In true DIY style, the label is currently operating through email and social media only. Website and record releases in the works for later in the year.

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**The Invisible Orange:
15 Years of Raising The Claw!**

In the heart of Vancouver's metal scene, **The Invisible Orange** celebrates its 15th anniversary this Spring, a testament to the enduring spirit of the genre and the vibrant community that surrounds it. As we reflect on this milestone, heartfelt thanks are extended to the passionate fans, talented artists, powerhouse bands, iconic venues, and dedicated staff who have been integral to The Invisible Orange's journey.

A resounding thank you **to the metalheads** who have fueled this adventure with their unwavering support and contagious enthusiasm. Your love for the genre has made The Invisible Orange a thriving hub for all things metal.

To the artists and bands, your sonic brilliance has defined the Vancouver metal scene. **From local gems to international headliners**, your performances have been the lifeblood of The Invisible Orange, creating unforgettable moments for metal enthusiasts.

To the venues that have hosted The Invisible Orange events, you are the pillars of our shared metal haven. From The Rickshaw Theatre that has been around with us throughout all these 15 years, to the current venues that continue to provide the local scenes a home in the different cities in BC, and without forgetting all the venues that have close through the years such as: The Old Cobalt, Funkys, Pub 340, Muninn's, Logan's, Pat's, etc. Thank you for providing stages where the community can unite and revel in the power of heavy music.

Behind the scenes, **the dedicated staff** of The Invisible Orange has worked tirelessly to deliver exceptional metal experiences. From event planning to execution, your commitment has been the driving force behind 15 years of metal magic.

As we look ahead, The Invisible Orange is grateful for the memories, friendships, and the shared love for all things metal that have shaped this remarkable journey. Here's to 15 years of metal grandiose, with a deep appreciation for the fans, artists, bands, venues, and staff who have made it possible. May the riffs endure, the drums persist, and the metal spirit live on! Raise Your Metal Claw! \W/

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UNDER THE OUTHOUSE



The Grinning Barretts Celtic Traditional meets West Coast Punk

Interview by Laurie Storrie

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what's your role in the band?

Pat Westmacott: I'm Pat, I play guitar and if you define singing with the most charitable terms, I sing.

Dave Greig: I'm Dave, I play guitar, banjo and sing, but there is way more to that than being in a band. We all pitch in on all the behind-the-scenes/organizing/carrying heavy shit/cat-herding type stuff.

AU: Give us a Brief History of your band

Pat: We started back in 2016, which sounds remarkably recent, but according to numbers is eight years ago. That is actually quite surprising to me. It took awhile to settle into a group of people who can

share a stage with my dumb dad jokes. In 2018 we dropped two EPs on CD, which was a bad idea, as no one buys CDs anymore. We started working on a full-length record in 2019, and then paused a bit and put out some great collaboration videos with our friends in 2020 and 2021 because, well, the world was kind of shut down. We joined Outhouse Records last

year and put out our first LP *Bottle Hymns*.

AU: All ages or bar shows?

Dave: We just really want to support the positive growth scene and really believe that you have to set out to intentionally create an awesome, inclusive environment, and the all ages shows are just such a great way to do that. It feels like it gives more space for everyone to be themselves and have fun in their own ways. We are very inspired by everyone who we encounter who are working so hard to make things better. Bar shows are great too, there is room for both, we would love to see some more of that "intentionally inclusive and safe for all" energy across the board.

Pat: All Ages shows are uplifting. I see kids pushing old men like me to be better. I'm 46, and I know I have internalized some really wrong ideas and I'm blind to them. These kids aren't willing to let me reside in that shitty headspace, and I can't thank them enough for that.



AU: Celtic Punk is a genre that has relatively few bands in it, but garners a huge following. Do you find that to be a hurdle or a boon?

Pat: Both? No one sounds like us, but as a result it's tough to describe what we're doing. We had someone complaining on social media for not sounding like The Pogues after our show in Nanaimo last summer. R.I.P. Shane.

AU: Your debut record *Bottle Hymns* came out last July and had a real working class feel to it. Does your day job influence the music you make?

Pat: In my personal estimation, I'd say it's the other way around. I've always gravitated towards music that tells the working class's story. Utah Phillips, The Clash, R.A.T.M., Ani DiFranco, Bosstones, Murphys. And when I got to the jobs, and saw bosses pitting guys against each other, wage theft, unpaid overtime, etc., all the things about worker solidarity I'd heard in songs suddenly made a lot more sense.

Dave: For me, I think it goes both ways, I spent a lot of years in the service industry, but also I'd say it's more that the music I have gravitated to over my life is rooted in the struggle of being a human in one way or another, which I relate to a lot and has influenced how I try to go about things and the music I want to play.

AU: Is it true the band had its own beer at Riot Brewing?

Dave: It was called Irish Punk Singalong Ale. They have been so supportive of our band, I'm drinking a Sour Hazy IPA right now!

AU: What's next for The Grinning Barretts?

Pat: St. Paddy's Day weekend. A beat down



for our livers when the West Coast division of Outhouse Records bands go to a cabin to record songs for an upcoming label compilation. New album in the works.

AU: Is there anything else you want to tell us about?

Dave: Support local music and local venues, artists, makers and other people making it happen. Work to uplift everyone, especially those less fortunate or more marginalized than yourself. Also, a huge thank you to all the people who have done so much to support us and our music, it's amazing and we very much couldn't do it without you.

AU: How do our readers find you online?

Dave: Oh, hmm... roguishly charming, yet gritty around the edges and full of sass? JK, we have a website.

thegrinningbarretts.com

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Photos by Colin Smith

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Simon: Like many projects, we formed during covid in 2021.

AU: You have a new split album out with No Heart from Canada. How did that come together?

Simon: It started when I went to see Suede Razors in Marseille when they were on tour with Kaleko Urdangak. Mike from Longshot Music plays in both Suede Razors and No Heart. After the show, he and I were talking over a beer, I told him I was a fan of No Heart. Two or three months after that, he sent us a message to see if we were interesting in doing a split record. Never underestimate a good after party!

AU: What label/labels is the split on?

Simon: The record came out this year on Rebellion Records in Europe and on Longshot

AU: Where did you play?

Simon: We have played Milwaukee, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philly, Lake Como, NYC, Boston, Sacramento, SF, Oakland, Fresno, Long Beach and San Diego!

AU: What were highlights of the tour?

Simon: SF and Pittsburgh were fuckin' insane. But all the shows were insane for us as a French band. I really want to thank Jesse from Milwaukee cause he was the first who sent us a message to ask us to come to the US. This tour would never have happened without him and Jorge from Authentic Productions NYC.

AU: Who are your current favourite bands?

Simon: That's always a tough question, but for new bands I would say Castillo, Squelette, Split System... but there are so many good ones right now.

AU: Any members in any other bands?

Simon: Pierrick plays in a synth-punk band The Scaners, Felix is in Cran, Prisonnier du Temps and sometimes plays with Lion's Law and Damien plays in Red sails and Get Bucket.

AU: What are your biggest musical influences?

Simon: Our biggest influences as a band I would say are Slade, The Clichés, Templars, Jook, and Eddie and the Hot Rods, But we aren't limited to those.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

Simon: Thanks to all the people who have helped us, listened us, come to see us, and bought us drinks! Support the bands, the venues with a soul and the promoters who give everything to keep alive good music.

[instagram.com/claimedchoice](https://www.instagram.com/claimedchoice)

Clamed Choice

Interview by Chuck Andrews and Daryl Bidner

Absolute Underground: Who am I speaking with and what is your role in Clamed Choice?

Simon: I am Simon, I play guitar and sing in the band.

AU: Where is the band from?

Simon: We are from Lyon, France.

AU: When did Clamed Choice form?

Music in the US.

AU: How many copies were pressed?

Simon: 250 copies in Europe and 250 copies in the US. Again thanks to both labels!

AU: Do you have any plans to play in Canada?

Simon: We would love to tour Canada! I have so many friends there. I hope it will happen in the future!

AU: Clamed Choice recently toured in the USA, correct?

Simon: Yes we toured in the US last November and it was a blast!





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BLAST FROM THE PAST



Blast From The Past

A 50th anniversary of the debut KISS album and very 1st tour in February 1974.

By Clark'Super'Mantei

Hello and welcome again past blasters to this special 50th anniversary of KISS's debut album and their 1st ever tour outside of NYC, along with a T.V. appearance too. All this happened way back in February 1974. And as it's a Valentines day issue, it feels right to write about those 'Rock and Roll all Nite' N.Y.C. rockers KISS. So let's get rock and rolling right into it.

It all started in August '72 when Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons met Peter Criss and they practiced until they were tight enough to search for a lead guitarist. In January '73 the audition happened and none other than 'Space' Ace Frehley was chosen to complete this soon to be world renowned band who chose the name

KISS! Ace had a month to click with KISS and on January 30th, 31st and Feb 1st 1973 KISS debuted live to about 8 or 10 people at the Popcorn Club in NYC. They worked on their craft throughout the year and on March 13th 1973, Eddie Kramer, the legendary producer of Jimi Hendrix, spent

the day at Electric Ladyland making an official KISS demo tape of 6 songs. Then on July 13th 1973 a one 'Bill Aucoin' became their manager and got them a record deal with Neil Bogart on the new 'Casablanca' label. This brings us to November 1973 when Paul Stanley along with Gene Simmons,

Peter Criss and Ace Frehley entered Bell Sound Studios in NYC to record their first LP. A thrill for the young members of the soon to become world renowned phenomenon. I discovered KISS as a 9 year old kid in Calgary in 1976. By the time they were number 1 in the world it was summer 1977 and I was so excited to go see KISS in Calgary on July 31st at the OK Corral ... until I got grounded and missed the show. I was 10. In '78 we moved to Victoria and my KISS Army school friends missed the '77 show as KISS cancelled here so they knew how I felt.

In February 1985 I saw my 1st KISS show in Vancouver and for the next 38 years I went to as many shows as I could. In 1996 I saw the original KISS line-up and I felt relieved as I'd missed them in '77. I saw the reunion in 1996 in Tacoma and then in 2013 KISS played Victoria 36 years after they cancelled. I was on the cover of the newspaper and it was a magical show. I met KISS too. Yet, I never did fix my bucket list and finally see KISS in

Calgary until this past November of 2023. Now lets time warp back to February 1974 shall we?

KISS had recorded an LP and soon booked 3 gigs outside of NYC and on February 5th, 6th and 8th, they played Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg.

On February 18th, their debut LP KISS was released and on February 19th 1974, they played the Aquarius Theatre in Hollywood on the Dick Clark TV special and KISSTORY had begun.

KISS toured endlessly and made 20 lps and for 50 years the KISS Circus rolled on until January 2019 when KISS started their 'End of the Road' final world tour. I saw Vancouver and then Toronto in 2019 when a crew guy told me they will tour Canada, where they began so many shows ago. So in November

of 2023 I finally got to fly to Calgary and due to my Blast From the Past articles I wrote last year I was offered to interview Paul Stanley in Calgary on November 12th. Amazing experience for me too. I had the Diamond package which included a soundcheck

and interview and it was amazing. KISS came out for the VIP soundcheck and started to sing "Sweet City Woman" by the legendary band from Calgary called The Stampeders. Gene and Paul in harmony singing the 1971 #1 smash hit single. I laughed. Then they played a few old numbers from the 1970's until 3 of us got to ask questions. How cool!

So here are a few questions from my interview with Paul Stanley in Calgary. Enjoy.

AU: Hi Paul. I'm Clark from Absolute Underground magazine. On November 10th 1973, you guys entered Bell Sound Studios for 6 days and then a week of mixing. And in February of '74 you showed up in Edmonton and Calgary. What are your recollections of that album and tour?

Paul Stanley: Two things. When we first went to Bell Sound I was petrified. I was scared to move anything, like a microphone position or my amplifier as it was all so new to me.

Yet we went in to do what became the 1st KISS album. Not long after that we got some offers to do shows and the first 2 shows were in Edmonton, at the university, literally on lunch tables. We set up all our gear and we were standing on lunch tables that were moving. And then we played Calgary, so KISS and Alberta go back all the way to 1974.

AU: Was it originally Michael Quatro?

Paul Stanley: Yes. Michael Quatro, Suzi Quatro's brother. Most of you won't remember Suzi, but Michael was supposed to do shows and he cancelled, so they put us in instead and nobody knew who we were. I mean it was like; in between bites of your tuna fish sandwiches you'd see these guys in make-up on tables exploding and singing. It was really eye opening for us. It was the first time we had toured, and I will also say we were met with open arms and legs!

AU: Haha. In 1977 on my 10th birthday I bought 2 KISS tix in Calgary for \$15 bux, but I was sadly grounded for being too hyper.

Paul Stanley: Yet here we are to play for you tonight.

AU: Thanks Paul. Tonight is my 21st and last ever KISS show ever and I am humbled and honored to

be here. I can't wait till the show tonight. Thank you KISS for 50 years.

Paul Stanley: Thank you very much. Do you all wanna hear another song?

KISS played "Goin' Blind" and then informed us that they had to leave for a couple hours to go become KISS! That was funny. Then the KISS crew hosted the guests to free meals and drink tickets and when KISS was ready we each got our photo with KISS and then went to our seats to feel the electricity of the lights lowering and then that now infamous intro "Alright Calgary. You wanted the best and you got the best. The hottest band in the world... KISS."

November 2023 in Calgary was a legendary performance indeed of 50 years of KISS ALIVE!

What mattered most to me was that my bucket list from 1977 was now achieved. Plus I interviewed the 'Starchild' Paul Stanley. A dream fulfilled.

On February 6th of 2024 the CTV news did a special of that very show way back in 1974 at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (S.A.I.T.). At the very same gymnasium too. And also radio station RTBN ran a 12 hour KISS marathon.

Saving the best for last, a fellow named Frank Shufletoski, appeared at the celebration in the very same gym he saw KISS at that night 50 years ago and he even brought his photos from that very night. How fukin cool is that!?

I thought I was the only one who knew this happened waaaaay back then? That 1974 Calgary photo is posted here, along with a few that my friend Nor and I took in Calgary 50 years later.

Lastly, in Toronto in 1974 the CTV news interviewed Paul Stanley and this is what he said. "When people pay \$6.00 to come and see us we give it our all. Exhaustion and energy and our sweat and our songs and a spectacle they will remember. I want them to go home knowing they got their \$6.00 worth." Wait? \$6.00?

Well folks, that's the difference of 50 years.

In 2023 when people pay \$1400.00 dollars for a soundcheck and a photo with KISS and another \$500.00 for a ticket and \$100.00 for merchandise, I want them to go home knowing they all got their \$2000.00 worth. Lol. And we did. The End of the Road Final Tour is over.

It ended in Madison Square Garden on December 1st and 2nd. In New York City where all the magic began. KISS has had 8 members and many lineups and all of it was so much fun.

We wanted the best. We got the very best too. For 50 long amazing years!

Congratulations KISS. Rock and Roll Over and Rock Out and Rrrrrroll On everyone.

Yours truly,
Clark'Super'Mantei.
February 6th 2024.





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Well it's death metal for sure, but we're constantly dipping our toes into other genres. We always try to take a fresh approach for every song. The goal is to not fall into any sort of repetitive pattern when we write. Metal is such a broad spectrum and we could ramble on about sub-genres for daaaays, but we don't want to confine ourselves to strictly one. If it's heavy, it's good enough for us!

AU: Would you say there are any bands with a similar sound?

DC: Bands that sound like Decryptor... I'm sure you could listen to our music and pick out tons of our influences. They range drastically between the four of us and that's what makes this such a fun project! We all grew up with the great pioneers like Maiden, Priest and

Sabbath, but our music often echoes a lot of old-school metal from bands like Death, Slayer and Possessed. And of course, we've been heavily influenced by countless others along the way.

AU: You have a new record out. Tell us about it.

DC: Our debut album *Imminent Ruin* is a full-length album that we are very excited to announce will be released Feb. 29th, 2024! It's been a long time coming. We've been working on this album for about three years now, writing and recording everything ourselves in our home studio. A steep learning curve to say the least; some of the songs were re-recorded multiple times as we experimented with different techniques and styles for honing our instruments.

We were about halfway through the album when Jesse joined the band and that really sparked an ambition to finish it. It was an awesome experience, and we gained a lot of knowledge which we'll be putting directly into the next one!

AU: What is the creative process for the band?

DC: It's a pretty shared process, I think we've all written lyrics but there's generally one person who comes up with a concept and we sort of piece together the song structure as a group.

AU: What are your songs about?

DC: The album's theme is in the name: "Ruin". Although the overall theme is somewhat accidental, we decided to roll with it and thought about what else could be ruined. "Caldera" references the destruction of Pompeii, "Downfall" is about war, "Cloud of Dread" is about internal struggles. Each song turned into something that could be destroyed and so when I (Dean) wrote the lyrics for the title track "Imminent Ruin"...

AU: How important is the format with the music you have and will release?

DC: We believe physical formats are always the best way to listen to music. We'll be slinging CDs and cassettes at our merch tables, and you can also find them online on our Bandcamp page. We hope to get *Imminent Ruin* on vinyl eventually, but that'll be later on down the road.

AU: Where can people find you and your music?

DC: You can usually bump into at least one of us at any metal show in Victoria. Other than that, we usually dwell at Ananda Farm in Central Saanich - that's where we practice. Oh, and I guess we're on most of the social media platforms as well if you don't feel like leaving your house to talk to us.

AU: Any last thoughts?

DC: Victoria's metal scene is coming back to life after "you-know-what" and we are really excited to watch and help it prosper. RIP Logan's (gone but not forgotten).

decryptorvic.bandcamp.com

IG: @DecryptorBand

FB: @DecryptorMetal

Photo by Finding Charlotte Photography

Imminent Ruin

Debut album from Decryptor

Interview by John Carlow

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

Decryptor: We're Decryptor and we are made up of:

Dean Fast - Vocals / Guitar (Reverted Decay)

Justin Tjart - Guitar

Jesse Wilson - Bass

Caleb Belknap - Drums (HOG)

AU: How/when did the band come together?

DC: It all started back in the day... Caleb, Dean

and Justin were childhood friends - growing up in Brentwood Bay. Caleb and Justin played in a punk band (Happy Ending) in their youth, but gradually drifted towards heavier riffs and double kick patterns. They got together with Dean in 2020, who was working on his own metal project (Reverted Decay), started jamming, and songs started forming pretty naturally. Justin came up with the band name and wrote our first couple songs, Dean started learning death metal vocals, and Caleb built a music studio at his place where they'd practice and learn to record their music. Jesse joined the band in late 2021 and that's when everything really started to come together!

AU: Does your music fit an existing genre?

DC: If we had to put a genre label on Decryptor...

SHRED SESSION



SHRED SESSION

By Jimmy Miller

With Valentine's Day upon us, Shred Session asks: what do you love about skateboarding?

For some skaters, this query is impossible to answer. "Shut up and skate" used to be our edgy credo. Seemingly, things are different now; the modern skater knows what mindfulness is and it's part of their day. Whether it's practicing intervals of tricks like reps to improve their skills, through injury rehab, or through dietary controls like intermittent fasting (...or maybe they're just too broke to eat). At the very least, we've evolved emotionally as a culture (a bit) with introspection as part of our equations. With this spirit in mind, I reached out to some notable pals for their take on matters, waxing poetic about our favorite useless wooden toy.

Competition killer, backtail beast, and Kamloop's own Matt Berger deemed skating as "the best escapism life has to offer."

Victoria, BC's pride/joy and Krooked pro Una Farrar highlighted her love as "above all, a sense of true community and belonging."

BOLD Skate's Carla Hyslop feels that skating "brings together all types of people of all stages of life" with an "abundance of smart, creative, funny weirdos" and it fosters "freedom, physical expression of creativity, adrenaline, community, being part of a cool club that has unlocked the secret to a good life."

Nanaimo skate phenom Zoe Zollinger loves skateboarding "because it pushes me and challenges me and the feeling of landing a trick is the best feeling ever. It has pushed me out of my comfort zone and brought me so many different

experiences. I have met so many amazing people and I love the community I am a part of because of it."

In addition to bumping club beats, in between hucking gigantic switch 180s, Whitby, Ontario's TJ Rogers overcame some serious medical hurdles with his devotion to rolling: "I love skateboarding for many reasons! One of them being how it's saved my life & helped me overcome challenges I never thought I'd have to face."

Medicine Hat, AB transplant and Goodnews Skateshop rider Lucas L'Heureux: "I love skateboarding because it is the sickest thing of all time. I also love it because it has given me a way to express myself that nothing else can. Skateboarding is one of the only things that I can be 100% myself while doing."

Member of the Samson Cree Nation, Colonialism Skateboards pro, guest Antihero pro, and ATV ripper Joe Buffalo feels "there are many reasons as to why I love skateboarding. I love that it came back into my life after I tried to throw it away so many times all those years when I was deep into my addictions. Kinda like a boomerang, except when my close friends threw theirs away it didn't come back to them. It made me appreciate it when it came back to me and once I sobered up, that's when I began to grow with it all over again. That's what I love about it. Skateboarders are just a different breed altogether."

South of the border, Alex White, global advocate for women's, non-binary and queer skateboarding, says "I love skateboarding because it allows me to feel childlike wonder and joy unlike anything else in my life." Paul Schmitt, one of the world's largest skateboard manufacturers, feels "it's the ultimate expression, you decide

what you decide. The vibration through your feet makes you feel alive. The wind on your face confirms you're moving, it can be that simple – so that's as good as it gets."

Skate musician Stephen McBean of Black Mountain and Pink Mountaintops eloquently summed things up with "skateboarding suspends time", alluding to getting lost in the process – as well as tapping into the fountain of youth. Musical contemporary Gymbo Jak of Dayglo Abortions and Shred Central fame reflected even deeper by saying "In the beginning, I loved the overall rebelliousness of it. Everyone who didn't skate had such a disdain for it. No one could understand our constant subjection to physical harm for fun. The joy I feel from riding my skateboard distracts me from any personal or social issues in life. Skateboarding has become such a part of who I am, I shudder to think of who or where I'd be right now without it."

Upon summary and contemplation, my reflection is, at a time when my life was spiraling, skateboarding gave me something to cling on to for stability. Simply put, skateboarding gave me something that was uniquely mine, yet shared, within a shared space but not like an awkward class project. It's a physical conduit of expression but not a rule-based jocular team pursuit. It's a toy to tinker with, but not one that gets forgotten or outgrown. Overall all, I'm very thankful I found skateboarding and I think it's safe to say that everyone questioned feels the exact same way.

...but how do you sum up the enormity of this question? Please submit your answers and maybe we'll make a part two to this piece.

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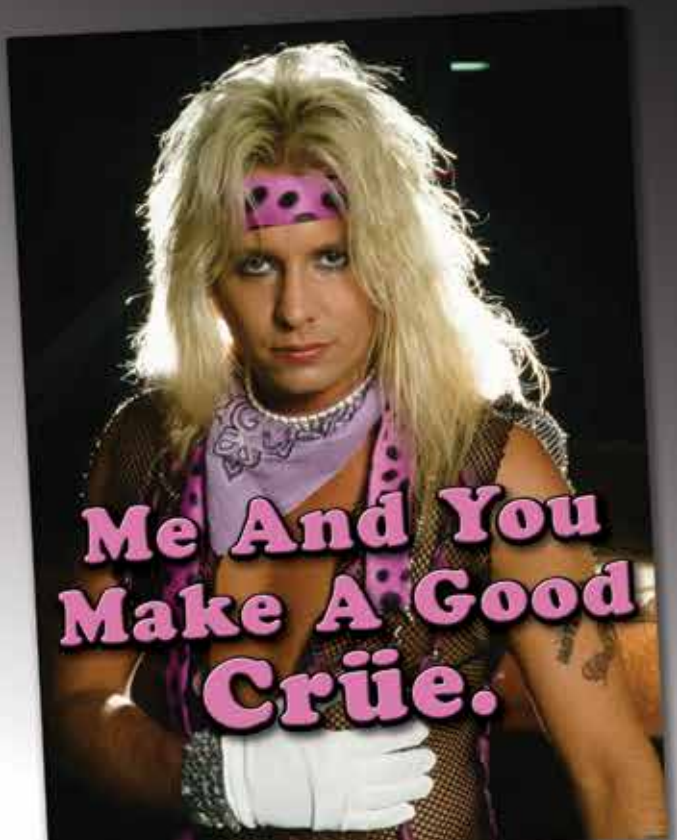
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The Winter Pop Culture Convention Guide to the Pacific Northwest

By Ed Sum

The nerdy convention season has begun and the Fan Expo brand is pretty much leading the charge. Their Portland show took place earlier in January, and the next show is in Vancouver, BC (Feb 17-19). After that is Emerald City Comic Con (Feb 29-March 3), and at the end of the month is Sakura Con (March 29-31) in Seattle, Washington. I consider those the big three.

There's smaller-sized events such as our own city's Tsukino Con (Feb 23-25) and in Tacoma, Anime Washington (Jan 27-28) – but what happened to the Capital City Comic Con? Apparently, they're taking a long break after the 2022 show which took place over the Autumn month. They're currently involved in separate endeavours to stay busy, and since Cherry Bomb Toys recently relocated to new digs and are still figuring out how to get their National Toy Museum of Canada displays to look sharp, I suspect locals will just have to be patient.

In this round-up, what's presented is a highlight reel of the talents touring. For Fan Expo, I'm loving that they are on top of what's hot on television. With *Ahsoka* being the best of the Star Wars televised series, and having a little crossover with the animated *Rebels*, to see Eman Esfandi and

Diana Lee Inosanto together at both the Portland and Vancouver (BC) shows is particularly exciting. Adam Savage is also coming to town, and for fans of Danny Trejo, these four talents are whom I think are the talents to meet! A returning favourite includes Bruce Campbell! And all I can say regarding the group representing the television series *Charmed*, where's Alyssa Milano?



At Emerald City Comic Con, former Time Lord Jodie Whittaker is making an appearance! It'll be great to hear about her behind the scenes moments in the making of *Doctor Who*. While I'm not a fan of *Twilight* (HBO Max), the number of names from that series round out this lineup. At least fan favourites like Dante Basco and Jeremy Shada will be present. Recently announced are Christopher Lloyd and Christina Ricci for a light *Addams Family* reunion and there may be more names announced closer to the event.



Chris Evans (Captain America) is going to be a huge draw for those wanting a dose of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and I suspect a few more names will drop in the month of February too.

This year is noticeably different because SAG was on strike some months before, so that may be affecting why the conventions seem to be coasting on neutral. It's tough to get certain

names when they've been contracted to do other events outside of the Pacific Northwest. At least all the organisers are doing their best to invite talents whom they think are a draw.

For a full list of celebrity and comic book creator guest appearances, please see the events website at: fanexpohq.com/fanexpovancouver/celebrities sakuracon.org/guests emeraldcitycomiccon.com/en-us/guests.html

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Brigata Vendetta

Interview by Chuck Andrews

Brigata Vendetta are a new force to be reckoned with in the famed Bay Area punk rock scene, but the three members are anything but newcomers! Frontman and bassist Darrel Wojick and guitarist Mike Caputo – renowned for their work in street punk stalwarts Harrington Saints – are joined by Bum City Saints drummer Brian Zobel. Together, these three “saints” are crafting a brand new sound informed by classic hardcore punk that stands poised to surprise and excite longtime fans and new ones alike!

Absolute Underground: Who am I speaking with and what is your role in Brigata Vendetta?

Darrel: Hey! This is Darrel! Lead vocals and bass.

AU: Where is Brigata Vendetta from?

Darrel: We are from Richmond, CA. Just a few miles north of Oakland/Berkeley.

AU: How did the band come about? When did the band form?

Darrel: I had an idea to do some OG style 80's hardcore. I talked Mike into writing some tunes with me on the side. Long story short (this has been a few years long project) I really liked what we were doing and after Harrington Saints broke up, it became our main focus since we had the groundwork already. This was probably as early as 2019/early 2020. I'm not sure. With the Covid

interruption, things are a bit hazy.

AU: Your debut album *This is How Democracy Dies* is out now on Pirates Press Records. How long have you guys been putting the album together for?

Darrel: Another long story... we wrote it over a period of just a few months after Brian joined the band. The writing became really easy and we also challenged ourselves to keep a pretty brutal pace. We were almost finished mixing in March of 2023 when our engineer and friend got very ill. So we didn't finish the final mix and master or the artwork until October of last year. Then of course held the record for a proper release timeline.

AU: What are your favourite songs from the album? I really dig “’87 Again”, and “Into the Ground.”

Darrel: “’87 Again” as well! “1,000 Cuts,” “Tempers Flare.”

AU: What's the best thing about being on Pirates Press Records?

Darrel: Having a team willing and able to help you see your idea come to life! As well as the backing and hard work to distribute your records and work them. And, of course, these interviews!



PIRATES PRESS RECORDS

AU: Two of you guys were in the Harrington Saints, and one was in Bum City Saints. Was it a requirement when you formed Brigata Vendetta that everyone involved had to have been in a previous band with “Saints” in the name?

Darrel: Hmm, I never understood being involved in more than one project if they're all gonna sound basically the same. And we actually took a bit of a beating on the first EP for it NOT sounding anything like

Harrington Saints! This type of punk was one of my first loves, musically.

Seems normal to me, besides, the current crop of Oi! bands just doesn't do it for me. And the addition of Brian Zobel allowed us to push the speed boundaries, haha!

AU: Mike played guitar in Harrington Saints, and Darrel sang in that group, but despite those similarities, this band is much faster! Who would you say are the biggest influences on Brigata Vendetta's sound?

Darrel: Negative Approach, Avskum, Discharge, Toxic Reasons, Varukers. Mostly 80s American H/C as well as British UK 82.

AU: Who are your favourite bands in your local scene right now?

Darrel: Ultra Sect, The Complicators, Skinny Pete and the Meats.

AU: Does Brigata Vendetta have any plans to tour, or play any festivals in the near future?

Darrel: Currently working on the UK for this summer. Fingers crossed. As well as getting down to LA finally for a weekender.

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, which of your songs would be the best one to make sweet love to? Hard and fast, or slow and romantic?

Darrel: Haha, GREENIES... 54 seconds of bliss. Take it slow, lads!

AU: What does it say on the dating profiles of the band members?

Darrel: They don't exist. Married! Wouldn't have one even if I was single.

AU: Any special plans for Valentine's Day?

Darrel: Nope. I usually cook for my wife and daughter. In general, I don't like holidays telling me I have to do something on a specific day.

AU: Is there anything else you would like to add

about the band, or your new album?

Darrel: Just that we are really pleased with how it came out. Thanks to Scott McChane for working with us again and Jeff Hultgren for absolutely knocking the artwork outta the park! We hope everyone likes it. We are already writing the next one!

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Rewinding Back to the Natural Magic of Handwritten VHS Labels

By Josh Schafer

Few forsaken objects hold as much nostalgia power as the VHS tape. More than just the object itself, it's the experiences involving this so-called obsolete piece of media that power this nearly nuclear level of nostalgia. It's evident in mass media, advertising, major merchandising and even in people's basements (where numerous nostalgics are building basement video stores), that a VHS revival is already here, and it's only getting more play.

There's always been the relatively small, yet powerfully passionate pledges of long-running underground VHS culture (e.g. online Facebook groups, Instagram feeds aplenty, and dedicated VHS-driven entities such as us), but it's readily apparent that the love for VHS is solidified and is pressing fast forward on expansion. As of 2021,



it's clear that VHS' incredible cultural impact and inherently flawed yet retrospectively pleasing aesthetics will forever influence us, even after being taken to the dump by society at large.

Even with the abundance of VHS love sprawling from seemingly every direction, there is an often overlooked and ostensibly ordinary aspect to VHS that doesn't get enough attention, and yet it offers a unique window into the people (i.e. us) that used it. It perhaps provides the most potent personal connection to VHS, and spells out our most cherished memories tied to it.

Handwritten labels.

We explored a smattering of handwritten labels in our book *Stuck on VHS*, but that was limited to specimens found in video store settings. There's another world of handwritten VHS label intrigue, and it came from our own living rooms.

It could be your mom's handwriting on a home movie from your third grade play, or your next-door neighbor's scrawled rendition of the *RoboCop* logo, taped off of cable for your older brother and traded for a six-pack. The beauty part is, it could be anything.

In ways, these home-dubbed, handwritten tapes have the ability to tell stories. These handwritten



interpretations, introductions, and representations of distant, fuzzy, and perpetually warm memories could be the only remaining instance of someone's handwriting. They may serve as a rewind-inclined reminder of a person: their interests, tastes, and inclinations. In a small yet sweet way, they are an extension of whoever wrote the label.

It's certain that handwriting has the power to show people's personalities. Studies show.

Spelling, grammar, neatness, cataloging criteria, style, mixed with what's recorded on a tape: it all tells a story. Whether it's that poignant connection to tapes your Grandpa used to record off of TV, or the incredible curiosity of someone's mind-melting (and mildly inappropriate) taped-from-cable quadruple feature, with titles misspelled to perfection. These are pieces of video ephemera that deserve to be looked at with a more curious eye.

Are we over-romanticizing this? A cynic might smirk and nod. Let's just say that charm doesn't appear on every home-recorded VHS label – and there's something to say for the thrilling game of rewind roulette that is popping in an unmarked

LUNCHMEAT

videocassette.

But let's also say that there's beauty and wonder were you look for it. And for so many of these handwritten labels, there's often a spark of personality, a curious mark, or some sort of hidden story with them. At the very least, it makes you wonder: who's the person that made this *Crocodile Dundee*, *Nightmare On Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* and *Carrie* triple-feature, and can we party with you?

If you have some favorite handwritten labels you'd like to VHSshare, post up on social media with the hashtag #handwrittenVHS, and tell us your story! We can't wait to VHSsee 'em, Tapeheads!

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NEVER ALONE

And The Festival of Animated Objects

Interview with Puppeteers Tia DeLauria and Claudia Chagoya
By Sameena Darr

AU: What is *Never Alone*?

Tia DeLauria: It's a puppet show about a mother and son rekindling their bond over the joys of metal.

AU: Where did you come up with the concept?

TD: CAOS (Calgary Animated Objects Society) has been touring senior citizen homes with our puppet shows and Xstine [asked] us, "Hey do you two wanna make puppets?"

Claudia Chagoya: Tia was like, "What if we make seniors listen to metal?"

TD: When I heard the lyrics to ["Never Alone" by Terror] it was just a really cute song cause it's like, "When you're down/Reach for me/With all your strength/And I won't let go." Something the seniors wouldn't be like, "Oh Heavens!" Haha.

AU: What is the process of creating a puppet?

CC: The first situation with my puppet was with strings, the joints were little knots – so the movement wasn't really like a proper arm – very chaotic movement. It was a lot of exploration, but basically it's made out of popsicle sticks, toothpicks, felt, foam clay and whatever we could find that looked metal.

TD: Wood glue. LOTS of wood glue. Claudia's was probably the second iteration of our puppets and my puppet at this point, with all her Woodstock '99 injuries, is probably the fifth or sixth version of the puppet. She's lived a long life, had some surgery. Like, when Fred Durst tells you to break stuff, you do that.

AU: I saw on the 'gram the puppets were at a metal show.

TD: We took them to Meshuggah, White Chapel and In Flames at Grey Eagle on November 28. And if there is anything I'm good at, it's getting strangers to do stupid stuff – so they thought it was hilarious that we had puppets.



AU: How did you guys initially get into puppeteering?

CC: CAOS and Xstine Cook! CAOS is a not-for-profit that focuses on puppets and animation. And Xstine is the woman that founded that organization. She picks the most introverted people and makes them perform.

AU: What metal bands are both of you into right now?

TD: Spotify tells me that Cancer Bats is my favourite band. Um, and I'm not one of those people—

AU: You use Spotify [laughing]?

TD: Well, I do because we see [Cancer Bats] every time, we get tickets instantly. And we've been to every show that Cancer Bats has been to the entire time I've lived here.

CC: My favourite bands [are] Opeth and Katatonia. Sometimes when you're very angry you just need to listen to these specific kinds of sounds.

AU: Where will the puppets be making an appearance next?

TD: At the Festival of Animated Objects in March and Chinook Blast in February.

AU: What is the Festival of Animated Objects (FAO)?

TD: FAO is a collection of mask, puppetry, clowns. We have a lot of physical theatre performances, we have dancers, but mainly mask and puppetry festival.

CC: The Dolly Wiggler, it's like a cabaret about puppets for adults, right? Last year we had a group that came from France and the performance was a really good show that was life size puppets.

AU: Why should people come to see *Never Alone*?

CC: It's fun!

TD: We just spent the last two weekends at Market Collective. You would get the cool teens who would be like, "Yo, it's puppets." Or the dad across the room who sees a tiny Iron Maiden shirt and wants to see what it is. We even had one mother who happy cried, I guess because her son has hearing aids. People should come see our show because it gives a lot of representation that makes people feel special.

www.puppetfestival.ca

Puppet Launch into Space is Feb 10

The Festival of Animated Objects is Mar 11-24

The Dolly Wiggler Cabaret is Mar 15-16





Zach Lorkiewicz and Brinke Stevens: *The Night Jane Went Insane*
By Ed Sum

Zach Lorkiewicz is no freshman in the horror indie film scene. He's crafted a lot of shorts, and to be recognised is tough. Although he's been at it for a decade, his solid work ethic is one that Brinke Stevens says is worth noting. For this Scream Queen legend to agree to be in his work did more than make his day. It's validation that he has a promising future.

"I've been very fortunate because I met a lot of really creative collaborators in my career," admits this filmmaker. "It's very difficult to meet producers in the Indie world who will commit to your project."

Some may say the short, *The Night Jane Went Insane*, might not have happened if it wasn't for this creator making the right connections. And the story is rather sweet.

ZL: I knew Linnea Quigley through my friend

Brendan Petrizzo, and we'd occasionally hang out. When I went to a couple of events with her, Brinke happened to be there. She introduced us to her and Michelle Bauer. We simply kept running into each other at conventions and other places. After a while, I simply asked Brinke and said, "I'm free next month. Let me know." I wanted to write a story that's unique to her and different from films she's done in the past.

BS: Zach came up with a concept that was called *The Invasion*. It's about a woman who is contacted by aliens. And at the end, in the original pitch, she'd be beamed onboard by the aliens, and we'd see them dancing together on the TV screen. He found a studio for rent that had an apartment that looked like it was from the 70s. That created the look of the film, and he had the germ of an idea. So everything just kind of evolved from there.

AU: In my understanding of these types of narratives, there's always a fear of what's coming and how one deals with this extraterrestrial threat, correct?

ZL: Yeah, and part of the story also included creating a character who wanted to escape in some way, but I don't know if I can push that idea a little further [into a feature film]. Instead of ones from another planet, I thought they should belong in a different dimension!

BS: When I grew up, I read a lot of science fiction, including *Galaxy* magazine. I was a very weird child and I always thought I'd been dropped off by aliens who sooner or later would return for me. When Zach pitched the idea, I even created a backstory: I was once a hotshot NASA scientist whose one big dream in life was to communicate with aliens. When it never happened, it would lead to that downward spiral [which you see in this film] and what you

see is me, smoking, drinking and so on. That life was never the same. To create Jane, I worked with hair and makeup artist, Tatiana Tovar. When I asked to make me look like Helena Bonham Carter in *Fight Club*, everything fell into place. She also helped develop my wardrobe.

AU: Brinke, was it odd that your performance meant emoting more than anything else?

BS: I really only had two lines of dialogue. I had to go from dissolute to hopeful to gleeful to terribly disappointed and then to ecstatic at the end. And nobody ever asked me to dance in a movie before, so I'm really grateful to Zach for giving me those seven minutes to really give it all I've got. Maybe that is the sign of an insane person to go through so many emotions in a short period of time. I don't know, but for me as an actress, it was a role made in heaven.

AU: How did the others get their roles?

ZL: When the piece was in sound design, Brendan Petrizzo, my co-collaborator, said, "Why don't you ask Michelle Bauer?" He knew her, and I thought it was a great idea. She was down for it, and Linnea was easy to approach. They are the kindest people I've had the pleasure of working with. I really can't emphasise that enough. It was Kismet.



AU: Why do you think these classic Scream Queens keep going like the Energizer Bunny?

ZL: I've so much respect for people who are in the industry who, even when they get older, are still doing stuff. Brinke was one of the firsts - she's there at conventions, like Fangoria's first one, if I'm not mistaken. She's created her own merchandise label, had her own comic book - it's just crazy to see. For all three of them, the fact that they have very supportive fans says it all.

AU: What made you decide to distribute *The Night Jane Went Insane* freely on YouTube?

ZL: Right now, it's more about getting my work out into the world and allowing people to see it. We live in the age of the internet, with TikTok and all that. So why not? The response has been just really great. And although I try to submit to festivals, it's expensive, and you don't know if you're going to get in or not. Instead, I encourage readers to subscribe to my YouTube channel.

BS: It's really hard to monetize short films, and I think of it more as a calling card for Zach's talent. I can't wait till he does his first feature film. I don't know when that will be, but I think he's going to be an amazing filmmaker when he finally graduates into feature films.

[youtube.com/@CounttheClock](https://www.youtube.com/@CounttheClock)

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Touchdown the Raven Evermore

Interview with John Gallagher

By Billy Hopeless

When I was a kid in the 80s, I lived for metal bands and metal magazines. I would scan the pictures of these young musical warriors in their outlandish Gimmicks looking for new Heroes and Villains to fill my ears with the thunderous electric sounds of rebellion and angst. One of the unforgettable trios of this time was Raven, decked out in war paint and battle armour made out of athletic pads they looked like they could have just stepped out of the wrestling ring. Many from these days have faded into obscurity and myths in our memories but Raven has managed to endure. While still staying true to the steel of the forge, they have stayed sharp with



the times into a 50-year still slashing career. I am honored to speak to one of the two founding brothers: the voice and bass-slinging Sir John Gallagher.

Absolute Underground: Raven was first hatched in Newcastle, England back in 1974. What was the fledgling band like back then?

John Gallagher: We formed the band in 1974 in our hometown of Newcastle Upon Tyne, England... then we learned how to play! Our first gig was at our high school in December of 1975. At that point we were a four piece – two guitars, bass and drums. We graduated to playing the pubs and then the working men's clubs. We stuck out like a sore thumb – the other bands were playing soft rock like The Eagles, while we were mixing originals with covers of AC/DC, Zep and Deep Purple.

AU: You guys were hailed as athletic metal due to your American football 'n such sports gear worn like Mad Max Road Warrior battle armor. How did that come about and did you get odd looks from confused shop keeps trying to figure out what sport you were playing?

JG: It all came about organically. We started wearing these striped running tops... we were always running around on stage, so it made sense... looked different too!

HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU

Once we came to the states, we were walking by Madison Square Garden in NYC and stopped in an ice hockey store. Rob went for the helmet and Mark went for the hockey pads!

AU: Speaking of the 80s, you good sports took a young team of rookies named Metallica in 1983 as openers on your Kill 'Em All Tour and then in 1985, four nights after they played the New York theater here in Vancouver on the Ride the Lightning tour, you headlined the same venue on your Stay Hard Tour. Do you have any fond or funny memories of touring with those Bay Area bangers or of your show here in Vancouver?

JG: Oh, of course! That was our first headline tour of the states and we took those young miscreants out with us... with crew it was 17 people in two trucks and a 6 Berth Winnebago... guerrilla warfare! I remember that Vancouver show – we were blown away by the scenery and it was the first show with our new and ridiculously large state set.

AU: You certainly scored in the 80s, which, before we move on into the present, gives me the perfect kick one more to the pass at the past. I'm a bit of a cinephile and purveyor of the finest free streaming sites have to offer and one night during C.H.U.D. Theater while viewing a classic teen romp *Hot Moves*, I gained the useless-until-now knowledge that you scored the title track. What was your critique of the movie? If you could write a theme song for any genre of movie or for any director who and what would it be?

JG: That whole thing was quite the experience... from having the obvious mobster money men visit the studio to visiting the musical director at his NYC penthouse apartment where he gingerly played "Lady Killer" – which we also did for the soundtrack. When we finally saw the movie we were appalled by the overdubbed crashes and bangs over the top of the title song... and at how crappy it was! The final touch was the credits where we saw the aforementioned musical director had taken credit for our song – instant lawsuit!

AU: Ok let's fast forward and get to the state of game here and today here we are many years later and the pack is still on the attack! How

does it feel to be still on the field and what do you account for the longevity of the team?

JG: Quite simply, we love what we do! It has to be said that the addition of Mike Heller on drums back in 2017 really pushed things into overdrive. We are very aware of how lucky we are to do what we do, at the level that we do, and to play to our fans all over the world. We never take that for granted.

AU: 50 years! It's crazy to me, even with my own band pushing 30 years this year, that you formed the band and still play with your brother Mark. I can't even imagine playing in a band with my brother, let alone for any duration of time, and we all know how those other Gallagher brothers get along. How do you two do it?

JG: It's a sobering thought – 50 years? How did that happen? We used to say before the band started we would fight like cats and dogs, once we started the band we transferred the angst into smashing our instruments instead!

AU: Well, congrats because it's obviously still working 15 albums later. What are the key elements to writing a great Raven song? Where do you find inspiration to keep you excited about writing the next song?

JG: There are key elements. You need the killer riffs but in a real song format, not just 10 riffs strung together... strong melodies as well as some left turns and craziness! Inspiration and ideas are luckily never in short supply; we have always been prolific. In fact, we wrote 30-odd songs for the last album *All Hell's Breaking Loose* and then picked the ones that made sense as an album.

AU: As I said, 15 albums and still going on and on without throwing in the towel – amazing. So with your latest long player entitled *All Hell's Breaking Loose*, what's your pick of the litter from the Hades hound tracks?

JG: That's tough... it's 10 songs, all killer - no filler! Personally, I really love the title track, "Victory's Call" and "Go for the Gold."

AU: What's next on the play card for Raven? Any exciting new bets for the triple threat you can let us fans in the stands in on?

JG: We start a UK tour next month, then in March we start a North American run that goes through to May... then it's off to Japan!

AU: Oh shite, this was supposed to be my Valentines column. We better adjust our jocks and aim for the heart before we end this match. What's the closest to a romantic piece of prose you've written in a Raven song?

JG: Oh, hands down that would be the lead-off track "Hard Ride" from our first album. "I've got my hands on your assets, it brings the tears to your eyes..."


AU: Well, thank you again for this interview and long may you run. Before we go, it's time for a reader question. This one comes from a punter named Al Nolan of Toronto, Ontario who writes: Dear John, will Raven still honor the official backstage pass issued in their 1981 opus *Rock Until You Drop* on this tour and was the song "Hung, Drawn & Quartered" a metaphor for government resistance?

JG: Ha! The amount of trouble those backstage passes caused! No, we probably won't, haha! "Hung, Drawn & Quartered" is all about a gent named Guy Fawkes... look him up! ravenlunatics.com






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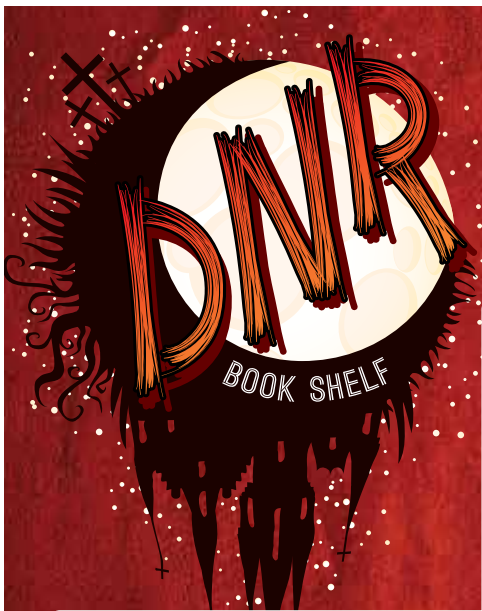
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NESTLINGS



Nat Cassidy
Tor Nightfire
October 31, 2023
 Though it is not his first novel, *Nestlings* is the first work by author Nat Cassidy that I have had the pleasure to read – and a creeping, uncomfortable pleasure it was! This won't be the first, or I am sure the last, review of this novel to invoke the comparison to *Rosemary's Baby*, but Cassidy matches that classic's dark atmospheric tension with aplomb.

As something of a joke, New Yorkers Ana and Reid applied for an affordable housing lottery at one of the city's most prestigious (and mysterious) high-rise buildings. Of course this was before the birth of their daughter Charlie – a birth which, through a rare and unforeseen complication, left Ana in a wheelchair. The lottery awards the young family a beautiful apartment on an upper floor and the building management is wonderfully accommodating to Ana's new accessibility needs. Everything seems almost too good to be true, but Ana tries to quiet her rising doubts. She has struggled post-partum and now she is determined to try her best to be excited about their new apartment and the new stage of life for all three of them. Despite her best efforts there are things she notices that don't sit quite right. The building is quiet at all hours, no one else seems to come and go from their floor, and when she looks out the window in her daughter's room, something seems... wrong.

As Ana unravels the horrifying truth of the

Deptford building and its inhabitants, I found myself re-reading passages just to fully savour the depth of the unease and the heights of the suspense. While some aspects of the story feel a little trope-y, *Nestlings* is still refreshingly original. I had a great time with this one and I think you will too.

Laura Phaneuf

HAIL SANTA!



John McNeel
Blood Bound Books
NOVEMBER 24, 2023
 No better way to sit back and enjoy your eggnog than with this excellent holiday read to set the mood.

Set in Canada, in St. Nicholas, we see a dying town rich in folk-lore purchased and about to be re-imagined as a ski-resort destination with a sudden influx of those about to make it so. The locals struggle with this idea while progress pushes ahead.

A horrible winter storm sets the scene for one hell of a Christmas break for its residences. Strange and sudden deaths begin to unfold starting at the school. We follow teacher Shona and the custodian Curtis through an intense allegory of lots of blood, narrow escapes and carnage all the while wondering what children are really capable of.

A strange and unique twist on St. Nicholas himself, his elves and eggnog for that matter. Horror fans will certainly love letting their imagination run wild along side the plot.

Demonika

DEATH: THE ANTIDOTE TO MISERY



Mats E. Eriksson
PMET Publishing House
January 1, 2023
 Let's get the New Year started with one of most entertaining and original books you could ever hope to read. We need an antidote to the misery that surrounds us.

This is, despite the title, a very uplifting and funny book. Mats is an acclaimed paleontologist and in this book he combines his love and knowledge for metal with his love and knowledge of fossils.

It really works! Mats' tale of an imaginary meeting with one of my great heroes Tony Iommi is truly excellent. We are in the hands of a master writer here, one whose imagination knows no boundaries; yet is able to tell a tale accessible to all.

It's great fun spotting the plethora of heavy metal references that abound in *Death: The Antidote To Misery*, there's potentially a great drinking game here.

I must mention the incredible art by Par Olfsson, Motörhead legend Joe Petagno, Dan Seagrave, Mark Riddick and Dan Lerner. Reading this book is like stumbling upon a previously unknown horde of the best album art you've never seen before, and makes a very special book even more special! All hail!

Steve Earles

MONSTRILIO



Gerardo Sámano Córdova
Zando
March 7, 2023

Santiago was born with only one lung, and a weak lung at that. Doctors expected he would not live past his first day in the world but astounding everyone and delighting his parents, Santiago continued to live and grow well into childhood. This book begins on the day he dies. Grieving in a way her husband can't understand, Santiago's mother cuts off a piece of his lung to keep her child close to her. After hearing an unexpected story of a similar act of grief, she starts to "feed" the little piece of lung. Eventually it starts to grow, and to hunger, and to feed, and what results is *Monstrilio*.

Gerardo Sámano Córdova's debut novel is entrancing. Told through the experience of four characters, we are shown the nuances of what it means to be a person – or a monster – navigating the messy world of family, loss, and

connection. Córdova writes with an element of magical realism that flows so smoothly you won't even hesitate to believe in the story of this monster as he consumes not only flesh but the whole of the human experience. *Monstrilio* is at once disturbing, bizarre, and surprisingly heartwarming, a true standout for the horror genre. I highly recommend this title if you are seeking a little bit of existential awe to accompany your gore.

Laura Phaneuf

FORTUNA: THE SACRED & PROFANE



Nigel Pennick
Inner Traditions
January 16, 2024

What is luck? We all crave it, and indeed, reading Nigel Pennick's fine book *Fortuna*, mankind has always craved luck, some way of putting the odds in their favour, of predicting the next throw of the dice, of making the right decision in love, of finding what the future holds.

So, luck is a truly universal concern (as the old Blues song has it: "If it wasn't bad luck, I wouldn't have no luck at all").

As Nigel says in his introduction: "Fate and destiny – matters of life and death – are of paramount importance to all humans."

So, in this engaging and well-researched book, Nigel explores the mythology and history of luck, and it's a terrific story.

You can't fail to love a book that name-checks Motörhead: The Ace of Spades, perhaps the most famous or notorious card in the whole pack, often associated with death and the devil. Some cartomancers take the Ace of Spades to actually signify death, though the Queen of Spades also appears in this context in American tradition. Arguably the most famous song of the heavy metal band Motörhead was "Ace of Spades", with the imagery of fast living and danger."

Overall, a book with a wide appeal. After all, who doesn't need luck?

Steve Earles

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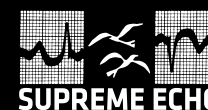


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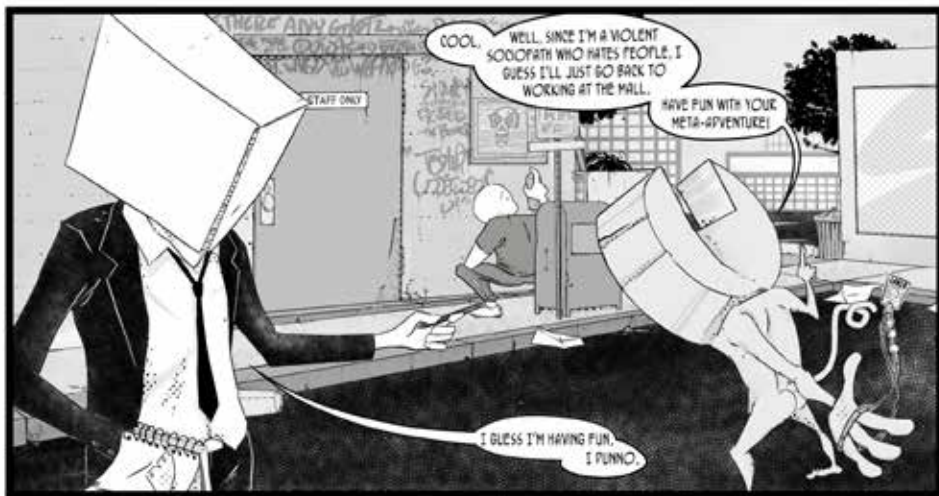


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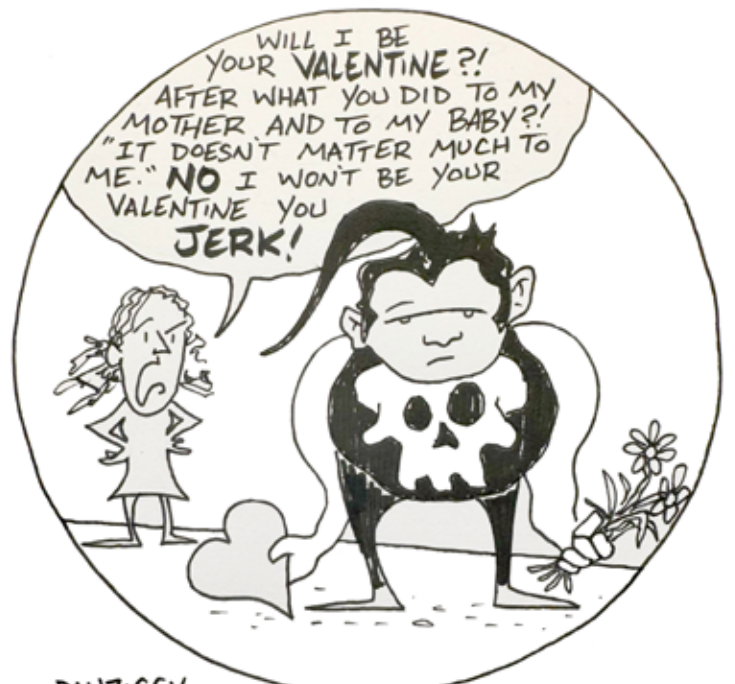
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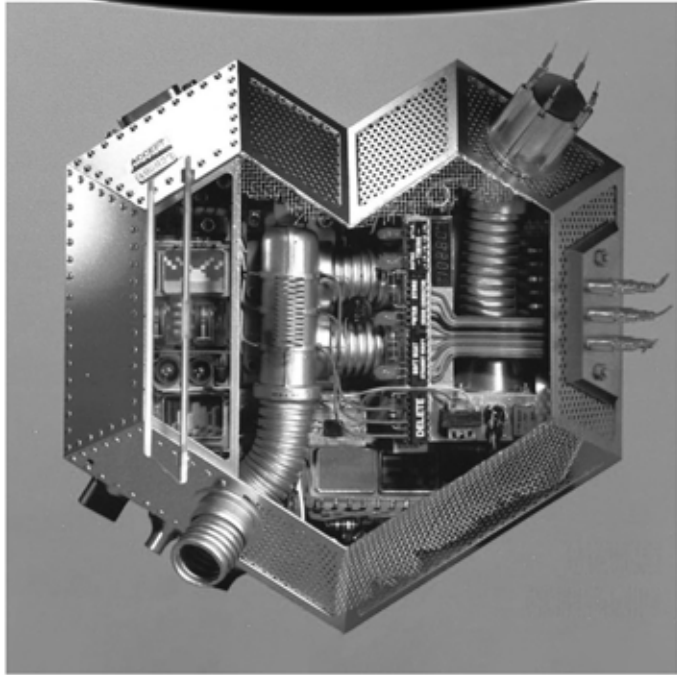
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W.A.S.P. is one of the most consistent and reliable forces in rock music - unstoppable and unassailable, like a heavy metal juggernaut sent back in time from a long-distant galaxy. Frontman Blackie Lawless is undoubtedly one of rock's everlasting figures - someone's whose attitude and vision changed the musical landscape around him, in the process bearing fruit to some of the biggest anthems of their time.

Their first five studio albums (*W.A.S.P.*, *The Last Command*, *Inside the Electric Circus*, *The Headless Children* and *The Crimson Idol*) contributed enough on their own for W.A.S.P. to be considered one of the greatest rock bands of all-time. Those LPs are all presented in this set, mastered half-speed at Air Studios, London for a superior, sharper, more direct and engaging sound.

Compiled with the full cooperation of Blackie Lawless, the box set also includes a 60-page book with exclusive and rare pictures from legendary metal photographers (including Ross Halfin, Tony Mottram, David Plastik and Paul Natkin), along with extensive



liner notes from Amit Sharma (Kerrang!, Planet Rock). Also included is an exclusive Blackie Lawless poster, plus a six-page folding poster replica from the debut LP.

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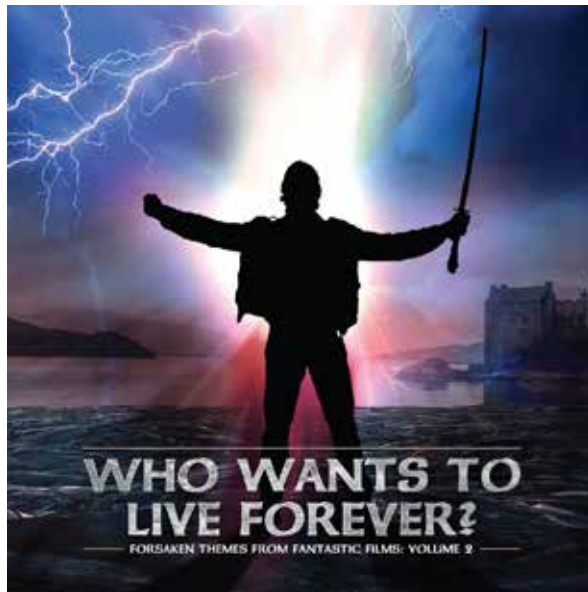
Who Wants To Live Forever

Perseverance Records Releases Forsaken Themes From Fantastic Films Vol. 2

The eagerly-anticipated follow-up to the first volume of *Forsaken Themes From Fantastic Films*, *Tears in Rain*, this 21-song, 50-minute anthology spotlights cues from Charles Bernstein's unused score for *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, David Williams' *Phantoms*, Marco Beltrami's *Resident Evil*, plus Edwin Wendler's theme from *Dragon Soldiers* and, the album's crown jewel, Michael Kamen's epic "Highlander-Suite", performed by FAME's Studio Orchestra.

Perseverance founder and producer Robin Esterhammer reflected on the ethos behind the new compilation: "This collection is like a playlist of some of my favorite scores that couldn't have standalone releases. It's a compilation of deep cuts, rarities and other cool stuff I thought would be interesting to soundtrack connoisseurs. Instead of just creating a Spotify playlist, we've brought these pieces together on a physical CD, offering fans several new recordings to enjoy."

Continuing its tradition of curated compilations since 2002, *Forsaken Themes From*



Fantastic Films is a treasure trove for enthusiasts; from re-recordings and orchestral suites to original tracks, this collection embodies the passion and dedication of Perseverance Records towards the art of film music.

Denver, Colorado-based Perseverance Records is a leading producer of film soundtrack music that hasn't been available for a long time, or never at all. The company was founded in 2002, and has specialized in the restoration and preservation of film scores from the 70s, 80s and 90s.

The company has branched out

into the recording of specially arranged and orchestrated suites of classic film scores and fan favorites, such as *Highlander*, the unused Coil score for Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* and *Alien* (coming on Vol. 3 of this anthology series). More suites by composers such as James Horner and Christopher Young are in the works.

You can find the full album now on all major digital service providers and streaming services as well as quality brick and mortar retailers. To learn more about this compilation and order the CD, visit:

PerseveranceRecords.com

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Absolute Album Reviews

A Journey Told Through Fire - Sworn

Strangely enough when listening to gore/noise I was linked to a Norwegian melodic black metal band! The band in question is called Sworn and the release I was linked to is called *A Journey Told Through Fire!* I do love me some good gore/noise but it's not a stretch to say that this is something that is "a bit more". The production is excellent and the musicianship is absolutely through the roof—reminding of the newer releases by Stormkeep, Lamp of Murr and Vallendusk.

The guitar work is as tight as a pin and the same can be said for the drums. The vocals are your standard black metal rasp—but they are entirely on point and are recorded with a sincere sense of professionalism. The melodic aspect is a real win and the word "powerful" is one that comes to mind! I can say without doubt that a lot of time and effort went into the production of this album and I'd honestly love to hear more! I will for sure be checking into if this band has released anything in the past. They are new to me, but for all I know they could be widely known with an expansive discography!

This CD and digital album is available at the band's Bandcamp page. You can also check them out on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, the metal archives and Sworn's personal webpage!

Featuring seven tracks in just under 50 minutes this one is an absolutely stellar masterpiece. Visions of quests and journeying run through your mind while listening and the sounds held within inspire genuine catharsis. Without further word vomit I will just state that this is a release worthy of attention—and anyone into the melodic blackened sound should give it a listen or three!

Devin J. Meaney

Bits 'O Boris - Boris The Sprinkler Beer City Records

I'm drunk, stoned, and past deadline so this review is gonna be a short one, you scumbags.

The sticker on the front of the album pretty much sums things up nicely... "19 Lost Nuggets of Wisconsin Cheese-Punk from Boris The Sprinkler!" This LP collects a veritable cornucopia of stray Boris tracks from 1992-2003 that originally appeared on singles, compilations, and whatever else! Save yourself the hassle of collecting it all! Buy this instead!" Truer words were never spoken.

I thought maybe these guys were a ska band based on their name, but I am happy to report this is not the case at all. This is pure punk rock infused with humour and fun. Some of my favorites on this album are "Why Don't We Do It In A Dumpster?", "Buying Beer For Junior High School Students", "I've Been Hittin' On A Russian Robot", "Kill The Sex Pistols", and "Bleep The Ramones".

Beer City Records has laid out the red carpet, and the vinyl for this release is available in every color of the rainbow.

Now piss off and let me pass out in this gutter.

Mal Content

The Burning Microcosm - Windfall

Once again while listening to gorenoise I was linked to a melodic black metal band! I have listened to this release before and forgot to review it so it makes sense that since I was re-linked to the album I should give it a review while I have a chance. The release I am speaking of is *The Burning Microcosm* by Windfall! It was released in 2023 by Sons of Hell Prod. on CD and tape and was uploaded for our listening pleasure at the Black Metal Promotion account on YouTube!

First off this is your standard BM but it has solid production and

tight musicianship. The vocals are on point and atmospheric, the guitar work is immaculate with cold tones and shredding riffs and the percussion pounds on with all the force of a winter storm raging upon your doorstep!

The Burning Microcosm features six tracks in under 40 minutes so the songs are on the longer spectrum—which is standard. The polar opposite of most goregrind and gorenoise and grindcore—but each genre has its pros!

You can check this out on YouTube or you could buy a copy physically from the label mentioned above. You can also check the band out on Facebook, Instagram, Bandcamp or the Metal Archives!

Lastly, this is some pretty good black metal. The vibe is spot on and again everything is put together nicely. This is something that both new and life-long fans of BM should enjoy—and I wouldn't doubt that anything new or older from Windfall is just as good!

Devin J. Meaney

Darkness Shall Rise Productions Balance of Power - Arbitrator

This is a very welcome re-release. Arbitrator were originally formed by ex-members of seminal punk band The Varukers (who also provided Frank Healy for the excellent and influential Sacrilege, The Varukers were definitely a breeding ground for talent).

It was worth noting that the truly good British thrash metal bands formed in the 1980s often came from a punk rock background, Warfare, Onslaught and the aforementioned Sacrilege are great examples of this, and I feel it gave them their own unique identity.

Due to line-up problems, *Balance of Power* wasn't released until 1991 on Cyclone Records, by which time Grunge ruled the roost, and *Balance of Power* fell below the radar. Ironically, there's probably a more appreciative audience for this album now, and deservedly so as it's an excellent thrash metal album!

Incarnate - Necrosant

Necrosant's 'Incarnate' is undeservedly obscure. Originally released on Black Mark back in 1992 (major kudos there). It's a truly brutal death metal album, and again, I feel it would find a more appreciate audience now than then. Deservedly so, there is something special about this album.

Desolate - Necrosant

This was the final Necrosant album, again originally released on the legendary Black Mark, home of Bathory (legend has it that Black Mark mainman Boss, was Quorthon's father).

It's a pity that Necrosant didn't continue, as this album shows a very positive progression in both playing and song-writing. "Plagued Mind" in particular shows a pleasing death/doom influence and it would have been interesting to hear more work from Necrosant in this vein.

Overall, three very well-deserved reissues from Darkness Shall Rise Production, and I eagerly look forward to hearing what this fine label releases next.

Steve Earles

Demo 2023 - No Way Out

Once again with my habit of looking for new punk bands by typing "Punk demo 2023" into the search bar I have come across *Demo 2023* by No Way Out! Unlike the last few bands I found this one is pure hardcore revelry! Even though it is coined as punk it is metallic in parts and in places it even has a grind/power-violence/thrash edge. One band that I can really hear while listening to this is Hatebreed! Jamey Jasta would be down like a clown while listening to *No Way Out* I'm quite sure!

The musicianship is very tight. The guitars are deep and powerful and the drums pound on with an almost

machine-like and well orchestrated vibe. The vocals are pure hardcore—and again this is very much in the same vein as something produced by Hatebreed's Jamey Jasta!

This was released on cassette and features six short tracks. You can check that out on Criminalized's Store Envy or you can just view the band on YouTube or check them out on Instagram! There is not much info in the YouTube bio but I can make a stab that the coined term "LAHC" stands for Los Angeles Hardcore!

So... without further rambling I will just suggest that fans of visceral hardcore check this one out. The release is only short—but it is very solid and is a great "premonition" of "hopefully" things to come!

Devin J. Meaney

First Offence - Tony Bardach and the Smoke RUF Records/Northern Electric Records

Tony Bardach is the bassist for the Pointed Sticks, Vancouver's long-running (45 years and counting) punk band. He has also been a gallery owner (Gallery 56, A Dental Lab) and an artist using street barriers. His musical side project, The Smoke, had limited release with Slowpoke and the Smoke Tonite \$2 which was an album of Zappa's Ruben & the Jets and old Top-40 covers. That album will be on Bandcamp soon. Which leads us to *First Offence*, which is a whole different beast altogether.

You can call it outsider music. Bardach calls it neo-cabaret. But he ain't no Liza Minelli. This is simple music with traces of Syd Barrett, Leon Redbone and John Sebastian. It's a throwback style that could be called Tin Pan Alley, homespun, vaudeville, pre-WWII, jugband, plus a bit of crooning of the wee-small-hours Sinatra variety, even a bit of sprechstimme (speak singing).

It is eccentric for sure, composed during perambulations around Gibsons, B.C., its main audience being Bardach's dog and cat. Subject matter is various mental quirks, foibles and altered perceptions. The lyrics relate to a great outdoors with the wind blowing a bit of Captain Beefheart into the words. Y'see Bardach's concept is that the most punk direction an old punk can go in is to embrace positivity.

"I am punk," says Bardach. "And it seems not punk to do a punk thing since that has become the mainstream. So this a new punk thing which would be more or less being nice about things. In short, I'm not a man on a mountain anymore. That said I'm still evolving."

So we have a John the Baptist-like voice crying in the wilderness and the result is a paean to the simple life from an aging punk who may just be the Walt Whitman or the Wildman Fischer of the Sunshine Coast.

Les Wiseman

Here's to Long Drawn-Out Terrible Endings - Forever Dead!

If truth be told, Thunder Bay's (actively) premier punk rock band Forever Dead!'s newest offering *Here's to Long Drawn-Out Terrible Endings* is exactly what is missing in punk music these days. The sound is sort of a genre-bending mix of power-pop, pop-punk, hardcore, skate-punk, garage-punk, rock n' roll and others... but executed so beautifully, in a way that indubitably makes all of that irrelevant. Not too many that practice these arts or disciplines do it better than them, or pull it off as well as they do. This album proves just that, and the seven song EP is a complete banger from start to finish.

Forever Dead! has been a tight-knit core unit since 2005, yet has seen a couple of changes over the years...but since congealed quite nicely as the current five-piece. Chelsea (vox), Jorge (bass/vox), Jesse (guitar/vox), Tylore (drums),

and Mrac (excitement guitar) have continuously set the bar higher, and higher, with each album that they release... and have indeed flexed hard with this offering. It's surely their finest work to date.

This is their fifth studio release, and honestly... it is so good, it's mind-blowing. The new songs compare to, and/or are on par with previous releases... but this one has a certain, and undeniable weight and substance that exceeds anything else prior to. The songs are strong, impactful, fiercely savage, and delivered through articulate (hive) mindset(s). With this release, Forever Dead! is completely on their game, and they are playing with fire.

Recorded and mixed by Paul Dutil, and mastered by Jon Tornblom Transparent Mastering...both of whom did a fantastic job. The album as a whole has a beautiful-sounding production to it, with a luscious tone, that's straight-up creamy... paired with super-catchy songs and hooks that are sure to have you humming for days or weeks.

The themes on this album are no doubt inspired/powered by rebellion, social alienation, sticking it to the government, the paranoia and difficulties of dealing with a pandemic/post-pandemic climate, the unsure state of the economy, shitty politics, duress...and living in that state, coupled with fears and traumas of enduring such a grueling existence...While wanting more from it (for themselves, their lives, their friends, family, and their children).

Every single track on this album is spectacular, and well-written/arranged (without a dud, sag or filler in the bunch). In every way, this album is far superior to most of the recent albums of the genre...I can't think of many that would shine brighter (as of late). It's a truly glorious piece of work. I would definitely give this album 10/10, or 5 stars (out of five).

If you are a fan of punk music in general, you'll love it...and I think you would be hard-pressed to find a newish punk album, that would hold any more weight than this one. If you are not familiar, do something about that...Get to know Forever Dead! and give the album a whirl.

Music In Defiance of Compliance Vol. 1 & 2 - MDC

Beer City Records

Millions Of Dead Cops, Millions of Dead Christians, Millions of Dead Cowboys, Metal Devil Cokes, Multi-Death Corporations... whatever you call them, they are a fuckin' killer band for sure, eh! Fast, aggressive, brutally honest, in your face, and always inciting dissension through their lyrics since 1979. Over 40 years of shredding the masses a new one and these road warriors are still touring 'til the wheels burn off.

Beer City Records hooked us up large and we scored the new MDC records they recently dropped on our domes. This vinyl release is extra cool as the sick cover artwork from Vol. 1 and the cover from Vol. 2 join up and connect to created a deadly-looking Uncle Sam gas mask skull guy.

These best of albums run the whole gauntlet of the band's dense discography. Cryptic cuts to new bangers. These two albums are the only MDC albums you ever really need to buy to revisit MDC or get acquainted with this band for the first time.

According to the sticker on the front, all songs have been restored and remastered and my speakers definitely noticed the difference as they started to smoke and bleed. The record is available in black vinyl as well opaque metallic silver or opaque metallic gold, each limited to 100 copies.

As always, if something sucks or blows I would be the first to tell you, but in this case, these MDC records do neither. Since getting my grubby hands on these records, they have been on heavy rotation and I've

melted two needles already.

Still political – still relevant – still raging (No Trump, No KKK, No Fascist USA!) MDC is the best there was, the best there is, and the best there ever will be. Domination through obliteration.

I'll sign off with the MDC lyric "Fuck you and God bless America!"

Mal Content

Onyx - Skipping Stone

Just like the Hot Brown that has been served up at the Brown Hotel in their hometown of Louisville KY for decades the band Skipping Stone has served up a five course meal of homemade deliciousness in the form of their latest EP *Onyx*. The Hot Brown was created in the 1920's...Skipping Stone came along about a 100 years later but have made just as much as a mark ever since. They have opened for the likes of Blacktop Mojo, The Lonely Ones, and Kip Winger just to name a few.

The five songs that are on *Onyx* are at times as subtle and soft as a feather and at other times like taking a sledgehammer right between the eyes. The three guitar attack of Jordan Carlson, Thomas Hicks, and Kelly Hood plays with melody and precision. Once they get rolling on the track "Chasing Ghosts" it was almost Pantera like power that assaulted my ear drums... check out the video for that tune as well on YouTube... great stuff.

"Straight Jacket" starts off light and airy almost Radiohead-like, then dissolves into a sludgy heavy dark vibe that really gives Carlson and Hicks a chance to contrast their vocal styling... such despair and weariness in the beginning then anger and aggression in the lyrics as the song progresses. On this track as on all the others bassist Patrick Robb shows why I would make him MVP of the group. The man is a bass playing machine! The only person that comes to mind in watching and hearing him play is "The Ox" AKA the late great John Entwistle of The Who.

Safe to say after reading the lyrics and then listening to the delivery of them in the track "Monsters II" someone is pissed! Intro is amazing and drummer Dan Illes lays down a solid back beat both on this one and the other four tracks on the EP He's all over his kit but to my ear at least does not overplay either, knows what the song needs and does it.

The song "Burn it Down" should be made WWE Superstar Seth Rollins new intro music post haste so that anywhere he goes this song plays in the back ground, it is that damn good.

Cross Breaking Benjiman with say Three Doors Down and toss in a dash of Puddle of Mudd and you've got "Vertigo" which was my favorite track of the five.

Skipping Stone's EP *Onyx* is out

digitally now, find it on their Bandcamp profile and check them out on all the major social medias.

Lance Hall

Riding On Fire: The Noise Years 1997-2004 - Iron Savior

Cherry Records

This is a comprehensive six-disc set of cult German power metal band Iron Savior's tenure at the legendary Noise Records (home, at various times, to such metal legends as Sabbat, Voivod, Celtic Frost and uh... Tankard!)

There are five full albums and an EP. Anyone who loves Helloween or Gamma Ray will find much to love here. Kai Hansen features on a great deal of material here, and indeed, there is a rather sprightly cover of Helloween's "Gorgor" which I love, as it is absolutely nuts!

Of course, this is very much Piet Sieck's creation, and his involvement gives Iron Savior a very consistent sound. Which is very uplifting metal, in the vein of Judas Priest or Helloween. Speaking of the Priest, there are some rather excellent Judas Priest covers as bonus tracks.

And you what, the way things are in the world right now, uplifting power metal is a very good thing indeed!

Steve Earles

Steel On Steel: The Complete Avenger Recordings - Avenger

Cherry Red Records

9 out of 10

Cherry Red Records are great at unearthing treasure from the past. This is very much the case with Avenger, one of many great bands to release music on Neat Records (home of the mighty Venom during their classic period).

The thing that strikes me listening to Avenger's two albums, *Blood Sports* and *Killer Elite* is just how fantastic they are. These albums can easily stand shoulder-to-shoulder with many of the classic metal albums of the 80's, no mean feat!

Avenger's musicianship and song-writing is first class. Above all there is that marvelous 80s energy and sincerity, outside of bands like Darkthrone, we don't hear that enough now. A bonus disc of Avenger playing live proves they could cut it live too.

As a very welcome bonus, the sleeve notes by respected metal historian John Tucker are excellent. For instance, I learned that Ginger from the Wildhearts was briefly a member of Avenger! I'd love to see Cherry Red re-issue John's books, the readers would love them!

Overall, a fitting tribute to one of the NWOBHM's great unsung bands.

Steve Earles

Crossword Answers

RIPCORDZ A LITTLE BIT EXTRA

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CROSSWORD NO. 102 FEBRUARY, 2024



Roll and Go:

Canadian Polka Punk Politely Steals the Show in Bridge City, OR on NYE

By Tormagh Van Slyke

As usual, I wasn't looking forward to NYE. It's usually all hype and little payoff. Then, I heard the Bridge City Sinners were playing back-to-back shows in Seattle and Portland on January 30 and 31. The Sinners are always great live, so I let the hype grow on me.

Long story short, the show in Seattle was already sold out. Kultur Shock opened too, so it sucked to miss it. Instead, I got free tickets from a friend, so we drove through eight hours of rain to Portland because...guess who was opening? The Dreadnoughts and Pete Bernhard from The Devil Makes Three!

The Devil Makes Three is a sweet band from Santa Cruz. Seeing Pete solo was cool. He had people singing, swaying and at points stomping around with just his voice and a guitar. Nice licks and lyrics, Pete. Respect and kudos. However,

for reasons yet to be explained, Vancouver's clusterfolk legends The Dreadnoughts politely stole the show.

Before I get carried away, let me take you to the venue. The McMenamins Crystal Ballroom is big ol' four-storey square building assembled over 100 years ago by what seems to be fine brick layers.

Historically a gambling, dancing, drinking, hook-up joint, McMenamins has housed "underworld kingpins, musicians, drag queens, head shop patrons, artists, bathhouse denizens and internment camp survivors." James Brown was among many who boogied this place down, ya dig?

Anyway, the place smells old and familiar. On the main floor, you've got a homey pub, Ringlers. Follow the maze of stairs and hallways, and you'll find yourself in the main hall where roughly 1,400 people gathered for the hometown band - The Bridge City Sinners.

The ceilings were like 20 feet high (I didn't measure, okay). And before too long, we stunk up the whole place, airing our booze and body

odour. When the Dreadnoughts hit the stage, it was fucking party time.

Punk rock featuring battle cries, cider swingin' sea shanties, polka accordion, fiddle and mandolin riffs, stage antics and crowd work - the audience was left wondering what, and who, just hit them. Seriously, only one person I talked to had bothered to look them up before the show. They didn't see it coming.

The lead singer/songwriter/frontman, Nick (The Fang), and drummer, Marco (The Swedish Bastard), are the band's two OGs from the aughts.

Nick had the crowd soaking wet in sweat with circle pits. Laughing and cheering away, the crowd formed human walls, a chaotic conga line and yelled Polish curse words like "Kurwa!" when commanded.

As an initiation, Nick sent the new mandolin player to the bar and back to get a drink - mid-song. The catch? He had to crowd surf each way, not spill too much, and get back in time to help end the song. The New York kid did good. So did the crowd.

Sadly, the Bridge City Sinners' front person, Libby

Absolute Live

Lux, couldn't make the gig due to, I think, last-minute health matters. Her bandmates filled in with some of their solo material, but it just isn't a Sinners show without Libby. They did their best, and damn it, I'm sure it was more than good enough.

Meanwhile, I took a maze to backstage and united with a high school chum, Conrad, who by some insane collection of fates ended up becoming the accordion player for The Dreadnoughts. Thanks for the tickets dude. Best NYE in recent memory. Shout out to photographer Kris Luke for hooking up the pics.

Check out *The Dreadnoughts live*. They've got dates in a few southeastern US states in February, followed by some shows in Kelowna and Vancouver before they head to Europe in July and August. Otherwise, find them on *Bandcamp*. My favourite album is still *Polka's Not Dead*.

thedreadnoughts.com

Photos by Kris Luke @KLPhotoPortland



Battle of the Bands - Memorial Arena - June 24th 1967 © Royal City Music Project

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SLED ISLAND MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FIRST WAVE OF 2024 ARTISTS

(February 6, 2024 - Calgary, AB) Today, Calgary's Sled Island Music & Arts Festival unveils the first wave of artists playing the 2024 edition of the event, running June 19 - 23. The annual festival presents a thoughtfully chosen lineup of music, comedy, film, art and conference programming in multiple venues across Calgary, Alberta each June. The artists announced today, ranging from highly established performers to compelling new acts, represent just a small sample of the 200+ bands that will perform at this year's festival.

Joining Sled Island's previously announced 2024 guest curator, Show Me the Body, is incisive Chicago rapper Mick Jenkins (performing with a full band at The Palace Theatre), Los Angeles indie rockers Cherry Glazerr, genre-bending rap artist Kari Faux, Montreal-based hip-hop trio Planet Giza, '70s Zamrock revivalists W.I.T.C.H., renowned soundscape composer Laurel Halo, British electronic producer Forest Swords, eminent post-punk three-piece Wombo, and Philadelphia hardcore punk group Soul Glo (selected by Show Me the Body).

Also included in the first wave lineup is acclaimed Toronto-based death metal band Tomb Mold, avant-garde ambient composer and Calgary native Sarah Davachi, hypnotic indie-pop musician Lael Neale, Chicago-based free jazz collective Irreversible Entanglements (led by poet and musician Moor Mother), illustrious multidisciplinary artist Malcolm Mooney (best

known as the original singer of the '70s German krautrock group Can) with his new project Malcolm Mooney & The Eleventh Planet, and Canadian "doom-esque" metal group Ethereal Tomb.

Each year, Sled Island's guest curator helps to shape the festival's programming. Show Me the Body's previously mentioned curator pick, Soul Glo, will be joined by several other exciting selections, including prolific underground rap artist WiFiGawd, experimental pop artist LUCY

(Cooper B. Handy), digital hardcore-meets-hip-hop act LustSickPuppy, industrial noise project NGHTCRWLR (the latest embodiment from King Woman's Kris Esfandiari), and more still to be announced.

Rounding out today's announcement is some incredible Alberta-based talent, including psych-infused indie group Kue Varo & The Only Hopes, wildly energetic post-punk outfit Brain Bent, Edmonton indie-punks Stem Champ, hip-hop powerhouse Tea Fannie & The Collective, and retro-pop supergroup Ginger Beef, featuring award-winning flutist Jiajia Li and veteran

producer/multi-instrumentalist Warren Tse. Sled Island's complete 2024 lineup will be announced in the coming months, including additional headliners, over 150 more bands as well as comedy, film, visual art, special events and conference programming.

A limited number of single show tickets to select Sled Island 2024 shows will go on sale, February 9 at noon MST.

For more information and to check out the first wave lineup, visit SledIsland.com.





Machine Head, Fear Factory, Orbit Culture, Gates to Hell
January 26, The Grey Eagle Events Centre, Calgary AB

The Slaughter the Martour made its sixth stop in Calgary, Alberta at the city's favorite medium-sized venue for metal shows as of late, the Grey Eagle. Yes, the '90s are coming back, with nu metal having its second lease on life – groove and industrial metal have also, albeit on a lesser scale (with the return of Pantera and Static-X) which has given veterans Machine Head and Fear Factory both a legendary status and new sense of relevancy.

Opens Gates to Hell were the definition of a warm up band and were basic enough as to not take any of the shine off of the headliners. Boom, smash, breakdown – that was pretty much it for every song. The energy was there but a truly memorable song was not.

Sweden's Orbit Culture were just in town opening for Avatar last year. Although I haven't taken proper courses on this type of musical culture much in my free time, I do enjoy what they bring to the table. They fit in with this bill much better than with Avatar, with their sound almost sounding like what Fear Factory might have sounded like if they started the band in this modern age.

Speaking of Fear Factory, their "resurrection" was the most intriguing part of this show. The addition of Milo Silvestro on vocals was like something out of Rockstar, and seeing that he somewhat looks like Burton C. Bell and mimics his vocals so well – it's almost like Dino manufactured a clone, which does actually fit well with Fear Factory's thematic elements. They could have gone the Static-X route, or even had a hologram to further drive down the sci-fi theme, but I digress. The sound and set list was very strong ("Shock," "Edgecrusher," "Linchpin," "Demanufacture," "Replica") but too short for a band with this much history. It almost served as an introductory set list to the band, who should very well be doing a headlining tour of their own at this stage, much like Static-X.

Whatever your opinion on Robb Flynn is, what cannot be denied is he is an individual who wears his feelings on his sleeve. When he's passionate about something, she shows it. He shares it. Machine Head's music is Robb's baby and in presenting it live, a lot of passion comes with it, which does make for an engaging show.

On this night in particular, a very young fan was in the audience on top of his father's shoulders. Flynn acknowledged the young Machine Head fan (who was really engaged in the performance), saying he would be a future headbanger (though it looked

like he already was one). These types of interactions engaged both Flynn and the audience, who knew that they weren't scripted lines but genuine ones.

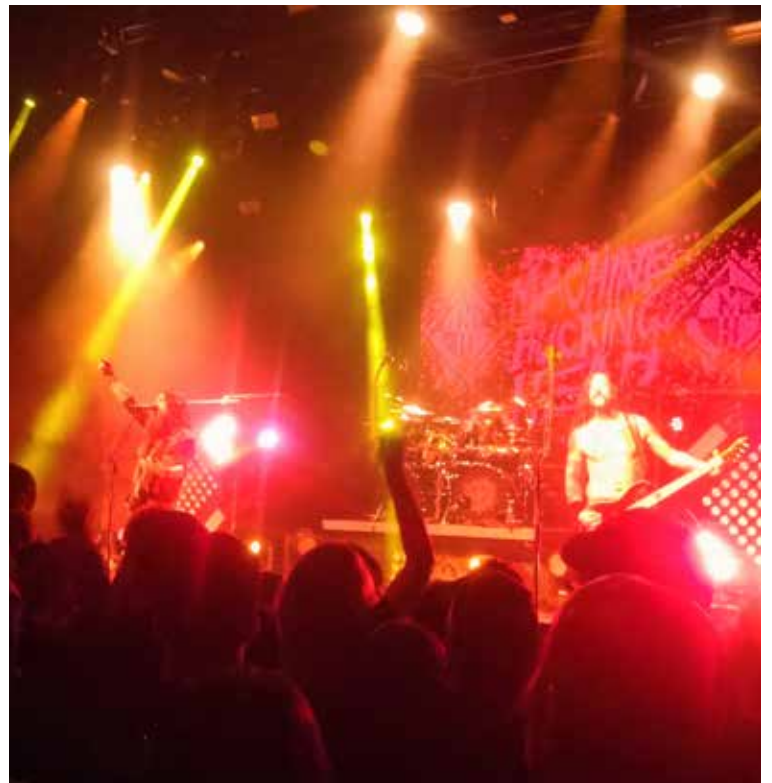
Machine Head's set was a carefully chosen one with the needed classics ("Ten Ton Hammer" and "Old") meshing in well with choice songs from throughout their vast catalogue, including their new effort *Of Kingdom and Crown*. The late '90s era was even fully embraced, which was nice as yes, the Machine Head fans do actually enjoy "From This Day" which caused one of the biggest crowd reactions of the night, and even "Bulldozer" from the nearly forgotten album *Supercharger*, which didn't feel out of place at all.

Absolute Live

When Machine Head is said and done, the song "Davidian" will live on as one of the best examples of groove metal from the '90s, and at this show it was the penultimate song. It could have ended there with the "shotgun blast" sending folks to their cars happily, though the final song here was "Halo" from *The Blackening*. They were still happy.

Ryan Dyer

See more reviews online at absoluteunderground.tv



Call Me Crazy

By CJ Sleez

So I'm back with a new column for a whole new ultra-"woke" society just waiting to be offended by my opinions. But hey, we'll get there...

I think the best place to begin is with a basic intro to give you a better idea of who I am and where I'm coming from. Who knows? Maybe you'll even end up agreeing with me on occasion.

I've been a part of Canadian counter-culture in some small way for over 25 yrs – minus a good chunk of the last decade where I kinda fell off the map (for a variety of reasons that would both shock and bore you). My perspective can pretty much be summed up with "Do whatever pleases you, but don't fuck over other people in the process." Basically, 'You do you'... Don't step on my proverbial toes, and we'll probably get on just fine. This outlook, which is kind of a mix of Bohemian attitudes and old school values, has quickly become outdated and I think maybe it's time for a renaissance.

The social climate has become so outspokenly uber-'PC' that people seem to relish the opportunity to express offense even if the issue has nothing to do with them directly. Like it's a virtual treasure hunt to find and expose whoever happened to let something slip that day that rubs against the grain; "First one to socially lynch the offender wins the prize!" Feeling righteous for shaming other people is a dangerously slippery slope. For the rest of us just trying to get through the fucking day, respectfully tolerating this social crusading trend is energy-vampire level exhausting.

Listen, in basic theory I'm with you... I used to be on your side... I think? I'm all about equal rights

and personal freedom...I've been around; and I say that 'like it's a good thing' because I believe it is. I'm all about breaking out of whatever cages your spirit and getting right messy with the world. Hell, I'm a bisexual ex-addict with severe bipolar who's still fronting a punk band at 45. Trust me when I tell you I've seen some shit... and I get it.

I fiercely believe in the right to share your perspective and personal interpretation of your own reality. However, when echoing those opinions ultimately results in silencing others, that's when social hyper-sensitivity becomes censorship and I think we can all agree that censorship is bad, right? In a new world order littered with trolls and Karens, people have become hesitant to openly joke around or speak candidly. Afraid of the backlash and reluctant to deal with the potential online fallout, they stay silent. Of course it's good to pause and think before we speak (a skill I'm still actively learning), but that pause should stem from wisdom not apathy or fear.

It's not the ideas that rub me wrong, it's the approach; the intentional representation of 'being so enlightened amongst the ignorant masses'. Hell, it may well be true (at least it is their truth), but telling everyone how much further evolved you are than the rest of us just puts you in the same lame social corner as the weird neighbor that peers over fences and that annoying vegan that everyone wants to kick off their soapbox.

But again, this goes back to my approach to life which is generally 'think whatever way you want but don't try to impose or push your personal ethics on me'. It's not your job to condemn others for having a different perspective – even if it is an archaic one. I've played that game and it's an

empty victory at best. No one is truly receptive to new ideas when they're on the defensive anyway. So yes, everyone has a fundamental right to express themselves, absolutely, but it's a free country and freedom is a two way street.

So, starting fresh this year... Can we all please just stay in our lanes and focus on our own lives instead of actively policing each other's? I mean, if arguing with strangers that you'll never meet is a normal part of your day, that's fucking weird!

Or at least it should be, right? But hell, I'm just a 'raised in the eighties', wild-child of the nineties who once considered herself liberal and now has no clue what the hell is going on with the world. Call me crazy.

Got a comment? Great! I'm glad you're inspired. Organize your thoughts and publish your own column or post it on threads where someone might care. This op-ed's rhetorical. Cheers.

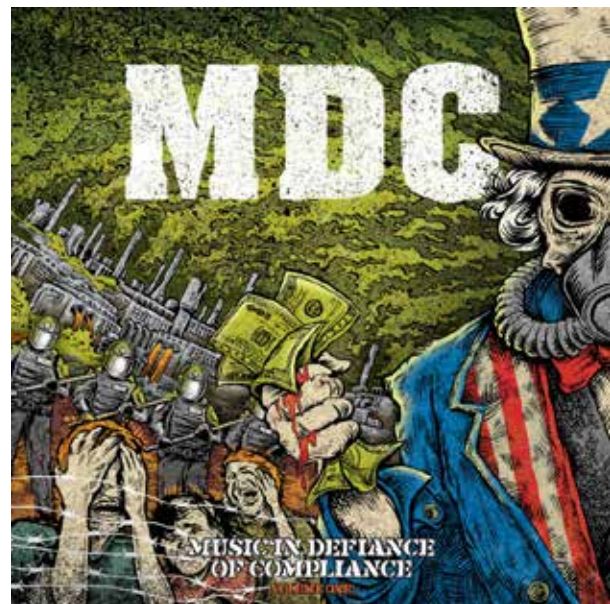
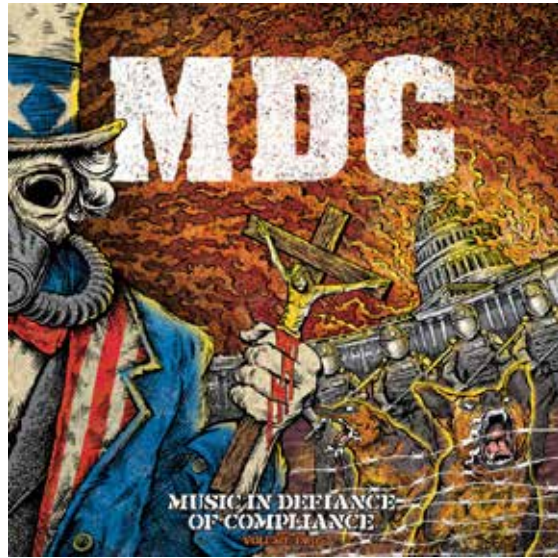
Photo by J. Taynton



Music in Defiance of Compliance

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For over 40 years, the legendary M.D.C. has been cranking out solid hardcore-punk tunes against oppression, injustice, misery, pain and death caused by all the corrupt politicians, governments and multi death corporations. Most of the time, these parties work together to line their pockets with money while regular people suffer, starve and die. This dual-record set is restored and remastered and features covers with interlocking designs on both the front and back. Starting with their legendary self-titled LP and going all the way to their latest release, you'll get a ton of ferocious hardcore-punk that will blow you out of the water. Each album also contains liner notes by both M.D.C. founding members Dave Dictor and X Con



Ron, and of course, the lyrics for each song, which unfortunately, are just as relevant now as when they first came out. The cover art and packaging were done by Carl Steinhagen, and when you put the covers together, it creates a large piece of art on either side. If you're into limited runs, there are 116 copies of a silver pressing of Volume One and 108 copies of a gold pressing of Volume Two available. This set is crucial for any M.D.C. fan or record collector, so make sure to check it out!

millionsofdeadcops.bandcamp.com

mdcpunkofficial.com

beercity.com



ENOUGH

Montréal Progressive HC

Members of Montreal's legendary political band, Sc.u.m., have joined forces with veteran frontman Dan Izzo from Calgary's Motherfuckers, Spastic Panthers, and Sheglank'd Shoulders to bring you ENOUGH, a sonic catharsis for the planet's current woes.

Their sound can be described as a fusion of old school hardcore with stoner melodies. A music genre that mixes rapid beats and power riffs that ignite emotions and pull you into the mosh pit.

Not afraid to experiment and write outside the box, ENOUGH's progressive-style of hardcore uses multiple tempo and mood changes that make you feel as if you went through small musical journeys at the end of each song.

When asked, guitarist G. Pearson describes his biggest influences as stemming from movies

and television: "In a song, the visuals (on a movie or TV screen) are replaced by the lyrics but the music can still convey tension, anger, fear, etc. For this album, I tried to incorporate chapters and interludes in some songs. I also thought it would be cool to do something new and play solos strictly on chords like in 'Hatewashed' and 'Where are your Gods?'"

On vocals, Izzo doesn't mince his words. His singing assaults your senses and yanks you from your safe space. His menacing voice snaps you out of your daze and forces you to confront today's reality. Hence their album's title: *Before My Eyes*.

Enough makes a point to tackle serious topics

such as mass shootings ("Bullet"), the Canadian residential school crimes ("Sunday Mass Graves"), our current nonchalance with AI ("Deus Ex Maquina") and our callous destruction of the environment ("Drowning in Flames"). Other social critiques targeting internet influencers and their followers ("Army of the Vain"), creationists in our midst ("Monkey See, Monkey Do"), and conspiracy nuts ("Kool Aid") are dealt with humor and ridicule.

Before My Eyes goes straight to the listeners' nerve center and challenges them to try and listen without clenching their fists. The world is in trouble and this band is here to remind us that all is *not* well. Reflect on what you hear and be prepared to answer when Izzo's stare meets yours as he asks the audience: "Have you finally had ENOUGH?"

enough-hardcore.bandcamp.com

Blank Generation

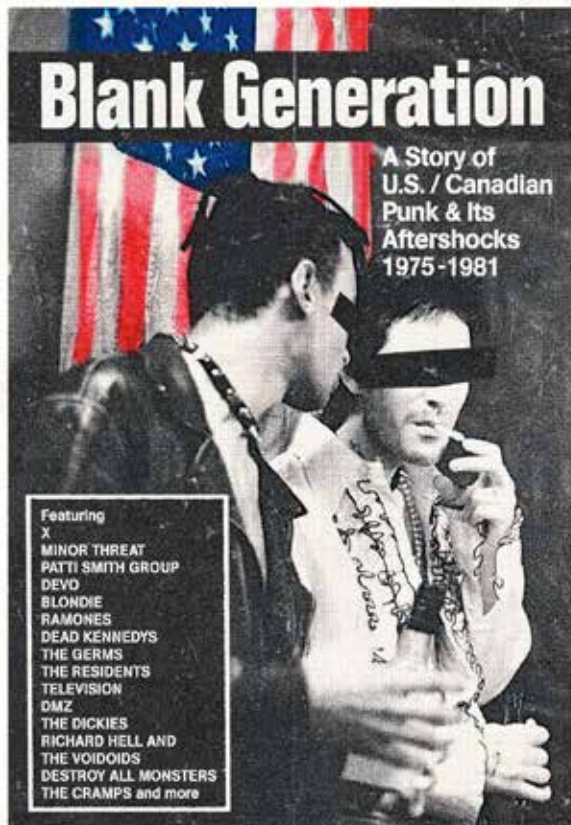
A Story Of US/ Canadian Punk and its Aftershocks 1975-1981

Named after Richard Hell's epoch-defining anthem, *Blank Generation* documents the emergence in North America of what came to be labelled punk rock. A year or two prior to punk exploding in the UK, bands who'd been playing live in venues like New York City's CBGB started releasing records, often on independent labels, as an antidote to the prevailing disco and corporate soft rock which dominated the US charts.

This five disc set reflects those influential NYC bands – Patti Smith Group, The Ramones, Television, Blondie, The Voidoids, etc. – as well as the scene's other pioneers such as Pere Ubu and The Dead Boys (both Cleveland, Ohio), Dead Kennedys and Crime (San Francisco), Devo (Akron, Ohio), The Germs and The Weirdos (Los Angeles) and Mission of Burma (Boston, Massachusetts).

Blank Generation offers a deliberately broad definition of punk, encompassing contributions from such outré acts as Suicide, The Cramps and The Residents through to new wave/power pop combos (Sneakers, Chris Stamey & the dB's, etc.). Also present are contemporary recordings by some of the mavericks who inspired punk – Destroy All Monsters (Detroit) boasted ex-members of The Stooges and The MC5 and The Heartbreakers and Killer Kane Band spun off the New York Dolls.

While the US punk scene was arguably always more diverse musically than that of the UK, the music evolved quickly, as evinced by the choices heard on the later discs. Many of the acts here such as X, The



Replacements, The Feelies, Redd Kross, The Dream Syndicate, The Gun Club and Minor Threat would make an even greater impact as the 1980s wore on.

It's hard to overestimate the seismic shocks caused by the music on *Blank Generation*, not only on everything in alternative music which followed in North America, from the 80s hardcore scene and the music heard on the whole alternative college radio network through to grunge and beyond. And yet this era has never before been treated to a comprehensive retrospective of this kind.

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by Dustin Jak

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- I love the Dead



2) Johnny Thunders & the Heartbreakers
- Pirate Love



3) Wayne County & the Electric Chairs
- Toilet Love



4) Exodus- No Love



5) Pagans/Meatmen - What's This Shit Called Love?



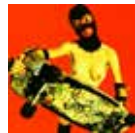
6) Besmirchers
- Puppy Love



7) T.S.O.L. - Darker My Love



8) Dwarves - Everybodys Girl



9) The Damned - Love Song



10) Buzzcocks - Ever Fallen in Love?



11) The Clash - Lover's Rock



12) Scorpions - Falling in Love



13) W.A.S.P. - L.O.V.E. Machine



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Absolute Movie Reviews

DAMPYR

Sony Pictures

3 Stars out of 5

Few people know what a Dampyr is, and they are technically a mortal with the extended life expectancy of a vampire! That is, these half-bloods are the result of a bloodsucker having sex with a mortal, and who they serve depends on the story. In pop culture, Vampire Hunter D is one and so is Blade! But few people will know about the Italian comic to which the movie draws inspiration from.

Harlan Draka (Wade Briggs) is trying to figure his life out as the Balkan War plays out. Although he is completely unaware of his heritage and even passes the belief in as a flight of fancy, just what happens next shows they are dangerous! While part of the story involves supernatural factions vying for control in the midst of mortal conflict, not everyone wants to choose a side. Although this reluctant hero gets involved while rediscovering his past, what goes on isn't all that surprising. He will have to meet his maker.

Gorka, Master of the Night (David Morrissey) wants him alive and he's as melodramatic as all hell. His agenda is rather simple and that's to rule in the shadows. However, when Tesla (Frida Gustavsson) is causing problems in the human realm, it seems the forces of light and darkness will have to find a way to work together in order to deal with her.

Meanwhile, the mortal militia led by Emil (Stuart Martin) have their own problems to deal with. As a result, it's easy to get confused on what's worth paying attention to. I had to give the movie several watches to make sense of it all and sadly, there were moments which slowed the

film down. I didn't feel as invested since the story wasn't as well focused as I'd hoped.

With no surprise, Bonelli Entertainment has plans to expand this universe. Although, I'm guessing the direction will be similar to the Worlds of Darkness RPG series, it's tough to say if the war to which most of the story takes place will still be the focus. I'm curious enough to want to follow this saga, and maybe what I really need to do is to find the comic books so I can better understand the world before I sally forth to investigate anything else that's been published since.

Ed Sum

FIVE KNIGHTS AT FREDDY'S

Directed by Emma Tammi

2 Stars out of 5

Honestly, I think Nick Cage's film *Willy's Wonderland* is better than *Five Nights at Freddy's*. The concept behind both works are similar, and anyone who knows the "killer trapped in a robot sub-genre" will want to make comparisons. In the latest, instead of a Janitor, the victim is Mike (Josh Hutcherson), who just wants to provide for his young sister, Abbey (Piper Rubio). Curiously, the concept felt more like a father wanting to take care of his kid.

But when he's not known as a people person, the choices for work are limited. When the opportunity to take on a security position at a haunted pizza parlour is offered, either he takes it or he does not.

While one movie concerns spirits of a cult possessing the animatronics (Willy), the other spins the concept around by saying that the souls of innocent kids are doing the same. However, time has taken a toll on their youth, and they will not hesitate to kill. One detail I collected on is that their torment isn't theirs alone. As they were once caged into

these iron maidens, so must their victims! That has quite the grim consequence to put into *Five Nights*, and it'll leave a mark.

Although the scares are tame, the visual direction is eerily good. And when an avenue of escape must be offered, what's presented wasn't all that exciting. When the survivors must learn about how it all began, why to accept it, and leave it be of all things!

But as for Matthew Lillard's involvement, perhaps it's good he doesn't offer a zoiks or let's run Scooby moment! He's the perfect successor to Shaggy Rogers role (Scooby-Doo), and it's good to see him play nice and nasty in horror movies. Here, he's Mike's career counsellor and also something else...

Although I saw the twist coming, I was hardly surprised.

What's left isn't too thrilling as it's a fairly standard let's watch these robots do some random kills, and it's up to the living to either fight or flee. It kind of honours the video game of the same name, but overall, if I had to choose which recent movie does the possessed robot genre best, it's *The Banana Splits Movie* of all things! That's because that idea is still positively bonkers, and it sets up a better potential for a sequel than anything else.

Ed Sum



THE COLOUR OF MAGIC

Yet again scrolling through the moist underbelly of the internet movie scene I came to Tubi. After checking out a few films that didn't really interest me I came to Terry Pratchett's *The Colour of Magic*. Being a fan of both fantasy and comedy I figured this one would be a win...but after watching I can say that this assumption was only about 3/4ths true.

The movie was very fun and the aura while watching it was warm and comedic—but a lot of it seemed to be lost me in the sense that some of it didn't seem to make much sense. The script seemed to be kind of poor too! With that said it was very

visually appealing and was well worth at least one watch.

This was a two part mini-series from 2008—so as it was made for TV as usual the budget I imagine was a tad lower than if it was a Blockbuster hit.

The characters were likeable and intriguing and in the end I might watch this again if I was feeling bored and couldn't find anything else to watch.

I thought this was directly a TV mini-series but apparently Terry Pratchett was the author of the original books from the Discworld series started in 1983—so I would be intrigued to read from that line. Maybe it would have made a bit more sense if I

had read the books first...but then again—maybe not?

Devin J. Meaney

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

I made my way to Tubi to see what B-grade cinematic treasures I could find. After checking out a handful of movies that I had no interest in I came to *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Here is the bio from IMDb.

"In 2022, a repair crew is sent to fix an orbital weapon but their spaceship malfunctions and ends up heading towards the dark side of the moon. There, in a mysterious, seemingly abandoned space shuttle, a sinister force lies in wait."

First and foremost I think it is

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amusing that this all takes place in the "distant future" of 2022. Secondly—this movie wasn't half bad! It wasn't the greatest film I have ever watched—but it was far from the worst!

One negative thing I have to say is that at times things were hard to understand. By the end of the film I still didn't figure everything out—but it was entertaining none the less. I won't go into too much detail as I think watching the film would be the best way to digest the story but I think fans of horror and sci-fi fusion films might dig this one! I will also say that although this film is very spacey it is also a tad "devilish"! If I was to give this movie a rating

I'd rate it 6/10 — even though I didn't fully get it, the creep factor was strong and the eerie vibes were pleasant to the senses!
Devin J. Meaney

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS ZOMBIES
3 Stars out of 5

The highly satirical *There's No Such Thing as Zombies* fills a niche that's rarely explored in this subgenre. In this British-style horror comedy, what's presented is more of a rom com because Carlotta (Luana Ribeira) can't decide who she loves more. Is it Colin (Rudy Barrow) or Paul (Rami Hilmi)? I won't say who eventually turns into a zombie,

but it's rather funny to see how this Uncle Fester wannabe shows emotions, despite not having the capacity to express his feelings. To stop him from falling back to baser instincts, he's tied up.

The focus is really about the people. Here, we see Carlotta is in denial; she doesn't want to admit to still having feelings for her ex. Her naivety and disbelief that her former boyfriend is a zombie is very much enforcing a theme, the title of the movie, and as for whether the Haitian kind even exist, that depends on figuring out the grander plot.

What's involved here is talky. There's no bloodshed or crazy levels of terror here. Instead, it's about asking those questions on what defines a zombie in either the classic sense or created by science. The latter doesn't get explored as well as I'd hoped, and as for the two inept agents searching for them, that subplot seems to have gotten lost. They were the only aspect that kept me watching, but without that resolution, what's presented felt like half a movie than a full one. Perhaps that explains why zombies often leave their meals unfinished. Consuming a fresh kill is better than something more than an hour old.

Ed Sum

THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Looking for something to watch I made my way to Tubi in search of something cheesy. After a brief perusing I found *The Thing from Another World*—a 1951 B flick. I do enjoy a good black and white film—especially when it involves aliens or monsters or things of that nature. Here is the bio from Wikipedia:

"The film's storyline concerns a United States Air Force crew and scientists who find, frozen in the Arctic ice, a crashed Flying Saucer and a humanoid body nearby. Returning to their remote arctic research outpost with the body still in a block of ice, they are forced to

defend themselves against the still alive and malevolent plant-based alien when it is accidentally thawed out."

Honestly, after watching the film I only have a few things to say. The vibe was great and overall this was a fun film but I can also state that the "creature" looked far too human to be visually appealing and the ending was anti-climactic to say the least. These are the only two negative things I have to say though, as overall this was a decent piece of classic B- grade cinema.

This was based on an even earlier writing—so to make a close I will say I would be interested in reading the original story. It made for a decent movie—but I daresay it would make for an even better piece of readable fiction!

Devin J. Meaney

ZOMBIE TOWN
Directed by Peter Lepeniotis
3 Stars out of 5

Even when R.L. Stine had more involvement during the making of *Zombie Town*, not everyone will find something to appreciate about it. This Hulu release has the potential to be like *ZombieWorld*, but instead of offering a tale where the walking dead are a threat, what's presented here is *Shaun of the Dead* minus all the scares. What's sorely missing is the lack of chemistry between the leads.

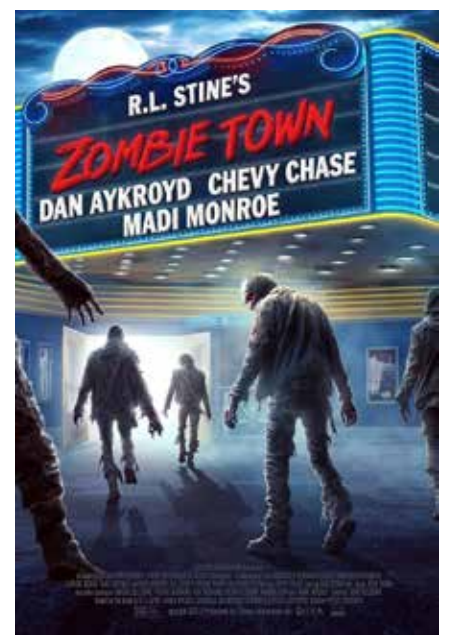
When compared to *Goosebumps* (the movie), the danger has no stakes to keep viewers invested. As for the television series of the same name, it's very tonally different. Here, what's presented is very lighthearted, and the threat isn't all that seriously dangerous! When Mike (Marlon Kazadi) and Amy (Madi Monroe) decide to view a film once considered out of print, and famed filmmaker Len Carver (Dan Aykroyd) said he shouldn't have revealed it to the world, they should know better! These young horror film buffs convince themselves they should

watch it despite a no turnout at the movie theatre. What they didn't realise is that the movie contains a curse that would get unleashed once it's played.

What happens should've taken notes from Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Last Action Hero*. Had it, I would've been thrilled to see some random monster creations from the silver age of cinema come to life! But when the title references zombies, sadly there's only so much one can do with this type of undead creature.

When the infestation takes over the entire town, it's up to these two teens to convince Len to help them. Only he knows the key to reversing the curse, and as for why Chevy Chase is involved, it's probably because he agreed to do it as a favour. While Aykroyd has a prominent role in this work where I could swear all he's doing is playing a variation of Ray Stantz. Chase is much more original; sadly he doesn't get enough screen time, as I'm curious how much of a mentor his character was to Carver.

Without this background development, the other story just didn't matter. I didn't care at all about the kids. I was more amused at how Mike is in over his head once the zombie manifestation comes to life. And as for the young lady, it's obvious she has feelings for him, but is unwilling to ask him out first. Her punkish demeanour helped keep me interested in this film, since I was waiting to see who would make the first move.



Although *Zombie Town* was released for Halloween, I didn't catch this flick until much later. After all, horror films should be enjoyed year round. Now all I need is a proper chilling ghost story to make the Winter holiday worthwhile.

Ed Sum

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Absolute Graphic Novel Reviews



Local Man Image Comics

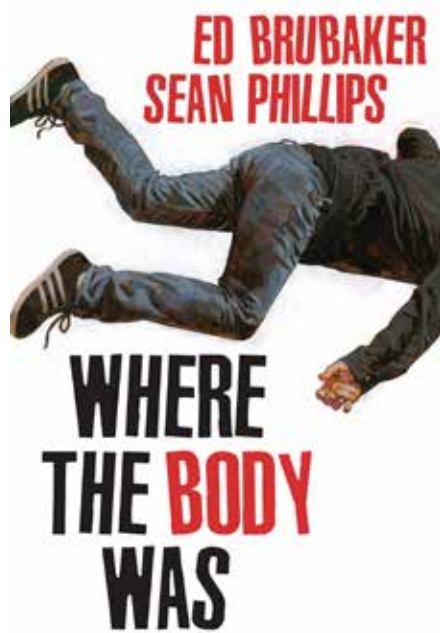
Local Man is an Image comic, co-created by Tim Seeley and Tony Fleecs, about a low-level superhero who gets kicked off his superteam and has to go back to living with his parents in the shitty small-town he'd tried to escape. The guy can't even use his old hero identity anymore, since it's legally the property of the team that now hates his guts. This is easily one of the best superhero-type comics I've read in a while! The dialog is witty and easy to read, but still has a grounded realism, like the characters themselves.

While most of the book takes place

in a small town with muted colours and normal folks, we get occasional flashbacks to the hero's time with the superteam, and these are done with the hyper-dynamic art and gaudy tones reminiscent of the kind of superhero books Image used to publish back in the 90s. It's a parody, but a thoughtful one with something more to say than just, "comics used to be silly."

Local Man is a hoot. It's got flashy violence and the potential for sexy scenarios, all charmingly undercut by a protagonist stuck somewhere between being a decent-person and an outright loser.

Hank Pattison



Where the Body Was Image Comics

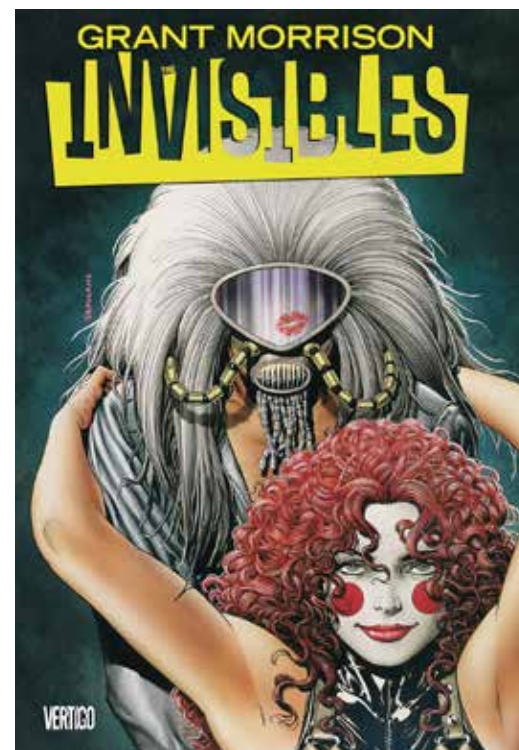
Where The Body Was isn't your usual comic from creators Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips. Sure, it's gritty and bloody and full of disreputable characters, but upon hitting the story's conclusion I was struck by just how silly it all felt, and I don't mean that derisively. It's just, after all the hard-hitting, ball-busting, gut-punching that normally comes with a story from this creative team, I found myself pleasantly amused by this tale's outcome.

This is a story full of sex and drugs and loneliness and liars. Lots of liars. People lying to each other, and lying to themselves. There's

also a lot of the other kind of lying, the lying around in bed naked with somebody else's partner, kind of lying.

It's nice to have a simple story with some lewd pictures and a bit of violence. There's a pleasant simplicity to it, not unlike the community the story revolves around. It does leave me wanting something more from the creators, but it's still an excellent use of our time. It tells a good story and then gets out. A lesson more creators today could learn from, in our age of, "how could this become a sequel or a series?"

Hank Pattison



The Invisibles DC Comics

The Invisibles is an older series from DC Comics which has just recently gotten a new edition, making it a perfect time to expose yourself to this psychedelic work of ontological terrorism put upon the printed page.

Author Grant Morrison is said to have come up with the idea of this series after smoking a bunch of hash and getting abducted by extra-dimensional aliens, and as you read this book, you may find yourself thinking, "yeah, that makes sense."

What's it about? You don't want to spoil a series like this, but let's just say, it's an adventure-horror-comedy

involving ugly forces of fascism invading from another universe, and our enteral attempts to overthrow those jerks by embracing sex and whimsy and fun and sci-fi madness and honest-to-god real-world magick.

Each storyline of *The Invisibles* is drawn by a different team of artists, giving the series a dreamy, irregular flow. It's not for everybody. But if you're the right person, and it's the right time, this comic series will hit you like six hits of high-powered blotter acid right to the center of your lizard-brain. You might never be the same again. And that'll be a good thing.

Hank Pattison

Z2 Comics in Review

By Ed Sum

Z2 Comics is best known for their collaborations with high-profile bands to create a new kind of sequential art. The stories not only reflect the origins of that group, but also (sometimes) include an artist's interpretation of their songs! And lately, they've been knocking their releases out of the park with their latest!

Although some of their products are very expensive limited edition issues, I fully support them, because to get them printed on high-quality paper or to release those albums again doesn't come cheap. Sometimes, what's offered includes autographs too! Although there's no COA, fans just have to trust that this company is doing the right thing.

Blondie: Against the Odds

From exploring how that New York Groove sound developed, what's produced here is an imaginative look at the band's early days. The artwork by Montos is really great, and when he's more imaginative in the later parts of the story by drawing Debbie riding a zombie shark, I took notice!



Here, readers get to see how she broke into the entertainment scene, and follow along to how she and Chris Stein met. But he has his own chapter, where we learn about his childhood. Thankfully, this book isn't just about them. What's offered in the later chapters are some wonderful retelling of their songs from this album as a mini-comic book. My favourites include "Heart of Glass," which is a pulp adventure, and "One Way or Another," which honours everything I adore in a wild west tale. "Dreaming" is just as fantastical, and they round out my top three choice reads.

Dee Snider: HE'S NOT GONNA TAKE IT

After reading this graphic novel, Dee Snider is a hero. He fought the system regarding music censorship and sort of won. Anyone who followed the PMRC hearings in Washington, DC, will get a look from this musician's perspective, and I couldn't put the book down. Although some of it is heavily dramatised, what's presented here can be compared to what has been posted online.



But what's more important is how this talent discovered rock and roll, and why he's stuck to it all throughout his teenage years.

Unlike other Z2 releases, there's no album being reissued. This account is penned by Snider himself, and I'm sure Frank Marraffino (Marvel *Zombies Supreme*) contribution is to add more drama where necessary.

Iron Maiden: Piece of Mind

The 40th anniversary of this band's seminal album has a book, and as for the model kit that's included in the Deluxe set offering – I was tempted! To have this large scale version of Eddie, this band's mascot, is better than the scale miniature products released earlier last year.



Instead of recounting this band's origins, the book gives readers a quick introduction and jumps right into the songs. What's presented is a love letter to many genres and to say which is best was tough! From Frank Herbert's *Dune* in "To Tame A Land," to Clint Eastwood's war-trodden "Where Eagles Dare," the gambit is well covered. Ultimately, my favourites lean on "Still Life," which concerns how a blind man makes his art, and "Sun and Steel," which has the feel of an Akira Kurosawa epic.

This commemorative tome has a lot of material contained within its 75 pages. There's even notes

from those who followed Iron Maiden's works throughout the years. Even the additional artwork speaks for itself.

In this book are illustrations from Ghoulsh Gary, Akirant, Jan Meininghaus, Jay Geldhof, Carin Hazmat, Nat Jones, Steve Chanks, Kyle Hotz, Travis Knight, Montos & Rantz Hoseley.

z2comics.com

horror-con.ca. The poster has a dark, horror-themed background with a central figure holding a chainsaw."/>



Royal Savoie

Owner of Royalty Entertainment

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

Royal Savoie: I am Royal Savoie, owner of Royalty Entertainment music promotion and events, and manager for metal bands Lucid Karma, Lidkicker and Chasing Phantoms. I am a host/presenter and MC and have a weekly radio show on CFUV 101.9 FM called *THRASHCAN*.

AU: What was your first introduction to the local Victoria music scene? What bands were getting you stoked?

RS: Years ago, during my time working in the Victoria bar scene, I became friends with Stefano Pasta, owner of Stefano's Artfarm. After he opened it five years ago, I began meeting some amazing and talented musicians/bands and started to work with some of them, hosting some of their music events. Cyborg, Wolf Venom, Chasing Phantoms, Buzzard Asylum and Dead Rights were just some of the first bands that really started to pull me into the punk/metal world. Super fun music, their passion for it and honestly, really awesome people.

AU: What made you decide to start promoting shows?

RS: Well, as I would be hosting/MCing some events I would be "the guy with the clipboard", basically running the event, coordinating with the promoter, bands, sound guy etc. Some people would ask me if I could find them shows, I hadn't really given it much thought up until that moment, but then I gave it more thought and Royalty Entertainment was born.



AU: Any secrets to proper show promotion you can share with people?

RS: Be honest. Be open to suggestions from your bands, it's a collaborative effort. If you don't know something ask! I didn't have a clue what a "backline" was at my first event! Check any ego you have at the door. If you think it's all about making money, then you are going to be disappointed and should probably find life elsewhere... Oh, and be nice to your sound person.

AU: What are some memorable gigs that you have put on over the years?

RS: Each one has their memories for sure, like my



first one! Sooo terrified! However, the all ages gig at the Little Fernwood last December 30th was awesome. I had an idea for a balloon mosh pit. With some creative construction, it worked so well... hundreds of balloons bouncing around in the pit as they went insane!!! Bar venues are great, but there's something awesome about an all ages gig!

AU: How did you get involved helping groups with band management?

RS: I had stopped by the Phoenix Bar and Grill, one snowy night early last year to check out Wolf Venom, and there was a new band called Lucid Karma on stage. They blew me away. Ryan Forrest (Wolf) introduced me to them. We talked about finding them some bookings. After a couple bookings, they asked me if I would be their manager. Again, I hadn't really thought about band management till that moment... and and...

AU: Who is on your current roster and what sorts of acts are you interested in representing?

RS: I am currently working with Lucid Karma, Lidkicker and Chasing Phantoms. They are all in the metal genre, however, for me there is no set genre. It really is about supporting live music of any kind, whether I manage them or do booking agent work for them. I'll help whoever I can.

AU: What drew you to take the band Lucid Karma onboard? Did you see something special in them? How would you describe them to someone who has yet to check them out?

RS: Their passion and drive. They know what they want and they know the hard work that goes into getting there. There's the managers' answer... but also... they're real. They are five of the most different personalities you could ever put together, and it works! Our road trips can get weird! They are a stage band. You have to come to a live show to experience Lucid Karma. They are melodic metalcore. Their music is hard, sometimes aggressive but most of all, fun. To listen to them is to only hear half of their music.

AU: What are some of the best venues to work with in Victoria?

RS: For me, what can I say, it's the Phoenix Bar And Grill, Jennie and Mike (and staff) are amazing! True supporters of live music! And the Little Fernwood Community Centre for all ages events. They have a turnkey venue, complete with lighting and full sound set up, with a cost that really makes keeping the ticket prices low.

AU: What's your next big show you have booked and what can people expect?

RS: March 23rd at the Phoenix, first Victoria show of 2024 for Lucid Karma. We are supporting our friends Nameless King on their Island leg of their tour, backed by Bad Blood and Lidkicker! A co-production by Royalty Entertainment and Journeyman Productions. Expect it loud! A hard metal night of moshing and fun! Maybe check in with your chiropractor... cause you're gonna bounce!

AU: What are some things people can do to support their local underground music scenes?

RS: That's easy... go to the events. Even if you don't know who the band is, you might end up finding a new favorite! I know times are tough and money is tight. If you can't go live, talk with them (the bands) online, most will be wicked stoked to chat with you. Share their music with your friends. Share their pages, pictures and videos. And if you can, buy some of their merch. You really have no idea how cool it feels to see someone walking around wearing one of your t-shirts.

AU: Anything else you want to promote?

RS: Yeah, live music... I'd really like to tell everyone about all the upcoming shows at all the venues locally, but for real there's so much cool stuff coming up this year to say it here. Check your local groups, socials and mags like this and and...

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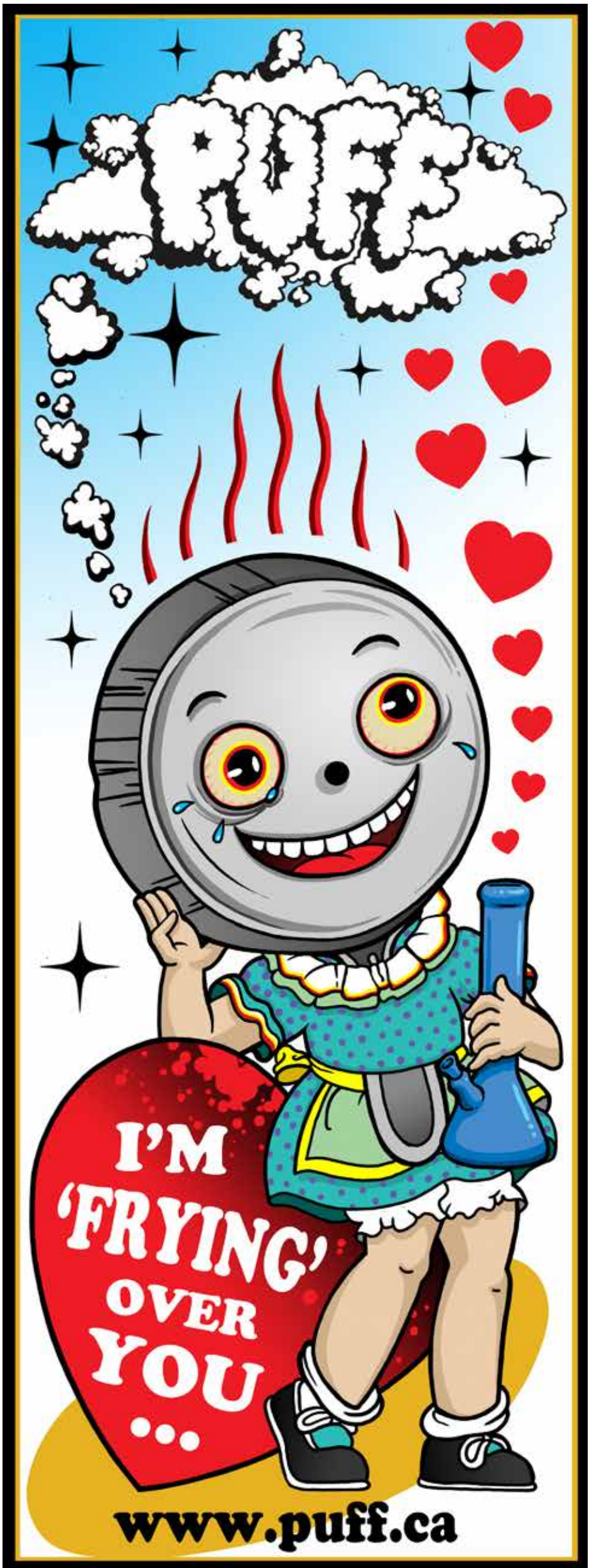
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Rockin' Cowboy Vancouver's Rock'n'Roll and Vintage Store

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

Dan: Name is Dan. I put the "rock" in Rockin' Cowboy Clothing Company.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Rockin' Cowboy?

Dan: R triple C evolved from Broadway roots set in 1971 to become a durable icon of Vancouver's Mount Pleasant. Back then it was called Western Town, [and was] the first store to offer western boots for sale in the lower mainland. The original storefront was three blocks east of where we are today. It burnt down in the mid-1980s. The original owner memorialized the tragedy in his epic poem "Thousand Lost Soles." From the ashes,

a legend rose. The store reopened in the Bank of Montreal Building on the northeast corner of Broadway and Main. Cowboy Dave came out here from Toronto in 1999, relocated the shop to 106 East Broadway and rebranded to Rockin' Cowboy in early 2000s. I walked in for the first time in 2015. We built fresh and opened in our current location at 118 West Broadway on February 8th of 2018.

AU: What's your favourite thing you sell?

Dan: Tough ask. Gun-to-my-head Top 3 would be vintage exotic boots, antique Navajo jewellery and the beautiful occasions when a customer sticks their head in the store to ask if we sell bull whips – yes, yes we do. Honourable mention to anything made of the mighty Bison.

AU: What makes Rockin' Cowboy unique?

Dan: Hahaha. Long list. The goal is to make sure there is no store like this for thousands of miles in any direction. Our aesthetic is George Jones' Nashville rhinestones meets Lemmy Kilmister's Sunset Strip radioactive glitter in a PNW coastal urban space cowboy locale. We do it our own way. Boot purchases come with a shot of whiskey. We host badass concerts in store. And of course, this ethos has attracted a renegade community of diverse clientele. We leave the door open so all types of individuals walk in.

AU: I see you often have vintage finds in your shop, can you tell us about that?

Dan: Hell yeah. We have vintage boots going back to the 1930s, and shirts back to the 19th century. We go all over North America to hunt inventory. Harvested from estate sales, flea markets, private collections, barnyards – anywhere it might be. Pieces by the big time celebrity tailors, Nudie, Manuel, North Beach Leathers, Nathan Turk, Rodeo Ben, Bluebell, Lucchese and more. Plenty history to explore in each artifact. Helping to hand them off to the right owner is a big thrill of this gig.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

Dan: Life is too short to wear boring.

AU: Any special events planned in the future?

Dan: Always. Next up, we're a sponsor of Battlefield Fight League's BFL 79 fight card at the Harbour Event Centre and on UFC fight pass Thursday February 8th. After that, my artwork will be on display at the Ace Motorcycle show at the Hastings brass foundry February 24th and 25th. The show features some real badass artists and custom bike builders. It'll be a banger. We've got Ashley McBryde at the Commodore Ballroom in March and Coast City Country Fest April 19th and 20th at BC Place and on Robson street. The Robson street party is open to the public, no ticket required.

AU: What sort of tunes do you rock in the shop?

Dan: It's as likely you'll hear Charley Crockett as you would Black Sabbath in here. Bill Monroe to Motörhead, Johnny Cash, Queens of the stone Age, All Them Witches, Willie Nelson, Jack White, Nikki Lane, The Dead South, Sturgill Simpson, Blue Rodeo to Meshuggah and many points in between. Lucky folks may even walk into a full blown rock 'n' roll or outlaw country concert in store.

AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?

Dan: Boots, belts & brims. New, Used & Vintage. As it reads on the marquee – there is something here for everyone.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Dan: "It's better to stand out than fit in," and "other people's opinion of you is none of your damn business."

AU: How do people find Rockin' Cowboy?

Dan: In person is best. At the store, plus we work rodeos, rock concerts, biker parties and all types of gatherings in the warmer months too.



In the fall, we co-host a pretty wild wrestle-rock extravaganza at International Motorsports on Grandview Highway – The Backlot Burnout. One hell of a party.

Track us down on our website for a taste of what we do and follow our Instagram for the most up-to-date info on inventory and upcoming events.

rockincowboyclthingcompany.com

[@rockin_cowboy_clothing_company](https://www.instagram.com/rockin_cowboy_clothing_company)





Wayne Kramer

April 30, 1948 – February 2, 2024

Wayne Kramer was the guitarist of MC5, had a prolific solo career, and was known to work with bands and musicians across many decades including: Alice Cooper, Bad Religion, The



Racketeers, Johnny Thunders, Mad for the Racket, Dodge Main, Marshall Crenshaw and others.

Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello says of his close friend, "Brother Wayne Kramer was the best man I've ever known. He possessed a one

of a kind mixture of deep wisdom and profound compassion, beautiful empathy and tenacious conviction... His band the MC5 basically invented punk rock music and was the only act to not chicken out and performed for the rioting protestors at the 1968 National Convention."

Morello continues, "Wayne came through personal trials of fire with drugs and jail time and emerged a transformed soul who went on to save countless lives through his tireless acts of service."

Survived by his wife, Margaret, and a son, Kramer will be deeply missed.

Top photo by Aeryn Shrapnel



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the Seeker, in the most romantic of headspaces, sought love; the undying love of movie magic. Chip the Seeker who looked for galactical truth through *The Urantia Book* that took him on a two plus years head trip to the edge of mental stability and back again.

Then there was Chip the Fixer who could read manuals, diagnose problems and fix almost any mechanical/electrical device, from telephones and typewriters to photocopiers and automatic espresso machines. None held any mystery. Chip the Deal Maker whose motto was "Buy high, Sell Low. Give

R.I.P - Chipbob Mon

Robert Henry Moncrieff

April 21, 1952 - December 19, 2023

"An aging rebel with a plan... just not a very well-defined one. A free spirit that no one's been able to tame. An insatiable wanderlust with an unquenchable thirst. Destined to travel and experience until the day I drop."

For me, Chip was Chip, my long-time and close friend Chip. To the kids, he was ChipBob while to various others in his life, Chip was Bob or Robert.

I didn't know Chip when he was a roadie for Mandrigal, nor when a smuggling operation ended badly and he got out of England by the skin of one's teeth.

The Chip I knew was a seeker. He sought name identity beyond his boyhood nickname, though; he certainly wasn't straight enough for Robert and too much of an individual to be a Bob. Chip

everyone a deal." Chip who, rather than take the chance of money burning holes in his pockets, moved cash along as quickly as his paycheck cleared while betting on a lottery win to cover the future.

Chip my Friend, an honest, kind, loyal, and funny guy. A poet who wrote from the heart. An artist who, whether making a scratch model of a full rigged sailing ship or drawing geometric visions, approached the project with exacting precision.

Looking back, maybe it would have been a good thing if that space cruiser from Galactic Headquarters had picked Chip up from the top of Mt. Shasta. As it didn't, Chip being here enriched my life and those that knew him for many more years. Miss you buddy.

- DJ



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R.I.P. Mark Reader
 In 2018 when I was in Texas with the Vic Jaks crew, we went to a massive private back yard pool called the Goat Bowl. The session was super heavy and dudes were pulling off serious shit. Mark Reader was a SF Jak who was charging the bowl super hard that day. He kept doing slides over the hip before going up the 14 foot wall up to the coping... it was scaring all of us, but he kept pulling it back in and seemed to have control... until he got clipped on one and hit the side wall hard. He was cool at first, but started turning green. We had to call an ambulance and he suffered a busted rib and ended up in the hospital. I saw him here in Vic the next year and he was doing the same fuckin' move at Vic West in the corner bowl. I never forget shit like that. I was looking forward to seeing him in Edmonton this year but our plans were cut short when I was informed of his passing the other day. I hope he finds a pool to ride wherever he is and he is careful... actually fuck that... Rest in Peace Mark Reader. Jaks Team 4 Life
 -Dustin Jak



Masuimi Max

March 12, 1978 - January 15, 2024

By Evilyn13

Masuimi Max was an icon and trailblazer in the pinup, fetish and punk-rock communities. You may know her from Playboy, Bizarre or Maxim Magazine covers, or you may know her from Punk Rock Bowling, Fear Factor or her makeup brand I am Sin, or maybe you just admired her as a fetish entertainer and model. As we mourn the loss of her untimely passing, I'm here to tell you about the impact Masuimi had on us and our city.

The first time we brought Masuimi to Vancouver

for our Sin City Fetish Night anniversary party was at the Red Room in 2012. We wanted to bring an international superstar in to celebrate our milestone event and our first pick was her. Masuimi had this magnetic energy and firecracker personality that attracted everyone to her, she

posed for pictures and hung out with attendees and rocked out on the dance floor, essentially setting the standard for us for every future performer we ever brought to Vancouver.

Masuimi performed her unicorn burlesque, which included her infamous "assles" (which were pasties on her buttcheeks) that she shook for a roaring crowd. She requested we provide a couple cartons of milk for this performance, and without thinking, we refrigerated them. It must have been a shock to her body when that ice cold milk splashed onto her body in the middle of her performance, but she didn't show any sign of discomfort. She had the crowd begging for more as she sauntered offstage.

We loved her so much we brought her back for Sin City Halloween in 2014 at Imperial Nightclub.

During this performance, she poured gold paint on herself, as well as six bottles of gold glitter, which accidentally spilled onto the stage further than anticipated.

This turned into an even bigger mess when we had our Halloween costume contest with multiple attendees marching on and off the stage tracking gold glitter and paint throughout the whole venue. It is possible there were words exchanged between Masuimi and the bar manager for the mess that was created.

This Halloween party ended up costing us thousands in damages and the whole room had to be sanded and re-painted to get rid of all of the glitter and paint because we always take care of our host venues. There's just not enough venues in this city to burn bridges like that! This is just



another legendary punk-rock story of Masuimi Max leaving her mark (literally) on a killer performance that people still talk about to this day. She was worth every penny and every grain of that glitter.

We brought

Masuimi back for Vancouver Fetish Weekend in 2016 and back to the Imperial with that same bar manager. Masuimi promised no messes this time, but while she was backstage getting ready, she was filling up a container with water and glitter, and when we inquired about that, her words were, "this one's only going to cost you \$500." You had to love the badass attitude and chaos she brought to the stage to ensure her artistic integrity wasn't compromised for any house rules.

I had an opportunity to do a photoshoot with Masuimi while she was here in 2014 for our Halloween party. Looking

back on this shoot, I was way out of my league, but Masuimi was so funny and such a joy to work with. I had been inspired by her for so many years, so this was a bucket list moment for me and I learned a lot from just watching her work the camera, bending into positions that looked so flawlessly natural for her, but for me were so awkward and uncomfortable. This photoshoot ended up being on the cover of Delicious Dolls Magazine, and was the first time I had ever appeared on the cover of a magazine, so it really was an experience I will never forget.

Masuimi came back to perform for us on New Years Eve 2019. By this point, everyone in the fetish community in Vancouver had become friends



with her, and she brought her A game for us on New Years Eve. Masuimi crashed in our spare bedroom for her stay in Vancouver, because she was more concerned with making friends and creating memories with people than living that glamorous five-star hotel life.

Masuimi was an entrepreneur and a visionary who launched her own makeup brand, was her own boss and toured the world doing what she loved. I feel like everyone I talk to has an amazing and hilarious story about her, or pictures with her because she was always gracious with her time and generous with people. She left a huge impact on Vancouver

and on people all over the world.

If you can, please donate to the GoFundMe created on her behalf to cover any expenses necessary to give her the farewell she deserves.

[gofundme.com/f/masuimi-max-memorial-fund](https://www.gofundme.com/f/masuimi-max-memorial-fund)

Photos by Fubar Foto, Zemekiss Photography, Patrick Parenteau, Kevin Free



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