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Vol. 20 - #3 - Issue 117 - April/May 2024  
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# VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY

## 10 Years in the Toilet with The Gnars

By John Carlow

**Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.**

**The Gnars Gnars:** The Gnars are Lumpy (drums), Gino (guitar and backups), Hoon (bass), and Brains (CHEWBACCA SOOOOUND). We had another drummer before Lumpy, but he went off the deep end on a crazed coke binge, so we fired him.

**AU: How did the band originally come together?**

**Gnars:** The three of us (Gino, Brains, and Hoon) were in Lesbian Fist Magnet, and when that shit fell apart, we decided to take a far Gnarrer approach. Then, one day, we found Lumpy in the gutter and made him our drummer.

**AU: Do you think you have covered most bodily parts and their functions in your library of songs?**

**Gnars:** As far as body parts, we tend to focus on the more aromatic variety. You know, the important parts. Ones which make babies or dispense human waste. But there are still so many parts to explore.

**AU: Have you visited Avatar Grove to see the**

**worlds Gnariest Tree?**

**Gnars:** It was just a normal tree until we got there.

**AU: How did the traditional inclusion of "Lola" in your set come about?**

**Gnars:** Lola; Oh, sweet Lola. She taught us acceptance and true love. It's also a fun song to play.

**AU: Gnars have done many fundraisers over the years and stood behind some great causes. Want to talk about a few of those?**

**Gnars:** Since the Gnars are stinking rich and have all we ever need, we thought why not play for free and raise \$25 for a good cause an' junk. There's also something awesome about playing dick 'n' fart songs for a good cause.

**AU: If you were asked to play a festival called "Disgust Fest", would you go?**

**Gnars:** Disgust Fest? It would just be Normal Fest until we got there.

**AU: I've seen a ton of**

**in the dictionary what would the definition be?**

**Gnars:** It's the term for when a bunch of Gnars are Gnars.

**AU: Funniest and/or most unusual thing to ever happen at a gig?**

**Gnars:** One time our bass player Hoon shit the bed on stage and started playing the wrong song, so Gino wandered across the stage and kicked him in the balls from behind. It hit the reset button and got him playing the correct song. Other than that, our recitals are quite tame.

**AU: What's ahead for the band?**

**Gnars:** Ahead for the band... Thinking about buying Epstein Island and turning it into a rehab facility for cocaine bears and Pablo Escobar's hippos. All animals really, including drummers. Musically speaking, we are working on another full-length album with songs about every stupid thing that pops into our heads... just like the last two albums. Stay tuned.

**AU: If the band had a mascot, what would it be? No need to answer if you're just going to say "giant penis."**

**Gnars:** Tiny penis?

**AU: Anything you want to add?**

**Gnars:** Lastly, we thank you for reaching around to us. Perhaps we hop in the Philly sidecar and meet up for a chilli dog, banana split, and a warm glass of lemonade some time?

Find The Gnars Gnars on Bandcamp and on Spotify and through all the other streaming services.

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

Photos by Finding Charlotte Photography



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## Knightwolves

### Vancouver Dark Psyche Rock

By AU Editorial

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

**Knightwolves:** You are speaking with Elliott Dolcetti, guitar and lead vocalist. Johnny Stewart, drums, and backing vocals. Cam Labele, bass guitar and backing vocals. The three of us are infamous for kicking ass and rocking the fuck out!

**AU: What's your origin story? How did Knightwolves get together?**

**KW:** The band Knightwolves was formed during the pandemic in 2022 during



a blood ritual under a full moon.

**AU: Can you describe your sound for anyone who hasn't heard you before?**

**KW:** The sound of Knightwolves is an amalgamation of '70s hard rock with elements of dark psych rock and heavy metal.

**AU: Who or what influences you the most?**

**KW:** As individuals and abandon, we collectively are influenced by artists such as Pentagram, Riot, Candlemass, and UFO.

**AU: You just released a new EP. What can we expect to hear?**

**KW:** The May 1, 2024 EP release from Knightwolves titled *Bloodwitch* has three songs which represent the amalgamation of styles we collectively bring to the table.

The influences that we listed above are evident

with the variations in these three songs.

**AU: Does it explore any particular themes or topics?**

**KW:** We enjoy mixing a little horror into our music to help the imagination connect. Happiness is airy and darkness has weight, hinting at the atmospheric depth found within the songs. Crafting our music involves a collaborative effort that begins with creating captivating riffs and shaping them into full-fledged compositions. We truly enjoy creating a riff and figuring out what personality it has, then shaping and adding from there. Our lead vocalist, Elliott, has a keen ear for melodies, guiding the lyrical direction to complement the haunting tones of our music.

**AU: It's the 420 issue here at Absolute Underground, do any of you riff on the spliff?**

**KW:** Riffing on the spliff occasionally happens, but it's not our drug of choice. We celebrate anyone's choices as long as it's done in a safe and respectful matter.

**AU: What do you like to do while high?**

**KW:** If we partake, our favourite thing to do is to stare at the ground, eat potato chips, and feel nervous.

**AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?**

**KW:** Our next big show is April 26 at the Cobalt. Performing with Deathchant, Danava, Killer Deal. We also have a few mini-

## VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

### KNIGHTWOLVES



tours taking place in May on Vancouver Island. We will be performing in Nanaimo on May 3 at The Terminal, May 4 in Ucluelet at the ANAF, and numerous other gigs throughout the summer.

**AU: Anything else for fans to look forward to?**

**KW:** We have been fortunate to build a strong Vancouver and Vancouver Island following. Our fans can look forward to the band playing like it's our last gig on earth each and every time.

**AU: You're releasing a new EP. What can we expect to hear?**

**KW:** We are eager to share our music with the world and hope that listeners will find enjoyment in the dark melodies. With our debut EP on the horizon, Knightwolves are poised

to captivate audiences with our enigmatic sound and immersive storytelling. Stay tuned for a musical journey into the depths of darkness with Knightwolves.

Collectively, our parents share our cunning successes and our deepest secrets. They are on board with the entire process. Knightwolves is committed to maximum riffage, 100% good times. All killer with no filler!

[knightwolves1.bandcamp.com](https://knightwolves1.bandcamp.com)  
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SUNDAY 5/26 - KAMLOOPS - BLUE GROTTO



## Supermodel Taxidermy

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground:** For those unfamiliar with Supermodel Taxidermy, who are you and what do you do?

**Supermodel Taxidermy:** We are a punk/metal (crossover thrash) band. Our M.O. is intensity, punching twelve solid rounds every night. I'm not saying we're holding any belts or anything, but we are definitely in the ring, swinging with the best of them. Supermodel Taxidermy is for fans of Suicidal Tendencies, D.R.I., and Slayer to name a few.

**AU:** I think you have an awesome band name, what's the origin story of it?

**ST:** Haha, thanks! The name was an idea that my buddy brought up one night. I loved it right away because to me, it signified stomping a heel right through the idea of idolizing all the wrong things in society. Like fashion industries trying to sell beauty through



malnourished runway models— that's so lame! Be who you are and be fucking proud of it. That's what this band promotes!

**AU:** If one rockstar should be taxidermed, who would it be?

**ST:** Well, I'm going to take this question two ways; the first being who would we recruit in the band? Rocky George, 100%!

The second way I'm reading this is who would we literally taxidermy? No one, just because messing with the dead is uncool.

**AU:** The band is based in Fort McMurray; how's the music scene up there these days?

**ST:** Our music scene rips, we have a few key players in our scene always grinding at booking shows (myself included). Last year, we had a big outdoor punk festival as well as a metal one. Fort McMurray is definitely alive.

**AU:** You have your debut album *At What Cost* out at the end of May on Punishment 18 Records, what can fans expect from this record?

**ST:** We call and receive quite a bit on this record with the vocals, so be ready for a lot of dynamics between myself (Shawn) and our bassist, Mike. Beastie Boys of thrash metal, if you will, haha. This album has some slow, chunky riffs but most of it is fast and intense, capping out at 198bpm. We have also hit a lot of touchy subjects such as Canada's opiate issues and the needle clinics revolving around them. One tune is called "Clinics" and focuses specifically on harm reduction. Look for the single out May 9th on every platform.

**AU:** Any plans this summer for touring and festivals?

**ST:** We are playing one festival on June 7th in Fort McMurray, Rock the Rails, and another show on May 3rd in Edmonton. After that, we start our CD release run through Alberta. We plan on finishing up the last show with Ripcordz on August 4th in Lethbridge. We're just finalizing the other details as we speak, so hit up our socials for more dates to follow.

**AU:** Where can fans pick up your album?

**ST:** Bandcamp has preorders already available. To all our overseas fans, you should check out the Punishment 18 website to save on shipping charges.

## FORT MAC ATTACK

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

**ST:** Look out for each other and check in on your friends. This world is hard enough, we shouldn't have to go through it alone. See you at the shows!

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

[punishment18records.com](http://punishment18records.com)

Photo by Todd Dupont

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# CALGARY CARNAGE



## Lynx

Calgary Hard Rock/Hair Metal

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground: Welcome back, for those unfamiliar with Lynx, who are you and what do you do?**

**Lynx:** Thanks for having us again! For those who're unfamiliar with us, we're Lynx, a hard rock/hair metal band from Calgary, Canada. We have JA6UR here on vocals, Blade on guitars, Fangs on bass, and Flash on drums. We started our journey back in 2020 during the pandemic when there was nothing much to do, so we got in together, started jamming, wrote a few songs, recorded them and made a couple of EPs. Our second EP *Long Live Rock N'Roll* got nominated for the Best Rock Recording of the Year 2022 by YYC Music Awards.



**AU: Lynx has its first full-length dropping in May, what can you tell us about this album?**

**Lynx:** We're super excited for this one, not only because it's our first full-length, but also because it's very different from our previous releases. All of us have put a lot of thought into this album, as every artist does. With our new frontman and his extraordinary talent, it has opened a whole new list of possibilities and the energy that Lynx has just went to the next level. From Japan to Spain, USA, and Germany, our previous EPs have made it to different parts of the world, we hope this album does go worldwide!

We're trying to give our fans the whole experience with this album. If you want to tour downtown with your girl or boy and crank up the tunes, we got that. If you want to sit back and chill, listen to some good-time rock, we got that too. You're having a party? Hell yeah! We should be the first album played because that's what Lynx is. We bring the energy, and the noise and want everyone to enjoy it with us!

**AU: Lynx brings back the familiar and classic sound of 80s hair and glam metal, what drew the band to going back in time and paying homage to that era?**

**Lynx:** Well, that credit goes to Blade. That guy came up with this crazy idea of forming a band and bringing back that good old sound in today's time. As a band, we all have different influences but we got connected by a shared love of 80s rock. The 80s is still considered the golden period in the entertainment industry. Great vibes, great movies, great music. It's almost been 40 years but you can't really overlook that.

**AU: Really enjoyed the single "Claws Out", it has quite a retro tape sound, was the album recorded in analog or digitally?**

**Lynx:** Thank you, glad you enjoyed the title track. It's different from the rest of the songs in the album too. It was recorded digitally, but Blade, who also produced and engineered this record, made sure that the final mix sounds like you're listening to a band from old times blasting the speakers in your 1987 Chevy Beretta cruising down the highway! After all, we're inspired by the sound of that generation.

**AU: Any touring plans this coming summer?**

**Lynx:** We're playing some festivals this summer within Western Canada and planning for a *Claws Out* tour starting at the end of this year.

**AU: Where can we find**

**Lynx online and get your music?**

**Lynx:** You can listen to us on most music streaming platforms like Spotify, YouTube, Apple Music, Deezer etc. *Claws Out* is releasing on vinyl, CD and cassette, so you can get those from our website.

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

**Lynx:** *Claws Out* is releasing on May 9, 2024. Make sure you spin our album and enjoy our music as much as we had making it. Rock on! ...Now go listen to Lynx!

**lynxrocks.com**

**IG: @lynxrocksofficial**

**FB: getlynxed**

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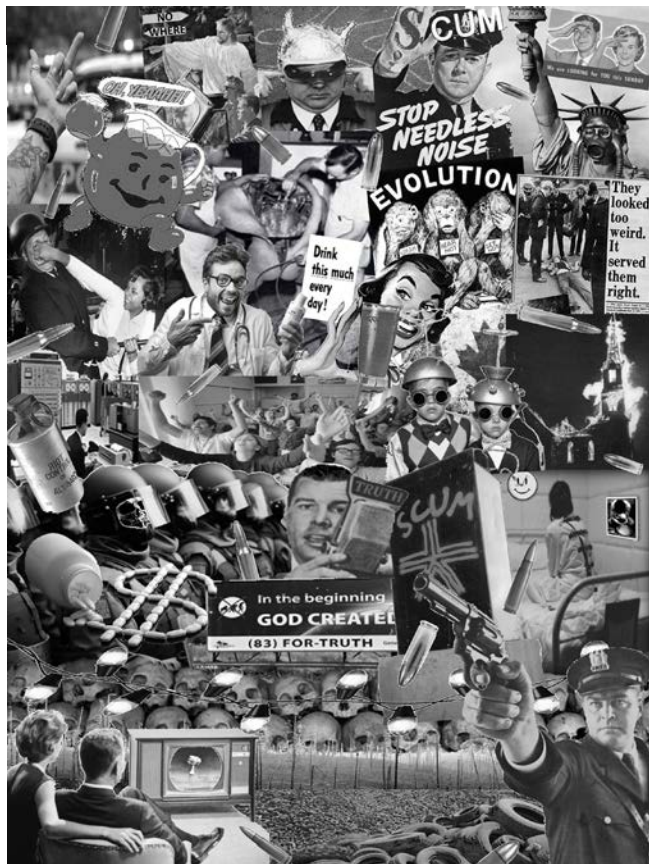
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high school. We lived on the South Shore of Montreal, and were always getting harassed by cops, either because we skated or because of the way we looked. So, we decided to hijack their logo and initials and put a large rubber stamped "S" in front of the C.U.M. (Montreal Urban Community in French), thus creating a more appropriate name for them. The original band was composed of myself and Michel Cyr, who later played guitar for The Unruled, and some friends of ours. The following year Jean Gravel/Lortie joined us on drums, and we began organizing parties at our practice space. These get-togethers helped pay the rent and were great because there were no steady venues for punks back then. Our style was heavily influenced by the booming Californian hardcore scene. We really liked the political lyrics of the Dead Kennedys and the raw power of Black Flag, and

**you tell us about that?**

**GP:** During the Covid lockdown, I received a message from Jean who was bored and half-jokingly asked if I had some new riffs for him. That planted a seed and I started composing new songs with the idea of making a second Sc.u.m. album. Six months later, we had 15 new songs and were ready to go into the studio. We managed to record the instruments and backing vocals, but there were always scheduling conflicts with Anthony. So, after two years with no real resolution, we decided to approach Dan Izzo of The Motherfuckers. He was our first choice because we really liked the way he sang "Exit Death" on *Punk Canada Vol. 1*. We sent him the songs and he learned and recorded everything in a couple of weeks. He did a great job, and we were really happy. We decided to describe the album as a joint side project by members of Sc.u.m. and Motherfuckers.

**AU: How has the band's sound evolved since?**

**GP:** As I've told a lot of people, I feel as if I was just thawed out of a cryogenic pod. Musically speaking, I'm in 1985. My style of playing hasn't changed a whole lot. Our new songs flow perfectly from the last songs written on *Born Too Soon*. I'm talking about songs like "Home Away from Home", "Pyramid Mall Blues", and "Beercan Nightmare",

# MONTREAL MASSACRE

perpetuated on Indigenous populations on this continent, global warming and pollution, social mass hysteria, conspiracy nuts... Finding subject



matter wasn't complicated, believe me. Do I still hate cops now that I am a respectable member of academia with a PhD? Fuck, yes! Cops haven't changed—so why should I? I just can't flip them the finger anymore, cause my knees are shot and can't outrun them. Speaking of which, we wrote a song called "The Beat", which talks about how people are being killed all the time by excessive force or trigger-happy cops. And because I'm an archaeologist, I had to include a song called "Monkey See, Monkey Do", which is about how I loathe creationists

and bible freaks. I really can't stand these ignorant troglodytes.

**AU: Any tracks you are stoked on?**

**GP:** I really like "Hatewashed", "Winds of War", and "Where are Your Gods?". It's funny, because you never know how or when a song will come to you. It took several days spread over weeks to get "Hatewashed" done, while it only took minutes to invent the riff and build "Winds of War".

**AU: Most under-appreciated Canadian band in your opinion?**

**GP:** Speaking for myself, I would have to say The Subhumans. Love those guys.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**GP:** Our album is currently on Bandcamp and Spotify, but we want to put it on vinyl soon. We hope to find a label by the time this interview comes out, but there's no guarantee, so if anyone reads this and is interested in our band, please email me.

In the meantime, if you want a hard copy, we joined with PILS Records who made limited cassettes of the album. They come with a free patch, and you can order from their Bandcamp. If you're interested in our *Born Too Soon* album, it's also available on Bandcamp. It was re-issued last year on Porterhouse Records. You can also find The

Motherfuckers on Bandcamp.

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

**GP:** Well, I hope they go and listen to our songs, watch our videos, and especially send feedback and talk to us. I will also give free Bandcamp download codes for the entire album to the

## ENOUGH

Sc.u.m. x Dan Izzo

By Aeryn Shrapnel

**AU: Who are we talking to?**

**Georges Pearson:** You are talking to Georges Pearson, guitarist of Sc.u.m. and ENOUGH. I have an alter ego named Yorgo, and I'm known for having excavated the oldest stratified archaeological site in Central America.

**AU: Give us a brief history of your band.**

**GP:** Sc.u.m. was formed in 1980 when we were in

# ENOUGH

that's what we were aiming for. We eventually released our first album *Born Too Soon* in 1985 with Anthony Mark on vocals. After several lineup changes, we finally stopped playing around 1988.

**AU: You were trying to record this album as Sc.u.m. but had to get a different singer. Can**

specifically. All multi-tempo progressive songs. This describes about half of the 15 songs on our new album.

**AU: Tell us about your new album.**

**GP:** I can safely say no two songs sound the same. In fact, people will be hard pressed to classify our music. We always had our own style and that hasn't changed. Some songs will make you want to somersault off a stage, while others will make you feel as if you're trapped in a mosh pit filled with molasses. I feel we've managed to fuse the best of both the hardcore and stoner genres. High-energy songs peppered with slow motion power. Although we think it's an awesome combination, it has caused us a bit of grief. Since we are hard to categorize, it's been difficult to find a label that will have us. We don't fit in with your typical monolithic genres usually associated with record labels. So, we need to keep pushing until we reach the right set of ears.

**AU: Does it explore any particular topics?**

**GP:** A lot of songs in *Born Too Soon* were sung from a first-person perspective. A lot of teenage angst. This new album has a wider, more mature "we" look at things. An introspective portrait of us as a noxious species on this planet. Don't let the title of the album *Before My Eyes* confuse you. I just thought it was a cool and ambiguous title. It could mean someone seeing their life flashing before their eyes, being witness to a specific event, or perhaps a sense of dread in the face of so many bad things around the world. Maybe all of the above and more?

**AU: What inspired some of the songs?**

**GP:** A whole lotta things. We touch on so many topics. Remember, we spent the last 35 years making a list of complaints. Mass shootings, influencers and their zombie followers, artificial intelligence, the war in Ukraine, the injustices



first 10 people who email us and explain what "Alt-9402" represents. It's kind of an Easter egg and is hidden on every page of our lyrics book—downloadable from our Facebook page. Whoever figures it out, email us. Winners will be posted on Facebook.

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[scum-mtlhc.bandcamp.com](https://scum-mtlhc.bandcamp.com)

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GLASSCULT - SET AND STONED - SOUTHWEST ELECTRIC - LONG GONE LONESOMES



## Blood Opera

By Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Max Murder:** You are speaking with me, Max Murder, the frontman of the cannibal onslaught known to the world as Blood Opera. We have come to kill, eat, fuck, and destroy the entire human race. You could say that I am best known for my giant cock that spews a mix of blood and/or jizz anytime I'm around the living—or, I guess my "singing" capabilities would be the more acceptable answer.

**AU: How did Blood Opera come to be?**

**MM:** We weren't always the decaying, blood thirsty, sex crazed zombies that you see. We were once like you: living, breathing, in search of love and happiness, or whatever— and the regular amount of sex was just fine. But while recording our first album, we all got sick with some kind of fuckin' plague. Turns out our guitar player had been bitten by something other than a groupie the night before, and had infected the whole band! We never made it out of that recording session alive— but, thanks to

some dumb ass kids that dug up our graves, WE'RE BACK... AND FUCKIN' HUNGRY!

**AU: Who or what are your biggest influences?**

**MM:** Uh, Hugh Hefner, Ron Jeremy— oh, you mean musical influences. Well, I'd have to say a lot of the eighties long hair bands like Dokken, Mötley Crüe, oh— Alice Cooper is a big one, for sure! There's some younger guys in the band who would say my tastes are rather dated, but fuck, I'm not cool or hip in any way, so I have no current musical knowledge. We obviously love bands like GWAR and Lordi, even early Ghost when they had the

B.C. in their name. We like anyone that keeps monster metal alive deserves a nod, ya know!?

**AU: You've rubbed shoulders with some major household names in both horror and metal including GWAR, Ari Lehman (the original Jason Voorhees), and George A. Romero himself. How does it feel to be recognized among legends?**

**MM:** The thought that anyone even likes our music or puts up with our re-animated existence is utterly mind blowing to me. But if anyone will, I guess it would be monsters from another planet or axe-wielding psychopath killers— and we are very lucky to have scared the stage with acts like GWAR, Ari, and even Macabre! George, we met through Rue Morgue and became immediately close with, as he knew us before we were even a band. He thought the idea of Blood Opera was pretty cool and had originally wanted to be involved. He unfortunately passed away before our first live show, but we dedicate every set to him. After all, he was the zombie Godfather and will always be a member of our sick and twisted

little family.

**AU: You just put out your first album, can you tell us about that?**

**MM:** *Songs in the Key of Death* is an aCUMulation CUMpilation, as I like to call it. We finally got our act together to bring you all of our never before recorded tracks, things written before Covid, and a couple of new songs from the last year. All in all, it's a good introduction to both what we are and what we're going to be. It's also the first of five keys, each of which contains a secret to mankind's only survival, so I recommend giving it a listen to ensure your futile existence. Sorry, that came off rude. Just fuckin' buy it!! Shit, so did that... sorry.

**AU: Any songs you're particularly stoked on?**

**MM:** "The Gates of Hell"! The first single off the album that we released Halloween of last year. That's my favourite. It's a newer sound, heavy AF, catchy hook, and I wrote the whole thing! The guys make fun of me saying that it's the only song I've written, which is NOT true. Either way, it won't be the last! It also features Maurizio Guarini from

Italian soundtrack legends, Goblin! We've been fans of theirs for years so to have him feature on a track based on a Lucio Fulci film seemed so perfect, and to me the song is pretty damn near!

**AU: What is your most memorable concert or tour story?**

**MM:** We've played some seriously crazy gigs and met some delightfully delicious humans along the way. We've had celebrities in the front row like Miko Hughes singing along to our cover of "Pet Semetary" and Mark Philbin rocks out to tracks from *The Return of The Living Dead*. I've got

to share the stage with Morgan Lander from Kittie, Beefcake from the original GWAR lineup, and the gorgeous Geretta Geretta from Demons. I even got to kiss both Jewel Shephard and Michelle Bauer on the lips! But I would honestly say that opening for GWAR on their last tour was a huge accomplishment. We got to eat with them, share their roadies' birthday cake, and even take some photos backstage. And for the last fuckin' time, it wasn't me that gave Blothar a blow job, OK!? He's got like four fuckin' penises— I'm not a magician.

**AU: Most under-appreciated Canadian band in your opinion?**

**MM:** I really like The Animal Warfare Act, they're like infected laboratory animals that sing about murdering everything, and also play into the horror genre. They've got a new track called "My Hellbound Heart" obviously dedicated to the novella that Clive Barker based *Hellraiser* on. We still have yet to play a gig with their ugly corpse— hopefully one day!



**AU: It's the 420 issue here at AU, do any of you get down with the devil's lettuce?**

**MM:** Oh, you mean the green goddess, honey ham, head, crops, Mary J Blige, astro turf, chronic, tumbleweed, purps, silly grass, five leaf clover, bernie, parsley, skunk, cripple, cheeba, broccoli... SURE! We used to go to the pot marches before they were cool, I even used to

sell it in the 90s, I think. Times have changed, the shit you buy now is so intense, I can't tell my car keys from my asshole— but ya we dabble in dank, we hang with Aunt Mary, we're hip in Arizona. However, we do not accept payment for gigs in pot anymore. Every time we do that RIP spends the whole band fund on Wendy's and shits blood for a week.

**AU: Indica or sativa? Munchies of choice?**

**MM:** When we were alive, weed was just weed ya know?! Now it's classified like pills, uppers and downers or whatever. Personally, since curbing my cocaine addiction, I find it hard to find that rush, so a high-dose sativa really gets me going, cleaning, working, running around. Then I need an indica to chill out and fall asleep— the government basically has me by my old, dead balls. I'm still happy it's legal though, there's even mushroom stores on my block now. Oh, and I eat before I get stoned, otherwise I'm shoveling peanut butter in my mouth-hole all night.

**AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?**

**MM:** We just played our album release party, opening for the kings of disco metal, Tragedy, as well as the originators of murder metal, the infamous Macabre. Coming up we're playing with Ari and First Jason again in Steeltown at The Hexploitation Film Festival, then taking a trip north to the Sue, Sudbury, and some other cold places. Later this year, we plan on killing and eating Quebecers and maybe even some Americans, and then returning to Frightmare in The Falls in Niagara.

**AU: Anything else for fans to look forward to?**

**MM:** Always! Let's see— a music video, pressing vinyl, convention appearances, we might even be in a movie! Imagine that... zombies... in a movie!

**AU: How can we find you online?**

**MM:** You can find us on all the big time-wasters: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok. And until the zombie apocalypse takes over all the big radio stations, you can listen to us on Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, Deezer, and Bandcamp— that's where you can find our merch too!

[bloodopera.ca](http://bloodopera.ca)



Photo by Jay Broderick



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## Ivy Gardens

### Niagara's Ultimate DIY Band

By Asher Thrasher

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

**Ivy Gardens:** We are Ivy Gardens, a stoner rock/metal band from Niagara, Ontario, Canada. As young musicians, we played together for years, and officially formed Ivy Gardens in 2020 with a new focus and mission statement. Huge volume, high energy, and the heaviest possible riffs we could hammer people's heads with. Over the past few years, we've been writing, recording, and producing many singles, some creative covers, and an EP, while also touring across Ontario and the east coast of Canada. We're an independent band with a specific vision for our music, and almost everything we do is driven by a DIY ethos that puts a lot on our shoulders, but allows us to create and present our art exactly how we want it.

**AU: Ivy Gardens has new album *Goon* dropping in April, what can you tell us about this record?**

**IG:** It's a culmination of two years of creative development, getting heavier, more vulgar, and sonically belligerent. We are always trying to improve as a band and take things in different directions, and this album is certainly a change-up from previous releases for us. The songs were also tested live before recording, so there is a very lively, energetic feel to the listening experience that we are really happy with.

**AU: Your album artwork is based on a mascot that has passed away, who was your band mascot?**

**IG:** A centipede that was tragically crushed in a door frame. Poor guy. He had no way of understanding the vast, incomprehensible horrors of a door frame and it was his ultimate demise.

**AU: You've said "Ivy Gardens operates under a golden rule: the 'dollar to decibel ratio.' We almost exclusively use old junk amplifiers and speaker cabs. Old Peavey garbage fished from some old fart's garage jam space, is not only the secret sauce in our sound, but also the only possible way for us to accomplish the task of CRUSHING volume under a budget of \$0." How do you find old gear vs new to create your sound? What's your favourite throw-away gear you have picked up to use?**

**IG:** We keep our eyes out for any online listings, pawn shops, and thrift stores. When it becomes a daily habit for the three of us, we find a lot of opportunities to increase our volume. We also target old Peavey or Traynor gear because it's cheap and has a very dark sound to it. These aren't highly sought after (currently) because it doesn't work great for most people. They're big, unwieldy, and obsolete for the most part. But it's perfect for our sound. For example, Peavey used to make a particularly oversized 4x12 guitar cab back in the seventies. It's a lot taller than most 4x12s and pretty unwieldy. But those suckers are dirt cheap if you find them, and the bigger the better. So that bad boy has been a staple of our live guitar sound ever since Andrew could track one down. It's heavy as sin, covered in dust and stains, and sounds like pure evil. Perfect. If your uncle's got any Peavey garbage in his garage let us know.

**AU: The band is from the Niagara Falls region in Ontario, but you're stated as the "loudest band in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia", what's the story behind that?**

**IG:** New Glasgow. It's a small town on the east coast, and on our previous tour, we stopped to play a show there. We didn't realize in booking

# NIAGARA FALLS TO THE WALL

that the majority of acts there are solo or smaller blues bands, and as we loaded in earlier in the day, the sound guy seemed shell-shocked with all of our gear (a mountain of Peavey garbage). We set up and did our soundcheck as people left due to the volume, and were told later that he made comments to the other people there that we might be the loudest band to have played there. Once we hit the stage, we made sure of it.

The cool part was there were a bunch of people there who really enjoyed it and were happily surprised to see a heavier band come through town for once. You don't often get to see stoner-punk-sludge metal live in New Glasgow and you could tell it was a cool experience for everyone there. Other than getting rained on through our pack, it was a great night.

**AU: Ivy Gardens is entirely DIY. You've built our own jam space, and recording studio, and studied audio engineering to record and mix your own material. You are entirely self-sufficient. What have you found are the pros and cons of taking this route?**

**IG:** Pros: it's a huge money saver for us. It also allows us to keep everything between the three of us in every part of the process, which makes things much easier to work on, and gives us our own pacing. Cons: it does add a lot to the workload for each of us. We can't just write sick riffs and play loud. We have to work on honing our sound on recordings, planning music video shoots or any larger-scale content we make, booking shows/tours, etc. But it's all part of the fun. Ultimately, it puts you in control of every aspect of your band. You can really craft a cohesive image and sound for yourself. But it's a TON of work.

**AU: Ivy Gardens is hitting the road for Eastern Canada tour dates in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and even PEI; how much DIY planning does it take to make this**

**happen for so many places? Any plans to go to Western Canada too?**

**IG:** It's a lot. The process starts several months in advance with securing venue availability, and then filling up bills with multiple bands that are a good fit. Sometimes, you'll know a band or two that you really gel with, and their advice on venues/promoters/local acts can be really critical in putting a good show together in an unfamiliar



scene. A lot of research and prep work goes into the whole process. We would love to go out west! It's a huge step for any Canadian band. That's something we have been talking about a lot lately...

**AU: Where can people follow and pick up tunes from Ivy Gardens?**

**IG:** Any streaming services, Bandcamp, we are also doing a small run of cassettes and CDs as well. Whatever format you listen to music on we will likely be found there.

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

**IG:** HEAVY LOUD AND SWEATY. THAT IS THE IVY EXPERIENCE.

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

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# HEALTH

L.A. Noise Rock/Industrial

By Renee Hutchinson

Two years after packing bodies like sardines into the Biltmore Cabaret in Vancouver, the Los Angeles trio HEALTH is returning. The self-described “cum-metal” band is taking over the Commodore Ballroom; this time on March 29th, 2024, and fans are anticipating an incredible show. Known for their powerful live performances, the combination of Jake Duzsik’s warm vocals, John Famiglietti’s hair-whipping guitar and keys, and drummer BJ Miller’s hurricane force percussion is a guaranteed good time. If you like doing all the things that your pastor warned you about in high school, go see a HEALTH show.

In anticipation of the upcoming show, John was gracious enough to take some time out of a crushing tour schedule to answer a few questions...

**Absolute Underground:** You’ve said that the process of building your songs starts with you making the bass on your computer, with you

then collaborating with Jake on vocals and lyrics to compliment the tone. When you’re in the initial stages of writing, do you have an idea in mind of what you’d like to inspire BJ to do with the track, or is it more that you and Jake create the building blocks and then unleash BJ on to it?

**John:** Well, I’d like to clarify, we do not have a set way we write songs. Songs sometimes start with a certain member before they come to everyone else or are done together collaboratively. We have no formula. Some songs Jake writes almost entirely on his own, then I re-do all the production and then we collaborate on it finishing. Some songs have started from a practice space recording of Beej just playing drums, or some soundwaves found. It just goes through a lot of discussion and collaborating to finish, no matter the origin, or who writes what.

**AU:** Your live shows are a force of nature. Do you take into account how it will feel to perform the songs you’re writing when you’re making an album, or do you put the album out and then figure out how you’re going to perform it?

**John:** Definitely. Now, we won’t let it stop us from writing something we feel is good. Songs that are the best live can often have little to do to with being a nice piece of music (it’s why some unknown punk band in a dive bar can slay harder than a massive artist in a huge venue). Especially for forthcoming material, we’d love to write more and more stuff that could kill live in the settings we’re playing in now.

**AU:** You are notorious for making yourself accessible to fans at shows. Is the connection to the people who love your music a facet of what inspires you to create?

**John:** Well, I see myself in our fans, and we make the music for them. So... I’d have to say yes.

**AU:** How do you all keep your mental batteries charged on the road when you’re doing so

many back-to-back dates?

**John:** Most importantly, if you can get some sleep, get a hotel on the day off. We have a bit of a travel emergency right now, and are getting a tour bus on short notice as we speak.

**AU:** You have used your platform to encourage people to participate in harm reduction, whether it’s safer sex or access to free naloxone kits. Have you been affected by loss as the opioid crisis continues? What is the most important thing people just learning about harm reduction should know?

**John:** Absolutely. I know many people personally who have died from accidental fentanyl overdoses. Go to [endoverdose.net](http://endoverdose.net) and take the course, they’ll send you stuff for free. You just pay shipping.

HEALTH can be found through most streaming outlets and tickets for the upcoming show are available on [Ticketmaster](http://Ticketmaster).

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

Photos by Mynxii White



**A** DEMIGODS  
FUTURE OF HELL  
HATEFUL  
(OF ALL ELSE)  
CRACK METAL  
UNLOVED

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## The Noname

### A Belief in Chaos Since 2001

#### Interview with Vocalist Ray Yao

By Ryan Dyer

*The people outside the city want to break in and the people inside the city want to escape.* You may be aware of the punk rock scene in China, but perhaps didn't realize how long some of the bands have been around. Xi'an's The Noname has been at it since 2001. Fronted by vocalist Ray Yao, the band has been a hardcore-laced punk rock vessel against false hope of the world. Their latest album, *Fortress Besieged* is named after the Chinese satirical classic by Qian Zhongshu and features a multitude of guest stars. The album, along with The Noname's upcoming European tour and Nonamefest will ensure that 2024 will be one of the biggest in the band's career. Ray Yao gives us the scoop on the album, tours and punk rock memories in China.

**Absolute Underground: You have been around since way back in 2001. Tell me about the punk scene in China when you first started.**

**Ray Yao:** Actually, I had my first band back in 1999, which was called Evil Heart. It was a bit grunge and a bit punk. In those years, because the internet was not as convenient as it is now, the cities with the best punk scenes in China were still in Beijing and Wuhan, but we also started to

organize a group in Xi'an, with four-six punk bands. In 2013, many new bands appeared in various styles, and the scene became better and better.

**AU: You have seen bands and venues come and go in China. Are there any you wish were still around?**

**RY:** Everyone has their own ideas and value of existence. I don't want to comment on anyone else. But one thing I want to say is, please don't judge me with your own thoughts. Many of the bands and friends I used to play with are no longer together; some of the bands and people who



were against me in the past no longer say they will rock forever too; so who wins? Who knows! But everyone has their own path in life, and they all have their own beliefs, even if it is not punk or rock'n'roll beliefs.

**AU: I only visited Xi'an once to see the Terracotta Army, though I know a few bands from the city, like you guys and Leviathan. Tell me about the scene in Xi'an. The bands, the venues, the fans.**

**RY:** I also know Leviathan. In fact, they are much younger than me, but they are the only metal band among the young bands in Xi'an that I think is very international. What foreigners know more about Xi'an is the Terracotta Army, the ancient city (from the Tang Dynasty), and local snacks. It is a tourist city. There are still many excellent rock singers and bands in Xi'an, but the development is probably not that good, so most of them will probably leave. Music fans are also more blindly obedient and will be guided by trends. But overall it's a pretty good city in China.

**AU: Sick and Tired... is one of your classic albums. In 2024, what are you sick and tired of?**

**RY:** Speaking of the album *Sick and Tired*... I have to thank the old German company Razor Blade Music/AMP STUDIO (although they no longer exist) for giving us the opportunity in the best of times in 2007. We released the album and toured Europe (2008). It would be great if I could visit again this time. I miss them all very much. Today in 2024, human beings have experienced too much, from wars to diseases, from the whole world to every country, from business to the rock scene... As you grow older, the things you are tired of are no longer just for yourself.

**AU: I feel like Chinese punk is getting more recognition these days, with Dummy Toys doing a Euro tour and you also going abroad with a Euro tour, hitting up events like the Rebellion Festival. Do you feel more fans from abroad are getting into The Noname?**

**RY:** Because there is more of an internet generation, there are more opportunities for bands that insist on themselves. At this time, it doesn't matter whether there are more fans or not. What we need is to support each other with more people who share the same faith—stick to it, UP THE PUNX!

**AU: In China, how do you feel about the punk scene now? Is the younger generation attending shows and starting bands as much as previously or less?**

**RY:** The punk scene in China has always been young. In terms of comparison, some people feel that the band has more and more opportunities, while others feel that they are getting less and less.

**AU: You have a new album coming out, Fortress Besieged. What are some of the song topics on this release?**

**RY:** The new album expresses our thoughts in the form of an overall storyline. This album was originally intended to publish the first twelve

strategies in the ancient Chinese classic *Thirty-Six Stratagems*, but it was ultimately decided to split them into different albums, EPs or singles in the future.

**AU: Who are some of the special guests on the album?**

**RY:** The special guests you've heard about so far are: The Choices (France), Big D & The Kids Table (USA) and Non Servium (Spain).

**AU: You just did a split and a few shows with Free Yoga Mats from Macau. What do you get up to in Macau, any casino fun?**

**RY:** FYM is a great band. We had a great time going to Macau. But personally I don't like casinos that much.

**AU: You have your own festival, Nonamefest. I see there are bands and camping. What is in store for this year's festival in Xi'an and Hong Kong?**

**RY:** For the last two years it was only done in Xi'an. This year, we will add a Hong Kong show, and maybe one in another city. There were excellent domestic bands (mainly local Xi'an bands) before, but this year, half of the bands will



be from overseas.

**AU: Any plans for The Noname to come to Canada?**

**RY:** We have just released a new 10" split—*Boston to Xi'an* with Cuidado (another punk band from David Big G) on Asbestos Records in Canada. Of course, we are planning a US + Canada tour in 2025. I think David and more good friends/bands will support us and join us. First of all, you should check out our new album. Thanks!

@nonamepunks

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## The Zapz

Winnipeg Melodic Punk

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Jay:** My name is Jay, vocalist and guitarist in the worldwide unknown phenomenon called The Zapz. Coming soon to speakers near you! I'm infamous for fucking up words, so maybe I'm outfamous?

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

**Jay:** The Zapz came out of members of other bands we were in. Rook (drummer) and I have been in a few other projects over the years. We enjoy writing music together, and have been friends for 10+ years. We started this band with a good friend of ours (Tye), pretty much just jamming in the rehearsal space over the pandemic. He moved on, and Ryan in. Largely, this band is about respect and positivity, taking care of one another. No bullshit. Stronger together than apart. Of course, lots of laughs and having a good time. Oh, and the music!

**AU: Who are your strongest musical influences?**

**Jay:** Not so much "who" but "what" I would say.



It's always been punk/hardcore/metal. Give me that, and I'm good. For myself, the Winnipeg punk/hardcore/metal scene influenced me a lot when I first started getting into music. We use to have this old record store in Winnipeg called The Cellar. We would go there, hangout, and listen to display discs in the player. Going to all ages shows prior to turning 18 at the Albert and the West End. Seeing those bands getting

up there and having fun made me want to do it as well. Then going to 18+ shows with larger touring bands. One moment that sticks out was one of the earlier shows I went to— August 13 1998 (still got the stub) \$5 advance \$7 at the door. I went to the Pyramid with some friends to catch SNFU. I listened to them on tape but never knew what anyone looked like. Pre-internet days. I'm hanging out, the place is packed, and this guy walks by me in a sparkly silver suit and gently twirls a baton while walking through the crowd. You could tell this person was on a different level. Next thing I know SNFU is hitting the stage and there's the silver suit with mic in hand (Chi). That opened my eyes— you can be the person you want to be, and not give a fuck! In later years, Rook and I had the pleasure to share the stage with SNFU in Winnipeg and while on tour.

**AU: You'll soon be releasing your first EP. What can you tell us about it?**

**Jay:** It's a five stack, I mean tracks of awesomeness that will leave you wanting more. The title of the EP is called *Pancakes*. We feel the songs turned out great. The process with Jordan at Ricochet Recordings was a great experience and he was a

pleasure to work with. We just hope everyone else likes it as well and wants to share it.

The artwork is being done by the one and only Jon Mayo. Follow him; he's been banging out projects for well-known, established bands. Hit him up if you need anything done. This EP gave us a taste of wanting to do more recording and get more stuff out. We have a lot more material and ideas that we think people will enjoy.

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

**Jay:** Shit! It's like picking your favorite kid. They all hold their own and as we have been sharing it with people, they come back with a different song, so it's tough to say. What I like, you might like something different. They all stand out in their own way I would say.

**AU: What's your songwriting process like?**

**Jay:** Usually, we come up with ideas on our own and collaborate, or just on the spot and work on them. We are old school; we don't write on computers.

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

**Jay:** The music scene in Winnipeg is really active. Venues opening and closing. A lot of the scenes are close-knit and everyone is friends or knows each other in some way. Winnipeg is that small/big city. As we have toured over the years, we have been to a lot of other cities, and kinda compare Winnipeg to those other scenes. The music scenes across Canada we have found to be very supportive of one another. Whether it's bands or promoters we were talking to, everyone has the same idea.

**AU: What are some of your favourite bands there?**

**Jay:** In 2 Months, One of Us, Death Cassette, Shit Happens, The Whatevermen, Mouth Feel, Pink Snot, Lost Planet Airmen, 40 Dollar Mike, Knife Hunter, Clipping, Dangercat, The Ripperz, Endless Chaos, Tyrants Demise, Spectre, Solanum, KEN Mode, The Murder Birds, Greg Rekus and The Inside Job, Screaming at Traffic, Dinner Club,

## WRETCHED WINNIPEG

Sportingman, Hippo, Death Tax, Trauma Shot, Saints and Rogues, The Rules, Show Pony, Trial Time, Propagandhi, Comeback Kid. I'm sure I'm missing someone... sorry! Those are the bands I like to catch.

**AU: This will be our 420 issue. Do any of you partake? If so, what's your favourite thing about weed?**

**Jay:** Some partake. Not me though. [I like that] the stigma has been lifted. That people can enjoy it if they like, plus the option to buy from a dispensary. Not be treated like a criminal for an alternative to booze. People should have options. Who knew... let adults make adult choices... What a concept!

**AU: Any plans for 420?**

**Jay:** Daaaamn... it falls on a Saturday?! This might be one of those "special occasions."

**AU: Do you have any hidden talents outside of music?**

**Jay:** The knack of fucking things up from time to time without knowing and randomly blacking out. Oh, and I'm not bad at video games and pinball.

**AU: Do you have any shows lined up for the release of *Pancakes*? Any plans to tour?**

**Jay:** EP release is on July 5th. We would like to book an all-ages EP release show as well; we will see if we can toss something together. Yes, we would like to tour, play some shows with other bands in other cities, and hangout.

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

**Jay:** Thanks for everything and we love what you do. Please don't stop.

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## The Order of The Precious Blood

### Blackened Hardcore from St. John's, Newfoundland

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground:** For those unfamiliar with The Order of The Precious Blood, who are you and what do you do?

**The Order of The Precious Blood:** Thank you so much! We are a group of five people from St. John's, Newfoundland and we like to write and perform fast, frantic, heavy music! We are comprised of Ben Chapman-Smith on bass, Cameron Legge on guitar, Barry O'Keefe also on guitar, Adam Hearn on drums, and myself, Paul Brake, on vocals. We try to mix more aggressive styles of music with a certain sense of foreboding atmosphere, and we like to play viciously energetic live shows!

**AU: How's the metal scene in St. John's Newfoundland these days?**

**The Order:** Well, it's growing a lot lately, which is great. There's a big mix of bands ranging between

hardcore, punk, and metal. Generally speaking, everyone exists in the same space and all play with one another, so the lines between a metal scene and the other scenes are really blurred. There are new bands cropping up every day it seems, which is in stark contrast to how it had been just a few years ago. I think things like this come and go

in cycles, ultimately, but I'm very glad to see that currently, it's on an upswing. Some cool bands from around here worth checking out are Smoke Signals, Carnage, Killer 9000, and Of The Black.

**AU: You have a new single out called "Cheaper But Will Do", a track that blurs the line between metal and hardcore punk, can we expect more music in the near future?**

**The Order:** Yes! Actually, we just announced another new single titled "Black Hole" coming out on April 18th! It comes out a day before our two hometown shows that kick off our tour along the Maritimes. We're currently working on more music as well, and we're thinking it'll take the form of an EP, hopefully in the later part of this year.

**AU: You're showcasing at the ECMA (East Coast Music Awards) along with tour dates across the Maritimes. How's the touring circuit out there? What makes you excited to get out and hit the road?**

**The Order:** Well, the East Coast seems to be having somewhat of a moment in terms of heavy music in general and there are lots of pockets along the way with growing scenes of their own. The bands from these towns are all playing each other's shows in each other's towns and East

# NEWFOUNDLAND NIGHTMARE

Coast hardcore is becoming its own kind of thing it seems. On the last tour we did of the Maritimes, which was our first time on the road as a band, we were stoked to find that there were lots of venues that would support the kind of music we play and there were lots of like-minded people all around eastern Canada who not only play similar music, but love to come out and support it.

**AU: The band is noted as taking an approach of augmented reality and "analog viral marketing" to get its music out to the masses. What more can you tell us about these efforts? Have you found that fans are receptive to it?**

**The Order:** We want to give the fans a little something extra. Music has become such a digitized art form that it can be tough for people to feel connected to it in a physical way, and we believe in trying to forge and strengthen that connection. The reception by fans has been everything from gratitude to fear, as the content of what we present can sometimes be jarring, but that is by design. We as individuals enjoy art and the sides of life that contain elements of mystery, so we want to make sure there is a little fear of the unknown as an aspect of what we do as artists and what we provide to our fans.

**AU: What have been the best clues and prizes in the form of secret drops the band has done?**

**The Order:** In the past, we've dropped secret previews for unreleased tracks, exclusive online

content not available anywhere else, we've given away free tickets to our shows, free merch, and things like that. If you're a fan, it pays to keep an eye on our social media for when and where we drop things before shows and such. You never know what you could find!

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

**The Order:** For any readers who happen to be in the Toronto area, we will be showcasing for NXNE in June, so follow us on our socials to stay up-to-date with the exact information so you don't miss out! Other than that, just a huge thanks to all of the awesome people who have streamed our music or come to a show or shown us support in any way! It really means a lot to us! Oh, come see us on tour in the Maritimes!

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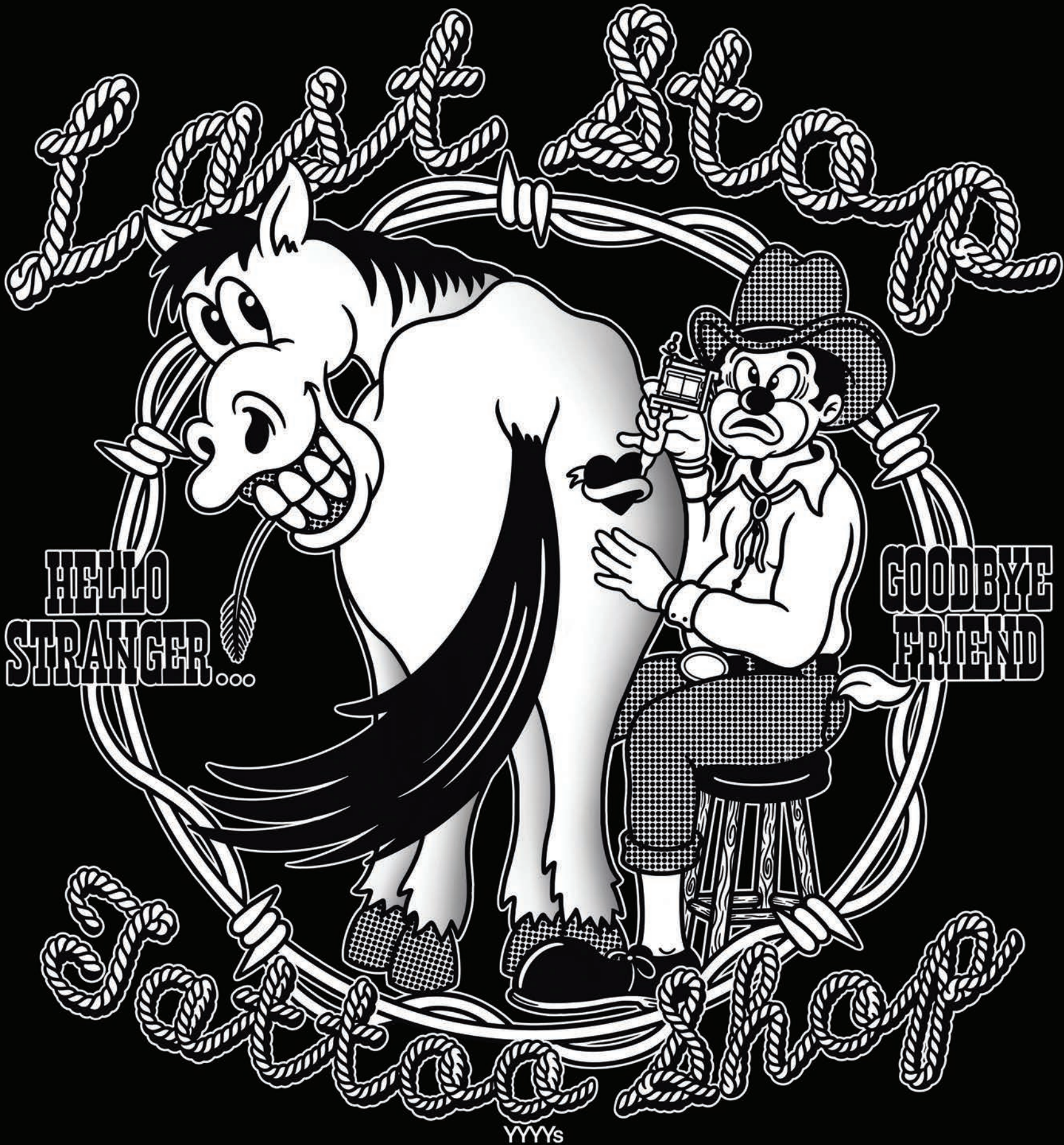
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## Astral Witch

By Ira Hunter and B.A. Johnston

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

**Astral Witch:** Jon, Jen, and Alyssa. We are the doom power trio Astral Witch, hailing from Hamilton, ON. We've been actively writing and performing music for almost a decade. Embracing DIY, queer representation, and all things that generally upset the worst kind of people.

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

**AW:** We don't have Tinder; we are happily married to Satan.

**AU: Give us a brief history of your band.**

**AW:** Astral Witch's initial incarnation was a duo

comprised of Alyssa Broere and Alyssa Nicole. Shortly after the band originated, Alyssa B. pursued her next project Within Nostalgia (North Bay), opening the door for Jen Brewer and Jon Tiberius to shape the sound of Astral Witch. Since then, we've been playing shows, writing and recording music, and having a damn good time doing it.

**AU: Describe the band's sound, if possible.**

**AW:** Black Sabbath by way of Soundgarden. Alternating lead vocals between Jon and Alyssa, creating an out of the ordinary duality.

**AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock 'n' Roll? Or all of the above?**

**AW:** Sure! Yes, please.

**AU: What's the current music scene in Hamilton like? Any other wicked bands for people to check out?**

**AW:** There's new venues appearing all the time almost as fast as they close! And a new generation of weirdos to appreciate the music. Southern Ontario in general has a ton of great bands releasing new music. Some of our favs are AAWKS, Death Club, Nova Doll, Black Absinthe, The Electric Dead, and Cannabus.

**AU: What's your fav submarine sandwich shop in town, and what's your go to order?**

**AW:** Coven! They have a killer vegan lox sandwich!

**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?**

**AW:** Not only do short shorts look cool as fuck, but they are necessary for keeping cool on a hot summer night. Especially in any small Toronto Venue in July, with questionable air conditioning. Astral Witch in general likes to keep the clothing



to a minimum.

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

**AW:** *Rosemary's Baby*, *Conan the Barbarian*, anything Troma or Hammer Films.

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

**AW:** We've almost figured out astral projection, which means soon we won't even need to worry about things like who's driving which vehicle, who has to stay sober, or how many speaker cabs we can fit in a midsize SUV.

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

**AW:** We're releasing an EP this June entitled *Confession*, with heavy doom and grunge vibes. Recorded at Greenwood Studio in Stratford with Nick Lobodycz.

**AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?**

**AW:** We have our release party for *Confession* June 22, in Hamilton, at Doors Pub with Pale Mare, Nova Doll, and Kawthra. We're heading to Ottawa and Montreal the first weekend of June; all other dates will be posted on our socials. We'd love to break the barrier of Ontario/Quebec and visit our fans out West!

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

**AW:** Satan, heartache, the struggles of the working class, and environmental degradation.

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

**AW:** If you're a fan of classic horror movies, you'll love "Left Hand Path". It features references to *The Omen*, *The Exorcist*, and *Poltergeist*. For this track, we summoned a disembodied voice from beyond the grave.

**AU: It's the 420 issue here at Absolute Underground, do any of the band members partake? If so, what's their favorite thing to do while high?**

**AW:** What are you, a narc? We love a cheeky little edible or a few hits from a vape pen, then

## HAM JAMMERS

we're off to see a movie, or soak in the vibes of our favourite records. And nothing beats sharing a bit of electric lettuce around a campfire with friends.

**AU: Indica or sativa?**

**AW:** This is situation-dependent; basically whether we want to melt into a couch, or party it up with the Fuzzed and Buzzed guys (Toronto-based label who loves to get wild).

**AU: Munchies of choice?**

**AW:** Souls! Muahahahahahaha!

**AU: Have you ever read this magazine on weed?**

**AW:** We *only* read this magazine on weed. Alyssa has repurposed several of the outstanding quality images in Absolute Underground magazine to create collages.

**AU: Weirdest thing to ever happen to you while baked outta your skull?**

**AW:** Tattooing each other with matching Motörhead tribute spades.

**AU: Best stoner band/movie?**

**Alyssa:** Nashville Pussy / *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*

**Jen:** Captain Beyond (first album only) / *Army of Darkness*

**Jon:** Yes / *Conan the Barbarian*

**AU: Favourite celebrity stoner?**

**AW:** Woody Harrelson.

**AU: Any plans for 420 this year?**

**AW:** Not yet— but that does fall on a Saturday this year, so that's handy. Probably light up a doob and listen to Black Sabbath's *Black Sabbath*? What are you doin', and can we come?

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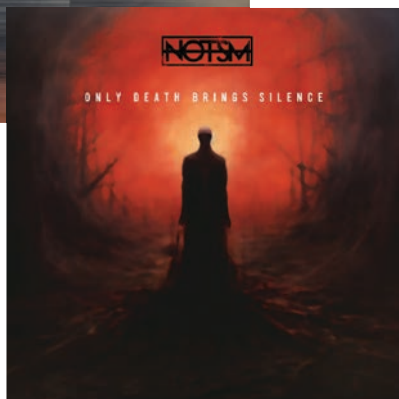


## NOTSM

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground: What can you tell us about NOTSM?**

**NOTSM:** NOTSM was formed out of my desire to create and share my metal creations with the world. My journey into metal music began over two decades ago when I first picked up a guitar. While initially drawn to learning riffs and songs from my favourite bands, it quickly became apparent that my true passion lay in creating my own music. Through multiple bands and musical endeavours, I honed my skills and nurtured my creative spirit. After the dissolution of my last band, I found myself revisiting old compositions and unexplored ideas. Sharing these songs online reignited my enthusiasm, prompting me to delve deeper into my musical archives. As I unearthed old gems and wrote new tracks, the desire to compile them into an album took hold.



With a vision in mind, I sought out collaborators— a mixing engineer and a vocalist— and together, we embarked on the journey of bringing my music to life.

**AU: As a one-man band, what can you tell us about the pros and cons of writing your music?**

**NOTSM:** I've been in multiple bands over the past two decades, and, while I certainly had lots of good and memorable times, being in a one-man band is definitely my preference. When it comes to writing and performing music, I'm a huge control freak, and this makes it very difficult for others to work with me in a band setting. While I'm not opposed to collaboration, I have a very hard time compromising on a creative idea that I have in mind. In a one-man band, there is no compromise, and this is the biggest pro for me. I want

every song, riff, and note to sound the way I envision it. Of course, there are going to be times when working with somebody might spark a new or better idea, but I understand that, and it's a risk I'm willing to take when it comes to writing music. Another downside of being in a one-man band is not being able to split the costs for recording, marketing, etc.

**AU: You're commented as stating NOTSM is an acronym for "none of this shit matters" and this is the mantra you've been using for years to remind yourself to focus on the things that are important in your life. How did this**

**epiphany come to you and how does it influence your songwriting?**

**NOTSM:** I can't remember exactly where I heard the phrase "none of this shit matters" but I think it was on a podcast many years ago, and it really spoke to me. I was going through a rough patch at the time, and it really made me think about what and who I was giving my time and energy to. There are many ways this phrase can be interpreted, but to me, it reminds me not to sweat the small stuff, which, when you really think about it, describes the majority of the shit we deal with in our lives.

The concept of "none of this shit matters" serves as a liberating mantra that encourages me to express myself authentically without concern for societal norms or expectations. It allows me to approach songwriting with a sense of fearlessness and honesty, resulting in music that, to me, is genuine, thought-provoking, and emotionally resonant.

**AU: How did you come together with vocalist Alex Hamilton for your new record *Only Death Brings Silence*?**

**NOTSM:** I'd just finished recording "The Hedonic Treadmill" and was planning on releasing it as an instrumental song. I was listening to it over and over and kept thinking to myself how cool it would be if it had vocals on it. I had an idea of where the vocals would fit into the song, and I had been thinking about the "hedonic treadmill" concept for quite some time at this point. I had never really written any lyrics before, but I thought this might be a good opportunity to try. I was really happy with how the lyrics and vocal phrasing turned out, but I knew I didn't have the vocal chops to achieve the sound I was going for. I had previously heard of the Fiverr website through a friend, and I decided to check it out to see if any metal vocalists were on there. I found quite a few of them but ended up working with Alex based on the reviews and demos on his page. He was great to work with, and I was really happy with the vocal tracks he laid down for me.

## OTTAWA ONSLAUGHT

After a great experience working with him on "The Hedonic Treadmill", I decided that I wanted him to do vocals on the rest of the album's tracks as well, and I'm very happy with the results!

**AU: What can fans expect from *Only Death Brings Silence*?**

**NOTSM:** I think that fans who appreciate heavy metal infused with melodies and dynamic shifts will find a lot of enjoyment in listening to this album. There's a delicate balance between the heavy and softer elements, both in the instrumentation and vocals. The meticulously crafted track list is designed to captivate listeners from start to finish, ensuring an engaging and immersive experience throughout the entirety of the album.

**AU: Will you be taking this project to a live stage in the near future?**

**NOTSM:** While I've always found my greatest fulfillment in the creative process of writing songs, I'm not opposed to the idea of live performances. Recently, I've been exploring the possibility of bringing these songs to life on stage by collaborating with local musicians. The response has been encouraging, and discussions are underway to translate the energy and intensity of my music into captivating live performances.

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

**NOTSM:** I'm very grateful for the opportunity to chat with Absolute Underground about my debut album! I hope that those who appreciate metal music will take the time to explore it and derive something meaningful, whether through its musicality, its lyrics, or both.

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

[linktr.ee/notsm](http://linktr.ee/notsm)

@notsm.music



## Miserable Tradition

Interview by AU Editorial

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

**Miserable Tradition:** Susynn (guitar/vox), Steve (bass/vox), and Chud (drums). Previous bands include: Twisted System, Mechanical Separation, Axed Up Conformist, Suckcess...

**AU: How would you describe your sound to someone who's never heard you before?**

**Chud:** It sounds like Saskatoon. Loud, mid-tempo, sometimes fast, kind of heavy, d-beat. I've heard "crustcore" in the past. Bottomline: we're a punk band.

**AU: I hear you have a new lineup. How did you get together?**

**Steve:** I don't know— how the fuck did we start this up again? Just say that; I don't care.

**Chud:** \*After Steve has left the room\* We

were playing shows back in 2015/2016-ish with the first three-piece lineup. Me and Steve had been jamming awhile before The Egg joined on bass. Played a few shows, went out to Alberta; nothing much. That's when Greg showed up. With physical force, he replaced The Egg on bass. It was an awkward few years of songwriting with Greg. We did a lot of peyote. He wouldn't let us play any shows, or have any social media presence for years. Then one day, in 2020 or something, he just quit showing up for practice. Rumour has it, he is a ghost writer for the guitar player, Derek, in Bitter State. So, then we got drunk for awhile or more I think, met Susynn sometime in there; she plays

guitar good— she has her own amp, and she rules. Way more than Eisner.

**AU: Do you feel each member brings something unique to Miserable Tradition?**

**Greg:** I have never lost an arm-wrestling match in my life. You want one?

**Chud:** Steve and Susynn have cars and I don't, so that's dope.

**Susynn:** We all kind of have different musical influences, I think that adds a lot to our sound.

**Chud:** I have been making noise with Steve half my damn life, so we can usually throw something together on the fly. Adding Susynn on guitar/vox and moving Steve over to bass/vox was when I think we finally started to find our sound. We had dabbled with mince/grind and some power-violence stuff in the past. Originally, we set out to sound like the Agathocles album *To Serve To Protect*, but with this new lineup we have gone down our own path, and I think it has everything to do with our different tastes in music; while at

the same time, sharing a love for playing this style of music. If that makes sense?

**AU: Do you have any new music in the works?**

**Steve:** Yeah, we put out an EP a few months back, and we just got back some nice live material we plan to use for some future projects. Watch out for a split on Poached Records in the future, I think. I don't know. Ask them. New songs and hopefully recording another handful of songs in the summer. We are all in other projects, so there is always something on the go.

**AU: What goes into a song? What inspires you?**

**Steve:** This deplorable world we live in, and our mutually shared hatred for humanity.

**Chud:** I just really like playing d-beats and hanging at Steve's place. Shoutout to Hank. Susynn isn't here right now, but I am gonna say her main inspirations are black. Also, trees and cats.

**AU: What's the scene like in Saskatoon?**

**Chud:** Wait, was that Greg that was just here?

**Susynn:** The scene is thriving right now. Great to see more all ages shows popping up. Different people and collectives putting in work to make these shows happen for everyone. It's a good city to be in right now. Bring your band here.

**AU: What sorts of bands are you into?**

**Steve:** Currently I've been listening to Bloody Phoenix, Assuck, Noothgrush. and Disrupt.

**Chud:** This week... Phobia, Bootlicker, Lack of Interest, Trenchraid, Bitter State, Uncurbed, Harry Belafonte (RIP).

**Susynn:** Toxic Holocaust, Hellripper, Midnight... Classics like Anthrax and Megadeth.

**AU: This is our 420 issue; do any of you toke?**

**Chud:** Susynn and Steve had to take off; probably to do illegal shit, I bet. So, it's just us now, finally. Oh weed? Love it. I smoke from the millisecond I wake up till when I pass out with a lit joint on my chest, burning a hole in my Discharge shirt. I smoke weed in Walmart. I smoke weed

# SASKATOMB

on airplanes. I have smoked weed in the psych ward— a lot. I smoke weed right before I drive my nephew home. I smoke weed the whole time my nephew is with me. I smoked weed before I failed my driver's test. I snorted a line of bath salts off the bass player from The Northern Pike's boner one time. I smoke weed in Churches and Government Buildings, libraries, and at funerals. Usually just joints or whatever. Hey, did Greg show up?

**AU: What's your favourite thing to do while high?**

**Chud:** That's a fucking hard hitting question right there! You guys are really digging deep. Didn't know Nardwaar was interviewing us. Just playing! I love you guys. Between me and you, about 15 or so some-odd give-or-take years ago, I was really into getting fucked up and wearing lacy, silky— you know, lingerie or whatever. It was dope. My favourite thing to do while high? Preparation for world domination, avoiding suicidal thoughts at least till my mom dies, yell and wet snot cry all over myself about absolutely nothing for hours, barefoot blazing hot coal walks and, ummm... Yeah. Or sometimes I like to draw or paint.

**AU: Are you planning any shows or tours?**

**Susynn:** We have a couple local shows coming up in the spring/summer. No tour plans, yet.

**Chud:** Invite us to play your city/town! Can we borrow your drum stool?

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

**Chud:** All jokes aside, we love playing this music and we hope you guys like listening to it! Big hugs to Poached Records, LaFrench, Black Cat Tavern, and all the homies. Thanks for hitting us up for the interview, keep it DIY and PLAY LOUD.

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

@miserabletradition

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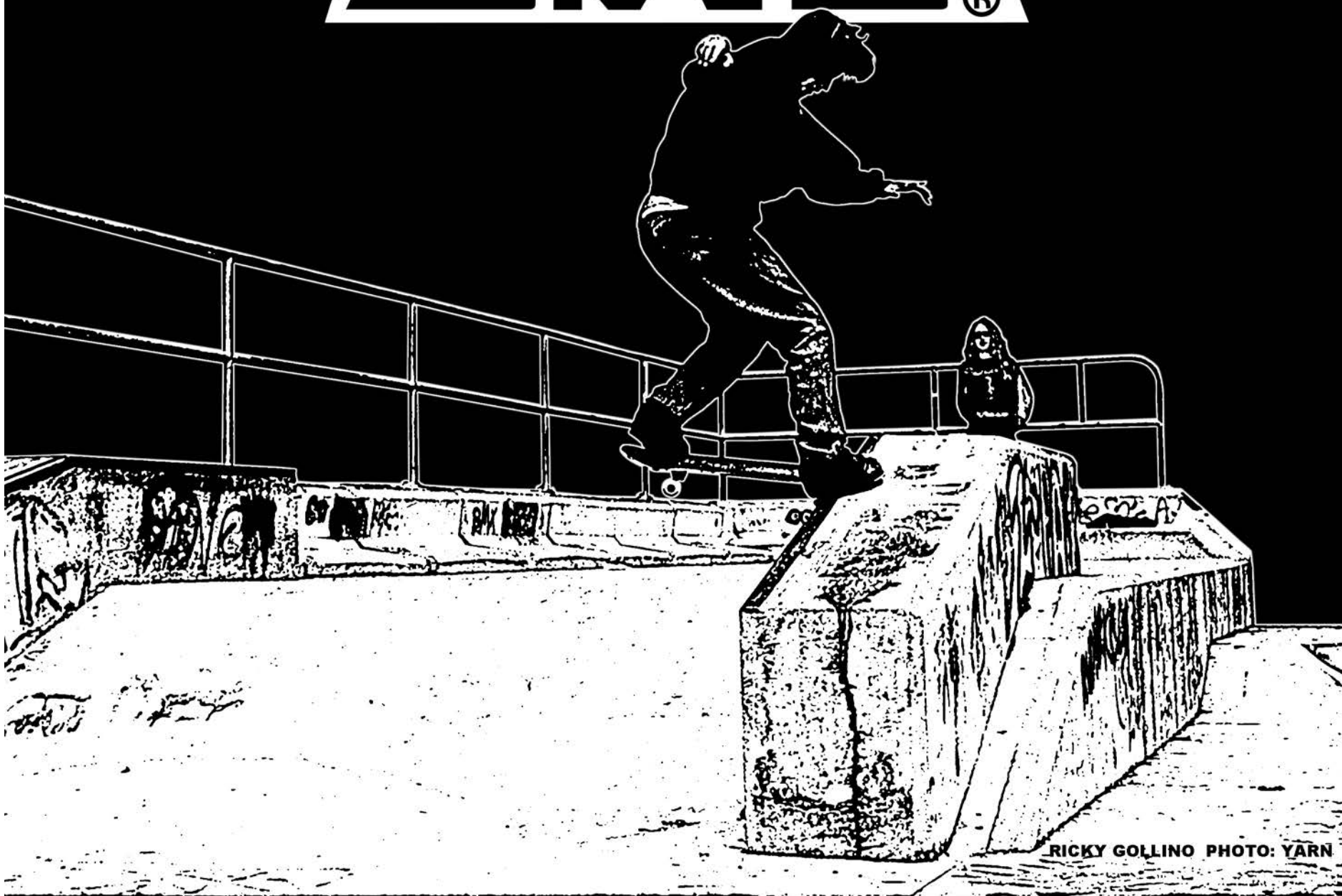
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# RIPCORDZ

## THIS IS ROCK 'N ROLL

### ACROSS

1. \*With 10-across, 67-across & 69-across, "Show yourself!"
5. \*With 68-across, "Anyone home?"
10. See 1-across
14. "California \_\_\_\_\_ Alles"
15. Steaming
16. Greek God of Love
17. Grain or missile warehouse
18. Like army boots
19. Broadcasts
20. \*Words whispered to a partner
23. Word at the beginning and end of a Bob Dylan title
24. Lincoln or Vigoda
25. Footnote words
28. Blood type choices
31. Pass into law
35. Actress Drescher
36. Chainsaw Man and Naruto
38. Piggy
39. \*The Mau Maus, for example?
42. Ambulance crew member
43. \_\_\_\_\_ far (anywhere)
44. Milk in Montreal
45. Sarcastic celebration
47. 60s-'70s PM
48. Sweet Gwendoline's foe
49. It runs the neighbourhood
51. \_\_\_\_\_ Easley ("Star Wars" town)
52. \*Yuppies and other scum
61. By \_\_\_\_\_ learning method
62. PhD challenge
63. Jethro's answer to Jed
64. Ottawa neighbourhood \_\_\_\_\_ Vista
65. Largest moon of Saturn
66. Imperial measure
67. See 1-across
68. See 5-across
69. See 1-across

### DOWN

1. "\_\_\_\_\_ in the Wind"
2. Off-Broadway award
3. Title role for Jodie
4. Looking for trouble online
5. Bill \_\_\_\_\_ and the Comets
6. Modern commerce giant
7. Ramones second live album
8. In \_\_\_\_\_ (replacing)
9. Historic Hollywood

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64						65					66			
67						68					69			

### CROSSWORD NO. 104

SPRING, 2024

10. "Somewhere Between \_\_\_\_\_ and Hell"
11. Rasta hello
12. Campus quarters
13. Feminine suffix
21. Word with welcome or gym
22. Not just fat
25. Hitman?
26. Ads, etc.
27. Magna \_\_\_\_\_
28. 29-down in a brasserie
29. Molson in Montreal
30. Playground retort
32. Go on \_\_\_\_\_ (rampage)
33. Baby's constant cries
34. Easily irritated
36. Absorbed a loss
37. It's human, in an old saying
40. How ballet dancers may dance
41. Words at the end of a countdown
46. It goes on a bagel
48. Shithead-run band
50. "A Punk, a Ted and \_\_\_\_\_ walked into a bar..."
51. Wife of an old Bond villain?
52. Waiter's burden
53. 3D projection (slang)
54. "\_\_\_\_\_, Brute": Caesar's last words
55. It's a great lake
56. Expos old league: Abbr.
57. Mideast airline
58. Furniture giant
59. Oil cartel
60. Actor Fillion to his friends

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## The Getmines

### Sequin-Clad Hard Rockers Put a Little Spit and Polish on 2024 with New EP

By Jessica Mulholland

Hard rock-punk artists The Getmines announced their fourth studio release, *Silver*, with a new single that dropped March 22, 2024. The new single, "False Profits" can be streamed on Youtube or Spotify, and can be purchased on major music platforms, including Bandcamp and Apple Music. Fans wishing to pre-order the *Silver* EP can do so now, via the band's Bandcamp page. The *Silver* EP will be available on all streaming platforms May 3, 2024.

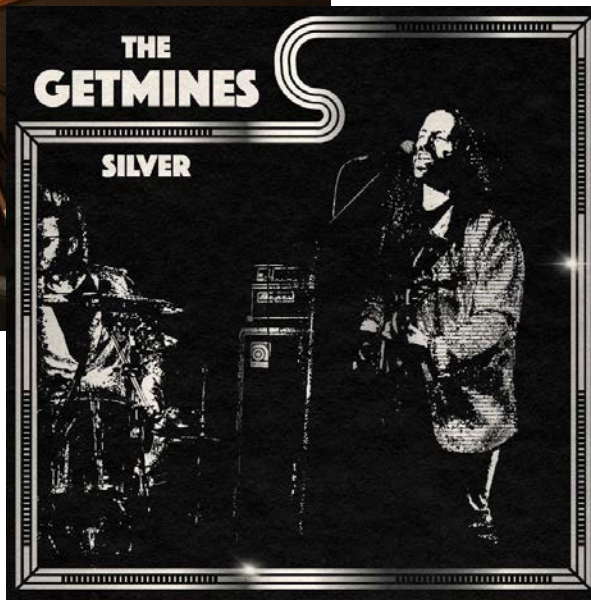
The EP— the second release of 2024 - sports a dark tone dolled up for the night. *Silver* challenges listeners to get up and get moving to the sound of what's road worn but unbroke.

The single "False Profits" jumps at charlatanism and televised religion with a self-produced video

featuring the band cocking their heads at crowds of cash duped by "green-eyed, toothy grins".

"*Silver* is more than just second place. This EP screams winner from A to B or 'A\$\$hole to Breakfast, so to speak," says Drummer Mike Kott. "We had such a blast making it, and you're likely to have a great time listening to it," quips Cliff Thiessen, bassist and vocalist.

*Silver* was recorded and produced by Michael Kraushaar of Little Red Sounds in New Westminster, BC. Kraushaar, himself a veteran of numerous Canadian punk, rock, and alt-country bands, reconnects with The Getmines in 2024 for both the *Gold* and *Silver* EPs. "Working with The Getmines doesn't really feel much like work at all.



The process was non-stop good times, I believe you can really hear that in these records".

In a recent interview with Jonny Bones he said "It's sounding like a million bucks, I really dig it. Usually when I get CDs in here I have to pump it all the way up but it's mastered so well I had to bring that level down," Check him out on Rad Radio CJSF 90.1 Burnaby, Thursday at 9-10 pm.

The combined EP's *Gold* and *Silver* will appear alongside a "secret song" available exclusively on vinyl and expected for the band's release party later in 2024. "We went as far as we had to— which was all the way" says Saxophonist and Vocalist Eric Fortin who joined the Getmines for the secret song recording.

The Getmines formed in Vancouver, BC, Canada in 2013, as an excuse to stay out late with great friends. The band has evolved, over a decade of dive bars and back alleys, as a tight three-piece that never fails to throw napalm on a dark room. The band

is well-known as a powerhouse in Vancouver's underground where they vehemently support other artists and deliver loud, energetic stage shows. Catch The Getmines live at the upcoming Electric Highway Festival, taking place at Dickens in Calgary, Alberta, Canada on April 4-6, 2024.

Other chances to see The Getmines live this spring include upcoming performances at the Hub in Penticton April 4th, at the Electric Highway Festival April 5th, and at a secret location April 18th in Vancouver via The Invisible Orange.



Follow The Getmines on social channels or check out their website for further show listings.

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

[getmines.ca](http://getmines.ca)

[theelectrichighway.ca](http://theelectrichighway.ca)



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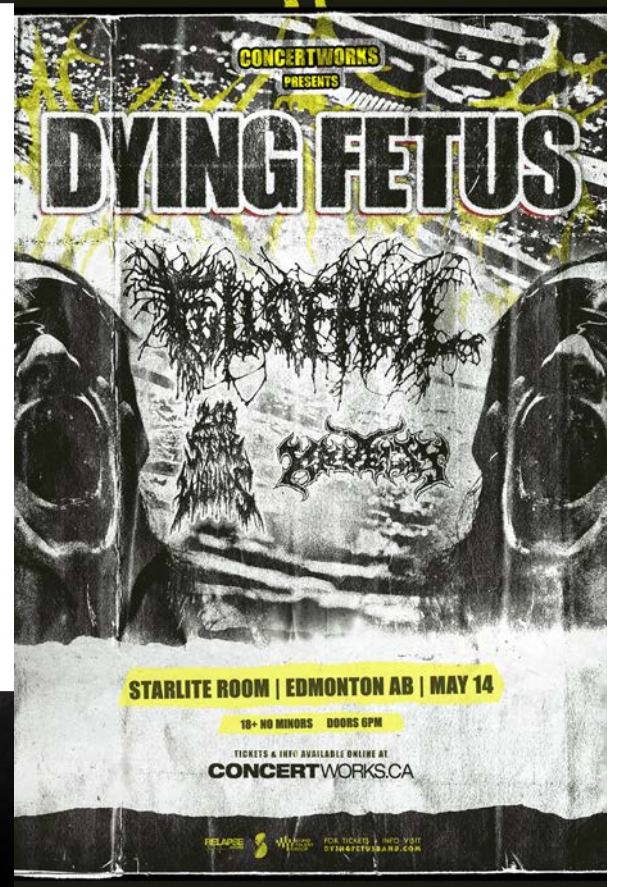
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## Gnarwhal

By Ryan Dyer

It's a long road to the Electric Highway, figuratively. It's an even longer road in the literal sense for Gnarwhal. The band is located 16 hours from the Highway's home base in Calgary, Alberta, in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. But just as the narwhal travels 1,700 km from Baffin Bay to Davis Strait, the band Gnarwhal have no qualms about travelling far and wide to get their music heard.

Starting in 2021 during the pandemic, the men in Gnarwhal put together their stoner, doom, and alternative influences (including bands like Mastodon, The Sword, Elder, and King Buffalo), to create a musical vessel and bring a new sense of purpose to the small, but growing scene in the city. In 2023, they released their inaugural self-titled album. Gnarwhal is made up of Mark Kilbride, Benji Straker, Jeremy Straker, and Layne Rybchinski, but for this interview they have come together as a single-tusked collective to answer my questions...



time, as well. We've actually been dubbed "post-doom" and "post-stoner."

**AU: What is the scene like in Yellowknife? What type of metal/rock/punk would you say is the most dominant there?**

**Gnarwhal:** The rock and heavy music scene in the Knife had been pretty non-existent, until recently. This town is mainly known for the active folk, roots, and singer/songwriter community. The pandemic stirred up a lot of creativity resulting in a lot of new bands (like ourselves). Punk music would probably be the most dominant right now but there are some great metal, prog, and heavy rocks bands coming out of the woodwork. There's been a lack of supportive venues for heavy music over the years. Most of the shows happening are still DIY, which is rad, but we're starting to see more support as we grow the scene. We're super stoked to see some local promoters and music friendly venues surfacing.

**AU: I saw a few of your videos where you play at the Raven Pub. It looks like a great atmosphere—rowdy rock fans who have maybe waited a few weeks for the show, and make**

**Absolute Underground: How would you describe the sound of Gnarwhal to the uninitiated?**

**Gnarwhal:** We find that Gnarwhal's sound crosses a lot of different boundaries; mostly in the heavy psych, stoner, and doom rock areas. Our collective upbringing and love for '90s grunge creeps into our music from time to

**sure they let loose when you hit the stage. What can you tell us about playing there?**

**Gnarwhal:** Yeah, big shout out to The Raven (aka The Dirty Bird). That place has been a landmark for a long time and has been really supportive of live music the last couple of years. Especially heavy music. All of the shows we've played there have sold out and things always tend to get a bit rowdy in the pit, as they should.

**AU: Everyone knows that prices for goods are more expensive in the Territories, due to them being imported. How about your own merch or show tickets?**

**Gnarwhal:** We'd say that our merch prices are on par with anywhere else. Cost of every-day goods up here isn't as bad as you'd think (although beer prices suck). Shipping costs are a bit higher but it's not that difficult to keep merch affordable. Show tickets are no different. Obviously, DIY shows cost us a lot more to run (venue, front of house, artist fees, etc), but we try to keep things affordable while still making sure everyone gets a fair share of the door. This is where it's nice to see promoters and venues stepping up to organize shows and supporting bands like us.

**AU: Do you feel the location influences your sound and lyrical approach?**

**Gnarwhal:** We haven't really considered our location as an influence, no. Our sound just stems from the many genres we've been influenced by throughout our lives, and also being intentional with writing songs that cohere as a collective. So far, lyrically, we're more influenced by emotive and life experiences as opposed to storytelling. Not to say that we wouldn't go that direction—it just hasn't been an inspiration so far. It's funny to us that so many northern artists/companies/businesses use northern themed titles and imagery. It's so played out up here. Like polar bears and northern lights are referenced everywhere.

**AU: How did you choose the band name then?**

**Gnarwhal:** Over beers; Jer and some buds were thinking of dumb "northern themed names". Gnarwhal was a product of that brainstorming session, and although it was kind of a play on and



dis to northern-themed names, we also thought it was rad and suited our vibe. So, I guess you could say that in the end we actually *are* influenced by our surroundings! Even though we live about 3000 km from the Arctic Ocean and have never seen a tusked whale!

**AU: You have been to Calgary before, playing Vern's. Is this how you met the folks from Electric Highway?**

**Gnarwhal:** Yeah, we had a rad time at Vern's. That was actually our first show away from home and everyone was so supportive. We had a couple of really great Calgary bands support us there and Clint of Vern's is always a beauty. We're super familiar with Calgary so we felt at home playing there. Jer's folks live in Airdrie, and both he and Benji have family and friends in the city. We didn't meet the Electric Highway crew at that show but had connected with them earlier in the year.

**AU: How long is the drive on the icy highway to the Electric Highway?**

**Gnarwhal:** Well, in one shot with good conditions, we're approximately 16 hours from the Knife to Cowtown. So honestly, it's not really much different than driving from Van to Calgary (but no sketchy mountain passes). The biggest difference is that there aren't really any stops along the way to play music.

**Stream Gnarwhal on Spotify and other services.**

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

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



## Solid Brown

By Ryan Dyer

Calgary's Solid Brown have come back from a solid break with their second album *Duexce*. The quartet present their sludgy, stoner sound a little differently, keeping the guitars in the basement and allowing the often-neglected bass to bring a friend. Hey drums, you can bring a buddy, too! That's right—two drummers and two bass players are featured in Solid Brown.

We catch up with them after a slot on the Electric Highway festival and chat with Scott Nickless, Tyler Pickering, Robito Cortez and Sean Friend, collectively known as Solid Brown, about all of the colours under the rainbow (but mostly brown).

**Absolute Underground: In Solid Brown I can**



**hear a little Primus, a little Big Business, a little Rush. Is my hearing okay? What other bands have inspired Solid Brown?**

**SB:** I think your hearing is okay but mine isn't, so I can't judge. I mean, we are all influenced by what we like. Some of the guys like original music, some like the covers. We've covered tunes by Rush, Deep Purple, Spinal Tap, The Voltage and Floyd— instant classics. Up next, who knows? The Bee Gees, Boris, Melvins, or the Meters, maybe some jazz (except for saxophone stuff)— there's just such an amazing selection of music out there that anyone can listen to. Check it out!

**AU: I saw Big Business and The Melvins do a set with two drum kits, but I don't think I've seen two bass players (it's always guitar). Though it makes sense, as the bass is utilized somewhat differently in this style. What was your approach to choosing these doubled instruments?**

**SB:** The *Senile Animal* tour! Some of us also saw that tour with Men of Porn, Big Biz and Melvins at the Commodore (Vancouver). Seeing arguably two of the best drummers on the planet absolutely crushing skins together was definitely inspiring... they put out some incredible records with that line-up too. I think that began the realization that more is *more*. Double it all up. It makes you sound huge and actually gives you a lot more freedom when writing 'cause you don't have to follow the typical structures.

**AU: "The mentality of this double drum and double bass quartet is no bad ideas," but, do you think you've had one so far?**

**SB:** Yeah, there's been bad ideas. We had a van once and some shitstick stole the catalytic converter the night before we had to go out to Vancouver. We drove there and back without one. The drummers usually have the worst ideas after showing up late and drinking Schnapps. Also, one time Rob used a flanger instead of a phaser.

**AU: Who are the better drummers and bass players in the band?**

**SB:** We all try our best. We give it our absolute best effort. It's the thought that counts. If you were to ask about one thing that's the best in the

band, it would probably be our patch cables.

**AU: What is the story about the image on the cover of *Duexce*?**

**SB:** Not really sure of who the kid is. I guess he's a pretty good shot. I really don't think he's old enough to be using binoculars, though. Scott bought a box of old medium format negatives at a flea market and digitized them. Judging by the photos, it was taken in or around France anywhere from 1940-1943. Some really interesting photos in the lot. People posed differently back then. Kids could hunt by themselves.

**AU: What is the story about the image on the cover of *Our Rich Heritage*?**

**SB:** The *Our Rich Heritage* album cover came mostly out of the desire to raise aspic awareness. The most classic aspic is the tomato aspic, so we went with that. Originally, we planned to have several concept albums dedicated to each of the various types of aspics but we decided against it because it's a fucking stupid idea. The red-brown hue and jiggly texture is unmistakably present in our music so it seemed like an obvious choice. We later added the recipe so that those at home can reproduce the experience.

**AU: There was a pretty big time lapse between *Our Rich Heritage* and *Duexce*. Why the solid dormancy?**

**SB:** Scott's knees hate the cold and he thought Europe would heal him. When the band got the news he was leaving we celebrated with more Schnapps and decided to record the songs that are now *Duexce*. Had to track fairly quickly as Europe waits for no one, then spent the next couple years trying to link up on the world wide web to finish the album remotely. Nice thing about Europe is the acceptance of Daddy's Brown Sauce. It fuels all good records.

**AU: You played a lot of van fests— Vantopia, Vanuary; do you have a van and is it brown?**

**SB:** Vandits van club throw a hell-of-a party! They've used the 'subtle sounds' of the Brown to lull the vans to sleep at night. But honestly, who really sleeps at Vantopia, especially when we're making our racket at 3 am? We are really amped to be playing Vantopia again this year and yes, we will be driving our vans. Unfortunately, none are brown... yet.

**AU: In regards to Western Canada and the stoner/doom/sludge scene, does it look healthy? Is there room for more?**

**SB:** Like they say on TV, toxic sludge is good for you! Doom too. If we're going by what we're seeing and hearing, yeah heavy music is alive and well. It's great seeing new, LOUD bands come up and venues and festivals putting them on stage. A shout out to AB venues like Palomino, Dickens, Ship & Anchor, Modern Love, The Slice, Bo's, The Buck, The Aviary and festivals like Electric Highway, Massif, Big Winter Classic, Purple City,



East Town Get Down, Sled Island, and Vantopia for booking heavy-ass music. I know we're missing a ton and don't want to even start listing all the rad bands, so yeah... shit's good... could be even better!

**AU: The "You're All Gonna Die on This Carnival Ride" music video is an old one now, but a wild one. What can you say about the making of it? Where did that floor come from?**

**SB:** There was this great two-floor live venue in Calgary called The Nite Owl. The ground level had this light up dance floor and then a stage (which Rob truly did fall off of mid-set). We had a gig

there, so the owner Stu let us set up on the dance floor before we played and Hans Grossmann shot it. Most of the facial hair had to be done in post. The old video footage is just cutting room floor stuff stolen from the extras on LaserDiscs.

**AU: The brown sound— is Solid Brown the perfect representation of this?**

**SB:** On the guitar tone colour chart, it seems brown would be the pinnacle one would hope to achieve.

I'm not sure what the rest of the colours mean. We probably sit around a hue or a shade of lemon. Is there a drum tone colour chart? Maybe they need a wheel.

**AU: What are your favourite brown things?**

**SB:** I think we all agree that the brown on the guitar tone colour chart is wonderful. Maybe a well tailored Corduroy suit. Really, the list could go on and on. Owls are pretty cool, too.

[solid-brown.bandcamp.com](http://solid-brown.bandcamp.com)

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## Parallel 49

Beer with Character

By Bobby Barrel

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?**

**Graham With:** Graham With, Head Brewer and Co-Founder

**AU: How long have you been involved in the world of beer?**

**GW:** Including all the homebrewing I've done, 16 years.

**AU: What was the genesis of Parallel 49 Brewing?**

**GW:** A mix of homebrewing new and extreme beers and response to the American craft beers being imported to Vancouver. We wanted to create an

East Van solution to feed Vancouverites' appetite for well-crafted, exciting beers.

**AU: What are some of the types of beer you brew?**

**GW:** We'll brew anything that inspires us: hoppy, strong, sessional, traditional, non-traditional. There are 40 taps at the brewery, so we're brewing all types of beers.

**AU: Tell us all about your Troll Beers featured in your Hop Patrol cases.**

**GW:** The Hop PaTroll pack allows us to showcase great hop varieties in different styles of hoppy beers.

**AU: What sets your beer apart?**

**GW:** Innovation, creativity, and with a focus on local ingredients and partnerships.

**AU: Have you won any awards over the years?**

**GW:** Numerous awards in BC, Canada, and even the world.

**AU: Any unique brewing secrets you can share?**

**GW:** Never get complacent and always keep improving!



BC. We even have some taps across the prairies.



**AU: How was your experience at the Great Canadian Beer Festival in Victoria this summer?**

**GW:** A great event to see fans of your products and meet up with comrades in the craft beer industry. It's always a blast.

**AU: Any other special events you plan to attend on the horizon?**

**GW:** We have a wrestling event planned. Stay tuned for more!

**AU: What do you like best about brewing beer?**

**GW:** After you brew the liquid, it is up to the fermentation gods to make the magic happen. Once the beer is finished fermenting,

## BREWING 101

the satisfaction you get when tasting the final fermented product.

**AU: What's one thing you would still like to experiment with in the world of brewing?**

**GW:** Expanding our fermentations beyond barely and into the realm of fruits.

**AU: Anything else you would like people to know about Parallel 49 Brewing?**

**GW:** We have new beers hitting our tap room every week so stop by regularly to see what is new.

[parallel49brewing.com](http://parallel49brewing.com)

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## I (Don't) Miss Weed

By Liam Crocker

I didn't try any drug except alcohol until I was 18. Weed was something that never interested me— I remember being offered some by some old creeps a friend and I were golfing with and I told them, "I'm forgetful enough as it is, I don't wanna make it worse!" I said the same bullshit about drinking before I tried that— "I don't wanna lose control of myself!" Losing control of yourself can be pretty fun, as it turns out. I had a stoner friend who sold weed and got him to sell me a joint. I walked all the way to Beacon Hill Park to smoke it so my parents wouldn't find me— I guess I was planning ahead for the inevitable paranoia.

I got to the park and lit it up, smoked a bit, put it out and tried to hide the evidence. Weed was still illegal at this time, so in my young, innocent mind I had now become a certified criminal. Instantly, I got scared and was sure that the park utilities truck had been watching me and was now stalking me. So, I left. I went to a Thai place and ordered some Pad Thai. The cashier asked me what spiciness level I wanted. Mild, medium, or hot. I remember being immensely confused,

which was making me giggle, and I had to ask her which one was the 'middle' level of heat. Anyway, I ate it, and it was amazing. Food had never tasted so good! More than anything else about weed, I miss how good food tasted. Plain Tostitos chips you'd sneak down to the kitchen to grab at 2 am hit like gourmet food when you're blazed.

From that day on, I started smoking almost every day and didn't stop for a decade. Sometimes it was a problem, sometimes I was scared, sometimes I was a little crazy, and sometimes it was a little sketchy, and most of it I can't remember. I don't smoke now because, like many people in their 30s, the carefree attitude of my 20s shuffled away and was replaced with real life with all its worries and responsibilities.

I miss the adventures I'd get into when stoned. Especially in those early days, when the psychedelic quality of it really came out with my low tolerance. I remember smoking on the deck with my best friend and being absolutely sure that the small plane we saw in the sky was watching us and doing multiple passes of my house. Why would they be doing that? Weed was illegal and we were stoned, I guess. I remember going out on my porch to smoke alone and hearing the sound of a helicopter, looking up at the branches above me in the night shaking in the wind, sure I was hearing the low hum of a UFO hovering above me in the darkness. Even thinking back now, it felt real at the time. Weed's ability to inject some magic into your life for a few hours was really something. Paranoia was always a catalyst for adventure if it wasn't too overwhelming. Can't have the good without the bad.

Most of all, I credit weed with creating a sense of camaraderie between my friends and I. It gave us a reason to hang out, it gave us something to do, and it let us experience different sides of each other's personalities. There was nothing better than hitting the grav-bong aluminum foil bowl (gross, I know) and ripping a video game or

a comfy movie with the bros. I had never been a big drinker, and chilling on a couch was always more my bag, so weed was always the perfect thing to do. Someone always had a little, and we were never stingy. Buying it was always an adventure when it wasn't readily available, too. We had one dealer who would sell dimebags in Halloween-sized chip bags he re-sealed with a heat sealer. Weed was the perfect semi-illegal activity to bring a little excitement and adventure to a young

man's life. It was a little dangerous, but not really. It was great for my creativity. It made food mind-blowingly yummy. For many years, it really did make everything better. You could always depend on that first smoke after a long day. I miss the good times, but I had to move on. I wish it didn't fry my memory so I could remember more funny stories, but that's the way it is. Those have become myths and legends now.

## LIAM VS THE WORLD



## Ripping the Alps Part Drü (That's Swiss for Three)

By Brydo "Cliff Magnet" Parker

Ripping the Alps Part Drü, that is three in Swiss. You could also say drai or drei depending on the region you are in, as the Swiss have four national languages.

So we left off the last episode of this epic snowboarding story with Ira, myself, and Tonow in the Jungfrau region of Switzerland at the resort of Grindelwald where we were getting yelled at by the Swiss Army to get off the World Cup racing course

they were setting up and that we were poaching. So we went back and did it again to make sure we were not getting cheers and yep they were yelling.

Now we had no idea Europe would be experiencing a serious powder drought. Our plan from the beginning was to follow the storm cycles through the various countries that the Alps are in. The Jungfrau region can not be fully appreciated in only two days. There is a lot to do and see and we did not have enough time to see it all. Suffice it to say that Jungfrau is awesome and one of the top places in the world to ride.

There is train access to nearly the tippy top of Grindelwald with a great view of the Eiger, a sheer 4,000-meter mountain. Now I have never ridden a mountain where you could literally ride down beside a moving train and pass under it in a tunnel or go across the tracks. Tonow took the lead on the next run as we went up yet another

massive lift. Tonow spied a small mini valley that looked like a pocket of snow was blown in there. It was about the size of a mega snowboard pipe and three times as long. To get into it we needed to duck a rope (not a good idea in unfamiliar terrain). We did that but found the snow on other side of that rope was solid ice that if you started to slide there was no stopping before going over a massive cliff. I started to slide to said cliff, but I managed to stop right at the lip, ten feet from death. I scooped my way over and found some snow I could get an edge into and hiked back up around the death zone to find the Powder Seekers waiting for me ready to drop into the best looking shoot we had seen yet on our trip. I rode by the boys and yelled "Poached!" as I gobbled up as much fresh line as I could get. To this day that is the most epic poach of my life.



You need to have legs of steel just to make it to noon in the Swiss Alps. Ripping down was a blast, the groomers were not touched even by the end of the day.

Closing the door on the Jungfrau and opening the door to Engelberg home of the mighty Mt. Titlis was a short drive through some very long tunnels that passed right through entire mountains. Titlis is legendary for having the only publicly accessible glacier in

Central Switzerland. Driving to the base of the mountain in the Mercedes camper, we arrived and went directly to guest services where I was set to pick up free media passes. When originally I applied for free passes, Mt. Titlis was the first to offer up media passes. A man named Peter Niederberger from the marketing department had assured me the passes would be waiting. So Ira and I went in and Ira started to speak french with the lady at guest relations, but she quickly and sternly said "No French here!" I introduced myself and she sternly said "Who authorized this?" I replied "Peter" she said "Peter who? We have many Peters here!" I said "Peter Niederberger" she reached over to a huge stack of



papers and immediately came up with a file in typical Swiss efficiency she said "You are Brydon?" I replied "Yes." she said "You need to pay five euros for each pass refundable when you return them, so 25 euros." I asked if she would take Canadian dollars, she laughed and said "We are Swiss, we take all money."

So I paid up, got the passes, and went back to find our gang including us three and Jai and Danny who was Jai's German ski buddy. Tonow was busy making sandwiches and snacks in the parking lot where we geared up and got ready to ride.

Up and up we went right over a whole mountain range to get to the base of Titlis. Then up another lift then we transferred to the Rotair, which is a one of a kind rotating gondola that offers a glacier panorama with a 360-degree perspective in the world's first revolving aerial cableway. The 360 view is unreal and you really get a great scope of the terrain. The Titlis Rotair docks within the overhanging glacier, so when you disembark you are actually in the Glacier and find yourself in an ice tunnel that exits through a big steel door out onto the tippy top of the mountain where the air is thin and cold.

Now the big surprise was 18 cm of fresh powder! The Powder Seekers did it again and found the only fresh snow in Europe. We were amazed at the Bluebird day enhanced by the fresh snow. Then we discovered a walkway, which is actually the highest suspension bridge in Europe, called the Titlis Cliff Walk. It traverses a trio of mountain tops, another Swiss engineering feat, and is very scary with steep drops and strong winds threatening to send the intrepid explorers to the deep mountain abyss far below.

We had spotted a sick line that was untracked and was beside the hanging glacier. We ducked a couple ropes and nearly

# POWDER SEEKERS



rode off a massive 500ft cliff, but managed to not do that. Note: Ducking ropes is not a great idea as there were no signs saying danger cliff, but in this case we found not death, but the best run of our lives. We lost Jai and Danny right away and did not find them again until the end of the day. Needless to say we did that run twice and continued having a great snowboarding day start to finish.



One of my most powerful memories is of us on the Cliff Walk kicking snow down a 300 meter vertical couloir and getting a little dizzy from the heights when Tonow asks amid all the majestic splendour, "Anybody want a sandwich?"

Shortly after that we heard what sounded like a cannon shot. As we looked up, an apartment building size piece of the glacier calved off and tumbled down the mountain not too far from our

previous run and decimated a stand of trees. No photos were taken as it happened so fast. I will say it again, in The Alps don't screw around, as death with grab you and grind you into a memory. We got the deposit money for the passes back and thanks to Tonow's sandwich making snack skills and my free ski pass connections, we managed to get four days snowboarding in Switzerland for almost free. We ended up only having to pay a half euro for parking. Not bad for shredding the most expensive place in the world to ski.

Next issue is Part Vier, which is Austrian for four. Where we dive head-first into the party zone of the Austrian Alpine resort town Saalbach-Hinterglemm.

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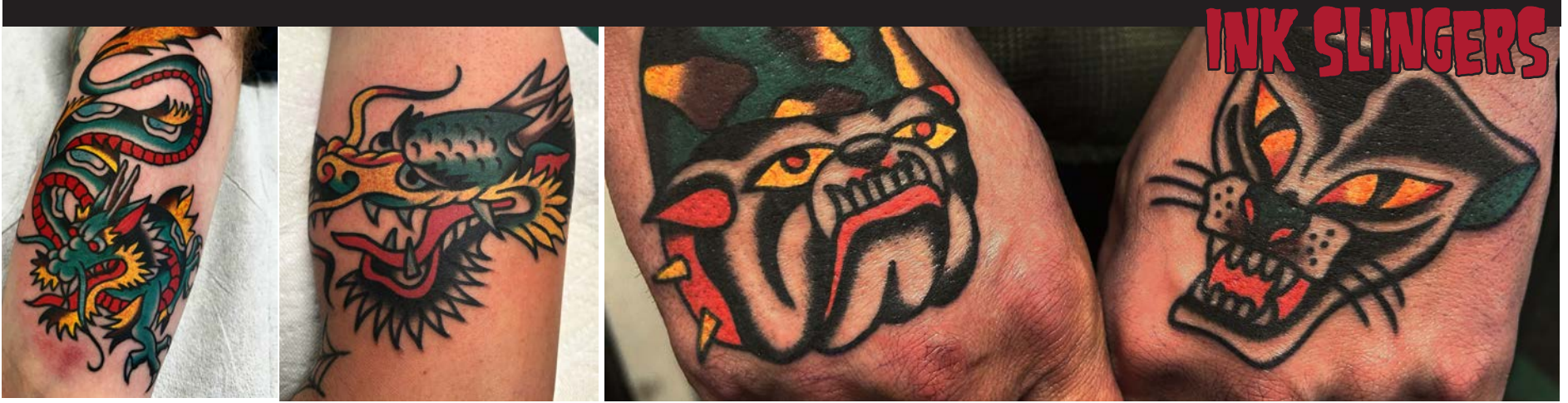
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## Mt. Splashmore

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Dave Goertzen:** Hey, my names Dave Goertzen and I'm probably most infamous for talking too much at the shop and annoying my coworkers.

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

mainly on making traditional tattoos but we work in a busy walk in shop so we do all types of tattooing.

**AU: What influences your work?**

**DG:** I'm mostly influenced by my friends and coworkers, seeing all the cool stuff they are doing and putting out gets my gears moving. Also, just digging through old flash and references looking for fun images is always a good way to get the juices flowing.

**AU: Any other hidden talents unrelated to tattooing?**

**DG:** I grew up playing music in the hardcore scenes of Alberta and British Columbia, not so much a talent but definitely another passion I like to stay invested in.

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

**DG:** At the shop, we listen to everything from Cam'ron to

Dead Kennedys. There are a few bands and artists banned from the list but I'll just keep it at that.

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

**DG:** I once tattooed a dick with boobs for balls farting and a baby face shaped like a carton of milk... You know just normal stuff.

**AU: This will be our 420 issue. Do you partake?**

**DG:** I used to a lot, but not



**DG:** I've been tattooing for six years this year and I got my start by just getting tattooed a lot and then started to paint flash. Took me a while to get my foot in the door but I'm glad I went the route I did. Got my first tattoos done at Government Street Tattoo and now I get to make them out of the very same spot that started the obsession.

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

**DG:** I focus



anymore! But to each their own!

**AU: What makes the best munchies?**

**DG:** SUPER NIBS AND DIET COKES

**AU: Dream project you are dying to do?**

**DG:** No real dream projects! Just happy to be here.

**AU: Any words of wisdom for our readers or aspiring tattoo artists?**

**DG:** GET TATTOOED

**AU: Where can we find your shop?**

**DG:** You can find us in the heart of Victoria's Chinatown at 1710 Government Street!

**AU: How can people book with you?**

**DG:** Walk into the shop or direct message me on instagram.

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## Unleash The Archers

By Erik Lindholm

**AU: Who are you with the band, where do you find yourself, and what's in your cup today?**

**Brittney Slayes:** I'm Brittney Slayes, vocalist for UTA, I live in East Van and I just finished an almond milk latte.

**AU: You're free of the studio and that intense focus. What's kept you busy outside of music?**

**BS:** Outside of music? Been playing a lot of disc golf actually! Scott (drums) and I try to get out at least once a week, but that doesn't always happen. There is so much to do when releasing a record, free time has been minimal.

**AU: With a wide-reaching tour booked through European festivals (Wacken), North America, Australia, and New Zealand, what are you looking forward to exploring in the countries you'll visit? Is there a mountaintop high, a cavern low, a giant statue?**

**BS:** We've never been to Australia, so we are excited to tour a bit of Sydney harbour, and of course we're hoping we have time to see Hobbiton when we get to New Zealand. We probably won't have much time to be tourists at the festivals, but we are playing on the same day as a lot of rad bands, so I've got a list of must-

see bands for every weekend.

We've never played Romania, so we're stoked about Celtic Transylvania Fest, and we have been trying to get to Sweden and Finland for a long time, so I think Time To Rock and John Smith Fest are both gonna be a party!

**AU: What did you learn making this record? How do you feel the band is evolving through this new release? Was there a moment in the studio where you went... "didn't see that coming?"**

**BS:** This record was tough because we recorded it ourselves at a studio in Cobble Hill called Silverside Sound, and Andrew (guitar) was behind the board the whole time. We didn't realize how much work it was going to be for him, so recording guitar parts ended up taking way longer than usual, which delayed recording bass and vocals and next thing we knew, we were



running out of time. We had only reserved the studio for three weeks, and couldn't really afford to extend it so, yeah lol, we learned that it's just not realistic for us to do everything ourselves. Next time we'll hire an engineer and Andy will just produce!

This new album is very similar to our previous record *Abyss* in a lot of ways, but we also tried to do some new things and experiment with some different sub-genres. I think we evolved just enough that our fans won't be bored but they also won't feel like we've completely abandoned our sound!

**AU: The new video for "Green & Glass" is beautifully realized— by AI that was trained solely on the works of artist Bo Bradshaw. It is reminiscent of many great futurist 1980s cartoons and films. How did the process go with RuneGate Studio and the artist to develop the storyboard and prompts for the AI? How did the band, studio, and artist, shape the video to match the song?**

**BS:** Honestly, the AI was such a small part of all the work that went into that video, it's really too bad that it has overshadowed everything else, but I guess that is to be expected when you include such a new and controversial technology in your work. We were filming the music video for our third single with RuneGate when they mentioned this AI program called Stable Diffusion and how it could be used to create music videos. We were already trying to use AI where we could, so that we

could say that AI was used in the creation of an album about AI; it was an intriguing idea to us. They turned their studio into a big green screen room, and we booked a long weekend to capture all of the footage. All of the characters' movements, all of the interactions, that's actually us. That's me underneath *Phantoma*, in an android jumpsuit I bought from Etsy. The council of humans is all UTA, and the droids at the very beginning are actually Adam and Danny from RuneGate. We filmed every scene over three days; there was a lot of walking on a treadmill, staring into nothing, and trying to emote. We are not the best actors, but we always like to try and be more than just musicians in our videos and create an engaging story that will keep the viewer interested. Anyways, RuneGate then built all of the backgrounds in Unreal Engine 5, from the ground up. They designed every single detail. They put in all the effects, all the dust, smoke, sparks etc. Then they used Dreambooth and Automatic1111 to train the models with the artwork we licensed. Stable Diffusion was then used to "paint" the footage in the art style created by the model. Finally, they used Warp Fusion to rotoscope the green screen footage, and DaVinci Resolve to do the compositing. It was an immense undertaking. We filmed everything in August and the boys barely got it in done in time for the release in February.

**AU: A notable change to these ears in the new record was addition of some synths, which really kicks the melodies off— are you adding**

**a keys player for live duties? I'm also feeling some killer Cynic vibes with processed vocal melodies, adding to the machine mystique.**

**BS:** Yeah, we had synths on *Abyss* and really liked it and felt that it lends itself well to a concept record with a sci-fi story so we leaned even harder into it on *Phantoma*. We won't be adding a new keys member though, we play to a click, so it was super easy to just add them as backing tracks and add it to our FOH outputs. It's expensive enough touring with five members let alone adding a sixth, haha. Visas, flights, hotels, and spots on the bus are pretty hot commodities around here.

**AU: The lyrics throughout the record have an undercurrent of humanity making bad choices, and perhaps, the need to escape or change what we're doing. A before and after time-frame, a changed Earth. "Gods In Decay" really spoke to this. What is your advice to stay grounded in these increasingly electronic times?**

**BS:** Personally, I try to stay off social media as much as possible. I have to post to stay in touch with our fans and keep everyone informed on what's going on with UTA but that is the extent of it. Spend time outside, hang with friends and family, travel if you can afford it, enjoy this planet while we still have it. We can all get so focused on the daily grind sometimes that we forget that none of it really matters. Society has created these dumb rules, and you don't actually have to follow them. You alone are in charge of your own path, don't let time pass you by! We are but tiny dust motes in a massive and uncaring cosmos; do what you want, be what you want, follow your dreams and don't worry about where you are in life or what others are doing around you, because there is no end game; it's about living. Never forget that.

**AU: William Gibson rules. Please recommend your favourite gritty cyberpunk novel, or depiction of the future!**

**BS:** I love the *Revelation Space* novels by Alastair Reynolds. Also, the *Tokyo Ghost* comics had a big influence on the story of *Phantoma*. As did *Bladerunner: 2049* and older films like *Aliens*, *Terminator 2* and the original *Star Wars* trilogy. All gems!

**AU: Last words to cyborg metal-heads and future wasteland historians looking back at this strange organic paper based medium?**

**BS:** Haha, well I guess I'd say slow down for a minute and go check out our eons-old record *Phantoma* and let me know if I got it right. In some ways, I hope not, but in others I feel like the destruction of our planet is inevitable. Humankind loves to create just as much as it loves to destroy, and the dichotomy is never ending! Hope you enjoy the record and see you at Wicket Hall on May 25th! Thanks for all your support over the years as well, we wouldn't be here without you. <3

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

Photo by Shimon Karmel

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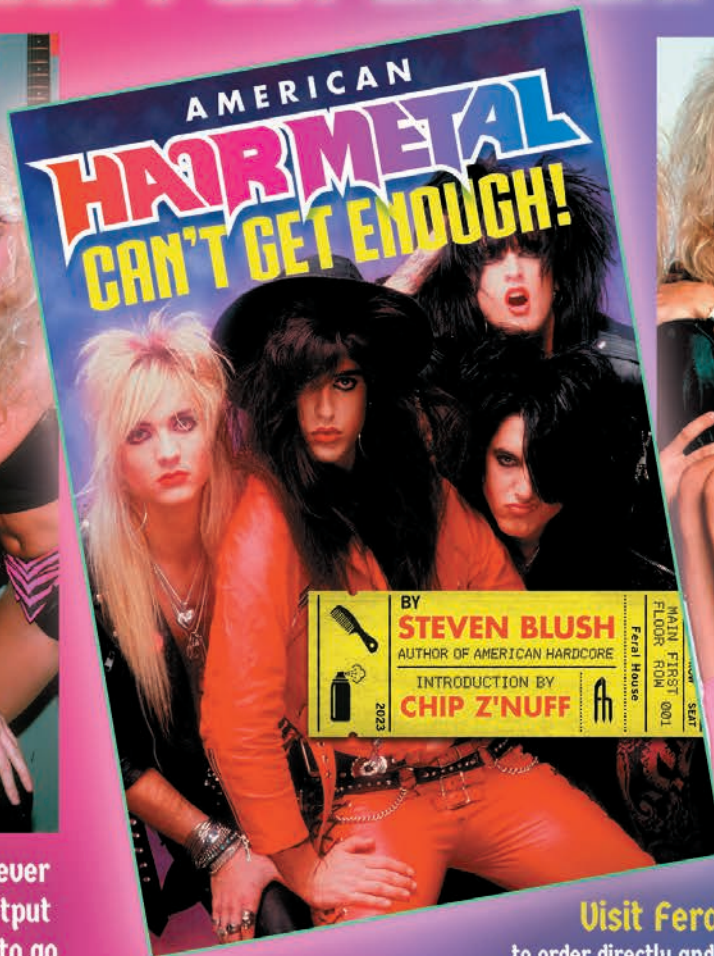
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## Horror at the Turn of the Century

(Or: the Beginning and the Short End of Mainstream Big-Budget Stoner Horror)

By Vince D'Amato

1998. There we sit, in the darkened theatre, in the downstream of the mid-nineties Tarantino/Robert Rodriguez/Kevin Williamson horror influx that was (among others) *From Dusk Till Dawn*, *The Faculty*, *Halloween H20*, *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, *Scream*, *Scream 2*, and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. In fact, the movie we're about to see is *I STILL Know What You Did Last Summer*. The scenes featuring a very young comedian named Jack Black as a spring break stoner seemed particularly cringy and out-of-place for a slasher flick of the time, and we all knew it was just going to be a set-up for some bloody murder that the movie's killer could accomplish without actually sacrificing any of the main and popular cast members too early in the proceedings.

Okay, so Jack Black's murder wasn't actually bloody at all, and the movie was really just a little... meh? But watching it now (you can currently stream it on Netflix), it's kind of a hoot to see the young pot-smoking Jack Black in an early role, and the young cast of famous up-and-comers Jennifer Love Hewitt, pop singer Brandy, Mekhi Phifer, and even a super-young Jennifer Esposito sharing a scene with *Re-Animator's* Herbert West himself, Jeffrey Combs...

Well, what Hollywood casting director put all that together back in 1998? But in 1998, Hollywood was still going through the tiring tropes of killing off the lone stoner/slacker character for humorous murder-fodder for whatever slasher-killer happened to be the main villain in the particular film...

Until 1999, that is, when suddenly the pot-smokers weren't just comedic stoners to be thrown to the proverbial wolves for our entertainment, instead, these often funny and charming characters became part of ensemble casts of various horror movie survivors, and sometimes, were the lead characters. In the weirdly small window between 1999 and 2003, there was a small shift in Hollywood theatrical horror where those fictional characters who smoked pot were suddenly placed in better, lengthier roles in horror films— and then, for some reason, after 2003, these films just sort of... stopped. Maybe it was a shift in pot culture itself.

A notable exception could be pointed at Joss Whedon's *Cabin in the Woods* from 2012, and other fingers have been pointed at the utterly brilliant horror-comedy *Tucker and Dale vs. Evil* (2010)— but these days, no one really wants to talk about Joss Whedon anymore (for now, anyway), and *Tucker and Dale vs. Evil* undoubtedly feels like a stoner horror movie, but in truth, Tucker and Dale are just a couple of beer-drinking fellas, and I don't clearly remember anyone smoking weed in that one, not even the "college kids". But back at the turn of the century, 420 culture was beginning to rear its head in bigger-budgeted (and in some cases hugely-budgeted) Hollywood studio horror. Incidentally, was it a coincidence that a good chunk of these horror movies were shot in, or had major connections to, Vancouver, BC?

**Bones (2001)**



So, this is the only film in this list that I can't confidently recall whether it featured any on-screen smoking. But, I included it here for Snoop Dogg's connection to pot culture, which I felt was actually important in bringing that culture into horror cinema. And, also, for its legendary casting of Snoop Dogg and Pam Grier, its overt connections with the horror noir genre,

and because of horror director Ernest Dickerson (who also helmed *Surviving the Game* and *Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight*,



and who got his start as George Romero's second unit director on *Day of the Dead*), who filmed *Bones* as an explicit homage to the blaxploitation genre of the 1970s and incorporated a lot of that genre's counter-culture ideology and social themes throughout *Bones'* updated millennial urban setting, which sees rapper Snoop Dogg as a murdered numbers-runner who comes back from the dead to wreak his horror vengeance.

Maybe *Bones* does lean on a lot of unexpected humour, and overall it's not really as scary as it should have been, but Dickerson's mid-career film does not deserve to slip into obscurity, either; it has too much going for it.

**Final Destination 2 (2003)**

This sequel is actually my favourite of the entire *Final Destination* series, mostly due to its charming cast and insanely architected elaborate death scenes that traditionally run a sort of mouse-trap series of events for each individual kill scene as "Death" catches up with its intended victims in the film, one by one. Helmed by David R. Ellis (*Snakes on a Plane*) and starring the magnetic and engaging Ali Larter (of the *Resident Evil* film franchise), it's ultimately the drug-loving party guy and seemingly full-time slacker Rory, played by Canadian actor Jonathan Cherry, who really steals the show and is one of the far more interesting and memorable characters not only in this film, but in the whole series. He's portrayed as a chronic recreational drug user but also a completely functional and helpful member of the group of survivors who are all out trying to outrun "Death" before it catches up with each of them, who were all supposed to have perished in the movie's impressive (and dare I say epic?) opening death-and-destruction highway crash scene.



**Freddy vs. Jason (2003)**  
Directed by celebrated 90s Hong Kong filmmaker Ronny Yu (after 1998's *Bride of Chucky*), this wildly surreal sequel to both the *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchises should never have worked, but it really does, thanks to the humour along with the film's timing and direction, and no doubt to the participation of original Freddy Krueger actor Robert Englund. Almost as if trying to correlate the dream-laden

surrealism of the whole show, *Freddy vs. Jason* features a group of young, pot-smoking friends who end up having to do battle with child-killer Krueger; and, in one sequence in particular, this leads into a very weird drug-addled dream/hallucination for one of the characters. Unfortunately, this film doesn't do nearly as good a job with featuring its pot-smoking would-be protagonists in a positive or charming light as the other horror mega-hits in this list, however, huge points for continuing to include some marijuana culture in mainstream horror films of this era.

**Idle Hands (1999)**



You all must've been waiting for this one, the absolute epitome of stoner horror for the turn of the century. Starring Vancouver actor Devon Sawa (*Final Destination*) as the quintessential stoner/slacker who must enlist his stoner (and stoned) friends along with his metalhead next-door neighbor to do battle against a demon from hell who has possessed... his hand? But it totally works.

Vivica A. Fox also joins the ensemble cast in a wildly surprising turn (coming off of her huge success in *Independence Day*) as a demon-battling badass who is the only one who knows exactly what's going on and is hellbent on stopping the demon is by killing our hilarious leading protagonist (Sawa) with her sacrificial blade. This movie is chock full of likable and hilarious characters, the entire cast has great comedic timing, and they all seem to totally get what kind of movie they're in and what they're all doing there. My personal opinion is that *Shaun of the Dead* took a lot of uncredited influence from *Idle Hands*, but that's just my opinion; I have no actual proof of that, although the shenanigans happening on-screen in *Idle Hands* appear to speak for themselves. And as funny as this movie is, there are several tip-top surprise scares, too. Incidentally, director Rodman Flender, who also directed 2019's *Eat, Brains, Love*, got his start with Roger Corman's company in the early nineties, and directed one of the *Leprechaun* sequels.

**The Cell (2000)**

Veering from the hilarious, to the pretty-damned-serious, this surreal, psychedelic, dream-laden gothic serial killer movie stars Jennifer Lopez (who was still at the dawn of her acting career at this time) as a social psychologist who is recruited by the FBI to work with agent Vince Vaughn in



tracking down the only recent surviving victim of serial kidnapper/killer Vincent D'Onofrio, after D'Onofrio falls into a coma. Lopez's task is to enter the killer's mind via experimental technology that will allow her consciousness to enter his thoughts. And once inside his brain, Lopez has to navigate her way through a dreamscape horrorshow that is the elaborate house inside the killer's subconscious mind.

Interestingly, Lopez' character, which is written to be a likable, serious young Gen X professional, is introduced to us as a person who casually uses marijuana during her off-hours, where she appears to use the drug in more of a quiet, meditative manner. Regardless, it is (or

was) a little odd to see it displayed in this sort of mainstream Hollywood serial killer movie of that time, when we were used to seeing protagonists like Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman from *Se7en*. But, overall, the meditative tone ultimately works within the world of this film, which centers around the beautifully horrific mind-journey through the internal eye of the killer.

This movie is all about the lush visuals. In fact, on my first viewing, I was annoyed that the entire plot of the film appeared to be moot, as the single clue that cracks the entire case which Lopez is able to extract from the killer's mind (*Inception*, anyone?) turns out to be nothing that Vince Vaughn couldn't have uncovered himself in the real world of actual detective work. But, upon repeat viewings, I realized that this wasn't really what the film was about— *The Cell* is more concerned with solving the puzzle through thoughts and dreams, rather than real-world police work, so it's clearly all and only about the mind trip.

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## Tales from the Darkside:

### Psychedelic Horror

By Vince D'Amato

420 culture is not exactly rich in the realm of horror cinema, it's really mostly relegated to Full Moon's *Evil Bong* series/franchise; and while some blogs or top-ten lists point to the films of David Cronenberg (*Videodrome*) or David Lynch (*Eraserhead*), to me there is undoubtedly a huge difference between "stoner horror" and "psychedelic horror", with *Evil Bong* representing

its problems, which was influenced by stoner horror movies that came out before the turn of the century, wherein partakers of pot culture also associated themselves— and thereby culturally appropriated—parts of Rastafarian or Jamaican culture that were also associated with 420 culture. It's honestly cringy to see a white person wielding a fake-

the former, and the latter being a sort of horror sub-genre that can be enjoyed while stoned, or otherwise on some sort of mind-altering substance. In the former category, Darkside Releasing represents a fun and quirky and begrudgingly likable slasher-comedy titled *Cheerleader Horror Movie*— but this sort of indie film is not without



Jamaican accent with ignorant abandon. I have to admit, I'm not sure where a film like this fits within the overall counter-culture of indie horror, which of course, also celebrates the type of counter-culture that 420 ultimately represents. Studios like Troma, for example, have made an independent empire on purposefully offensive and shocking horror-humour— and I love Troma! In fact, Troma produced one of the best 420 horror-comedies-slash-cult-favourites ever, *Class of Nuke 'Em High* (along with two remake/sequels in 2013 and 2018).

Perhaps, speaking broadly, it's best for audiences to decide for themselves? But, circling back to that latter category of "psychedelic horror", which, in my opinion, can be enjoyed either on or off of such mind-altering influences, a huge favourite of ours still stands

## TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE



as *Sister Tempest*, which is an absolutely insane and near-perfect cinematic dream-semblance of horror/mystery. Darkside Releasing has recently curated a small collection of psychedelic and surreal horror that includes more than one film from the brilliant independent British filmmaker James Edward Newton (including his newest film, *Katernica*) and celebrated Canadian indie filmmaker Chris Alexander (*Blood Dynasty*, *Girl with a Straight Razor*).

[darksidereleasing.com/amazing-surreal-horror-various-directors](http://darksidereleasing.com/amazing-surreal-horror-various-directors)

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Nestled in the heart of Cumberland, Vancouver Island's newest gem, CUBSpot, is poised to transform the cannabis landscape with its visionary approach to consumption and community engagement. As the island's first legal al fresco cannabis lounge, CUBSpot represents a convergence of culinary innovation, sensory exploration, and social connectivity, inviting patrons to embark on a journey of discovery unlike any other.

At the core of CUBSpot's ethos lies a commitment to redefining the cannabis experience through a holistic sensory approach. Drawing inspiration from the natural beauty and serenity of Cumberland's surroundings, CUBSpot offers a sanctuary where individuals can unwind, connect, and explore the diverse world of cannabis in a safe and welcoming environment.

Central to the CUBSpot experience is its groundbreaking menu of terpene-infused culinary creations. Terpenes, aromatic compounds found in plants, including cannabis, are known for their mood-enhancing properties. Leveraging this knowledge, CUBSpot's culinary team has curated a selection of dishes and beverages designed to evoke specific moods and sensations, taking guests on a sensory journey through the world of terpenes.

In its pursuit of excellence, CUBSpot has forged strategic partnerships with industry leaders such as Trugreen Cannabis Inc. and Community Urban Bazaar (CUB). These collaborations enable CUBSpot to stay at the forefront of cannabis innovation, providing access to the latest research, technologies, and trends in terpene science.

Trugreen Cannabis Inc. is a leading provider of premium cannabis products, committed to excellence, innovation, and community engagement. With a focus on quality and customer satisfaction, Trugreen strives to enhance the cannabis experience for enthusiasts across Vancouver Island.



Community Urban Bazaar (CUB) is dedicated to creating inclusive spaces that foster community engagement and cultural

enrichment. Through collaborative initiatives and innovative ventures, CUB aims to empower individuals and strengthen connections within the community.

From ambient aromatherapy to curated soundscapes and visual art installations, CUBSpot offers a multi-sensory experience that engages guests on every level. Whether it's the subtle scent of terpenes in the air or the soothing melodies of live music, every aspect of the CUBSpot environment is carefully designed to enhance the overall guest experience.

Beyond its sensory offerings, CUBSpot serves as a hub for community engagement, hosting educational workshops, cultural events, and theme nights that celebrate diversity and foster connections within the community. Through these initiatives, CUBSpot aims to empower individuals and strengthen bonds within the community.

#### Join Us at the 420 Event

As CUBSpot prepares to open its doors to the public, we invite you to join us for our 420 event on April 20, 2024. Experience an unforgettable celebration as we usher in a new era of cannabis culture on Vancouver Island. Immerse yourself in the sensory revolution and experience firsthand the fusion of culinary innovation, artistic expression, and community engagement at CUBSpot.

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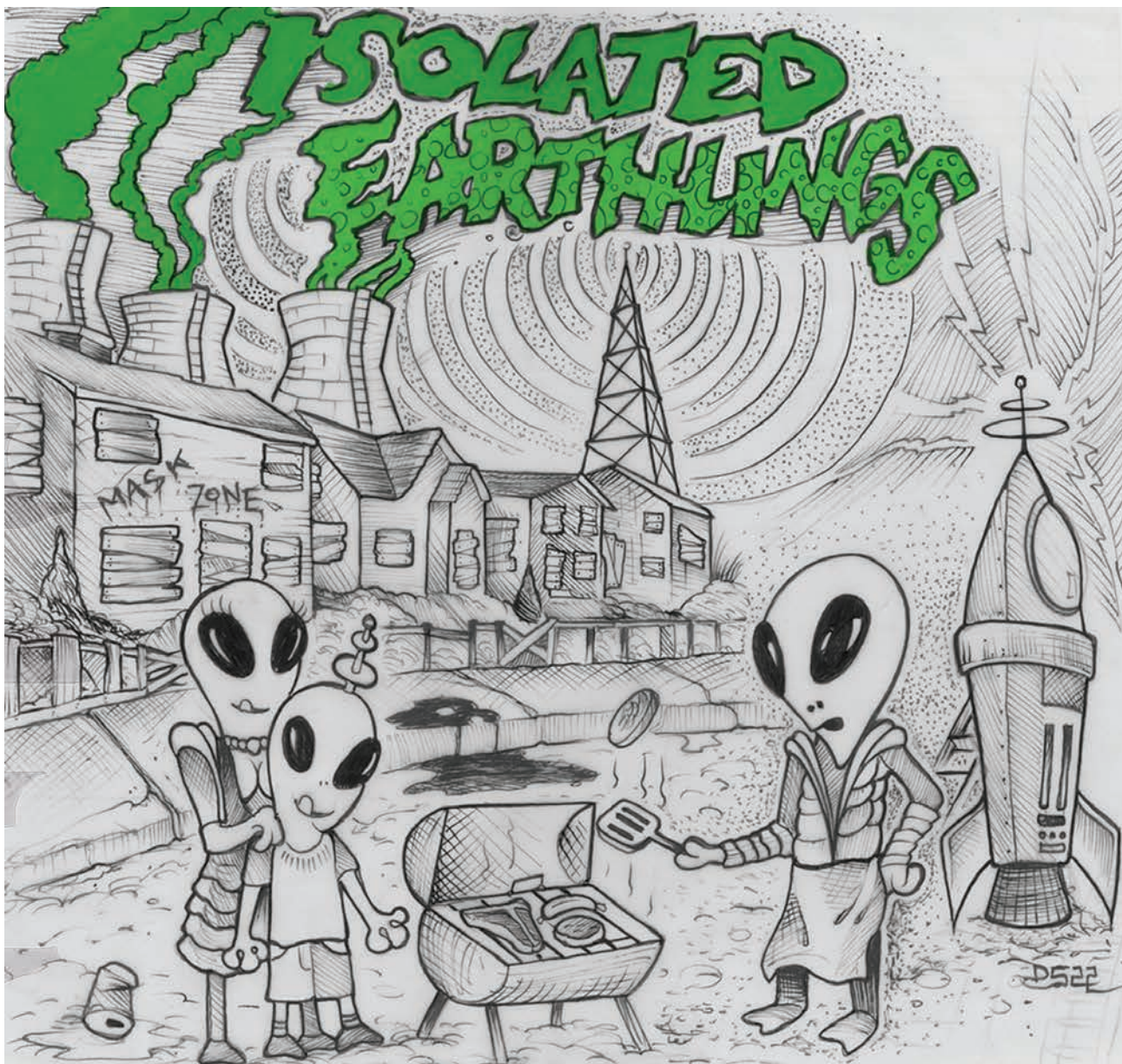
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# the SHIT TALKERS

## Papa Joe's Organics

Interview by Iree-I

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

**Tony:** My name is Tony Musfelt, and I'm one of the four partners here at Papa Joe's Organics.

**AU: When did you first start growing cannabis?**

**Tony:** I only just started growing myself about four years ago, but before that I was in sales for the better part of 20 years.

**AU: What first drew you to the industry?**

**Tony:** Well, I guess you could say that was way back in grade 8 when I smoked my first joint. The smell and the look are what really drew me in as a young person, and that fascination has never left me. I still get really excited about this plant when I see some sticky, dank weed.

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

**Tony:** We have our indica Nana Butter, Organic Gorilla Grapes, and Blueberry Shizzle. All very unique in their own ways. The Nana Butter will put you to sleep with a gassy sweet cherry nose. The Blueberry Shizzle will do the same, but with a straight up blueberry pie or jam flavour. The Organic Gorilla Grapes is a nice indica that won't put you to sleep like the others do.

As for our sativas, we have Mango Breath, Watermelon, and our Organic Mango Gold. The Mango Breath is a strain that is perfect for those who can't handle sativa-dominant strains. Coming in roughly at 60% on the sativa side it is a great daytime smoke with no burn out. It really reminds me of the benefits of Blue Dream when it first came out. Our Watermelon is like sticking your face into a bowl of cut up melons. The organic

Mango Gold is our hard hitting sativa; definitely not for beginners.

**AU: Do you prefer sativas or indicas?**

**Tony:** I actually utilize both. I prefer my sativas to be not so hard hitting as I can get a little squirrely but my indicas... bring it on. If it puts me to sleep, well, good— that's what I use it for. For me, there is definitely a third category that is often not talked about, and that's the 50/50 split hybrids. That to me is where you get the best of both worlds and

where the happy place is.

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

**Tony:** I don't think I can really answer that. I enjoy all the unique characteristics of the different strains out there.

**AU: What is it like being a licensed producer in BC?**

**Tony:** To be brutally honest, not at all as fun as I'd hoped my dream job would be. The government has put such a heavy burden on this

industry with overregulation (paperwork) and heavy taxation, that it hasn't even been about how much money can we make; it's about just keeping the bills paid so we can keep the lights on.

**AU: Why is it important to support local growers?**

**Tony:** We are the ones producing that chronic. That small batch quality smoke that people love to take.

**AU: What makes an expert grower in your opinion?**

**Tony:** I would say an expert grower is one that acknowledges that you never stop learning. Keep learning and implementing new techniques.

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

**Tony:** I wouldn't say I have any tips or secrets but



## CANNABIS CORNER

I will tell you this: love your plants and they will love you back.

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

**Tony:** We currently sell our Organic Mango Gold under Ross Rebagliati's Ross' Gold Label, and will be releasing another strain under that label called 7th Heaven. The Organic Mango Gold being a sativa, and 7th Heaven being an indica.

**AU: Where are your products available?**

**Tony:** Evergreen Cannabis in Kitsilano carries our products, and you can order it for delivery anywhere in BC from [ecsvan.ca](http://ecsvan.ca). We primarily use the direct delivery system to get our products out to stores but, sadly, not many stores utilize this system. To me, that's a shame because that puts craft cannabis into the hands of the consumers. Get out there and tell your local stores to use the direct delivery system to get quality cannabis like Papa Joe's Organics on their shelves.

**AU: What's the best part of your job?**

**Tony:** When I get off work at 4, then 20 minutes shortly thereafter. But seriously, I just enjoy walking through the rows of plants during

flowering and just taking in the sights and smells.

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

**Tony:** It's not always about how high can you get, but how good you can feel.

**AU: How else can this amazing plant be used to save the planet?**

**Tony:** Man, this world would be a lot more chill if more people just smoked weed.

**AU: Any plans for 420 this year?**

**Tony:** I, myself, will be hanging out at Mood Cannabis on Victoria Street in Nanaimo, and one of my partners, Cam, will be up in Prince George at the BC Craft Cannabis Summit.

**AU: How can people find you online?**

**Tony:** People can find us at [papajoesorganics.com](http://papajoesorganics.com), and on Instagram [@papajoesorganics](https://www.instagram.com/papajoesorganics). If you are a retailer, a great place to find us is a brand-new website called [jointconnections.ca](http://jointconnections.ca). A wonderful direct delivery platform effortlessly connecting retailers to processors.



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## TOMMY CHONG – PART 1

### Interview by Paris Chong

*This one on one interview was conducted at the Grow Up Conference & Expo in Victoria, BC*

**Tommy Chong:** This is my son Paris and the reason he's with me is that I smoked so much dope. I can't remember shit.

**Paris Chong:** I try to be his memory for him. We're going to talk about Tommy Chong. He's my father and I'm going to tell you some secret juicy stories from behind the scenes. But first, we want to talk about your history. You grew up here in Canada?

**TC:** In Canada, eh.

**PC:** You are a Canadian?

**TC:** Fuck yeah. I'm so Canadian. I swear to god I am. Cheech and I, we got pretty popular, doing stoner things and we did a bit on Canada. It was all about eh. We had everything eh! "What do ya think, eh?" so when I met the singer Joni Mitchell, she goes "That bit you did about Canada, eh? I didn't realize that we talked like that. Sorry."

**PC:** I think you had the first topless bar in Vancouver? How did you get into that?

**TC:** Well by that time, I'd been playing in a band, we had a hot band. We started off in Calgary. Talk about racism. If you were black, you were

automatically a singer. Every band that I was in, if you didn't have a black singer you were not that great. Being half Chinese I thought everybody was mean when we were little kids. We were those half Chinese or thinks they'd call us. My older brother was tough as nails. He liked to fight. I was the opposite. My dad was very tough too.

**PC:** But let's talk about where this club was?

**TC:** The club in Vancouver was on Davie Street. I called it the Elegant Parlor.

**PC:** Did you come up with the idea of doing a strip bar there?

**TC:** No, the strip bar came later. The very first club was an after hours club on Broadway and Elm. It was called The Blues Palace. When we got the band together we found this place. We toured British Columbia with the band. That was great.

**PC:** You were doing R&B music and entertaining and then something changed in your life and clicked. You were in San Francisco and you saw improv comedy for the first time?

**TC:** Our singer kept pushing us to go down to LA to try to get an audition. When I was down in LA, I went to a club and it turned out to be an improvisational club called The Committee.

That's when I saw comedy jazz style. They were mostly ex-jazz musicians doing comedy. Jazz musicians are the hippest people on the planet. So I got into the comedy thing.

Our band, Little Daddy & The Bachelors, was so good that we won a teen fair in Vancouver. We got first prize, which was a record with RCA records. Only trouble is there was no recording studios in Vancouver. So we had to record our hit record at a radio station in the hallway on the stairs. We did a record called Junior's Jerk with Too Much Monkey Business on the B-side. Anyway, we got very popular. This guy bought a building and he needed a club in the basement and he gave us the club. That was the first one called the Elegant Parlor. The Parlor got so popular with the band that we got discovered by Motown and that's how I ended up going to Detroit.

**PC:** Then you got kicked out of the band.

**TC:** I got fired from Motown. Again racism, it's true because I'm Canadian, and I got deported. We had some Canadian musicians with us. They went home for Christmas and came back and told them that we were working at Motown. So then immigration

came and found us where we were living and kicked us across the river to Windsor.

**PC:** Then there was a change in the culture at the time, like the hippie thing started happening, and that changed your whole perception of things?

**TC:** You know what changed everything? Bob Dylan in the 60s, man. When he started singing and opening everybody's eyes with his lyrics. Then Bob Dylan turned on The Beatles to pot. The Beatles were just a R&B band until they met Dylan. Then the pot turned into acid. So because of Bob Dylan we got Tommy Chong. Because I took acid back at a time when it wasn't called anything. It was called "Try this." "What is it?" "You'll see!" so I did a little bit of acid and wow man! I went out and sat under a cherry tree just tripping. Then your mother and I, who was just a very good friend of mine, we did acid together and you are the result.

**PC:** I am an Acid Baby. As a music guy, how did you open up a titty bar and start doing comedy?

**TC:** Acid man. I'm telling you acid just blew open my mind. Well first I wanted to do comedy when I saw the comedians and they were doing great comedy. As a guitar player, I was okay. I wasn't great. But I'm a poet too so I can write lyrics.

**PC:** So there is a club on Davie and you have to do something with it and you come up with an idea.

**TC:** Well the club on Davie was so popular, thanks to your mother, by the way. What happened was your mother, Shelby, was too young to get into the other clubs. I'd met her and her sister. Their parents were out of town so they were on the loose. Young girls going to clubs and doing everything they're not supposed to do and that's when I met her. She wanted to talk to the singer but I fell in love right away. I am all in front of her face. She asked "Do you know the song Walking The Dog?" I said "Yeah." She said "Well then play it." Okay so we played Walking The Dog. Then they said "Give us a ride to the Harlem Nocturne." That was the club that they were going to. We get to the Harlem Nocturne and they get out of the car and I said "Bye see you later." But Floyd, the drummer, says, "It's going to cost you a kiss for the ride." So she gives Floyd a kiss then she gave me a kiss and there was no bullshit man. It changed my life. She just laid it on me. Then I didn't know what happened to her and we went back to our club. About an hour later, we've got an empty club, and I hear this commotion at the door. I look up and it's Shelby. The commotion was they brought the whole crowd from the other club to our club. Because they wouldn't let her in that club she said, "Well, I know a place we can get into it." So of course she's gorgeous and pied pipered the whole crowd into our club. My brother was still not going to let her in. He signaled me from the doors. "Is she okay?" and I yelled "Yeah!" and



then that club was packed every night from that day on for five years.

**PC:** Like a dance club?

**TC:** Yep

**PC:** So how did you turn it into an improv comedy strip club?

**TC:** Another close friend of mine, a Chinese girl. Her family had a dinner club in Chinatown called The Shanghai Junk and they were losing money. But they owned the building and they owned the club. So they came and asked me and my brother, "Do you want an after dinner club? Not a nightclub." and I said "Yeah." and I said "They've never had a strip club in Vancouver." I had been down to San Francisco and saw what strip clubs can do. They said "Yes." and so we started Vancouver's first strip club. I got fired from Motown and came back and both clubs don't need me other than I'm the owner. So I started hanging out at the strip club. I don't know why. Then I started working the lighting. I'm

up there watching the show and these strippers are doing their thing. I'm a writer and comedian so I started visualizing how to do a show. How to change this into something that's more interesting. I realized that the girls are actresses so then I wrote a show for them. We had a doorman named Dave Graham and he was a very funny looking guy. So I said to Dave "I need an emcee." Dave said "I'll do it if you do it." He put it on me. So Dave and I started doing the comedy bits. Then

we had a real straight lawyer looking guy named Rick. We did cop bits and when we needed a straight white guy and he was really good. The club got immediate attention because it was something new in Vancouver. The press came down, the TV, everybody came down. Next thing you know we are front page headlines in the Vancouver Sun. Rick our straight guy is there with the girls with their titties on either side of him. His wife took one look at that picture and we never saw Rick again. So we needed a straight man. So this friend, this Russian guy, he had an underground paper out of Richmond. He said "There's a little guy working for me. You've got to meet him. He's really funny." So then I went down there with

Shelby and we met Cheech for the first time.


**PC:** He was not Cheech back then.

**TC:** No, he was Richard and he wasn't Spanish. He was Richard Marin. He's from the States originally.


**PC:** This is during Vietnam when there were quite a few Americans that were hiding out in Canada.

**TC:** Well, Cheech would say he wasn't really hiding





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out. He was part of a secret army that was in Canada at the time just in case the Vietnamese attacked from Alaska. I loved him right from the beginning. I told him what we were doing. He goes "Okay, that's interesting. I'll come down to look at it." He didn't say yes he just said let me see what you got. So he shows up I think the next night. We're backstage and Cheech walks in and he's got this gorgeous Hollywood looking lady with a mink coat, a brunette, just a stunner. Now I didn't know at the time that she was there to break up with Cheech. As soon as I saw the girl I thought "He is hired." Because I always judge a guy by his women. If a gorgeous woman is with this guy he must have something. So Cheech joined and at first he was an understudy. But Cheech is so smart he learned all of Rick's bits and came up with a bunch of Cheech bits.

**PC:** So things are going well with the improv then you guys wanted to try and make it down South?

**TC:** How we got down there? I am really stoned...

**PC:** You had a rehearsal and no one showed up. You and Cheech were the only ones that showed.

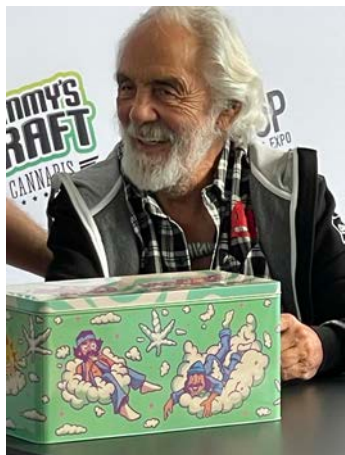
**TC:** Oh, fuck. We got fired by my brother! We were doing great. For the waitresses, when it was a titty bar, it was a cash cow. In titty bars they take money and throw it up there at people.

**PC:** This is when you brought a different culture to the club and it was more cannabis, like a hippie vibe and they didn't spend a penny back then.

**TC:** Oh, are you kidding? We changed that crowd from money-throwing drunks into theatre people. Theatre people they count their change. This is how I got fired. Cheech and I were sitting there trying to plan our next show. My brother had a handful of bills and throws them on the table in front of me. Say no more. That was it. By that time, I said, I was going to go back to music. Cheech is a singer. So Cheech and I we put a band together.

**PC:** You entered a Battle of the Bands.

**TC:** Yeah, we put a band together and then because I had the Motown reputation, we got a gig right away at the Gardens in Vancouver, Battle of the Bands. We had the band with everybody all ready to go. Cheech and I go out and start doing comedy. Well, once you get into comedy, you can't stop. It's like making love. You've got to keep going until you get off. That's what we did.



The crowd was going nuts. They never saw rock and roll comedy before. They loved us.

**PC:** That was your set? You never played a note.

**TC:** We never played a note and we won the battle of the bands.

**PC:** So at the time, this is Richard, you didn't know anything about the name Cheech. You are driving home. You've tasted some success and you felt like you guys had something special there?

**TC:** We're driving home in my dad's Nash and the windshield wipers quit working. It was

pouring rain in Vancouver. I was driving, but we were both taking turns leaning out the window and working the windshield wipers with a coat hanger. While we're out there we're trying to think of a name for the group. We're thinking, Richard and Tommy? Nah. Marin and Chong? Nah. I said to Cheech, don't you have a nickname or something? He goes, "Yeah, Cheech."

I'm out there going, "Cheech and Chong, Cheech and Chong! Cheech and Chong!"

**PC:** Where'd that nickname, Cheech, comes from?

**TC:** When he was born, he looked like a little Chicharrón, which is a little dried up pork skin.

**PC:** Cheech is Chicano. That means he's a Mexican born in the United States. The funny thing is that in Mexico, Mexicans have a hard time pronouncing the nickname Cheech, right?

**TC:** They call him Cheek. Cheek and Chong. Well no actually, everybody thinks I'm Cheech. I was on

The Masked Singer and they kept saying, Cheech, it's Cheech.

**PC:** Yeah at TSA, on our way here, they were like "Hey, Cheech Marin, it's great to meet you."

**TC:** I don't mind.

**PC:** You don't correct anybody on it anymore, you just go with it.

**TC:** In fact, I used to do it with my stand-up routine. I'd say, Listen even my wife mixes us up. When I got out of jail one time, I was laying in bed with her and she was "Cheech, Cheech wake up. Chong will be home any minute now." I was halfway down the road before I realized, Hey I'm Chong.

**PC:** Tell us about the first time you smoked pot.

**TC:** Oh, shit. The first time I smoked pot I was 17. A Chinese bass player from Calgary named Ray Mah, he came back from LA with a present for me. He had a Lenny Bruce comedy record and a marijuana joint. He handed me both, that was very serendipitous. I took both and I put the pot in my pocket. He looked at me and then he lit up his own. I took a couple of tokes and my life has never been the same. I was listening to a song by Ornette Coleman called "Lonely Woman" that was being played in the jazz club. When I heard that song, it changed my life. I literally could see a woman sitting in the window, alone, just sitting there and I couldn't believe it. Then I went home with the joint he gave me. I'd light it up, take a couple of tokes and put it out. That joint lasted me about a month. Second thing I did, I quit school. I realized everybody's faking it. I'm faking it. The teachers are faking it. I don't belong in school. I belong in the street. I belong in the clubs, playing. So that's where I went.

**PC:** So you and Cheech get discovered. You cut some comedy bits and they get airplay on the radio and you start getting some success. When did you feel like you started getting a reputation for being Chong? Because you're kind of pushing the envelope as an artist. Your persona is like, Yeah, I smoke weed and who cares? Dad you became an advocate.

**TC:** My success is based on backing up a partner. I was never a solo act. When I became a solo act,



I was only a solo act for a few months and then I talked your mom into coming on the road with me. I don't like being a solo. I was a backup guitar player. I was not a lead guitar player. Then when I got into comedy it turned into backing up Cheech basically. That was our magic.

**PC:** You're becoming famous for doing this and there's a certain persona that kind of became famous. I wanted to know when did people start wanting to give you a joint or hook you up with a bag of weed? When did you feel like you started becoming a representative of a culture?

**TC:** About an hour ago. It's tough for me to be retrospective.

**PC:** Because I've seen old interviews of you and Geraldo is like "Well you guys are really leaning into the drug culture." and you're like, "Yeah man, there is nothing wrong with it." You said to the interviewer "What if we're right?"

**TC:** We said that to Bill O'Reilly on Fox. I used to go on there a lot because they'd get all this hate mail and all this attention because they had this liberal Tommy Chong on there. I fucked with him all the time. I loved it. So Bill O'Reilly was doing this whole thing and I said, "Bill, what if we're right? What if everything that we've been advocating turns out to be real?" He didn't know what to say.

**PC:** The culture changed. You were right.

To Be Continued Next Issue...

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## Smoked Out Brainless

Interview by Executive Producer Rick Mason

We are joined here in the AU Bunker by the members of Smoked Out Brainless. Their roster is as follows: Matt Norris (bass, vocals), Gary Brainless (drums, vocals), and Jeff Carter (guitar).

**Absolute Underground: What's your favorite food to eat when you're high and have super munchies?**

**Jeff:** Salt and vinegar chips and Maltesers.

**Matt:** Avocados with lime juice and black pepper, and Rollmops.

**Gary:** French fries and cheese. Poutine with your mom.

**AU: How much shatter does one need to smoke per month to stay higher than an eagle having a siesta on the moon?**

**Jeff:** Probably as much as I smoke— a nice block.

**AU: Gary, you are a local hero in the Victoria/Vancouver punk scene. What keeps you creative and, most of all, buzzed into brainlessness?**

**Gary:** Sex, drugs, booze, and your mom's constant support and sensual love.

**AU: What's the highest you've ever been?**

**Matt:** Well, DMT, momentarily. But when I was, like 17, I ate one ounce of mushrooms, and I could no longer see colours— only perfect black and white chess board-like squares. My bro actually had a butcher knife and almost cut off his own penis— we had to call 911 and he ended up in the looney bin. Scary night.

**AU: If you were stuck on a desert island and could only listen to three albums for the rest**

**of time what albums would they be?**

**Matt:** Mr. Bungle's *California*, Acid Bath's *When the Kite String Pops*, Death's *Symbolic*.

**Gary:** Ramones' *Rockets to Russia*, New Model Army's *Thunder and Consolation*, No Fun at All's *The Big Knockover*.

**Jeff:** Jimi Hendrix's *Are You Experienced*, Korn's *Korn*, and Chevelle's *Wonder What's Next*.

**AU: If your band could play a concert anywhere, with any band from history, where would it be, and with what band?**

**Gary:** New Model Army at your mom's house.

**Matt:** Cypress Hill at Chong's marijuana grow-facility.

**Jeff:** Robert Johnson at any 1930s juke joint.

**AU: What's the stupidest thing you've ever done while high on weed?**

**Matt:** Spilled my drink.

**Jeff:** Lost my weed.

**Gary:** Walking around in circles looking for something that's in my hand.

**AU: Tell us about Smoked out Brainless...**

**Matt:** Three stoners playing some riffs, smoking some spliffs, chugging a couple cold ones, bass bliss and fine guitar lines, pounding drums all the time, voices like smoke and sour wine.

**AU: What would happen if you ran out of weed?**

**SOB:** We'd quit music.

**AU: Any words of wisdom?**

**Gary:** Don't smoke your brain out completely, and love who ya want to love; stay high and peaceful.

## Bulkley Cannabis

### A Legalization Story

Interview By Mal Content

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?**

**Trevor Mckilligan:** Trevor Mckilligan, Bulkley Studios.

**AU: In a few words, what would you say your comic is about?**

**TM:** The cannabis and harm reduction industry in BC and throughout Canada.

**AU: What made you decide to turn your story into a comic?**

**TM:** Frustration with local politicians and members of community, concern for seniors and people with AIDS or cancer. I'm sick of listening to rich people complain about workers but providing no safe products for people living in pain. Of course, Jesus.

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

**TM:** In the '80s. It was this X-Men comic printed in 1984; Storm and Kitty Pryde falling out of a plane. The white queen doesn't get served her dinner-tray and then this plane blows-up!

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

**TM:** Sort of like Cyril Shelford meets Kevin Eastman and Los Brothers Hernandez. These were the best creators in 1987 and are still among the best creators today. It's weird.

**AU: Is there anything else you're working on at the moment?**

**TM:** The Bulkley series is an ongoing comic project. A dystopic fable about the Bulkley River up north. It's kind of art meets life.

**AU: It's the 420 Issue here at Absolute Underground, do you partake?**

**TM:** Beedis, pipes, joints, bongos, tinctures— yes. Not into anything the shops are selling now. Our fellow workers having to deal with sobriety on a day to day level makes me really angry.

**AU: If so, indica or sativa? What's your**

**favourite thing about cannabis?**

**TM:** Shirts, pants, paper, fuel, harm reduction. China still sews every shirt on our back, we should use all parts of the plant.

**AU: What do you like to do while high?**

**TM:** Mostly darts. Rap music, homework.

**AU: Favourite munchies?**

**TM:** Whiskey.

**AU: Where can readers find your comic?**

**TM:** Spartacus Books and Lucky's in Vancouver, Okanagan Sportscards and Comics in Kelowna, and Mountain Eagle Books in Smithers. Well worth the price and printed on hemp paper made in the USA;

Canada doesn't manufacture hemp paper, too many yuppies.

**AU: Any final words of wisdom?**

**TM:** I suggest people grow their own outdoor. Workers are being mistreated and they deserve safe workplaces. Also, walk or ride a bike. Everyday I walk to work I'll see two or three hundred cars on the road for every one civilian walking. Where do they think oil comes from? Millions of human lives are lost because of oil wars and yuppies still think war is a camping trip. Don't fear the reefer.

[luckys.ca/products/bulkley-cannabis](http://luckys.ca/products/bulkley-cannabis)



## TED SMITH - PART 1 POWER TO THE POT PEOPLE

Interview by Iree-I and Wade Garrett

**AU: Who are we talking to today?**

**Ted Smith:** My name is Ted Smith and I'm most known for starting the oldest and now the only medical marijuana compassion club in Canada.

**AU: You've been a medical cannabis advocate in BC for close to 30 years. What's it been like?**

**TS:** It has been a roller coaster. Started in a van and now cannabis is legal and I'm in a beautiful store. Though I'm not part of the legal system yet.

**AU: How did being a medical cannabis advocate change when pot was legalized?**

**TS:** The old industry that fought to legalize cannabis in the first place has been almost decimated by legalization. A corporate takeover has occurred in Canada. So personal freedoms have improved but the industry is suffering.

**AU: Is recreational cannabis use at the forefront and medicinal hasn't progressed?**

**TS:** Legalization essentially tried to trump medical marijuana and just shove everyone that used cannabis as medicine into a recreational

store in order to profit more. It's hard to justify profiteering off of patients.

**AU: I always felt that the tax money from recreational cannabis should be used to provide free cannabis for medicinal users.**

**TS:** In an ideal world but that's not at all what's happening. In fact, legal medical marijuana online is more expensive than going to a recreational store and purchasing it.

**AU: You're the founder of the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club. What's the club's mandate?**

**TS:** Our club's mandate is to help people with serious medical problems have access to a range of products at the lowest prices possible. So we have a lot of products that aren't available in the legal system. A lot of high dosage products, hundreds of milligrams of THC as opposed to 10, which is what the government regulations allow.

**AU: What are your future plans for the store?**

**TS:** Right now we have some legal fights with the government. But when that's over and we become legal, we hope to open up integrated palliative care centers using cannabis as medicine. Along with other plant medicines.



**AU: You were recently on a panel at the Grow Up Conference & Expo with Dr. Rob Sealey. He has a Cannabis Clinic where people can go and get information and treatments. Are there any of those locally in Victoria?**

**TS:** I'm not sure if there's any of these websites, operating out of storefronts locally. Most of them have gone to the Internet where patients can pay a doctor to sign the

authorization to use cannabis. It's become very difficult to get regular doctors to sign medical marijuana forms. So most people if they want to get in the medical marijuana program to grow themselves have to pay for it.

**AU: On the medicinal cannabis panel, you were saying Health Canada is dragging their feet and how you've had to fight for every inch.**

**TS:** It is frustrating. Everybody in the industry has given Health Canada and the government all this credit but they've just fucked everything up.

**AU: Where do you see the future of medical and recreational marijuana going?**

**TS:** Well everyone's hopeful that the regulations and taxes become easier on the industry so that small businesses can do better.

**AU: Are people going back to their local neighborhood dealer, Duane down the street?**

**TS:** Well certainly the government regulations are driving people to the black market with not only their taxes but their regulations around the amount of THC that can be in an edible product. So if people want high dosage edibles, it's online websites that are really driving a lot of the black market right now. So the government needs to lower their taxes and allow for high dosage edibles. But the black market is still fighting to stay alive. There's just so much competition. There's only so many people smoking cannabis.

On the producers side as well I heard that they were producing, across Canada, five times more than they are selling. That is unsustainable.

**AU: Going back to the Grow Up Conference's medical cannabis panel with Dr. Rob Sealey. For those who missed it, what was discussed and what were some of the key points?**

**TS:** We discussed some of the dilemmas with medical marijuana, with research, with the medical community's reluctance to endorse cannabis as medicine and how cannabis doesn't fit into the pharmacy model of drugs.

**AU: Why do you think there aren't more doctors who are knowledgeable about cannabis and its many health benefits?**

**TS:** Because the medical community never as a group in any way acknowledged cannabis was a good medicine. The only reason cannabis became legal in Canada and for medical purposes first is because the court started to protect people from the blunt instrument of the law. So that court protection for medical purposes is what



made it become legal. Not because the medical community agreed that it was good medicine. They're still resentful of the courts.

**AU: What are some of the newest cannabis medical discoveries and treatments being researched that you are aware of?**

**TS:** Some of the more exciting research would be into fighting cancer. We're starting to learn that using multiple strain oils that have a four to one THC to CBD ratio can be an excellent way to fight and beat cancer. But there's so much research that needs to be done on which terpenes and essential oils work best together. We call them volatile organic chemicals now. These things that give it the flavor and the taste have more medical value than they have been given credit for. I hope in the future to be working on that myself.

**AU: If you flood your system with THC and CBD then cancer can't live in that environment?**

**TS:** Not very easily, no.

**AU: Concerning using cannabis to cure cancer, in your opinion, what is the best approach?**

**TS:** A lot of our cancer patients are using suppositories because it goes straight into their system and doesn't necessarily get them as high as using an edible or smoking. But certainly people using what is called Rick Simpson Oil or RSO or Phoenix Tears, essentially it's like a honey oil. But eating that oil has proven in a lot of cases to either fight or entirely beat cancer.

**AU: I've heard that you need to get it in your system, or to have it touch the affected area?**

**TS:** Oh yeah. Topically, smoking it, edibles, a suppository, all the different ways of getting it into your system to essentially attack the cancer from all sides is the best route. For sure.

To Be Continued Next Issue...

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## GROW UP

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### Medical Cannabis:

**Advancements, Applications, and Patient Care**  
Featuring Moderator Antuanette Gomez (Peak Pharm Labs) and panel guests Dr. Rob Sealey (Cannabinoid Medicine Specialist), Shan Mei Young Tai (Charlie's Pharmers Market) and Ted Smith (Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club)

This panel was part of the Grow Up Conference & Expo in Victoria, B.C.

*(This is an excerpt from the last portion of the panel discussion as we were getting stoned with Tommy Chong beforehand)*

**Moderator:** Yes, you have a question?

**Audience Member:** If the main thing that cannabis influences is neural transmission, which is how our entire neural system communicates, doesn't that mean that cannabis can influence our entire being and thinking and our entire existence to some degree? No one really talks about this in the medical field or how much our physicians are learning about the neuroscience and the influence that the endocannabinoid system may have on our neural system.

**Dr. Rob Sealey:** I totally agree with what you're saying there in that it influences so many different areas because of the endocannabinoid system. The endocannabinoid system has still not made it into the curriculum of any medical school in Canada. So having physicians aware of this and be able to have a conversation about how we could use cannabinoids from a plant to help influence the endocannabinoid system is way out of the loop of most physicians. I firmly believe that the discovery of the endocannabinoid system is going to be the greatest discovery of our lifetime,

bar none. The potential is phenomenal. So, we're just at the cusp. But not many people know a lot about it or talk about it. But it is going to be the Nobel Prize for Dr. Raphael Mechoulam and his group out of Israel, I am convinced.

**Ted Smith:** It is really fascinating to try and understand and keep up with the science on cannabis and the endocannabinoid system. I started my work before we even knew of it and so it was almost bizarre to start reading news that there's this endocannabinoid system that regulates all these things. I knew that, through the help I was providing with the Cannabis Buyers Club and people telling me it helps me with this or it helps with that.

All these things that just seemed too good to be true and then all of a sudden we discovered this system. But now as we explore further it's like, well maybe THC isn't as important as we thought. It's important but then there's all these terpenes here. So back to the question about involving yourself in the medical cannabis field. In a way you couldn't be involved in anything both more exciting and interesting that has a really profound effect on people. We are learning new things, like I'm understanding through patient testimony that a 4:1 THC to CBD ratio for fighting cancer is ideal. But that's not even touching on the terpenes. We should be growing certain strains that have terpene and cannabinoid profiles that target certain types of cancer and then make medicines from them. That's where we're going with this sort of thing. But we're still just really at the cusp of what is possible. Because there's been and continues to be so many limitations on the regulatory side of things. In fact, the research that we're hearing about is more overseas than Canadian-made.

**Shan Mei Young Tai:** We're at a really important time. Ancient medicine is meeting modern

science. These are medicines that have been used for tens of thousands of years and now we're understanding the science of it. If you think about the fact that every cell in your body has to maintain a certain balance and your cannabinoid system helps every cell to do that. Why do we not know about this? It's really exciting that's coming and we're going to learn so much more.

**Audience Member:** Just curious what the status of cannabis education in medical education is?

**Moderator:** I find that there are small curriculums here and there. For example, if you're a pharmacist, you can get more education about CBD. But that's for pharmacists, is there anything else for other doctors to get more education?

**Dr. Rob Sealey:** There's some online courses physicians could volunteer to do, I just don't think there's a lot of uptake. It's not being taught regularly. I spent many years going out to educate as many physicians as would listen. Initially, there was quite a few. But most of them just kind of shut down and say, there's so many different moving parts to authorization and monitoring and dosing and administration methods, etc. What's the thought of drug interactions? What are the conditions? What's the evidence? That a lot of them say, "I'm full up. My hard drive is choked off so cannabis is not something that I'm interested in doing." That's where cannabis clinics will pick up the slack. Some education cannabis clinics and physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, different educators have that conversation and I think that's where physicians have offloaded. They've sort of said "Well, I'm not comfortable with this. But there's a specialty clinic that will do this." I think that's where it's turned. But I think most individual physicians are kind of at the point where at least they'll say, "I'm supportive but I'm



not really comfortable." Like, "Go see somebody else." That's where it's headed more-so now.

**Ted Smith:** I think the information is there but it's just that the medical community doesn't have the incentive or the awareness to actually find

that information. Dr. Sealey here, for example, has learned about it and any of them could too, if they really wanted to, but the fact is, most of them don't want to. Most of them resent the fact that the courts made it legal for medical purposes in the first place.

Certainly, Health Canada does. It didn't become legal because doctors in the medical community thought it was good medicine. It became legal because we fought relentlessly to continue to use it. That's why our club continues to fight because the regulations are not in the best interest of the patients and they are not even trying. They're fighting us tooth and nail for every little thing in order to make this more accessible to patients. But our club and people across this country will not relent until cannabis is more available to patients and doctors are truly informed about it.

*(Audience erupts in applause!)*

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April 20 6:30 pm-12:30 am  
Langford Legion 91

Mutt Metal Productions presents 420 Metal Meltdown – a tribute night from possibly the

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Opening up the evening will be special guest Wolf Venom, a “Mutt” metal band from Sooke/Langford that you do not want to miss. They have been turning heads wherever they go!

Playing second is Rock City Riot (Judas Priest tribute). Those who have personally seen Judas Priest would be shocked to find a better tribute.

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Regular People (Pantera tribute) will be headlining the event. These fellas have been on a hiatus for quite some time and they are coming back with a vengeance.

Please bring one non-expired, non-perishable food item upon entry, and feel free to bring more if you like. There will also be 50/50 draws with all proceeds going to the Goldstream Food Bank. There will also be door prizes of merch, weed,

booze, and more, so make sure you don't lose your tickets!

Please come and support some extremely talented and seasoned musicians and help raise money for the Goldstream Food Bank. You will not be disappointed!



## Trichome Consulting Services

Interview by Iree-I

Trichome Consulting Services (TCSI) is a premier leader in

cannabis industry compliance consulting, serving North American and international clients. With a comprehensive range of services including licensing, regulatory compliance, and operational support, TCSI has successfully secured over 1000 cannabis licenses in Canada since 2008. Their experienced team excels in liaising with Health Canada and guiding clients through the application process. From professional consulting to patient services, TCSI is dedicated to exceeding client expectations and setting new industry standards globally.

**AU: What's your mission statement?**

**TCSI:** Our mission is to exceed client expectations by providing comprehensive services that ensure regulatory compliance and facilitate the success of cannabis operations.

**AU: How did you first become involved in the cannabis industry?**

**TCSI:** TCSI initially immersed itself in the cannabis industry over 16+ years ago in Canada, since 2008, spanning MMAR, MMPP, ACMPP, and the Cannabis Act. Since our inception, we have been dedicated to navigating the complexities of cannabis operations and regulatory compliance. With a focus on securing Health Canada licenses and facilitating successful applications, TCSI has become a preferred choice for clients seeking

guidance in the burgeoning cannabis sector.

**AU: Do you just help people in Canada, or do you have a global reach with your consulting?**

**TCSI:** TCSI extends its reach beyond Canada, serving clients globally. We have clients and affiliated partners in key regions such as New York, Oregon, Washington State, California, Nevada, Florida, Texas, Alaska, South Africa, Israel, Costa Rica, Mexico, Australia, as well as collaborations with First Nations Indigenous Groups and USA Native Tribes. TCSI is committed to evolving the cannabis industry landscape.

**AU: How has your business changed since legalization happened in Canada?**

**TCSI:** Since legalization occurred in Canada, TCSI has adapted and expanded its services to meet the evolving needs of the cannabis industry. We have continued to navigate regulatory changes and support clients through the legalization process. Additionally, legalization has provided opportunities for TCSI to broaden its global reach. Our commitment to providing comprehensive consulting services remains steadfast, ensuring that our clients continue to thrive in the increasingly regulated cannabis market.

**AU: How does the little guy get involved in this growing industry?**

**TCSI:** Small-scale players can enter the Canadian cannabis industry by focusing on niche markets, like craft cannabis or specialty products. They can also build community relationships, explore micro cultivation licenses, collaborate, and emphasize sustainability. While large corporations dominate, there are still opportunities for small businesses to

thrive by being innovative and strategic.

**AU: What are some of the benefits of medical marijuana?**

**TCSI:** Medical marijuana offers numerous

benefits that can significantly improve patients' quality of life. Some of these benefits include pain relief, management of chronic conditions such as arthritis and multiple sclerosis, alleviation of symptoms associated with cancer treatment, reduction of anxiety and depression, improvement of sleep quality, and relief from nausea and vomiting. Additionally, medical marijuana can be a safer alternative to traditional pharmaceuticals for certain conditions, with fewer side effects and lower risk of dependency. Overall, medical marijuana has the potential to provide relief and improve well-being for patients facing various health challenges.

**AU: What are some of the success stories involving people you've helped?**

**TCSI:** Check our website to read the success stories. Testimonials showcase our commitment to guiding clients through every step of the process, from licensing applications to facility design, regulatory compliance, and beyond.

**AU: Any laws you'd still like to see changed?**

**TCSI:** One key aspect involves reducing regulatory barriers and fees imposed by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) on cannabis businesses. These fees can be prohibitive for small-scale players and hinder their ability to compete with larger corporations. Additionally, there is ongoing advocacy for further streamlining of licensing processes and regulations to make entry into the industry more accessible for small businesses and individuals. By addressing these issues, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable cannabis industry that benefits both entrepreneurs and consumers alike.

**AU: Who are the best licensed producers?**

**TCSI:** Some of the best licensed producers and top brands currently featured in the market today; you must give praise and recognition to ALL NATIONS which are the number #1 Indigenous Grower in Canada (located in BC). In addition, CannGroup Development Corp., Stigma Grow, Mona Lisa Healing, Valhalla Flwr, Ostara Medical Inc., Medmar Growth Ltd., Green Karat; have not only successfully navigated the licensing process but also praised our team's expertise, professionalism, and dedication. Our role as



trusted advisors, facilitates success and growth in the cannabis industry.

**AU: How was your recent experience at the Grow Up cannabis conference in Victoria, BC?**

I had an amazing time networking and connecting with all the key players in the industry, including notable figures like Tommy Chong. The conference provided valuable insights and opportunities for collaboration, further solidifying our presence and partnerships.

**AU: How will you be celebrating 420 this year?**

**TCSI:** By continuing to uphold our commitment to excellence in the cannabis industry. While we appreciate the sentiment of laying back and lighting one up, our team at TCSI will be diligently supporting our clients and partners. We remain dedicated to helping clients achieve their goals, whether it's obtaining Health Canada licenses, ensuring regulatory compliance, or providing professional consulting services. Our focus will be on guiding our clients toward success, raising the bar on industry standards, and continuing to contribute to the growth of the cannabis sector.

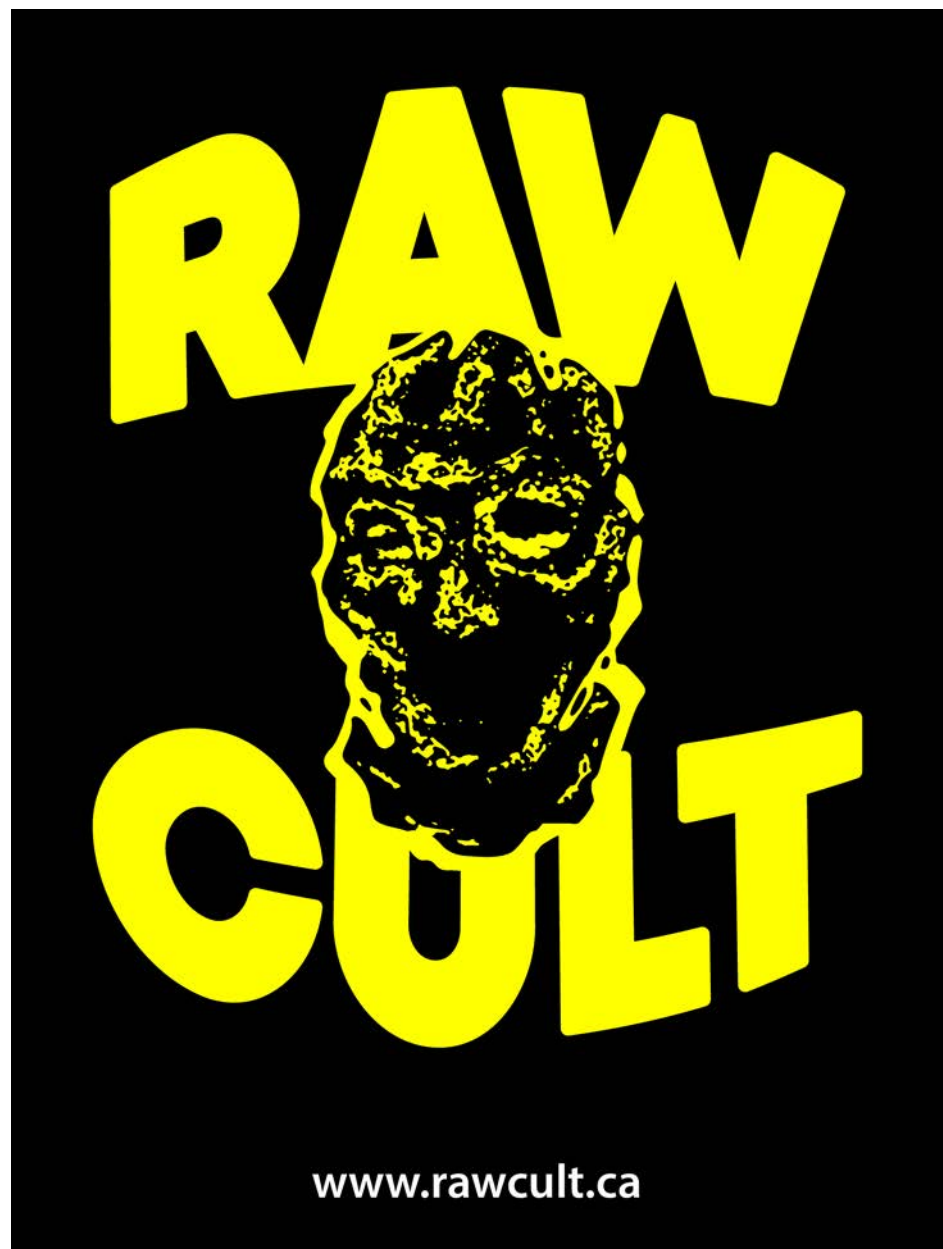
**AU: Anything else to add or mention?**

**TCSI:** At TCSI, we take pride in being the top choice for cannabis consulting. With a wide array of services and unparalleled experience, we're dedicated to helping you thrive in the dynamic cannabis industry. Whether you need assistance with licensing, compliance, or operational support, rely on us to steer you towards success. Thank you for entrusting TCSI with your cannabis journey— we're excited to continue supporting you in the future.

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# THE WEED OLYMPICS



## Happy Daze



**STRAWBERRY**



**DARKSTAR KUSH**



**GARLIC BREATH**



**GORILLA GLUE #4**



**TRENT'S ORGANIC WIFI**



**YOUBOU GOLD**

Strain	Appearance	Smell	Taste	Rank / Potency	Comments
Strawberry	Badly-trimmed and brown	Moldy hay, I say nayyy	Barely smokeable	4/10	Dispensary garbage
Darkstar Kush	High-grade killer	Yum-yum like bubblegum	Great grape gum on the tongue	8.5/10	It plugged up the bud grinder. So sickly sticky
Garlic Breath	I want to buy a QP	So good, I want to buy it	I tried it, can't deny it. Now I want to buy it	9/10	A big hand, a big fan
Gorilla Glue #4	Nice crystal count, small weird buds	Like Unicorn Poop	Harsh, now smooth	5.5/10	Good strong weed, just not great
Trent's Organic WiFi	A wee bit shabby, and stems	Like weed when I was a kid	I really love this one; strong	9/10	Organic greenhouse weed at its best
Youbou Gold	Huge nug, just amazing	Like a pineapple pear	Like coconut rum and ginger	10/10	Love local-grown small-batch weed like this



J. COOGS



RANDOM GRAVES

Strain	Appearance	Smell	Taste	Rank / Potency	Comments
Strawberry	Strange craters, interesting mottled coloring	Like fruit salad - Subtle but valid.	At first pretty bland Then like Afghan	7/10	Creepier weed. Great white ash, dense and sticky stash
Darkstar Kush	Looks like tiger ice cream	Like a blend of red & black licorice	Peppered black grapes	9/10	Light ash, long-lasting burn. I'm tooned - feels like I'm floatin' on balloons
Garlic Breath	Dark green nug	Like Purple Kush	Hot buttered cookies	8/10	Rock-dense buds, smooth on the lungs, calms the blood.
Gorilla Glue #4	Looks like White Widow. Very light green buds	Sugary lime candy	Fresh kiwi	6/10	Dense enough. Good ash but cheery keeps dying.. Reasonably potent but not gratifying
Trent's Organic WiFi	Like a frosty arrowhead	Salted Macintosh apples	Banana Jello	9/10	Spongy spellbinder. So sticky it clogs the grinder.
Youbou Gold	Rainbow stripes on massive buds	Raspberry steak on a bed of angel food cake	Like pomegranites in vodka rootbeer	10/10	Incredibly dense sticky buds. Got so high I was a literal spud.



Strain	Appearance	Smell	Taste	Rank / Potency	Comments
Strawberry	It's a bud, it's a nug	Like old stale outdoor; gross	Like an old sock, outdated old stock	5/10	Grown wrong and cured worse
Darkstar Kush	Glistening purple crystal	Like high-grade skunk	This is what made me love weed	7.5/10	Visually stunning, mind-numbing
Garlic Breath	Perfect purple passion	Super impressed, now the smoke test	Like Jack Daniels Lemonade	8.5/10	If this was a lady I'd ask for her number
Gorilla Glue #4	Beauty bud, baby	Like a gorilla's bum-bum	A little dry; burns hot	6/10	Good strain, just way too dried out
Trent's Organic WiFi	Solid buds, bad trim	I like it, old school outdoor	Thick smoke. Me like long time	8.5/10	Very strong but the look is outdoor
Youbou Gold	So good, big rock-hard buds	Skunk weed, Funky weed	Tastes like honey and mangoes	10/10	If I still grew weed I would want this strain

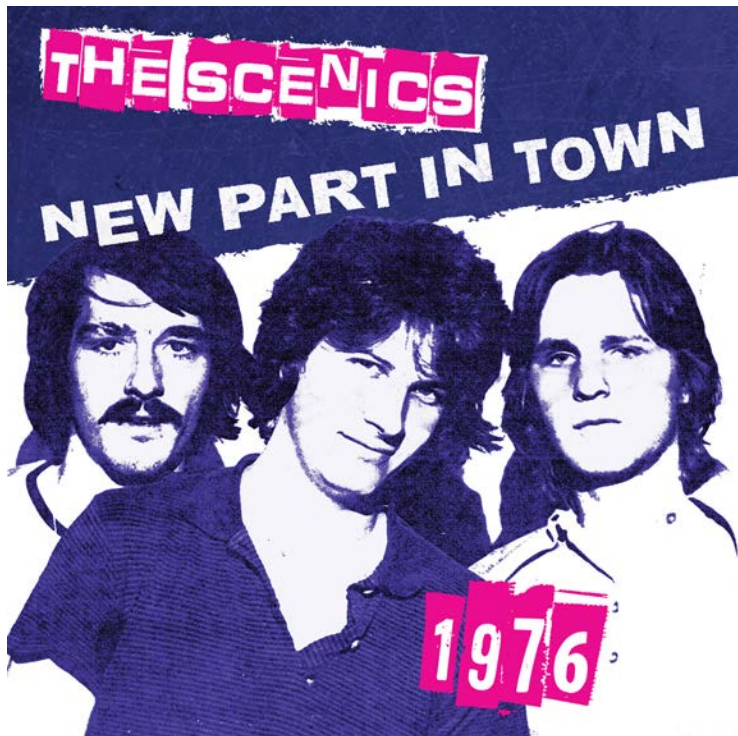


ink. D

**GOLD MEDAL: YOUBOU GOLD**  
**SILVER: TRENT'S ORGANIC WIFI**  
**BRONZE: GARLIC BREATH**  
**RUNNER-UP: DARKSTAR KUSH**







## The Scenics

### New Part in Town

By Andy Meyers

In the last week of High School, I hand-wrote a sign. In bold and shaky print, I issued a series of challenges—“Are you tired of being in bands that aren’t doing anything different? Do you want to do something exciting?” At the bottom, a list of names. Bowie, The Band, Traffic, Eric Dolphy, Patti Smith. I went downtown and tacked it up at L&M Music.

Ken Badger was an amp repairman at L&M. He was the only person who answered my ad.

Itchykoo Park blared out of the flat, sounding like a party. I knocked on the door and heard a “Yeah”. I pushed the door open. The short hall in front of

me opened into a room. A man stood framed by the doorway. He faced me at a three quarter angle. His blue corduroy pants hung low around his waist under late-twenties baby fat. He was slouched over— his stance was tense, wary, a cigarette trailed out of his hand. But there was a gleam in his eye.

That day we met he laughed a lot, a nervous laugh, a guffaw and a chortle, choked, affected, his face turning away. We sat and talked and smoked some hash. He seemed as eager to talk as play. He seemed

no more eager to play than talk. He threw on the new Modern Lovers album, a simple throbbing beat like the city’s July heat. The first song only had two chords, it felt easy to slip into, like a drug. Like an attitude.

We finally began playing when we found some common ground, songs Bowie had redone in colour that Ken knew in black and white from the Pink Floyd, Kinks originals. I sang as we both played through his amp. Something was happening right off, because it didn’t feel like anything was getting in the way.

I was 18, he was six years my senior, a Velvets/Roxy Music aficionado, not into The Beatles, more into places where things did not add up quite so neatly.

When I arrived I had asked him if Small Faces were one of his favorite bands. He said no, wild-eyed. I

think he had picked something I would have heard, but was still a bit obscure, something that would point out what direction from the mainstream he was hiding in.

He had called me because Patti Smith’s name was on my sign. As he later said “That’s not something you saw much in those days”. He asked me if I’d heard The Velvet Underground. I said I had taken a good hard look at one of their albums, but bought a 1966 Bob Dylan/The Band bootleg instead. He said “Oh, too bad”, and chortled like a lawnmower starting and then rising up into the air. I said, “How can you say too bad to that?”

He played me side one of *Loaded*, very loud. He played Television’s “Little Johnny Jewel” and I heard guitar playing and lyrics appearing like events looming up out of the fog over a saucy latin rhythm played by British sailors. I didn’t know what to think, but I immediately began assimilating it.

We played some of his songs, “O Charlotte” and the just-written “In the Summer”, songs about lust, laughing, seeing it all from a few steps back from popular. We played some of my songs too, songs I soon deleted, but he was respectful and tried to get all he could out of them.

I left that day wary of stating any commitment or enthusiasm. Just nods of head, eyes down, and yeah, I’ll give you a call. Ken was different from the 17 year old yahoos I was used to. Personally, he was both direct and evasive, but musically, he laid it on the line. That combination was new.

So we’d smoke Thai sticks, and he’d play me “I Wanna Be Your Dog” really loud. He kept playing my songs, and I liked the way his face went when he sang his, so I kept coming back.

The first three months there were no drums or PA. We could play any old way we felt. We found out we could stick to each other like glue. By the time we began playing with drummers we were in each other’s back pocket.



In 1976, this music was seen by a few as a way to overthrow the stale, safe clichés of rock and say “No, what I mean to say is *this*,” and then deliver it straight from the solar plexus. It was not about posing, not about being part of a crowd or a safe rebellion. It was about going it alone. We knew no other bands in Toronto playing this music. The only current examples we’d heard were “Little Johnny Jewel”, Pere Ubu, The Modern Lovers and Horses. That was it.

We tried out a few drummers. As Ken said “Some who we would not have and some who would not have us.” In October, we found one who we would have, who would also have us.

Mike Cusheon was tall, gaunt, with a black handlebar moustache. He lived in a Ryerson College residence. There was a storage room deep in the building where we could play. We began learning songs, made some recordings, played a couple of gigs. We became The Scenics.

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## Mats Eriksson – Part 1

Interview by Steve Earles

I recently had the pleasure of reviewing *Death: The Antidote to Misery* by acclaimed Swedish palaeontologist and heavy metal expert Mats Eriksson, who, like a 21st century Viking version of Indiana Jones (with Tom Baker era *Doctor Who* thrown in for good measure), dives deep into the primordial past to discover the mysteries of life itself, and all to a soundtrack of what is best in metal! Mats was good enough to answer my questions on metal, fossils, and more!

**AU: Mats, for the benefit of the readers, what is a palaeontologist?**

**Mats:** An aficionado of the long dead! In other words, it is someone interested in, and working on, primordial organisms (AKA fossils!) with the aim of understanding the evolution of life on our planet. Thus, we literally go far beyond where any archaeologists or historians dare to tread. After all, the history of humankind did not begin with us! Considering that *Homo sapiens* appeared only some 300,000 years ago. That's just a blink of an

eye compared to the 3.5-plus billion-year-old history of life.

**AU: That's certainly deep time, Mats! Tell me, were you a metal fan first, or did your interest in fossils and metal grow side-by-side?**

**Mats:** Out of those two specific options, I can easily say I was a metal fan first. However, for as long as I can remember, nature and animals have also enthralled me. As a matter of fact, I originally wanted to become a biologist, but for various reasons I went down the palaeontology rabbit hole instead when starting university training. But, in many ways a palaeontologist is a biologist, just as the organism we worked on are long since dead and petrified, which inevitably makes them much more metal! So, let's say that my interest in nature and arts and music has been running in parallel through most of my life.

**AU: Being Irish, I find the cold climate we "enjoy" in Ireland has had a great influence on my interests. Being Swedish, was it similar for you?**

**Mats:** Hmm, interesting point you make, Steve! My spontaneous reaction is no, not necessarily. Meaning that I think most people who are living in places with our type of climate simply adapt and don't necessarily think about it, though they obviously complain a lot!

**AU: That's part of the joys of being cold and wet all the time! That's what the Irish invented whiskey for: to cure the cold!**

**Mats:** Indeed, though on second thought, it might have actually made me, and many of my peers, focus more on indoor activities during our formative years; which, inevitably, opens up lots of time to practice with bands and being creative with arty-type stuff. But, Steve, every time I travel somewhere with a warmer climate, I wonder what the fuck I'm still doing in Sweden—haha!

**AU: What would your top ten metal bands of all time be?**

**Mats:** Dude, you are killing me! How am I supposed to pick only ten? Anyway, even though it varies for me, there are some albums that would always qualify into my top ten or top hundred list, so, I'll guess I'll just pick some of those and

painfully regret not being able to pick others. In no particular order... and I don't know if Deep Purple and Rainbow qualify as "metal", per se?

**AU: They do, Mats. Metal would be much the poorer without the influence of Rainbow and Deep Purple!**

**Mats:** Right, good point. So... Morbid Angel's *Altars of Madness*, Death's *Leprosy*, Mercyful Fate's *Don't Break The Oath*, Rainbow's *Rising*, Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*, Sepultura's *Beneath The Remains*, Deep Purple's *Machine Head*, Obituary's *Cause Of Death*, Immolation's *Closer To A World Below*, and Bolt Thrower's *War Master!*

**AU: All good choices, Mats, but what Swedish metal bands would you rate the highest?**

**Mats:** This probably varies somewhat depending on when you ask me, but right now I would say the following bands: Dismember, Entombed, Grave, LIK, Heavy Load, Bloodbath, Watain, Unleashed, Ghost—sure, we could get into the debate of whether they qualify as "metal", but please just bear with me.

**AU: Again, I'd count Ghost as metal band in the vein of Blue Oyster Cult or Lucifer, people forget that bands like Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath, B.O.C., Hawkwind, Saxon, Metallica, and more have all had top ten or top twenty hit singles. It doesn't make them any less metal.**

**Mats:** That's a good point. Also, I must mention Vomitory, Necrophobic, Wolf, and Snowy Shaw. I think the last two are criminally underrated.

**AU: I agree, especially on Wolf—such a great band. So, what inspired you to write *Death: The Antidote to Misery*, and how would you describe it to the readers?**

**Mats:** I have actually thought about this myself; especially now, in hindsight. The honest idea is that I don't really know. But to elaborate a little further on this, let me just say I am uncertain of what initially sparked the idea.

So, it must have been some sort of "calling", an internal desire that just needed to materialize. In a way, perhaps it is a logical step in my constantly evolving writing process?

Anyway, I simply started to write one of the



chapters one day, envisioning that I met one of the musical heroes for an interview, and things just spiralled from there down into fantasy land. It whet my appetite, and so I continued.

**AU: Speaking as a fellow writer, I agree that's the way to go—just do it! Writing is like archaeology in a way to me... the story is already there, like a fossil in stone, you just have to put in the hours of work to expose the unknown mystery hidden within to light.**

**Mats:** Now, that's a good way to put it, Steve! Anyway, voila, three and a half years later, here we are, and the book is published. Had I originally known about the amount of work and time that would required, I probably not have even started it, but now I am very happy that I did.

I am very proud of the result, and it challenged me in numerous ways. Obviously, writing fiction is very different from both the scientific and popular science outlets that I am used to, but also writing in dialogue was a first for me. Given that the book still contains tons of hard science, it forced me to research a number of topics outside my expertise, so that also left me with much accumulated new knowledge.

*To be continued next issue...*

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## Cock Sparrer

**UK Punk Legends Announce 8th (and last) Studio Album *Hand On Heart***

**Interview with frontman Colin McFaul**  
**By Aeryn Shrapnel and Chuck Andrews**

**AU: How are things in the UK?**

**Colin McFaul:** We're good. Album comes out next week. Got a couple of shows lined up to launch the album— one in London and one in Glasgow, Scotland. I'm looking forward to this year; it's going to be busy for us.

**AU: How is working with Cherry Red Records?**

**CM:** Really good. We've always tried to work with companies that we can get along with and are professional in what they do. Not all companies are like that, as I'm sure you can appreciate, but we are really getting on with Cherry Red. They've been really supportive and they couldn't have done more for us.

**AU: Did you anticipate that you'd be putting out a new record 52 years after you started?**

**CM:** Haha, no. We didn't anticipate it three years after we started, to be honest. This was never supposed to be a long-term thing. Punk rock was supposed to be about shock and awe. It was supposed to be about getting in, making noise, and then getting out again. Nobody anticipated that we'd still be together making that noise 52 years later, but we're glad we have. We're very pleased with the new album, the songs have turned out really well.

**AU: What keeps you motivated for writing music? How do you keep coming up with such fresh material?**

**CM:** We've always tried to just write about every day— our lives, people that we know, stories that we've heard, and people we've met along the way. We've never tried to be too inventive with the storytelling. It's when you can still record an album like *Hand On Heart*, and be honest with yourself that you are pleased with the outcome. That's motivation enough. We've always said that we would know when we weren't doing it from

the heart, and we knew that our fans would be able to tell. At that stage, we would stop doing it. So far, we're happy to carry on for as long as we can keep doing it to the standard that we've set ourselves.

**AU: It really shines through in your songs. How do you approach writing music?**

**CM:** It varies, really. We have a couple of primary songwriters. It used to be Steve Burgess; he used to write the vast majority of the songs. Then, when Daryl came along and got his feet under the table, he started contributing as well, but they can take lots of different shapes and forms. It's unusual that we're presented with a song that's completely finished. Someone comes to us with a first verse and a chorus, or sometimes it's just a few lines and a title, and that's when everyone gets involved and tries to give it the Cock Sparrer effect. There's a formula that I guess most bands use— we certainly do. We try to introduce that as often as we can into any new album, and it's basically about writing songs that are believable, writing lyrics that people can relate to, and fill in the songs with enough hooks and catches to make everyone come back and want to hear it again.

**AU: What can you tell us about *Hand On Heart*?**

**CM:** We started to record in 2020; we had half a dozen songs that we wanted to go into the studio and just get recorded. We didn't have a big game plan as to what we wanted to do with those songs or anything like that, but we knew that those songs were pretty good and wanted to do something with them. Then COVID happened, everything shut down, and we couldn't do anything for a couple of years. We then had to make a decision as to what to do with these songs: We could either release them as singles, we could stick them on an EP, we could use them for compilations, or do nothing with them. So, in the couple of years when we'd be sitting around doing nothing, we came together with another dozen songs or so. Daryl and our producer James Bragg worked hard in making this sonically the best Cock Sparrer album that has ever been.

**AU: I noticed some classic Cock Sparrer themes of loyalty and tenacity; does the album have**

**any other themes?**

**CM:** They're all what we consider to be working class tales. We're all working class guys, although we've all pretty much retired from work now. That was our family histories. I mean, my mum was a cleaner, my dad was a lorry driver. That's the environment in which we grew up and I think stories about ourselves, our experiences, our lives, and people that we know often provide that level of input into each of those songs to make them believable and likeable.

**AU: What is your favourite Cock Sparrer song and why?**

**CM:** If ever I'm asked this question, I always say that my favourite is "Because You're Young". Mainly because we were just sitting in our various houses one night, and all of a sudden, something came through the letterbox and it was a cassette tape from Burge, and he said, "I've written a song, it's finished, it doesn't need anything. Just listen to it, I hope you like it as well." We all sat there listening to it, and he was right; that song was perfect from start to finish as far as we were concerned. It came about at a time when we were all having our children and it just seemed to resonate. I think that's probably my favourite Cock Sparrer song, but there are a few, and it does change from person to person and mood to mood.

**AU: What's your favourite from the new album?**

**CM:** I know it's gonna be, as we say, a marmite moment, but I really like "My Forgotten Dream". That's the next step along from "Because You're Young"; it's more of a retrospective. We just really wanted to make it as strong as we possibly could, so we decided to go for a four-string quartet rather than some keyboard effects making violin sounds. So that's right up there, but it's all so new and so fresh, that I really like every song. I think it's the best thing we've done for a long time. It's surely on a par with anything else in the back catalogue, and sonically, I don't think we've got an album that sounds as good as this one.

**AU: How do you keep putting out such quintessential Cock Sparrer songs?**

**CM:** I think something that's important to realize is that we do it from a position of not having



to. There's no pressure, there's no record label saying to us, "You must have three releases this year, we've got a 30-day tour lined up for you in the summer, you gotta go here, there, and everywhere and promote these things." We decided a long time ago that was not the sort of pressure that we wanted. We decided to do it on our own terms with people we like, and people that we've worked with and can trust; because of that, we're always happy with the outcome. If one of the big labels came along tomorrow and said, "We'd like to sign Cock Sparrer and here's a barrel of money," we would turn them down, as we have done in the past, because we like the way things are. We like the fact that we've got to where we are in our career without having to do what we're told to do, and we think people appreciate us for that.

**AU: Absolutely— and it allows you to be yourselves, as well.**

**CM:** That's right. I mean, if any member of the band was anything other than thoughtful, respectful, and kind, the rest of the band would put them up on it and go, "You can't behave like that, you're out of order." We're the same guys that we were when we met at 11 years old. We're a bit older and a bit fatter, but we're still basically the same human beings, and we respect the fact that we look out for each other.

**To Be Continued...**

*New Album Out Now!*

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*Photo by Roberto Pavic*



## Demolition

### Pro Wrestling Legends

Interview by Andrew Roberts

Professional wrestling in the late '80s and early '90s was like something out of this world. Larger than life superheroes in colourful outfits hitting and body slamming each other around the ring, as the crowd went crazy! Hulkamania was running wild, and the World Wrestling Federation (now WWE) had never been bigger. Wrestlemania 3 in March of 1987 had a then-record crowd of over 90,000 in attendance to see Hulk Hogan body

slam Andre the Giant, a clip that still gets played to this day. Tag team wrestling was experiencing a big boom around this time, as well. Teams like The Hart Foundation, The British Bulldogs, Killer Bees, Strike Force, and many others were an exciting part of the lineup for an event. The duo of Ax and Smash of Demolition were just getting started around this time and with their black masks, leather, and spikes. They quickly caught the attention of wrestling fans around the world. They would go on to win the tag team titles within a year of debuting on television, and hold them for 478 days. A record that would not be broken until 2016. Ax (Bill Eadie) and Smash (Barry Darsow) have long since retired from the ring, and

now make appearances at wrestling conventions and fan expos around the globe. Fans will be excited to hear that they will be coming to BC this May for a few live fan experience events to tell their stories, participate in a Q&A with the audience, and a limited Meet and Greet opportunity for autographs and photos with the wrestling legends! I caught up with Ax and Smash for a small preview of those upcoming events.

#### Absolute Underground: How did you get into professional wrestling?

**Ax:** I got into wrestling by accident. My next-door neighbour, a former pro boxer, was a Pennsylvania state boxing and wrestling commissioner who invited me to a match in Pittsburgh. When we went to the locker room the promoter asked me if I was interested in wrestling; and, six weeks later, following training, I was in the ring for my first match.

**Smash:** I worked at a bar with Rick Rude and the Road Warriors. Eddie Sharky was a bartender and watched us throw people out, and one night he said, "I need to get you in pro wrestling." He did. Went through his camp and we all got in at the same time, different territories.

#### AU: Do you have a fun road story you can share with us?

**Smash:** There were so many things that happened on the road, I need to write a book. The problem is some stories people wouldn't believe, and those are real stories. I had a great life in wrestling. I had one week, when Dusty Rhodes and I were in Montana. We said, "Let's fish all the streams we drive by." We bought fishing rods and fished about eight different streams. We caught all different kinds of trout. Had a great time. Then from there I went to Alaska and caught a 52 lb King Salmon. A week later, I caught a big shark at the barrier reef in Australia. The next weekend, a seven-foot Marlin in Hawaii. I am the luckiest guy in the world. Very grateful for all the fans that helped make all the characters that I have been.

**Ax:** We took great pride in our work. We found good gyms to work out in daily, and good places to rest and eat. Our product was us, so we wanted to make sure we took good care of the product.

#### AU: Did your manager "The Devious One", Mr. Fuji, ever try and play a rib on you?

**Smash:** No, he never did pull any ribs on us. I guess he thought that Ax and Smash were his bread and butter, and better not mess with that. Thank God, he liked us. We were great friends.

#### AU: Is there a dream match that you wish could have happened?

**Smash:** Every wrestler wants to have a match with the world champion. That would be the dream match. I believe when I was Smash, I could have done an angle with Hulk Hogan, and we could have really had great matches. That would have been another great moment for me. There were so many great wrestlers. I was just glad to be able to work with most of them.

**Ax:** We were fortunate we had the chance to work with all the top teams at that time. We don't have a dream match, per se, but there are many teams today that would be fun to go against.

#### AU: Was there ever any thought of Demolition jumping to WCW?

**Ax:** At one point, we were asked to go to WCW and were about to go to Japan first. There was a struggle within WCW at that time for who would be in control, and we both felt we didn't want to



deal with all the drama. We hoped it would settle down, then we would go; but as fans know, it never did settle down, and eventually was the demise of the company.

#### AU: What were the major differences working for WWF and WCW back in the early '90s?

**Smash:** To me, I thought the WWF was a step above WCW. They were two completely different companies. The wrestlers were all great. The way Vince did the TV shows were so much more professional, I thought. Just the look was so much better. Vince was incredible at making

wrestlers. I thought that was huge. Even today, WWE makes talent and other organizations use his talent. That's a huge difference.

#### AU: How was the transition between gimmicks for you between Smash and Repo Man? Did you have any say in how the character

#### was created?

**Smash:** I really missed being Smash. They broke the team up because they wanted to get the Road Warriors over. They were the new team. The transition wasn't hard. I really wanted a job in the WWF, and I worked hard to make it happen. I didn't have much say on what I could do, but Vince did let me run with it. I worked with all the top guys, and that was great. They were all my friends.

#### AU: You both still travel around the globe for wrestling fan conventions and expos. What do you enjoy about those?

**Ax:** We always enjoy meeting the fans. They all have their own favourite memories, and it's nice to hear their stories. We are blessed to have made an imprint on so many, and we're happy to get a chance to interact with the great fans. We always love to meet them, and we are looking forward to our trip to BC. All of the fans over the years have supported us, and we are excited to chat with them, take a photo, hear a story, and just say

hello. See you all soon!

You can catch An Evening with Wrestling Legends - Demolition LIVE in Victoria on Thursday, May 16th at The Mint Restaurant (All Ages Event); in Nanaimo on Friday, May 17th at The Queen's (All Ages Event), and finally in Vancouver on Saturday, May 18th at Chill X Studio (19+ Event). They will also be taking part in All-Star Wrestling's events at The Cloverdale Rodeo on the weekend of May 18th and 19th.

Andrew Roberts is the owner of Got Pop? Concerts, a Vancouver Island-based event promotion company. Over the last twenty years he has brought such acts to BC as Jon Lovitz, Mother Mother, Carly Rae Jepsen, Bob Saget, Mick Foley, The Trews, Big Wreck, and many others. A wrestling fan since the age of five after seeing Macho Man Randy Savage, Andre the Giant, and others on Saturday Night's Main Event, which his father recorded for him on VHS and, regretted soon after.

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## Interview with TJ Harley AKA The Good Thelonious Jovinous Harlequin

By Mike "Assistant to Karen the Intern" Croy

Welcome back to another rumble of Turnbuckle Sandwich. In this edition, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing an independent wrestling veteran TJ Harley. What follows is our inter-dimensional discussion!

**AU: Who are we talking with?**

**TJ:** For the moment, TJ! But Good Thelonious has an agenda all his own.

**AU: How long have you been involved in the wrestling industry?**

**TJ:** Near 25 years. My debut was in May 2000.

**AU: How did you get started in wrestling?**

**TJ:** You can still find it on YouTube, it was called "FWF Shaw Cable FULL SHOW Wrestling". At 18, my friends and I produced our own television broadcast that was seen all over Southwestern Ontario. That is until a local promoter called the TV station to have it pulled, as Ontario Pro Wrestling required licensing at the time—something we were unaware of. The promoter then called us and threatened to send a real-life convicted murderer and local pro wrestling legend (Johnny K-9) to deal with us. This was motivation to seek out a pro wrestling school in the area and we ended up lucky enough to receive tutelage from WWWF Legend Waldo Von Erich and Quebec wrestling mainstay Carl Leduc.

**AU: What wrestling companies have you worked with?**

**TJ:** TNA/Impact Wrestling in 2007. I worked a few Explosion matches (syndicated TV) and also appeared on various Pay Per View Events filmed in Orlando as security or 'additional talent' with some memorable interactions with Dusty Rhodes, James Storm and Kurt Angle.

Some other notable promotions are: 365 Pro Wrestling, Guelph, ON and Victoria, BC



Southern Allstar Wrestling, Millersville, TN  
Neo Spirit Pro Wrestling, Niagara Falls, ON  
All American Pro Wrestling, Carbondale, IN  
Millennium Wrestling Federation, Toledo, OH

**AU: Favorite storyline you've been involved in?**

**TJ:** In 2005, I stepped into a main event role on the Ontario Independent scene, I was very motivated by previous main event matches between Eric Young and Derek Wyld for a promotion called Neo Spirit Pro Wrestling in the Niagara Region, I wanted to parallel that intensity and high level

of risk, in an effort to give the fans something of the same experience. It all culminated with a 60-minute Iron Match vs 'Dangerboy' Derek Wyld (also on Youtube). As a heel, I had people spitting mad and the escalation of our spirited affair was a fitting backdrop for what was a physically demanding match up.

**AU: Any favorite opponents you've wrestled?**

**TJ:** Eric Young, JC Owens, Cody Deaner, Shawn Shultz, Devon Shooter.

**AU: Most famous wrestler you've locked up with?**

**TJ:** Kazuyuki Fujita, a most fascinating and eye-opening experience. Fujita at the time was the New Japan World Champion. I was spending some time at the New Japan Dojo in Santa Monica, California that was used as a launch point for active Japanese/American Wrestlers looking to gain an extra edge. Fujita was in the US for a huge event at the Memorial Coliseum, and had used the opportunity to attend the day of training. After a very intense work out, I was taking part in 'Young Boy' duties which consisted of scrubbing the 18'x18' canvas mat. With my head down scrubbing to my hearts content, I was joined by the New Japan World Champion Fujita in this task. This really opened my eyes to the level of respect ingrained in such culture and solidified my love for Japanese tradition. I might suggest this is akin to Hulk Hogan helping to stack chairs after an event at MSG.

**AU: You took a bit of a hiatus from wrestling, what got you involved again?**

**TJ:** Dixie broke my wrestling heart. 365 Pro Wrestling and the talent surrounding it has rekindled my love for this industry. Watching the

careers of my peers blossom and being a part of their growth into skilled entertainers as well as wonderful human beings has been an absolute pleasure and honour.

**AU: Growing up, were you inspired by any wrestlers in particular, and if so who?**

**TJ:** Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat. As a child I was set to go to Wrestlemania 3 at Pontiac Silverdome to see the biggest event in history to date... Unfortunately, at 7 years old, I was a bit overzealous in my preparation and used a



wrestling hold to injure a neighbor boy. I was actually grounded from wrestling forever, not allowed to go to Wrestlemania (although, my brother who spent \$1000 on the Hulkster call-in line, still got to attend).

**AU: When on the road, where do you like to stop to eat and what's your go to order?**

**TJ:** In Victoria, a smoked brisket plate at Jones BBQ! Oh Momma! That is the good stuff!

**AU: Who do you respect and who inspires you?**

**TJ:** I respect all my peers in this business who convey the same to those around them. These days, my biggest inspiration is unconventional new talent who are humble in their desire but have a ton of natural ability to entertain and put on a show. From 365 Pro Wrestling, Becky Beech has been one of my favorites to watch. Inferno has a ton of potential, bringing an extremely high level of athleticism to the ring.

**AU: Ever check out concerts at the Carlson Loft in Powell River?**

**TJ:** I catch open mic nights there, super fun time with tons of talented local musicians. That would be a great spot to put on a pro wrestling event!

**AU: Where is the 5th Dimension located?**

**TJ:** Ahh, yes indeed, now this is a question fit for Good Thelonious! You see, the 5th Dimension is nowhere and everywhere; it is in the hearts of every fan, in the imagination of every dreamer. It is the future, the past, the present. It is the unwavering, unedited, unabated, never-ending nothing and ever-evolving everything.

**AU: Who is your birdman sidekick?**

**TJ:** Ephialtes; is my beautiful 'Trunk Bearer'. He will surely live forever.

**AU: Do you get your powers from your moustache or your mittens? Or a combination?**

**TJ:** Maybe not so much of a combination, than a system of dependent answers to a question that is yet to be asked. The Moustache will bear witness,

# TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH



but the Mittens pass judgment.

**AU: What's in the trunk that accompanies you to the ring?**

**TJ:** The 5th Dimension, of course!

**AU: Is there anyone whose moustache power rivals yours?**

**TJ:** Tom Selleck. Other than that, no. Certainly not in wrestling.

**AU: What kind of music does Thelonious enjoy?**

**TJ:** The cheers and jeers of all those in attendance at a 365 Pro Wrestling event is the most glorious music to these ears.

**AU: Where does Thelonious land on the spectrum of good or bad? Or a jokester?**

**TJ:** Ahh, the name did change to 'Good' Thelonious last year, and Thelonious did also say he was sorry for all the previous transgressions!

**AU: What lays ahead for Thelonious in 2024?**

**TJ:** Ever hear the term, "I wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then"? Thelonious Jovinous Harlequin has already lived 2024 a thousand



times. Regardless, there is always a risk of giving something away that could change this timeline and end up having another Mandela Effect.

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

**TJ:** Love yourself first and most; love what you do, love how you do it. In the words of Maya Angelou, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Make them remember you by making them feel the love.

You catch TJ wrestling for 365 Pro Wrestling live or on YouTube.

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

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# THOR

By Shel Thor Korr recruit #6669

**Absolute Underground: For those living a sexually unsatisfied life, please give us a brief history of yourself and what you're all about.**

**THOR:** I am Thor! Love is the answer. It is the most powerful force in the Universe. That being said, Thor is a longstanding band and brand, of which I am the only constant. I was a champion bodybuilder, winning American, Canadian, and World titles. 50 years ago, I decided to combine music and muscles as a career and came up with a genre called Muscle Rock. This gave me the opportunity to evolve into a world of recording, film making, song writing, as well as being an inventor and historian.

**AU: Tell us about your new record *Ride of the Iron Horse*.**

**THOR:** It's my 50th anniversary as a recording/ touring artist. The label, Cleopatra Records, and I wanted to release a record that would celebrate my five decades of rock and be a strong bookend to the albums like *Keep the Dogs Away* and *Only the Strong*. *Ride of the Iron Horse* is my 40th album, and one that I am most proud of.

On my earlier albums such as *Only the Strong* and *Unchained*, the topic was mainly about warriors, battle, and mythology. *Ride of the Iron Horse* hits numerous subject matters. I feel it's a very musical record, spanning various genres including rock and metal. Kevin Stuart Swain produced the album. We co-wrote seven songs together. It has nine new songs and six unreleased demos/bonus tracks. Kevin plays the hell out of the guitar and bass, while Lisa Freakrock keeps a solid, powerful beat.

**AU: Can you give a little insight to the song "Peace by Piece"? Are you referring to the bible or...?**

**THOR:** "Peace by Piece" is meant to be an anthem

for all artists, authors, creators, inventors, etc., who have pounded the pavement, knocking on door after door, getting rejected over and over again, trying to sell their script, ideas, manuscripts, master tapes, and what have you, to the record label, book publishers, movie companies, etc. It's tough out there. Being someone who creates, getting turned down is a hard pill to swallow, but if you believe in what you created, you can't give up. Maybe one day your creation, whether a song or a book, may become the best thing since sliced bread. Some of the greatest painters, such as Van Gogh, were not appreciated in their time, but are held in high esteem today. I can relate, as in the early '80s, I tried to get a record deal for *Unchained* as I shopped the tapes in New York City, and had the door slammed in my face, time after time. I thought to myself, maybe this record will be huge 1000 years from now. "Peace by Piece", the song, is not about the Bible, but about a piece of literary work that could be of Biblical proportions; maybe not now, but in the future if it was placed in the right timeline.

**AU: Why did you wait so long to release "To the Extreme"? This is the THOR KORR ANTHEM of 2024, but it was recorded 25 years ago.**

**THOR:** I really enjoyed listening to Linkin Park and Limp Bizkit back then. I was coming off my previous album *Dogz II*, which everyone said sounded like it was influenced by Nine Inch Nails. The hardcore Thor fans were not happy that I took the plunge into nu metal with *Dogz II*. In 2001, I was recording tracks for *Triumphant*, in which I had returned to the more classic Thor sound. "To the Extreme" just didn't fit that album at the time with the rapping in it. So, I put "To the Extreme" in the vault and forgot about it, 'til I recently revisited it and dusted it off and gave

another listen.

**AU: Who is your favorite rapper?**

**THOR:** Eminem is very good.

**AU: Where is the belt of Megingjard?**

**THOR:** I wore that belt for my concert at Muskelrock in 2015. Currently, I have it locked away in a trunk along with other Thor artifacts, and it is buried deep in the ground.

**AU: Does the Triton 7" actually exist? Dan Neild felt the need to call this out in a public forum.**

**THOR:** I had released "Energy" as a 7-inch Thor single in Germany years ago. But not under The Tritonz. Due to the recent successful performance in Portland by the Tritonz, we are planning a 2025 Tritonz World tour.

**AU: You are playing some gigs in Alberta this spring. What can we expect April 12th at Modern Love in Calgary, and April 13th at Temple in Edmonton? We know Thor knows how to party.**

**THOR:** Thor is going to Rock the Cities. Dan Neild of the Alberta Thor Korr is ready to lead the crowd

in Calgary. Mattie Cuvillier head of the North Alberta Division will raise the Thor flag and lead the fans in Edmonton. It's gonna be a party to celebrate the 50-year anniversary. "We're gonna celebrate, were gonna generate." Legendary guitarist Frank Soda will be ready to rock as well as bassist Kevin Stuart Swain.

**AU: Speaking of Thor partying, what was it like working with Seth Putnam?**

**THOR:** He was a very cool guy. His family were very kind and supportive. He did go way outside the box at times with music and live performance experimentation. In 2002 he came up on stage at the Boston show at the Coolidge Theatre. We sang "Throwing Cars" together that night. It was the last I saw of him.

**AU: Odin seems like a decent dad, but you have two sons yourself, Iron Thor and Zon Son of Thor. Who's the favorite?**

**THOR:** I love both my sons just the same. Iron Son of Thor just got married to a beautiful Valkyrie in Germany. Zon in Victoria, BC just had a daughter with his lovely wife. Also Fin Thor of Finland is doing well.

# BENEATH THE WHEEL

**AU: Sorry I forgot about Fin Thor! What are you looking forward to with your Alberta tour dates? Fitting in with your newly acquired cowboy hat? Alberta Beef? Being the strongest man in a province full of wimpy coked out rig pigs?**

**THOR:** To meet up with everyone, sing Thor songs together and have fun!

**AU: What's your favorite Thor song to play live?**

**THOR:** "Thunder on the Tundra"!

**AU: What mask goes best with your cowboy hat?**

**THOR:** My own face.

**AU: Any last words for the THOR KORR?**

**THOR:** We are all Warriors of the Universe. Keep Rockin'!

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

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# BLAST FROM THE PAST



## Celebrating The Stampeders And A Tribute to the late Ronnie King

By Clark "Super" Mantei

Hello again, past and future past blasters. This issue pays homage and tribute to the legendary Canadian band The Stampeders. It sadly also pays tribute to the now late and fantastically great one and only Ronnie King who wrote, sang and played bass for the group since 1965. Ronnie was born in Holland in 1947 and moved to Calgary in 1955, where he sadly passed away this past March 4th 2024. He was 76 years young. Rest in peace.

Where to begin this article has been tough since Ronnie's passing. So, I guess I'll start with the fact that this April 2024 is the 6th anniversary of Ira Hunter calling me at home and asking if I could drive him up to Duncan from Victoria where we live. I asked when and he said "Right now buddy, the show is tonight." I explained that I'd just come home from Abbotsford where I saw Steve Miller and Frampton and I was wanting to unwind. Then it hit me. "The Stampeders as in 'Sweet City Woman'?" "Yes. That's the band, I'm going to interview their drummer Kim Berly."



So, instead of opening a beer and relaxing, I showered and got ready for a mini road trip to Duncan with a broken head gasket and a lot of water in my steaming ole van. Yet, we made it in plenty of time. I had worked and roadied and traveled many miles and years with many groups but never attended an interview. I zipped through my father's record collection and found a 1974 K-Tel album called *Canada Gold* with 22 Karat Hits, including "Hit the Road Jack" by The Stampeders. Perfect. I thought Kim could read the LP's song and get some stories from him knowing the other acts. It might work. We made it to the Cowichan Performing Arts Centre in Duncan and I enjoyed my first experience with Ira and his fabulous *Absolute Underground Magazine*. Kim met us and was kind and genuinely sincere. Ira did his interview and it was really professional.

Soon after, Ira offered me my own column entitled "Blast From the Past" which was to become a bi-monthly memoir of classic bands and past concert stories. My own page? Wow. I eventually accepted and I'm proud to say that in Feb 2019 in AU Issue 86 my first article appeared and it was none other

than Ira's interview with Kim on the Stampeders.

Since then, I've done five years of non-stop articles and today, I'm humbled to say, it has left me proud and I've learned so much. Ira called me again on June 23rd 2022 and told me "The Stampeders are in Victoria tonight if you wish to go." He took his father-in-law, which was sweet. I got ready and drove 10 minutes to the Royal Theatre and found a single ticket up front. During the comedy-like show. Kim on drums was pointing me out as "That lady in the front" (I had long hair I guess? Haha). And Ronnie made jokes. After that show, I met with the folks who ran the theatre, as I've known them since I was a pre-teen in the 1970s. We had a chat and the three Stampeders came out and listened to our stories. That was neat. Then they got in their van (Kim

Berly drove) and when they went to say goodbye, I approached them and gave them a copy of Issue 86 of AU and Kim was so happy. He opened it to the page of my first Blast column and read it. Ronnie grabbed it and they were happy to pass it around and take it with them. We had a great chat about them wanting to

return and as they drove away, I caught them at the intersection and I started to sing "Sweet City Woman" and they all joined in singing away as the light turned green and they all waved while laughing. I was in my happy place indeed.

Let's take a quick look at their history, shall we? In 1964, Kim Berly and Rich Dobson along with three older friends formed The Rebounds. In 1965, they lost their bassist and Ronnie King joined with another member too. Now they were a six-piece and moved to Toronto in 1966 to play weekly shows in bars and clubs and such. They also changed their name to The Stampeders. By 1968, the three older members announced that they were leaving to have a more stable lifestyle. So, the now classic trio was born. Rich and Kim along with Ronnie all decided to write their own songs and they all sang. By 1971 they had a contract and manager and their debut LP called *Against*

*the Grain* was released. That LP contained the smash #1 hit "Sweet City Woman" which has that classic banjo intro. I found out that banjo was added later and as no one played the banjo, guitarist Rich Dobson tuned it to a guitar and plucked away that legendary intro and "brought the country to the city" and it was a smash.

In 1972, they won three Junos for Group of the Year, producer (Mel Shaw) and Rich won Composer of the Year. Along with Anne Murray getting awards, they were now on their way. The Junos first went to television in 1975 and The Stampeders opened the show playing live. What a time in history to be alive in Canada, eh? The band would go on to record six albums and release 18 singles by 1976, the last one being "Hit the Road Jack" with none other than legendary TV music host Wolfman Jack on the song.

After that Top-10 smash, Rich Dobson left the group to pursue other music venues and started Marigold records and also produced and wrote many hit singles for many well-known artists like Alanis Morissette, among others. Kim Berly left in 1977 and Ronnie made another LP with a new member called *Platinum* and the chemistry was gone. So were the Stampeders.

In 1992 they reunited for an appearance on "Where Are They Now" which was a short-lived Canadian show, but it brought them all back together as a classic trio. In 1998, they released their last album called *Sure Beats Working* and they remained touring up until 2023, bringing their amazing, fun, and comedy-like rock 'n' roll show to Canadians year after year. They were all ready to tour this spring when Ronnie suddenly fell very ill and left us all.

So, in this issue I decided to do a 60th anniversary of the band. Then I read Ronnie passed and I was sad, I didn't know what to write or say as I never interviewed Ronnie, so I called an ol' roommate, bassist producer, studio owner, and friend to help. His name is Rob Begg from Vancouver and we recently reunited after two long decades. Rob played in school jazz bands on bass and then Legions in BC, then a high school friend and him made a trio when Rob moved to LA to study under Carol Kaye (legend on over 10000 sessions—she's 89 now) and also worked at Sunset Sound. Rob plays bass in so many bands and he played many shows on the bill with the Stampeders, so I asked him to write his thoughts on his friend Ronnie. Here's what Rob sent me:

*"Ronnie played a 1966 fender precision with a Gibson EB-0 pickup by the neck way before Billy Sheehan. Ronnie had a great feel. Since he was part of a three-piece band, he played hard. Against The Grain was their breakthrough album. My good friend Dave Slagter engineered that record and I*

*asked him a ton of questions about his tone etc. David Hayes worked on that whole record and said they ran to L&M at the last minute for "Sweet City Woman" and no one knew how to play the banjo, but they tuned it to a regular guitar and it made history. Ronnie's playing was very much like Carol Kaye's and that time period. Lower-mid with punch. I had played on many shows on the Bull in Calgary with Ronnie many times when I was young. He was an icon. He influenced so many young bass players from Canada. Not only that, he had a great sense of humor too. Ronny was no cowboy. He was a performer to the highest degree. We will all miss Ronnie but we will always love him forever."*

Well, thank you Mr. Begg and we look forward to doing a story on your very well-known Marpole Studios you created in 1994 in Vancouver. A great tribute with insight.

As for me, going back to April of 2018 in Duncan, I handed that *Canada Gold* to Kim and he read off the artists and told tales of knowing many things about those bands. He discovered that his band had now outlived RUSH, for instance, and told

tales of Ian Thomas and he was blasting through his past when Ronnie walked in and joined us and started to get enthused for the show he was about to play. I had no idea I was in for a two-hour comedy fest with classic hit songs and my memories of being

a kid all came back. I knew most every track. I remembered seeing them at Ontario Place when I was a kid in the early 70s. Talk about blasting back to my youth.

As for a tribute to Ronnie... well, I have news. The upcoming shows in Ontario this April were to be Ronnie's last shows meant to be known as "The King's Final Bow" but he left us in March. So, when Rich Dobson said "Ronnie would have insisted the show must go on. I lost a great friend. We were like brothers. All my best Stampeders stories are Ronnie stories. He was larger than life and will be missed."

In Ronnie's honour, the Stampeders have recruited bassist Dave Chabot for the tour. I'm certain the houses will be full to honour such a Canadian legend. I myself, will be certain to review the shows and hope to bring you a great story of a great band making a tribute to a great man. That's right, a legend. Ronnie King. Rest in peace.

With that I'll bring this issue to a close and quote Rik Emmett, who is from another Canadian trio called Triumph, and he just stated Triumph will not reunite. Yet I always end with his quote... "Rock Out and Roll On." Until the next blast, please take care.

Yours sincerely,  
Clark "Super" Mantei.





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## Troy Ounce Vancouver Outlaw Country

Interview by AU Editorial

*Troy Tornado* is the debut album from Troy Ounce. Featuring 10 tracks, the main single "Crash & Burn" embodies the vibe of the release. This album was written in the most depressed and defeated time of Troy's life. After becoming terribly isolated, he decided to quit his job pack up his car and just head east down Highway 1 with no plan— just his clothes, computer, and guitar.

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

**Troy Ounce:** Howdy! My name is Troy Ounce and I been involved in the Canadian music scene

off and on since the early 2000s. From 2005 to 2017, I played gigs in various punk bands, and I also made some beats on my computer that've seen some small success getting a placement in a TV show (*Red Oaks*) on Amazon Prime in 2017. By mid-2018, I started to gain recognition as a singer songwriter and country artist.

**AU: How would you describe your sound?**

**TO:** It has always been country, but for the first few records it was really raw folk music with a western outlaw influence. Over time, it has evolved into a mix of outlaw meets modern country, I'd say.

**AU: Who are your strongest musical influences?**

**TO:** Ernest and Craig Wiseman. Because they inspire me to want to be a better songwriter.

**AU: It sounds like you had some pretty life-altering experiences while writing this album. Can you tell us about that?**

**TO:** I was really isolated in my life and just felt the urge to quit my job and head east. I didn't realize what an incredibly stressful and stupid decision it was at the time. I just honestly wanted to see my country and write songs about it, so I drove through the Rocky Mountains with no plan other than to just binge-drink in dive bars and cheap motels with my guitar, do drugs, and write songs. On the second or third night I made it to Bassano, AB, a cool little town outside of Calgary that I ended up living, working, and performing in for the better part of a week or so. It was such an interesting town; every night drinkin' at the bar, the people were so cool, they wanted me to go up to my room grab my guitar and bring it down, so I could sing songs for everyone. That was a really fun part of the adventure, but there came a night when I was doing some mushrooms after a gig at the bar, and I just had this realization I needed to get back to Vancouver. So, the next

morning, I woke up still high on mushrooms loaded up my car and decided to drive back through the Rockies.

This is where things got really stressful, as this past October there was an extreme housing and job crisis in Vancouver, and after being homeless for a month, continuing to live out of cheap hotels and my car, I finally found my new studio, which I proudly call "The Chicken Coop".

I hit some incredible highs and some extreme lows during my adventure, but luckily I landed on my feet, and now I have begun planning my next adventure to Nashville; although I have learned from my mistakes of the past and plan to not quit my job this time, and, most importantly, not give up my apartment!

**AU: What was it like coming face to face with death?**

**TO:** It was gnarly... While driving through the Rockies, I underestimated the distance it would take me to stop on gravel when I pulled in to take a photo of the mountains. After going around 90 kph, and my tires locked and I almost went right off this 400-foot cliff. Thankfully, I stopped two feet from the edge. I was just honestly stoked I was able to continue on my adventure and lived to tell about it at the time. I definitely got drunk that night.

**AU: How does it feel to be on the other side of that experience?**

**TO:** It has helped me appreciate the little things, as during most of my adventure I did not have heat, a working fridge or warm water. I have certainly grown from that experience as a person and as an artist.

**AU: How do you approach writing music?**

**TO:** I usually grab a couple beers, or a six pack, and sit down with my guitar after work. And then I just start freestyling over some chord progressions. I'm a big verse-chorus guy; I really hate writing bridges, haha. I am getting better at it, though.

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

**TO:** I picked "Crash & Burn" as the single, because that's the story of the record, essentially. It's a record I wrote for the person that's a risk taker who hates their job, hates their hometown, and just wants to pack up and leave.

**AU: Tell us about the first song you ever wrote.**

**TO:** One of the first songs I ever wrote was called "Full Throttle", and I ended up cutting it with the Raincity Ghouls. It's a bluesy George Thorogood inspired number that talks about a heavy drinker and their life at the bar. It's funny how, over the years, I feel I became the person that song is about. I wrote it when I was 16 or 17.

**AU: It's the 420 Issue here at Absolute Underground; do you partake?**

**TO:** I do! I'm smoking right now as I answer these questions, haha.

**AU: What's your favourite thing to do while high? Are you Team Indica or Team Sativa?**

**TO:** I'm a big Indica guy, but now that I'm getting older, I have moved to a hybrid. My favourite thing to do while high is eat chicken wings and drink beer at the bar; or if I'm in an introverted mood, I just like cruising YouTube and watching random shit— maybe some comedy. But, honestly, my most favourite thing to do while high is make music.

**AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?**

**TO:** Yes. I'm playing Nashville this summer, and am planning to come back out to Alberta sometime this year as well! You can usually find me at various jam nights testing out new songs around Vancouver at places like Begbie's Tavern or The Beer Shack. If you would like to book me for an event you can get in touch with my booking agent at: [whisplair@gmail.com](mailto:whisplair@gmail.com)

**AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?**

**TO:** Go check out my latest album, I also have a new single out "Hell", and will be releasing more new music soon! Much love!

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*Happiness in Troubled Times.* We just dropped the first single March 29th, and will be dropping our second single upon the release of our EP on April 19th. I feel like these five songs are some of our strongest to date, and it pulls all the punches, from start to finish in just under 10 min. We even got Tracy A. from Cross Dog doing a guest spot, which I am extremely honoured



## Choices Made

**Toronto Hardcore Punk**  
Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Hardcore punk powerhouse Choices Made is poised to make waves in the punk scene with the release of their highly anticipated EP, *Happiness In Troubled Times*, on Friday, April 19, 2024.

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

**Josh:** My name is Josh, and I am the vocalist for Toronto Hardcore band Choices Made.

**AU: How did Choices Made become a band?**

**Josh:** Through the ancient art of online scouring, I stumbled across a little post on Craigslist for a group of musicians putting together a hardcore band. I, myself, having more "punk rock" roots, thought "Who knows? Maybe. I'll give it a try." I was just dying to make music again. Went through the audition; and here we are. I got the gig, and we have been kicking it for a few years now. Through the audition it was clear that we were all like-minded musicians who've played in bands before and we just wanted to get back to putting out some solid tunes and playing live shows again.

**AU: You have a new EP coming out soon. Can you tell us about that?**

**Josh:** I'm pretty excited for this release. It's called

about. They are one of my favourite bands going right now, so it meant a lot when Tracy agreed to be a part of it.

**AU: Do the lyrics explore any themes or topics?**

**Josh:** When I write lyrics, it usually stems from how I'm feeling. So, depending on my mindset, the lyrics can be quite personal, or they can be observational. I would say you will find a mix of songs dealing with mental health struggles, feeling out of place in the world; to songs about broken trust, being used by others, and people who put on a show only to be the complete opposite behind closed doors.

**AU: What sets it apart from your previous releases?**

**Josh:** In all honesty, I think for anyone who has been listening to us, this will fit right in with our previous releases. For anyone that has not heard us yet, we tend to blend that New York hardcore style with California punk, and it is something I feel we have dialled in well. Songs that don't usually crack the three-minute mark, in your face riffs, lyrics with something to say, or personal reflection. Just raw music that feels great to play live and rock out to.

**AU: What goes into a song? What inspires you?**

**Josh:** For the most part, we all contribute riffs and ideas that usually will come to fruition. Our guitar player, Steve, is usually the one churning out the majority of the riffs. He will record them and send them to us unfinished and then once we hit the jam room, we work it all out from there together. I usually will come up with a basic melody and then finalise the lyrics with things I have been ruminating on for a while to get them out on paper. Lyrics are like a diary for me to get things off my chest.

**AU: You also have a couple music videos coming out. Who did you work with on those? What was filming like?**

**Josh:** We shot both videos all in the same day as we wanted to make use of the space we had. We worked with Michael Crusty, who did all the shooting and edits for our second single coming out called "Masquerade". We then shot footage ourselves for our first single "Happiness in Troubled Times", which we then passed it back to Mike to do the editing. It was a long day, but it was a hell of a lot of fun shooting in an empty large warehouse and laying the visual foundation down to help bring these new songs to light.

**AU: This is our 420 issue; do any of you hang with Mary Jane? Best band to listen to while stoned?**

**Josh:** We don't really partake, ourselves. I used to a while ago, but found it started giving me panic attacks. Even from the very first puff. So, I cut it out. But when I did, I would listen in my headphones to a lot of 1960s artists. Just the way those old recordings sound, cranked in your headphones... there is just a warm sound to it that sits nicely. Or a personal favourite of mine Hüsker Dü's *Zen Arcade*. That one hit different.

**AU: Tell us about your EP release party.**

**Josh:** May 3rd, in Toronto, at the Bovine Sex Club.



We share the stage with our good friends in Dragged In, Bad Egg, and more to be announced. We will have a limited run of vinyl available for this show for people looking for physical copies.

**AU: Any other upcoming shows or tours?**

**Josh:** We got a bunch of shows we are finalising, and a bunch solidified to support the release in Ontario. April 19th, Welland; April 20th, Newmarket; April 26th, Hamilton; May 3rd, Toronto; May 4th, Milton; which are all set up, and we are looking at Barrie, Ottawa, Kingston, and Peterborough, just being finalised between May and June.

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

**Josh:** Well, if people have made it this far, I just want to thank them for taking an interest, and if they can just check us out online, give a like, give a share—any little bit helps to get the name out there.

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# Röckët Stähr

Interview by Ed Sum

**Absolute Underground:** For our readers who don't know about your work, can I please get a formal introduction?

**Röckët Stähr:** I'm an independent singer-songwriter. When I first started writing music as a teenager, I was trying to emulate a very basic blues rock style with a bit of a southern flair. Sort of a cross between Lynyrd Skynyrd and early Aerosmith, with a bit of Bad Company thrown in. Very riff-driven. At the same time, there was always a bit of Ziggy Stardust and T-Rex influence thrown in there.

Def Leppard's album *Hysteria* was getting big at the time, and that was kind of a gateway from the Top 40 I was into in the mid-80s, to a heavier, rock sound; I was doing the angry teen thing, and when *Appetite for Destruction* (Guns N' Roses) started getting popular, it blew the lid off for me. Ironically, I hated it at first, but it really changed my life. There was no looking back after that.

As things progressed from there, Guns N' Roses' next record *Use Your Illusion* (with "Estranged" and

"November Rain") really opened my mind up to how songs can be made more elaborate. I was also really into Billy Joel and Elton John, especially *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* and his work with the Paul Buckmaster String Orchestra on stuff like *Madman Across the Water*. That and his record *11-17-70* really got me wanting to re-learn the piano and make it my own. I took lessons as a kid, but I never got very good.

**AU: Were you in any bands when you were developing your skills?**

**RS:** My very first band, The Feel, was based in New Jersey, which is where I'm originally from. We were a very basic blues rock trio. Because we couldn't find a bass player, I played that and sang. After I graduated, I moved to Boston. My brother followed me shortly after, and we put together a band called Uncle Butch



with my friend Pat. We moved down to NYC, and after a couple of years broke up.

Afterwards, I was a solo artist who went by the name The Count. It was then when I got serious with piano and taught myself how to orchestrate. I was also in a punk band in the late '90s called Modus Novus.

One of the songs on my new record *Röckët Stähr*, is called "Somewhere Down the Line". The verses and chorus were written back when I was 17, about to turn 18. I was very influenced by Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Tuesday's Gone". But when I created it back then, I didn't have the skills to take it further. It was within the last two years that chord progression for the bridge and solo section hit me— and I finally finished it!

**AU: So, how many of the songs you wrote on either album (the movie and this self-titled release) would you say are autobiographical?**

**RS:** When I was younger, that was primarily almost every song. It'd be about some girl I was in love with or something I was going through, but as years go by, that gets boring. But, here and there, I might express a thought. I'm not a political artist by any stretch, though, once in a while I'll put my views into a song. I sometimes might get an idea from my buddy's life or things I see going on around me. There's a tune on the record that is actually based on a friend's discovery that her father had a whole separate life that nobody knew about.

So that's kind of how I go about songwriting. And that was also one of the fun things about writing my animated rock opera. It's like, well, what do I write about today? Sometimes all you need is to listen to that good ol' rock and roll, and you want to turn it up loud.

**AU: Why did you decide to release an animated movie first instead of a proper album?**

**RS:** I've released material online over the years, but didn't take it seriously enough to promote it. *Death of a Rockstar* was the first thing that I put out under the Röckët Stähr name. Putting that out gives me a chance to have anybody listening for the first time to hear my versatility.

**AU: So why decide to choose a glam rock identity?**

**RS:** I think there's a lack of fucking larger-than-life rock stars and artists out there! I've always been a fan of the gritty and real, but when you look at the greatest talents from long ago— whether it's Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, or the Rolling Stones—they're all larger-than-life personalities. They're like cartoon characters. As for the theatrical side of what I do, KISS and Alice Cooper are the forebears of that kind of thing. You don't see that stuff anymore. Also, although I'm not a huge fan of Ghost musically, they take theatrical rock to another level.

I think the grunge movement killed what defined a larger-than-life rock star. Even though that sound was a breath of fresh air at the time, that aspect of rock 'n' roll never really fully recovered. Instead, there was a shift to rap and hip hop.

One thing I love about classic rock and roll from the '60s to '90s is that these musicians are not like me; they're much cooler than me. I want them to be something to aspire to, not to look like the guy pumping my gas.

**AU: So, why aren't you touring?**

**RS:** I haven't played live in many, many years. That was one of the things that led to making *Death of a Rockstar*.

The last show I played was at Mercury Lounge in New York City where I had a full band, backing singers, and all that; it cost me about \$1000! It was a successful show, but at the end of the day, the payoff wasn't enough.

So instead of doing that again, I decided to really hunker down and put all my time and energy into making the movie. I'm just getting myself rolling again after a lot of recent setbacks. And if things go well over the next few years with that, then I might explore the option of live shows and taking Röckët Stähr onto the stage for the very first time.

**AU: In terms of pumping out music videos for your new album, is that all made by you?**

**RS:** It's all done in my tiny little apartment; I want to put one out for each song on my new record maybe once a month until I release another album. It's a fucking hard process, man, because the makeup alone takes me about two hours to put on, and then two more to rearrange the apartment, four more to shoot it, and then there's breakdown to make the apartment look like nothing ever happened, so my wife doesn't get mad. My small fan base, which has been growing, really enjoys the videos— so, yeah, I'll keep making them.

**AU: And in recognition of our 420 issue, what's your view on cannabis use?**

**RS:** I'm completely for the legalization of all drugs, let alone just cannabis. And I'm a complete libertarian in every regard. Your body is your own body.

**AU: Do you have anything to say in closing?**

**RS:** Long live rock and roll.

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## Emicrania Italian Death/Thrash Metal

Interview by AU Editorial

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

**Sal:** Hi, I am Sal, vocalist of the old school death metal duo Emicrania, from Italy.

**AU: How did Emicrania get together?**

**Sal:** Emicrania was born from an idea of mine, and Giancarlo (guitar and bass), out of a passion for death metal and linked by a deep friendship.

**AU: Where did you get your name?**

**Sal:** The chosen name has always linked us, because together years ago, we had a zine with this name and we decided to make a project that would continue to bring the name of Emicrania.

**AU: What are some of your musical influences?**

**Sal:** Our influences are a mix of everything the old school death metal scene represents. I don't feel like naming names; anyone with a bit of death metal culture can find something from a band there.



**AU: You have a few songs up on Bandcamp. Can you tell us about them?**

**Sal:** We are present on Bandcamp with two songs to give an idea of what we are doing. You can also find the same songs on YouTube on the brutalmuSICK channel.

**AU: What's your process for writing music?**

**Sal:** Our music is completely intuitive and derives from our culture of the music we make. The lyrics then deal with everyday life experiences- they talk about life.

**AU: Any plans to release a studio album in the near future?**

**Sal:** We are working on that. We've already recorded other songs- by the summer, we will be ready for the album.

**AU: This will be our 420 issue. Do any of you partake?**

**Sal:** We are really happy to be part of it.

**AU: Favourite bands to listen to while stoned?**

**Sal:** We've listened to many bands. Morbid Angel, Carcass, At The Gates, Internal bleeding, Cannibal Corpse, and bands from the Italian scene, like Fulci.

**AU: Upcoming shows or tours?**

**Sal:** For now, we are only focusing on our debut album

**AU: Do you have any**

**final words of wisdom for our readers?**

**Sal:** Music is something that keeps us alive and can represent our thoughts and emotions. It's a great amplifier of our soul. I always say that when you feel something in your heart, write and you will feel better.

**AU: Where can we find you online?**

**Sal:** We are present on Bandcamp, Facebook, or on the brutal muSICK YouTube channel. Search Emicrania.

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## Funny Bonez

By Courtney Evers

I first met Bonez Poley years ago in St. Catharines. A friend of mine was headed to the Temple for a show, and I decided to ride along. The house was a full-out DIY punk/metal house venue, complete with beer box carpeting and a sound system in the basement loud enough to shake even the neighbours' houses. Some of the audience members were hitting the pipes from the ceiling while crowd surfing, and someone ended up in a garbage can. It was a wild night and turned out to be one of the two house venues that Bonez has run over the years.

**Absolute Underground: Tell me about how the Temple and the Red Light venues came to be.**

**Bonez Poley:** I've traveled around a lot and was always drawn to house venues. When I moved to St. Catharines and discovered they didn't have one there, I knew that was a void I had to fill. The intimate setting of a DIY space has the capacity to cultivate a much closer-knit community than you otherwise find at the bigger above-board venues. It just gives you so much more freedom to book whatever shows you want and run them however you want.

**AU: What's your favourite memory of them?**

**BP:** At Red Light, we always had massive bonfires. We'd go around town collecting skids and then light 'em up after the shows. Those parties raged until the wee hours of the AM. One night, we had the band Child Bite there from Detroit. I heard this story after the fact, but apparently two members of CB were sitting quietly on the sidelines as a wild after party raged around them. A man showed up out of nowhere who didn't appear to know anyone there. He had a large bag of what could only be described as "documents" and proceeded to sidle up to the massive fire and burn them, one stack at a time. No one even acknowledged him. He finished destroying all his documents and left. I still have no clue who that was, or if he even knew us.

With the Temple, I really leaned into my focus on community-building. I had the music venue in the basement, and an art gallery on the main floor. Every month, I'd feature a different local artist

in the gallery. I threw a show once a month with a mix of local and touring bands, and we'd have a community potluck and art opening celebration before the show. I really made a point of mixing up different genres on the bills for those shows, in an effort to get as many different people out as possible. My favourite mashup was grindcore legends Fuck the Facts headlining, with local opener Clownfish Hat; basically, the most

adorably coy solo artist you can imagine, who performed that night in a fuzzy animal onesie. Everyone there loved all of it. It was such a heartwarming vibe.

**AU: When we first met, you were in the band cuntscumb, and now you've transitioned over to Pisser. Tell the kids more about Pisser; what are you up to musically these days?**

**BP:** Pisser is an old-school crossover thrash band that I formed while running the Temple. We've been through several lineup changes and are currently on a hiatus, but I did just do a run of cassette tapes, which were a split-release with myself! Comedy album on the A side, with the recent Pisser EP on the B side. You can also find Pisser's music on Bandcamp, and on vinyl via Schizophrenic records.

**AU: What inspired you to start pursuing comedy, and what's the best story of your early foray into it? Any tips for other folks looking to dive in?**

**BP:** To be perfectly honest, I was in between bands. After cuntscumb came to its natural end, I was struggling to find the right people in St. Catharines to form a new band with. I had some friends who dabbled in stand-up, and I went to watch them at an open mic. I was really missing the outlet of performing and when I saw the comics on that open mic, I thought, "I could do this."

I thought it would be a fun hobby to tide me over 'til I formed another band. I could not predict how hard I would fall for the craft, and how much it would consume me. It has now been almost ten years (except for the Covid lockdowns) since I haven't gone more than a week without performing stand-up, and I don't ever want to stop.

If you're looking to start, hit some open mics. Seeing amateurs taking a crack makes it feel more accessible. If you only watch pro comedy you think, "I could never do that." You can. It just takes a lot of work. Like, a lot of work to get to any place where you're even kinda good—haha! So don't get into it unless you're really willing to let it consume you.

My other tip is keep your ego in check. This is an industry of egomaniacs, and it's easy to get

carried away. Keep yourself humble and surround yourself with others who do as well, or you can oh-so-quickly become that stereotype of the sad, bitter, and suicidal clown.

The DIY ethos and skill sets I built over my years in the punk/metal/house venue communities most definitely inform the way I manage my comedy career today. I still really value community, and I gravitate toward other comics and venues who do, as well. And I don't kiss the asses of any big clubs or labels who'd have me be a cookie-cutter version of what they've decided funny is. I do things my own way, and I stick to my guns!

**AU: What are you up to next with your comedy?**

**BP:** Well, I recently released a special called *Inflammable Material*, which people can watch for free on YouTube. They can also listen to the audio version on any of the streaming platforms. So, I'm still working to promote that beast, but I'm at once writing and workshopping the next one! I hope to record another in about a year's time. The new one is shaping up to be pretty autobiographical.

I'm also working on a sitcom with another group of stand-up comics. I'm writing one of the main characters, who I'll also be playing. So, I've been having a lot of fun with that. And! I'm about to embark on a western tour of Alberta and BC. Very honoured to be touring with a fantastic Calgarian named Conner Christmas, and looking forward to hitting the road for the first time since the pre-pando era!

**AU: What cities will you be visiting, and maybe you can warn audiences about what to expect from your performances?**

**Bonez:** So far, we've got shows booked in Calgary, Creston, Vernon, Banff, and Lethbridge, and we'll be adding more dates. People can find up-to-date info on mine and Conner's websites. Hard to tell you what to expect, as we've both got a pretty wide range. One thing I'll say about us is we never punch down. And that the main prerogative is to have fun!

**AU: How does performing in Canada differ from other locations? Any unique experiences or challenges you anticipate?**

**BP:** Lots of driving—haha! Everything is so far apart!

**AU: Now you've decided to add co-writing a sitcom as a skill set. Tell me more about it?**

**BP:** It's a sitcom called *Douche Rehab*. The creator of this show is Danton Lamar who runs The Comedy Lab, which is the only minority-owned comedy club in Toronto.

**AU: That's a great name. What's the show about, and can you share a particular piece of writing on it you are excited about the most?**

**BP:** I can't go into too much about it at this stage, but it's heavily character-based and, essentially, the characters are all trying to become better

people. The character I'm writing is in a lot of ways a caricature of my younger self, but with emphasis on all the worst parts of me. It's been a good exercise in shadow work. We are currently raising funds to get this show off the ground, and there will be a fundraiser gala at Royal Paradise theater in Toronto on May 17th!

**AU: Now don't kill me, but I also happen to know you appeared on the queer dating show *Dating Unlocked*. How did that come about, and what was that experience like?**

**BP:** *Dating Unlocked* was created by a company called Border2Border. They specialize in queer content. A friend had been featured on another great show they did called *Drag Heals*. She sent me the audition call for *Dating Unlocked*, and I'm glad she did. It was honestly more fun than I expected! It's a very light and silly show, and I think it's wholesome as far as reality shows go. They're not trying to catch you at your worst. The Border2Border crew were just lovely, and they made us feel as comfortable as one can in that sort of situation. I think queer representation is important, so I really appreciate what Border2Border is doing.

**AU: So, we have musician, visual artist, comedian, screenwriter, actor, and reality show participant. Can you share insights into your creative process of juggling multiple artistic roles?**

**Bonez:** I really wish I could. I will say, my biggest struggle is picking a focus. I feel like my brain is screaming in a thousand directions at all times. Sometimes I have so many ideas churning and projects going that I get really overwhelmed, and a lot just never get completed. Luckily, at least a few of them do! Haha!

**AU: Are there any new challenges or goals you're**

**looking forward to tackling in the near future?**

**Bonez:** I'm really excited about acting right now. It's something I've always dabbled in, but now that I have the taste for playing a lead, I want more! I've always wanted to star in B horror films, so I'm hoping to make that a reality. Off to a good start right now with writing my own death scene in the upcoming Grindhouse feature, *Jesus Cop*, from writer/director Rob Gabriele!

**AU: Where do people find your content?**

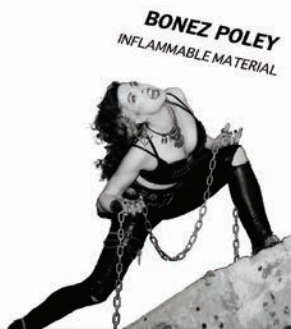
**Bonez:** My full comedy special, *Inflammable Material* is up for free on YouTube. You can also find up-to-date info about gigs on my website and you can search Bonez Poley on any platform. I'm the only one!

**AU: Finally, please give me your Famous Last Words:**

**Bonez:** You only get one shot at this life. So, find the things that bring you meaning, and the things that make you happy. And then fight for those things. Fight for them like your life depends on it.

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

Photos by Meaghan Eady





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## Comeback Kid

Vocalist Andrew Neufeld  
Talks New EP, *Trouble*

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Andrew Neufeld:** Hey, this is Andrew/Goose and I do the vocals in Comeback Kid. Infamous for? I think I'm most infamous for sneaking into airport lounges TBF. Or ice. I really enjoy ice.

**AU:** Your new EP just came out and it's quite a bit different than your previous releases. Can you tell us about *Trouble*? What can fans expect to hear?

**AN:** Well, actually the majority of these songs were written around the same time as the *Heavy Steps* sessions (our last LP), but we didn't feel like they fit *that* specific album so we moved on without them. After *Heavy Steps* came out, we went back and revisited some of these tracks and decided to work on them some more. I wouldn't say that these songs are the future of where we are trying to go with the band, but rather a creative detour where we allowed ourselves to spread our wings creatively in a different way,

do another LP.

**AU:** Does *Trouble* explore any particular themes?

**AN:** For sure... here's a little run down:

"*Trouble in the Winner's Circle*" is ripped off of comedian Neal Brennan's (*Chappelle's Show*) podcast

segment talking about celebs and famous people in the public eye and their public shame/downfalls, which was an interesting take for me to write about. A tongue-in-cheek song about the masses peering at others' lives through a fishbowl.

Another song "Chompin' at the Bit" is just about someone being a bit too eager.

and weren't trying to make a "this is us now" statement. Rather, we wanted to get a little indulgent and write some different kinds of tracks than we usually do. One song has a bit more of an alt-rock feel, one has a '90s punk throwback approach, and one almost has a street punk/oi feel. They are all hardcore songs, but we wanted to mix it up a bit and just do our own thing before we decide to



"*Breaking and Bruised*" is about get pummeled by life but keeping on coming back for more.

**AU:** How do you approach writing music?

**AN:** We have a few songwriters within the band, so generally songs are written on a solo basis. Someone will write the riff or most of the song at home, and then bring it to the band and we will all work on it together and adjust things as we see fit. I then will write the lyrics to whoever's song it is. Generally, if there is a main songwriter of a specific song, they become the "BOSS of the song" which means they usually will get the final say in case there is push back from the rest of the band, haha. We all live in different cities, so it's always great to bring the song to life after creating it on your own originally.

**AU:** The video for "*Trouble in the Winner's Circle*" looked like a lot of fun to make. What did that process look like?

**AN:** It was fun to make! I flew my friend, director Daniel Priess out from Hamburg, Germany to Vancouver. We got a green screen set up at a homie's studio space in Vancouver for these *big fishbowl* scenes when we are in the bowl. Then we were able to make ourselves "small" in the fishbowl for the big fight club scenes that we recorded at the Cobalt (legendary Vancouver punk venue) all day before a night time gig. It was 3-4 days of mayhem before we started to tour the next day in Seattle!

**AU:** What do you guys like to listen to in the tour van?

**AN:** New shit I've been digging this year... Militarie Gun, Spiritual Cramp, new Ye and Ty, Fight On Sight, Desmadre, Pink Pantheress, and The

Chisel!

**AU:** What do you consider to be the most essential Hardcore album?

**AN:** Not the *most* essential, but one of the most important for my generation maybe is Hatebreed's *Satisfaction is the Death of Desire*, influence-wise, I would say.



**AU:** This will be the 420 issue, does anyone in the band partake?

**AN:** Yeah I do! Smoke me up!

**AU:** Indica or sativa? What's your favourite thing to do while high?

**AN:** Hybrid! Wake and bake before a big walk!

**AU:** By the time this goes to print, you'll be almost done with your Canadian tour, then you'll be heading to Europe. Is there anything else on the horizon for fans to look forward to?

**AN:** We are currently in the studio recording something special for 2025... The show in Victoria is gonna be killer... it was amazing last time! Lots of overseas touring, but that doesn't matter to Vic!

**AU:** Final words of wisdom for our readers?

**AN:** Keep your head up champ!

[linktr.ee/ComebackKid](http://linktr.ee/ComebackKid)

[IG: @comebackkid\\_hc](https://www.instagram.com/comebackkid_hc)

Black and white photo by Aaron Schwartz

Colour photos by Georgia Rawson



we called it The House of Heathens... And one of the versions of that house was owned by a church.

**TR:** The first house that we all lived in together was a parsonage of the Lutheran church next door. So many bedrooms in this big, wide-open house. It suited our filmmaker needs quite well. The church people would get mad at us sometimes. One day, they came over and said that they were sick and tired of this House of Heathens. So, obviously the name kind of stuck. We just kept making more shorts and ended up having another house in a different part of the city with even

more people— including Kevin at one point.

**AU: Kevin, how did your involvement with the House of Heathens come about? Let's talk about some of your earlier memories and projects working with them.**

**Kevin Martin:** I always say, I have never made a dime with the video store, but what I lack in money, I've made with great experiences and meeting great people. Obviously, the video store also spawned, DEDfest. And it was through DEDfest that we started doing a competition for young filmmakers that wanted to make short films. We let the audience vote on shorts before

## Perusing the Aisles of *The Last Video Store:*

**A Modern-Day VHS-Mix-Tape to Video-Store Era Canuxploitation**

By Lacey Paige

It would be hard to argue against the importance and decade-defying stronghold of the video store era (originally associated with the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s). The essence that physical media holds in the grander milieu of the pop culture paradigm remains a strongly desired point of counter-cultural interest— albeit perhaps on a much more niche level than it ever was before.

For many of us, navigating the strange, confusing, always-seemingly-in-flux and sometimes incredibly dull years between the late '70s and the early 2000s, when video stores were a common ground for escapism, gave us a safe place to expose ourselves to metaphorical and allegorical representations of the socio-political chaos of the times. Movies and video stores also offered us a channel to explore human experience, our common anxieties through different historical eras, and our increasing reliance on technology and artificially generated forms of recreational and digital social interaction. In a time where streaming services have seemingly won the format wars of decades past, it's perhaps more important than ever before to look back and reminisce on the cultural significance of the video store era, physical media releases, cinema, and the people and communities who dedicated their lives to making all of it happen.

While in 2024, independent/genre cinema is alive, well, and getting the love and appreciation it deserves via community fan groups, conventions, film festivals, print and digital fanzines, one thing is for sure: video shops are now considered endangered... and perhaps even on their way to permanent extinction. *The Last Video Store* is an ode to a not-yet-dead-but-highly-endangered era— still loved by many— that needs to be watched to understand why video stores, physical-format media, and the times that made

these things socially relevant, will live on forever in the hearts of many... and why we need to keep them alive and going strong! We had the opportunity to sit down with Cody Kennedy, Tim Rutherford and Kevin Martin— a few of the key cast and crew members of *The Last Video Store*.

**AU: How did the House of Heathens collective come to formation? How did the idea and the drive to create a scrappy little homage to the video store era come about?**

**Cody Kennedy:** I guess if we were to go back to the very start it would be Tim and I meeting in high school and discovering that we both wanted to make movies, and we shared a love for similar films. Then together we watched stuff and then experimented and created stuff. We were really into theater back then. It was kind of like writing skits, sketch comedy things. A little bit later, we had made a couple of short films, which led us to DEDfest and meeting. That was kind of where the House of Heathens started, when DEDfest was hosting their monthly screenings, and we were entering their contest short film contest to pay homage to the movies they were screening.

**Tim Rutherford:** Then we all moved in together in the same house.

**CK:** Yeah, there was the house that Tim, myself, Josh and a couple of our friends that came from the film industry— the ones who didn't have anything to do with the shorts, but had just kind of been there in the background. It was this crazy house, like I guess you could call it a "film house" because we were crafting, creating props and green screens... We had a green screen living room for a few days a week, things like that. So,



we showed the feature films and the winners would get a prize, which generally came from my video store. For, like, three or four months in a row, Tim and Cody just kept winning everything. So, they came into the store, and I got to know them a bit better. In 2012, we brought in Michael Biehn from *Terminator* and *Aliens*. We thought it would be fun to do a reel of shorts of all his best movies before welcoming him on stage. It was DEDfest Derek's idea to get Tim and Cody to film something funny at my store that would be relevant to the Michael Biehn event we were hosting. Then people started asking us what we were going to do next. I'm like, what do you mean doing next? Originally, it was supposed to be kind

of a one-off. So, I eventually convinced Tim and Cody to do these monthly screenings. I asked the guys if they wanted to do a parody of whatever movie we were screening via DEDfest's monthly screenings at Metro Cinema, and to shoot them in my store.

Ironically, we were doing a screening of Astron 6's *Father's Day* that year, and I'm like, well, we can't do a parody of a new movie... Nobody's seen it! So maybe we'll just do something original. So, we turn me, the real-life video store guy, into a grumpy guy. For a while, Josh (Lenner)— AKA Viper Jackson— became my fake employee. We had this silly idea to turn Netflix into an evil gangster named Netflix who just wants to destroy my store (ironically). And so this became more original. Then there was also the Christmas episode with a killer tree, which was a blast!

**AU: How did you guys go about funding the movie and what were some obstacles that you encountered along the way?**

**CK:** We attempted to make this movie in 2013 on a shoe-string budget; it was very ambitious and we never completed it. I learned a lot over the last couple of years after that. With our fully realized feature, *The Last Video Store*, we spent a lot of time actually trying to see if we could get grants to make it and cover the entire budget, but we were unsuccessful. Then Kevin asked us to make him an actual commercial for his video store, The Lobby DVD Shop, in Edmonton.

**TR:** So, we were like, let's make this commercial for Kevin's video store. But then we're like, maybe we can't make a short film based around making a commercial in the video store. We ended up making this short film called *The Video Store Commercial*, and we got lucky because it managed to get a premiere at South by Southwest (SXSW) in 2019— a year after we made Kevin's commercial. Getting into South by Southwest opened that door, along with some of the contacts we had made with the original *Last Video Store* short that predated our first attempt at making the feature.

**CK:** We were able to get into the front-page film market and from there, we got to meet some key players in the low-budget horror and genre scene. Then we made a deal with Blue Finch Distribution, and from there spent another two years waiting and developing and re-writing the scripts and waiting on a final answer. Finally, when that came through, we talked to somebody in November and by February we were in production. That was basically like a rocket taking off.

**AU: Genre/indie film is largely based around establishing genuine relationships with other like-minded creatives in the industry. Can you speak to the connections you've made?**

**CK:** We developed friendships with some of the members of the Canadian Film Corporation over the duration of a decade, and when it came to shooting this film, because it was a small budget, you want to try to find different people to cameo for certain parts. We were able to pull a few of them to cameo and play some really fun characters in the film. We think it helped out in a way where maybe they felt a certain degree of fun comedy to the roles that they played.

**TR:** Working with Steve Kostanski, who was part of that as well... He's known for his creature design work, practical effects, and as a member of the Astron Collective, he assisted us a bit on this



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as well. During Covid, I went to see Steve during a break from production to go return some of the toys that he lent us. He gave me some great advice about utilizing this time and not getting worn down by the break. He reminded us just to let the production make its own decisions and not to worry about things we can't control.

**CK:** But having him in there, we kind of took a step back and at one point realized that there are a few jokes in the movie about Canadian horror and independent movies as a whole as well as the exploitative nature of the films. When we were sitting there realizing that we kind of did that, it was like a pretty funny moment to realize that we have the majority of the Astron 6 guys involved as well as Laurel Dean, the director of *Wolf Cop*, who makes an appearance in the movie, and others. I think it speaks volumes to the community in Canadian genre film that you can deeply rely on a lot of these people to collaborate with and even call on to give you great advice. Yeah. I mean, it's mainly all positive from my side and that's probably cause I'm older now.

**KM:** The most important thing, for me, is that I never would have thought that meeting Tim, Cody, and Josh would change my life this much. We've helped each other out. They thank the video store for getting the ball rolling for their creative endeavours, and I thank them for breathing new life into my old crusty heart. Also, because of doing DEDfest and going to our festivals, meeting other filmmakers, Canadian genre filmmakers... I guess that regardless of what it leads to— even if it's nothing— it doesn't matter because you look back and you take a deep breath, and you think, that's literally been over a 10-year journey of friends that kind of all met each other at a real video store and did these silly things there. Who would have thought it would have led to this? Then you think, "Oh yeah, I'm in Austin, Texas, at the Alamo Draft House right now. Malcolm McDowell just walked by me; Joe Lynch is over there... and we're part of this." It's a little bit humbling.

**AU:** You guys managed to achieve the vibe of that video store era in *TLVS*; how did you also achieve a very sincere sense of nostalgia?

**CK:** The pure satire thing has already been done, so we really wanted to have the moments where we can sit and experience that sense of a longing for that time. Let's take a moment to linger on the nostalgia factor after we've just experienced a whole bunch of these sequences. It's inevitable, but there's something beautiful and there's something sad about it and I think the movie really captures that and it's just like, again, I think of it as noble but necessary and it's like if



we didn't have that, if we didn't have these things and those sacrifices, we wouldn't have art and that would be shitty. There's no less artistry in the art of curating than in the art that you're curating itself because that, for Kevin, is keeping what he loves alive. Physical media is something that we could use a lot more of.

**KM:** It didn't quite dawn on me until people saw the movie and the first reviews like, "Man, this movie's got a lot of heart." Usually, when people say that, it's like, "Oh, that's not good." But then all these other random critics, keep bringing up the

heart thing and the sadness thing... So, you're right. I didn't think about it, but in the end, the video store does not win... It's like, we've reached the end, and that's kind of how we felt when we finished filming the movie. Everybody was kind of sad because, you know, that's a wrap kind of thing... And maybe that's that; maybe that'll be how it is at my video store...

**AU:** What are some of your general philosophical thoughts about the state of the

there, but for movies, it's coming back. That's a huge blessing for all the boutique labels that are salvaging and getting great releases made of some of our favourites from over the last few decades— whether it's Arrow Video, Criterion, Kino Lorber or Vinegar Syndrome... it's all just fantastic. As long as they keep doing what they're doing, I can keep doing what I'm doing.

As far as movies in general, when we're talking about Hollywood, that's a kind of a train wreck right now. There's still good stuff coming out... but everything comes in waves. Movies are doing just fine. They're here to entertain us. The whole point of cinema is that life can be tough, and sometimes during tough times, we just want to escape for a couple hours, just go somewhere else. And, hopefully with our silly movie, we got to escape into a video store for 80 minutes. You know, like the whole idea of this movie is that video stores are universal.

**AU:** What's in store for you guys next?

**CK:** We can't really give details on the physical release yet, but that will happen sometime in the near future. In the meantime, I think we're probably just doing a light festival run. I'm not sure how much further they're going to take it. We're aiming for what will hopefully be a physical release in the summer or fall.

**KM:** My store must stay open long enough for the movie to come out in physical media so I can have it in the store itself. When that happens, the circle of video store life will be complete. That's like the most meta thing that could happen. What's going to be surreal is when it does get picked up for distribution here in Canada, and when I can order copies, I'm going to have to pay for that movie the same way I pay for any other movie I bring into the shop... Wild!

**You can catch screenings of *The Last Video Store* at Calgary's Underground Film Festival (CUFF) on Saturday, April 20, 2024, at The Globe Theatre. *TLVS* will also be playing at the Cleveland International Film Festival on Friday, April 12, and Sunday, April 14, 2024.**

**movie industry, streaming, physical media, and the fate of the physical video rental store?**

**KM:** It's interesting... It'll be 19 years since I opened The Lobby DVD Shop this summer and about five or six years ago, I felt more and more dire straits. I think it's kind of reversed since. I think because there are so many streaming sites, it's tough for people to decide what to watch and to remember what they've already seen.

Like how vinyl has had a big resurgence, obviously in the last 10, 15 years— I'm not saying Blu-ray and DVD and physical media will get



## Catching up with Vancouver's B-Lines

By John Carlow

*My introduction to hardcore was a B-Lines gig at the late, great Tavern of the Damned (Logan's Pub, Victoria, BC). Lightning fast, loud songs delivered with unhinged fury. Ryan Dyck was kind of intimidating at the time, with an almost possessed persona during their shows. Off stage, he's a pretty approachable guy, who I've kept in touch with over years since the band hung it up.*

**Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.**

**Ryan Dick:** I'm Ryan Dyck, the singer in B-Lines. I was also in a band called Fun 100 before that.

**Scotty Colin:** My name is Scotty Colin. I was the guitar player and primary music composer for the band. Past bands include Fuck Me Dead and Go It Alone. Growing up in Southern California, I also played in No Excuse and Stand as One.

**AU: For someone not familiar with the band and its run, how would you describe the life span of B-Lines?**

**SC:** B-Lines began in the year 2007. After the breakup of Fuck me Dead, Norm Drouillard (guitar) and I (bass) decided to pursue a new project. Around the same time, Fun 100 was also breaking up. We decided to ask Bruce if he wanted to play drums. During our first practice,

we knew it was perfect. We thought why not ask Ryan if he wants to sing? We did a demo with that lineup.

From there, we had a few shifts in the first few years of the band. Norm left, I jumped on guitar, and we recruited Jason Fisher (ex-drummer of Fuck Me Dead). Eventually Jason left, and Adam Fothergill joined on bass. We did our two LPs with that lineup. Adam left the band and Todd Taylor (guitarist of Nervous Talk) on bass guitar. A huge part of our history was when Christian Letner joined us as our roadie. His dedication was over the top. He was a pro. He drove us everywhere, did an amazing job during our shows, and really believed in us. It's hard to say what it would have been like without him.

In 2015 after the release of the second LP, Ryan decided to fold the band. Continuing without him was out of the question for me. His personality on stage and gift with putting words to the music was irreplaceable. We all got along very well, and there wasn't much drama in the band, other than the fact that I had a huge substance abuse problem that affected the band at varying times and degrees. I could never thank them enough for the patience they had for me. Besides that, it really was what I would call a "magic combination". Everyone did their part, and they did it beautifully. We had huge success locally and limited success outside of Vancouver; what more could you ask from a DIY punk band? We still get together on occasion to see each other around Christmas, to catch up and connect. I love these guys with all my heart, and they've played such a huge role in my journey through life.

**AU: Anyone want to dive in on what you all have been doing since the band packed it in?**

**SC:** I've moved back home to California where I was born and raised. I live with my fiancé Cynthia Campbell, and I'm focusing much of my attention on making art. Music is, and always will be, a huge foundation in my life. Although I'm not focusing

on recording or releasing any music to the public, pay attention, because there may be something down the line. Besides English, music is the first language I learned how to speak. I play many different types of instruments. Music is something that will stay with me. Most importantly, I am growing deep into my spiritual practice. It's something that has been the foundation of my life and has been evolving since I cleaned up from hard drugs in 2013.

**RD:** I'm still in Vancouver! I worked at Mint Records for a while after B-Lines ended and now I write grants for musicians and do project management for We Are Time Records. I also work at Red Cat Records when they need somebody to price a big stack of dusty Loverboy and Prism LPs. Bruce works at a thrift store and still plays drums completely unprofessionally. Adam builds synthesizers and has a kid! Todd is a video editor and flower logistics coordinator.

**AU: Can people still find B-Lines stuff?**

**RD:** I sold a box of about 50 B-Lines LPs to Neptoon Records in Vancouver a while back when I was moving, because I was tired of packing and unpacking it every time I moved. I would imagine they still have a few kicking around in their basement record crypt! Ask them to go for a dig!

**AU: The lone first press 7" from Lowlife (Pre-Personality Crisis) goes for \$300 in some circles. Think people will be paying big for B-Lines someday?**

**SC:** It's hard to say which way the cards will fall. Life does funny things. The most important thing to remember is the memories and how meaningful the experience was. We start DIY bands because we are fed up with how the corporate music industry operates, and we do it because we know we can do it ourselves with an entirely different sense of motivation. I'm 48 years old now. I started in my first band when I was 14. If you told me back then that Misfits t-shirts were going to be for sale in places like Wal-Mart and Target, I wouldn't have believed it and it would have disgusted me. Maybe this is more of an extreme example, but I still think its relevant. It's not to say I wouldn't be thankful for the success of B-Lines on a wider scale in the long run. It's just important to keep the motivation in check and not be clouded by any expectations. I imagine it would feel good years after the fact to be appreciated and given more credit to your influence on the scene. And I love that Lowlife 7"! It doesn't surprise me it's going for that kind of money. I'm thankful enough to own all the Smash the State compilations.

**RD:** When I was working at Red Cat Records, I recently sold a used copy of our first 7" for \$4, so it may take a few more years in the cellar for our records to start fetching \$300.

**AU: What were your fave show and places to play?**

**SC:** That's a good question, and so hard to say. Headlining Music Waste one year at the Waldorf was phenomenal. Phil Western did the sound at that show. It's quite amazing what can happen when you have a brilliant sound man. Also, heading the Music Waste at the Astoria one year was amazing. It was the first night we played "Hastings Strut". We hadn't heard Ryan sing it yet at band practice. We broke into it and it kind of surprised us on stage. Go Ryan! He also ended up cutting himself with glass (on purpose) on stage. Kind of par for the course, but so awesome and such an impact.

Besides that, we had some great shows down the West Coast on tour and did really well in LA/ Orange County. Our friend Kent was huge in helping with that. There are plenty of venues that have closed since we were playing. The Emergency Room was a good one. In its heyday, that was a brilliant space to see shows and to play. I've often found myself walking through the city and remembering a venue that used to be there. The memories are huge.

**RD:** I agree with Scotty, Music Waste was always lots of fun. I miss a lot of the back-alley DIY venues that are long gone. They were often gross and dangerous and wild. I was always partial to the Astoria as well; I can't believe I was never banned from that place.

**AU: Your shows certainly had a rep for being outrageous and... unpredictable... Flying beer, broken shit, bodily harm. Any untold stories?**

**SC:** I guess I just answered part of that one in the last question. We played a show in Victoria when Ryan decided to stop drinking. He shared with me that being on stage completely sober felt like being naked. He told me it gave him a new respect for what it took for me to get clean off drugs and still be on stage playing in front of people. The stories of all the fun and chaos are entertaining, but it's also important to look at things from more than one angle. You must be able to see the bad in the good, and the good in the bad. It's all relevant.

**RD:** I remember smashing a bunch of glasses at one show, and the bartender kicked me in the balls after the show. I definitely deserved it.

**AU: It's been said that the band packed it in because you didn't think you were believable as "pissed off punks" anymore? Do you stand by that, or were there other reasons?**

**RD:** I was the one that instigated the end of the band. I didn't really have anything to scream about anymore so I figured that is the correct time to stop being in a punk band. There will always be new punk bands to take over.

**AU: I read in an old interview that Ryan had his own zine? Tell us about that, and are there still any copies around?**

**RD:** My high school friend still has a few copies of *Bull Sheet*, and he pulls them out when I'm over at his place to embarrass me. My brother and I used to write to every record label we could find and ask for promo CDs to review in the zine, which we did review, but we were stupid teens who knew nothing about music. The amount of confidence I had was remarkable.

**AU: What's in your music collections now? What were you listening to when you were still together as a band?**

**RD:** I've been buying a bunch of '80s twee-pop records from a collection that came into Red Cat recently, but I also listen to a lot of ambient music these days because, as we've already established, I'm old. Back in the B-Lines days we were always listening to early LA punk, KBD-ish comps, and the garage punk of the day like Tyvek and Times New Viking.

**SC:** My music collection is all over the map. In B-Lines days it generally mostly focused more on DIY punk, a lot in the KBD area or California punk from the '70s I've always loved the early punk from Australia and New Zealand. I still love all that stuff. In more recent years I've grown into areas like experimental music, kraut rock, world music from various cultures, and acoustic stuff like John Fahey or Robbie Basho. I even love some classical music from composers like Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, and Philip Glass. I love the piano and more intimate ensembles like quartets.

**AU: Any bands out there now doing what B-Lines did back then?**

**RD:** I like TJ Felix... Way more prolific than B-Lines, they put out an album every couple of months it seems. I like their very direct and absurdist take on punk that not very many people can pull off. I don't know why but it sounds the best playing out of phone speakers. True weirdos making punk for themselves and maybe only themselves.

**AU: Who do you like on the scene these days?**

**RD:** I like Chain Whip and Bootlicker as far as active punk bands go, but I also don't go to very many shows anymore. I'm at home listening to my Martin Denny records, drinking wine, and reading crime novels.

**SC:** I'm not paying enough attention to what is going on in the scene these days. With the overwhelm of the information age and the wi-fi world, it feels like the DIY realm has suffered compared to what it used to be. Maybe I'm just getting older and holding onto "the way things used to be," but I'm okay with that. I'm following my own creativity and creating my own world. I suppose that's always been one of my strengths and one of the reasons why B-Lines did what it did. I'm sure there's some amazing stuff out there. I think there always will be. If anyone wants to share anything with me, I'm open!

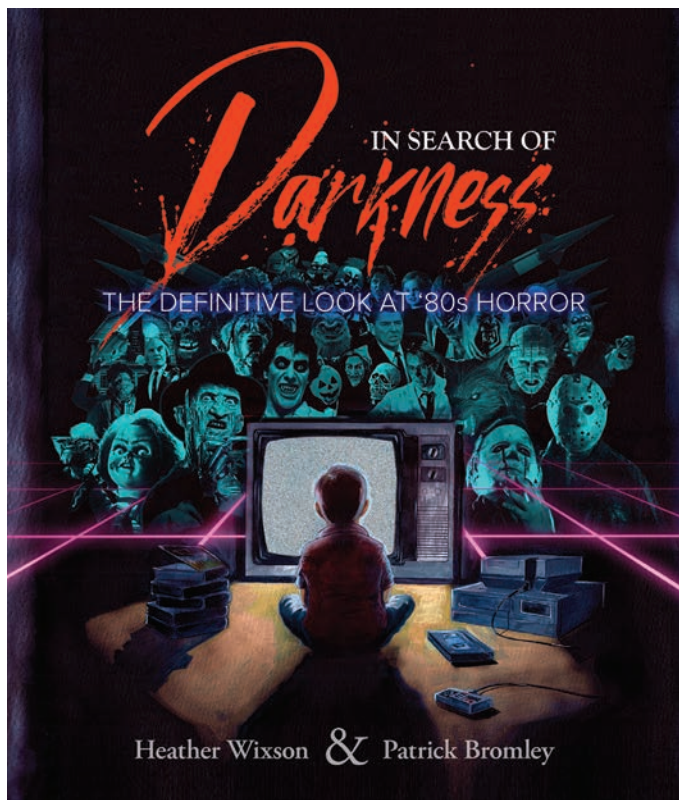
*Apparently, Neptoon Records has a cache of B-Lines, and Bandcamp hosts the bands profile.*

[b-lines.bandcamp.com](http://b-lines.bandcamp.com)

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

*Photos by John Carlow*





Darkness will still receive a limited-edition poster included with their book. Celebrating over 140 films from the greatest decade of horror – the 1980s – *In Search of Darkness* is the definitive guide to this iconic era in genre filmmaking. *In Search of Darkness* will allow readers to immerse themselves in the history of their favorite horror movies and discover hidden gems from this iconic time period, as each movie will be commemorated with a stunning two-page layout and presented in the same format as the popular documentary series. Featuring hundreds of pictures, trivia facts, icon features, year-in-review pages, a film checklist, and more, *In Search of Darkness* is the ultimate '80s horror bible.

## In Search of Darkness The Definitive Look at '80s Horror

The wait is finally over as the '80s are back! Dark Ink, the publisher of horror icon biographies and dozens of other film and genre titles, is thrilled to announce that the *In Search of Darkness* coffee table book is finally ready to ship! Written by Heather Wixson and Patrick Bromley, this book is set to be the definitive celebration of '80s horror in book form.

With the first thousand copies selling out quickly, Dark Ink added 513 copies to the press run, allowing fans who missed out one final chance at getting a limited edition copy of this expansive compendium! All new orders for *In Search of*

*Just like the amazing documentaries from CreatorVC, this book is a true labor of love. Heather, Patrick, the designers, editors, and everyone on our team poured their hearts into this beautiful book and we couldn't be more proud of how it came together. We can't wait to see it displayed in fans homes around the world,"* said Michael Aloisi, owner of Dark Ink.

To celebrate the release of *In Search of Darkness*, Dark Delicacies in Burbank, California will be hosting a very special signing event on April 27th featuring both Heather Wixson and Patrick Bromley, as well as a number of icons who helped shape the landscape of '80s horror.

Patrick Bromley has been writing about film since 2004 and is a member of the Chicago Film Critics

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Association and Online Film Critics Society. As Editor-in-Chief of *F This Movie!*, Bromley hosts a weekly podcast and manages a full site devoted to the love of movies. His writing also appears on *Daily Dead*, *Bloody Disgusting*, and various other publications. Bromley has been an obsessive fan of horror and genre films his entire life, watching, re-watching and studying everything from the *Universal Monsters* of the '30s and '40s to the modern explosion of indie horror. He lives in the Chicago area with the best wife and two cool kids, whom he is trying to raise as horror nerds.

Heather Wixson was born and raised in the Chicago suburbs and moved to Los Angeles in 2009 to follow her dreams. A 16-year veteran in the world of horror entertainment journalism, Wixson has spent her career as a writer and

supporter of preserving the history of horror and science fiction cinema. Throughout her career, Wixson has contributed to several notable websites, including *Fangoria*, *Dread Central*, *Terror Tube*, and *FEARnet*, and she served as the Managing Editor for *Daily Dead* for nearly a decade before retiring from entertainment journalism in early 2024. Heather Wixson has also written for both *Fangoria Magazine* & *ReMind Magazine*, produced the first installment of *In Search of Darkness* and is the author of *Monster Squad* as well as the *Monsters, Makeup & Effects* book series. The third volume of *Monsters, Makeup & Effects* is due to be released in late 2024.

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## Wolf Venom

### South Island Mutt Metal

#### Interview by AU Editorial

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

**Wolf Venom:** You're talking to Matt on guitar, best known for his work in Fractured Anatomy. Ryan on drums, known mostly for his time in the Mags. Wes on bass, with an extensive log of gigging with the Steve Kemp band, Radio Chaos, and his '80s metal band Raid. Nik on vocals, mostly known for his green thumb as a singer in a band, and party improv.

Collectively, we're known as Wolf Venom, playing some good ol' heavy metal at local venues all over Victoria, with other great local acts like Lucid Karma, Lidkicker, Electric Druids, Gate Theory, Dead Rights, Buzzard Asylum, Hit the Deck, the Opposed, and Screaming Fury. Shout out to Royal Savoie for getting our music out there on 101.9 CFUV with his show *Thrash Can* (on every Thursday from 9-10pm), as well as managing some of the bands mentioned above and organizing and promoting local gigs.

**AU: How would you describe your sound to someone who has never heard you?**

**WV:** Ever since we started playing music together, we used a lot of the well-known LOUD music genres as word vomit like punk, thrash, stoner/groove metal etc, as most bands do. After one jam, as we discussed our sound, Nik muttered

the words "Mutt Metal," and you could practically hear the ding of light bulbs turning on above our heads. A new genre was born. Not only does it simplify our sound whenever someone asks, but it also feels super fitting considering our band name, and everybody always gets a kick out of it too when we

tell 'em.

**AU: What are some of your influences?**

**WV:** Big can of worms right there...

Matt's influences start from seeing Ozzy at 13, and learning Sabbath and RATM riffs when he first picked up the electric guitar. He was in high school when nu metal was at its peak, listening to a lot of Korn and Bizkit, transitioning into the new wave of American heavy metal, with acts like Killswitch Engage, Lamb of God, and Shadows Fall. Can't forget the big four.

Nik's influences started off with '90s punk rock like NOFX, Misfits, Bad Religion, Pennywise. His tastes then progressed into heavier territory with bands like Slayer, Iron Maiden, and Megadeth.

Wes' influence in music started when he was six years old playing piano. He quickly transitioned into playing cello, performing classical music at the Conservatory of Music with Grade 3 honours when he was 10. His favourite artists, first and foremost include Geddy Lee, Billy Sheehan, Steve Vai, and Joe Satriani.

Ryan's influences started at an early age, listening to Genesis, Duran Duran, and Platinum Blonde. He then grew into the sounds of Led Zeppelin, the Doors, and hair metal bands like Ratt and Mötley Crüe. When getting his first drum kit at 13, he started playing songs from Warrant, Bon Jovi, Poison, progressing into harder material like Metallica, RATM, and Pantera. His favourite drummer is Gene Hoglan, best known for his works in Death and Testament.

**AU: Are you working on any new songs?**

**WV:** Absolutely. Matt does basically all the demos at home and by the time the band formed, he already had over 30 full song demos for us to pick through. Now up to 50 tracks.

Nik wrote a ton of great lyrics to accompany the music and we slowly figured out which ones we wanted to play for our gigs.

But to better answer your question, nearly every rehearsal we simply jam for a while and groove out something new, so we are always keeping it fresh.

Matt's always working on new riffs, Nik's always writing lyrics, and we still have a backlog of over 30 demos that the bands barely touched yet, so yes, there's definitely new music that's happening.

**AU: If you could share a stage with any band, who would it be?**

**WV:** Megadeth, RATM, Slayer, Pantera (RIP Dime)

**AU: Tell us about your 420 show coming up.**

**WV:** 420 Metal Meltdown at the Langford Legion on April 20th.

It all started off with Ryan's vision of hosting the sickest metal tribute show Langford/Victoria has ever seen. His first thought was to have local Pantera tribute legends Regular People headline the event, but the problem was they hadn't been active the past eight-ish years. Long story short, they re-formed for this show, grinding hard, which they've now sadly announced will be their last show ever as a band together.

They'll be closing the night for one epic final bang, with supporting acts from Rock City Riot (Judas Priest tribute), Island Maiden (Iron Maiden tribute), and of course, Wolf Venom opening up the night and playing our originals.

With this being a "Mutt Metal Productions" first official event, we definitely had our moments of doubt and overwhelm, but we are happy to announce that the event is officially SOLD OUT. So, apologies to anyone reading this who wanted tickets, we will have to get a bigger venue next year!

## WOLF VENOM

For anyone who does have a ticket to 420 Metal Meltdown, please bring non perishable, non expired food items. All donations will be given to the Goldstream Food Bank, as well as the money raised from the 50/50 draws. There will also be a ton of door prizes available, so make sure to not lose your ticket stub in the mosh pit!

**AU: Indica or sativa?**

**WV:** Back in our day, we had no idea what the hell we were smoking, haha. As long as your dime bag didn't have sticks n' seeds in it, and didn't smell like oregano, it was getting busted and rolled.

Overall consensus with the band though, is sativa.

Matt wants to give a shout out to StoneHouse Craft Cannabis, a local micro he works at here in Victoria. Our new Grape Gasser (indica) and Jerry Can (sativa) products are amazing if you like a fruity, diesel blend with high THC and terp %. We take great pride in growing/trimming/packaging our herb. Support local! Ask for StoneHouse!

**AU: What's the best stoner movie of all time?**

**WV:** Hard to say, we watch most movies stoned, haha! *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii*, *Up in Smoke*, *Half Baked*, *Zoolander*.

**AU: Any other plans for future shows or tours?**

**WV:** As of now, our biggest plan is to record our first full-length album, which we will get to after the 420 gig. We do have another show or two lined up at the Phoenix Bar in Victoria, one of them being with Electric Druids on May 11th. We also have a show in Ucluelet with Dead Rights this summer.

**AU: Famous last words?**

**WV:** Smoke 'em if you got 'em.

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## MOONBATHER

Victoria Heavy Stoner Doom

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**MJ:** I'm MJ I play drums, I guess I'd probably be most infamous for bringing my bong with me pretty much anywhere we go.

**Jacob:** I'm Jacob, I'm infamous for yelling into a microphone, taking naps, and having a ravenous hunger for lasagna.

**AU: Describe your sound if possible.**

**Jacob:** Describing our sound has always been a tough one for us. It's heavy, it's groovy, energetic, it's dynamic, it's psychedelic at points. It's an amalgamation of all of our biggest influences from the 70's, 80's, 90's and 00's.



**AU: What are some of your influences?**

**MJ:** Some of our biggest influences are Soundgarden, Black Sabbath, SLEEP, Kyuss, Clutch, Primus, Melvins, Tool, Mastodon, Megadeth, Dio, Judas Priest, and Gojira.

**AU: You released your debut album last year; can you tell us about that?**

**MJ:** It was fun recording the album, we recorded

it quick and dirty in Greg's (guitarist) basement with Evan Matthiesen. Also, we filmed a live video on the Pacheedaht Territory to promote a few of the tracks which was a blast.

**AU: Is it thematic in any way?**

**Jacob:** The only constant theme in my songwriting is rock and roll, everything else is just to fill in the blanks.

**AU: Are you working on any other new songs?**

**MJ:** The Band is working on a few new songs that we're really stoked on! The plan is to have them recorded by the end of 2024 to release in 2025.

**AU: If you could share a stage with any band, who would it be?**

**MJ:** would be stoked to play a show with SLEEP.

**Jacob:** I agree with MJ, we would love to share a stage with SLEEP. Another band we'd love to share the stage with is Vancouver's Dead Quiet.

**AU: What are you doing for 420?**

**MJ:** We're gonna be playing a 420 rager up in Nanaimo at the terminal with Death Hawk and touring band Conversation! That pretty much sums up our plans for 420 right there.

**AU: What's your favourite thing to do while high?**

**MJ:** Play music!

**AU: Team Indica or Team Sativa?**

**Jacob:** Team Indica all the way. Sativa doesn't get you as stoned, waste of time.

**AU: Favourite munchies?**

**MJ:** Gotta be Reese's cups!

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**MJ:** Check our debut EP, available to purchase on bandcamp and streaming everywhere!

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## NOMEANSNO & MUDHONEY PART ONE

### From Obscurity To On Bookshelves Everywhere

This book signing and author panel featured the bands NoMeansNo and Mudhoney. Showcasing the release of the books

NoMeansNo: From Obscurity to Oblivion by Victoria's cause célèbre, **Jason Lamb** alongside the co-authors of Mud Ride: A Messy Trip through the Grunge Explosion.

This event was moderated by Lamb who spoke with **Steve Turner** (guitarist and founding member of Mudhoney), **Adem Tepedelen** (co-author of Mud Ride) and **John Wright** of NoMeansNo.

**Jason Lamb:** For those of you who don't know who I am, my name is Jason Lamb. I do radio in Victoria on a radio station called The Zone and I wrote a book about my favourite band called NoMeansNo. It's named *NoMeansNo: From Obscurity to Oblivion* and it is out now. I'll actually do the backstory here because it's worth it. My son Martin goes to high school. He's a musician. He's in all kinds of bands. I was picking him up after a jazz concert several months ago and was talking to his band teacher, Mr. Weaver. Mr. Weaver's like, "How is the NoMeansNo book going?" "Oh, it's good. It's like almost out now."

Then he says "That kid over there, Samuel, his dad helped write a book about music too." I'm like, "What are you talking about?" He's like, "Yeah, he wrote a book about Mudhoney." So, that's Adem Tepedelen who is right here. Who lives here in Victoria. So, I got a hold of Adem. I'm like, "What's going on here?" That two Victoria people helped write these books about these iconic artists. Adem mainly wrote the book of the memoirs of this man, Mr. Steve Turner. The guitar player and founder of a little band called Mudhoney. Widely considered pioneers of what we now call grunge. I also brought this guy down from

beautiful Lund, BC to help me; this is John Wright. He's the drummer and a founding member of NoMeansNo, along with his brother Rob of course.

The idea is, we are just going to kind chat for a minute and then I'll let audience members ask some questions and then we'll get to the signing of the books. I just got back from Mexico and I read Steve's book down there and first of all it's a fantastic book, I highly recommend you get it. It's called *Mud Ride: A Messy Trip Through the Grunge Explosion*.



I was blown away by even though you guys kind of came from different genres and different times a little bit. The crossover stuff that happened between your two bands was a little bit strange. First of all, you were in Seattle

and obviously these guys were in Victoria at that time. But NoMeansNo came down to Seattle quite early. You played a lot of the same venues and I was trying to figure out if you guys ever actually shared a bill together? We've been talking about this over dinner because I had a couple of interviews with people who where like "Oh yeah, I definitely saw NoMeansNo and Mudhoney on the same bill." Somebody told me that they saw you at The Town Pump in Vancouver. But we're like, "I don't think that happened, maybe Green River." Before Mudhoney, Steve was in a band called Green River so we figured that maybe Green River and NoMeansNo may have shared a bill, maybe.

**Adem Tepedelen:** I have not found any proof.

**Jason Lamb:** Neither have I, and I was really good at tracking down every flier, ticket, and poster that I could possibly fucking find.

**Steve Turner:** You know, there were so many Vancouver and Victoria bands that came through Seattle back in the early to mid-80s that I definitely saw NoMeansNo and my first memory of them is as a two piece. But it might have been

half a set as a two piece.

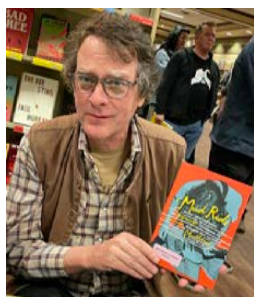
**JL:** So, with the two-piece stuff, really they mainly just stuck to Victoria, maybe Vancouver. Then they toured for a bit with Andy Kerr, their first guitar player, and they would do half the set as a two piece and then I believe Andy would come on and finish off the last bit. Do you remember what venue that was, the first time you saw NoMeansNo?

**ST:** I think it was The Metropolis, but I might be wrong on that. Do you remember, John? It was an all ages club in Pioneer Square, Seattle.

**John Wright:** No, I don't remember the name.

**JL:** These guys are old by the way, I just thought I should mention that. This club was 40 years ago.

**JW:** That's the problem. It's like, okay, what were you doing 40 years ago? I don't remember.



**JL:** Now, Mudhoney, came up just before or around and obviously we're including Green River there, bands like Nirvana and Soundgarden. I also know that you guys, John. When NoMeansNo went, I think it was the first time you went to Seattle, you slept on Chris Cornell's floor. Right? And he was married to a woman named Susan.

**JW:** I took the couch.

**JL:** Do you remember Susan Silver, Steve?

**ST:** Yeah, she's still around. She's one of the co-owners of the new Crocodile.

**JL:** Is that right? So, I was told I would never get Susan Silver for my book. There was just no way. She's not the kind of person who would ever talk to me. I found Susan Silver. She was Chris Cornell's wife back in the day and she was like, "Yeah, I would absolutely love to be a part of this. It would be amazing. Let's talk about NoMeansNo." And then she just completely fucking ghosted me. So she's not in the book, but I heard Chris Cornell was a massive fan of NoMeansNo, which is cool.

**ST:** That makes sense. I think we all were.

**JL:** That was a real surprise for me, getting into this. Again, just reading your book and seeing all these names of people that I had gotten a hold of that are in my book too, like Daniel House and Jack Endino. Both of them from Skin Yard and Jack Endino is a massive producer who has produced you guys a lot and Nirvana as well. Who else? Jim Tillman and the The U-Men. You guys know the U-Men? Ever hear of that band at all?

**ST:** Legendary Seattle band. There's a box set from Sub Pop that collects everything they did. They were huge and the coolest band in Seattle.

**JL:** I want to talk to you, Adem. I want to ask you what your connection is with Steve and how that all came about?

**AT:** I lived in Seattle from about 1990 until 2002. I wrote for and edited *The Rocket*. I was very interested in the Seattle music scene going way back before I even moved to Seattle. I went to the University of Oregon and I was aware of what was going on in Seattle pretty early on. Huge fan of Green River, like from the first record. So I was a Steve Turner fan, you know, big Mudhoney fan. I was looking for book projects and I contacted Steve through Instagram. I just kind of messaged him and said, "Hey have you ever thought about writing your memoir?" And he seemed pretty interested. This was during the pandemic, so...

**ST:** I had nothing else going on.

**AT:** We just Zoomed like once a week, So, week after week, we just basically talked. For me, it was great because I could ask this person who experienced firsthand and was a huge part of this music that I had loved so much since I was in university, I could ask him everything. We just talked and talked and then I transcribed all our discussions and then I wrote the book.

**To Be Continued Next Issue...**

[pmpress.org](http://pmpress.org)

[mudhoney.org](http://mudhoney.org)

[thezone.fm/punk](http://thezone.fm/punk)

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

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## Eva X

### Industrial Pop Robot in YVR

By Steven Saunders

**Absolute Underground:** Hey, Gaby! Thanks for doing this interview thing (and thanks for the assist that one time in the fighting pits). Let's start with the classic question: Who are you and what music do you do?

**Gaby:** I am Eva X! AKA Gaby Gustafson. I'm sort of a hybrid pop/industrial producer. I write music that sounds like Lady Gaga and Nightwish had a synth baby.

**AU: What's your favourite thing about doing the music you do?**

**Gaby:** I'm a process nerd. I love just developing new sounds and songs. My absolute favorite is when I have a quick idea and it works and the song is immediately ten times better than it was before. Getting to turn those flashes of inspiration into an actual finished piece is amazing.

**AU: When it comes time to lay down new**

**tracks, what's your process? Like, what inspires you? What exactly goes into Eva X?**

**Gaby:** For me, creation is iterative— See: Process nerd. I generally start with a hook or two, and flesh out the song around that. My inspirations are all over the place. Semi-autobiographical, sci-fi story bits, you name it. The only thing is it's just gotta feel true to me.

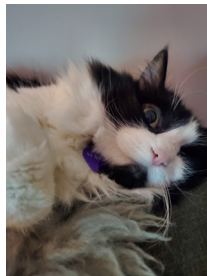
**AU: Now, what do you hate most about the process? What do you dread when it comes to production?**

**Gaby:** Vocal editing is pain. It's tedious work that involves digging through all these takes and finding the right performance, timings, emotions, and delivery for the song. The only good thing I can say about it is that it's always encouragement to keep working on singing.

**AU: You throw a killer live show. Could you please tell us a bit about that whole thing?**

**Gaby:** Thank you! I'm glad you noticed. I think of the live show as its own medium alongside the music, and I go pretty hard with designing it.

Last year, I went on tour with Moris Blak and Danny Blu. That was a real kick in the ass to make the live show as good as possible. I think we had been OK up until then, but it was a catalyst to really critically evaluate every part of it. Literally, I filmed probably 50% of our practices leading up to the tour, hit the gym to make sure I was in shape to deliver the performance I wanted, reworked the lights on the drive to the first shows,



color coordinated the whole band. It would have made a great montage to Mulan's "I'll Make a Man Out of You" or something.

I'm still improving on this. I program custom colors into our lighting and video. I'm working right now on very specifically tuning my breath control for a couple of newer tracks to the set.

**AU: What is your dream collab project with another musician?**

**Gaby:** Right now, it's collabing with Rabbit Junk. I can think of a lot of cool collabs but that is my #1 right now.

**AU: What possessed you to become a kick ass musician, anyway?**

**Gaby:** Two things, really. One, I've always been drawn to music and performance, and one day as I left school, it was like "Fuck, I'm not getting any younger— let's just do this." That was the impetus. Second was watching Scott Fox (iVardenshpere) do his Singularity set. That was the first time I'd seen electronic music up close like that. It was the blueprint. Seeing that performance gave me the map for how I could translate my vision to a solo project.

**AU: The goth-industrial music scene/s can traditionally be a bit of a sausage Oktoberfest. What would you say have been the more interesting and/or difficult things with music when it comes to being femme in the industry?**

**Gaby:** Story time! For the first six months after my EP came out, people would immediately talk to Erik (my spouse; Adoration Destroyed) about collaborations or gig things. Drove me crazy. It took a team effort to steer people to me instead. These days, I'm fortunate to be surrounded by wonderful collaborators and a great label (Distortion Productions), so most of my experiences have been great. Mostly these days, I just deal with drive-by sexism and the odd creep. Yay?

**AU: What is the best moment you've had with Eva X?**

**Gaby:** This is hard! I've had some very cool moments and encounters. I think the absolute best one might be our second show in Spokane, Washington. People were right up front, screaming and singing along. It was an absolutely electric moment.

**AU: Okay, brass tacks: who is your fave Mass Effect character and why?**

**Gaby:** NOT FAIR. I LOVE THEM ALL. If I have to narrow it down, I think it's Miranda and Kaidan. I've always had a soft spot for Miranda. I often think of her when performing "Machine", actually. And I stan a quietly badass, kind man, so Kaidan is in my squad pretty much the whole way through ME1 and 3. (Also, I play Soldier.)



**AU: What games are you playing right now, and why is it Baldur's Gate 3? (I can't wait to play an evil gnome or something!)**

**Gaby:** It is not Baldur's Gate 3! Not yet, at least. It looks amazing. BUT. I KNOW I am going to play the shit out of that game, and I can't yet.

I'm playing *Jedi: Survivor* right now— I actually just finished the main plot last night. Ugh, what a devastating last act in the best way. I also got a library card earlier this year and have been reading a bunch. I'm finishing up *The Bone Clocks* by David Mitchell, and actually happened to read *Three Body Problem* a few weeks ago.

**AU: Where can our lovely readers find your rad music, and what live shows do you have coming up?**

**Gaby:** You can find my music on Bandcamp or on streaming by searching Eva X.

I have several shows coming up!

April 21 - Dark Force Fest, NJ; May 18 - Toronto; Handlebar, May 21 - TBA; May 22 - Chicago, Fallen Log; May 23 - Detroit, Small's; May 24 - Pittsburgh, Cattivo; May 25 - Lancaster, Little Mutants; June 28 - Mechanismus Festival, Seattle

More to come! HYPE!

**AU: Any last words? Keep in mind, the world will forever judge you on this!**

**Gaby:** Mr. Spock says hi!

*Editor's Note: Photo of the adorable Mr. Spock included.*

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## Nate Silva

### Interview with Toronto Guitarist, Singer/Songwriter

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground:** Hey Nate, welcome back! Last time we spoke, you were in another band called *The Slyde* that won the Canadian Wacken Metal Battle and performed at Wacken Open Air in 2019, now you have gone solo and have your first full-length, what can you tell us about this endeavour?

**Nate Silva:** Hey! Thanks for reaching out. A lot has happened in five years, haha! *The Slyde* is currently on indefinite hiatus since early 2020—and no, not because of the pandemic—but due to personal differences with certain band members. After some soul searching and nature seeking during the early days of the pandemic when I relocated to Muskoka, (cottage country north of Toronto), I decided to start a new project under my [abbreviated] name. It's equally different and similar to what I was doing in *The Slyde*. It is ultimately more rock-oriented with heavier pop sensibilities and less metal, but I retain the emphasis on lead guitar work and interesting musical arrangements. After leading hard rock

and metal bands since I was 19 years old and freelancing and being a sideman since I was 23, this project was certainly a long time coming!

**AU:** This album, *The Chase*, is definitely different from what your former band was, this album is more rock 'n' roll, alternative, and 90s, maybe even some pop influences, but yet still your own, especially with your unique vocals that remind me of Geddy Lee and Coheed and Cambria's Claudio Sanchez. How long did it take you to put this record together and in your own words what can you tell our readers about it?

**NS:** The record was produced and recorded in two "waves": the beds and rhythms were recorded in August 2021 at Crosspatch Studios in North Bay, and then lead guitars, vocals, and keyboards were recorded in my home studio in Ottawa in late 2022. The disjunct recording process was due to my September 2021 enrollment in a Master of Arts in Music degree at Carleton University, which consumed my life (for better or worse) and put the project on the shelf for a bit. But now it's done, and ready to be unleashed. The music is likely me at my most "creatively vulnerable," as I was processing a lot of changes in my life during the writing—both personally and professionally—and writing this music helped me get through all of that.

I appreciate the vocal comparisons and side note: you can find some Rush and Coheed and Cambria video covers I did on YouTube during the pandemic!

**AU:** What would you like fans to walk away with after listening to "The Chase"?

**NS:** Well, I can answer this in a few ways. I think a lot of people who have heard some of the pre-release singles are feeling empathetic to some of the messaging in the lyrics; others also commented on the musicality of the guitar work. I've received positive feedback on the over-catchiness of the hooks/melodies, in addition to the vocal work. However, at the end of the day, I am hoping listeners can enjoy this somewhat strange mix of music I'm doing with this project. It's certainly 90s alternative rock-inspired (dating

myself here), but there are still hints of that Slyde-esque prog rock and metal tendencies, and contrasting that is this element of folk rock and singer-songwriter vibes.

For me, the older I get, the more I veer away from the "write music for myself" sentiment. Not very many people around me do original music—and pursue it seriously—for as long as I have, and while age and experience shift your perspective in many ways, it doesn't diminish the drive to live a life of music creation. All this to say: *The Chase* literally means, "keep going," and I think these songs embody that message through grief, change, and healing.

**AU:** What do you enjoy most about doing your own solo project now?

**NS:** Less mouths to feed, haha! In all seriousness, the sheer simplicity—in several capacities—is what I enjoy the most. I am really embracing the "trio sound"—something I had a hard time with in the past as far as orchestration goes, but now I am really enjoying it. It's easier to coordinate the behind-the-scenes stuff (and there's a lot of it) with only two other band mates and maybe one crew member, as opposed to having three, four, or more band mates, plus crew. Logistics are more manageable with fewer humans as well. More importantly, in a trio, every member has to be on top of their game onstage. I believe we provide that engaging and rockin' live show, where musical integrity and musicianship are combined with thoughtful songwriting. And doing that as a trio gives an inner sense of musical accomplishment (or at least, for me it does, haha).

**AU:** You're hitting the road this summer across Eastern Canada (ON, QC, NB, NS, PEI), how excited are you feeling about being on the road again, and any plans for other parts of Canada and beyond?

**NS:** Honestly, it's going to feel nostalgic being on the road with the band! During *The Slyde*'s early days, we were road hogs, touring Eastern Canada every summer for five years between 2009 and 2013. But I think I learned a lot about tour management during that time, so I am trying to make these shows more successful. The first

half of the tour will be with the trio; and the other half will be as a solo acoustic performer. So there will certainly be variety for me, and I'm extremely pumped to bring the band out on the road.

Matt Babineau (drummer) and Dan Joseph (bass player) are some of the finest musicians I have ever worked with, period. As far as other touring plans: I am currently building a team for that; I've signed on with Voilà Concerts—a booking agency based in Ottawa—and I am hoping to sneak my way into the festival scenes by 2025. However, with the flexibility of this project, I'm fortunate to be able to widen my scope in what kinds of gigs I can take. Long term though, I want to be playing Canada-wide, and eventually make my way into the European markets.

**AU:** Where can we pick up your music?

You can pre-order the album *The Chase* on Bandcamp. Search "Nate Silva" on Spotify and all the streaming services. Plenty of video content on my YouTube channel. Due to my millennial tendencies, I've been avoiding TikTok, so I'm not quite there yet, haha.

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

Additional plugs!

Music video for title track "The Chase" will be on YouTube May 3 2024 - the day of the album release!

For those who were familiar with *The Slyde*, our swansong release "The Slyde - Live At Rivoli" is on YouTube.

For fans of Green Day, YouTube search "Nate Silva Green Day" for the *Dookie* tribute show I did in February 2024.

The aforementioned Rush Moving Pictures cover video is on YouTube: "Nate Silva Rush Moving Pictures"

Thanks for the interview!

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# High Anxiety

Anarcho Crust/D-Beat Punk

By Scarlett Rose S.

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?**

**JT:** J.T./Chelsea Anxiety

**AU: Please give us a brief history of your band.**

**JT:** I started the band around 2014, going through many lineup changes over the past ten years. Most of the time, we have been a three-piece, at one point we toured as a two-piece. The current lineup consists of myself on guitar and vocals,

Ashley on vocals, and Jay on drums.

**AU: Do you have a specific message to give?**

**JT:** We are female and two-spirit fronted anarcho, abolitionist, intersectional feminist, crust/d-beat punk. Get the drift?

**AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.**

**JT:** Heavily influenced by



'80s crust and d-beat, as well as the late '70s/early '80s anarcho-punk movement. Of course, we have our own creative take on it all.

**AU: What's your creative process like?**

**JT:** I write the skeleton, then we come together and bring it to life. We all live many hours away from each other, so writing sessions generally consist of 8+ hour days when we are able to get together.

**AU: Have you released an album or any songs recently?**

**JT:** We are in the final stages of production for our first release, *Your Dreams Are Caught in War*, which will be released on vinyl in September.

**AU: What are some of the things your band does to give back to the community?**

**JT:** We have done charity gigs for anarchist groups, women's shelters, Free Palestine organizations, animal welfare, food banks, etc.

Regardless of formal contributions, we are always trying to give back in one way or another, even if it's as simple as putting a smile on someone's face who is feeling low at a show.

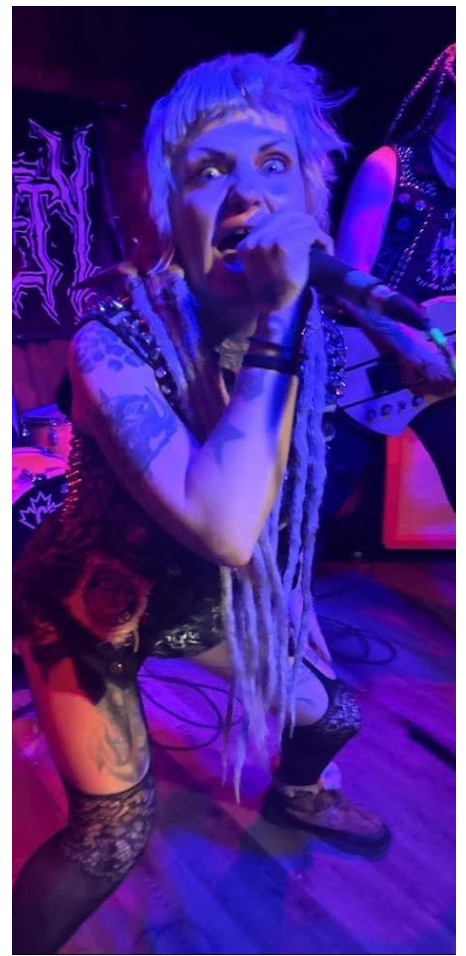
**AU: What are some of your best songs about?**

**JT:** Creating a sustainable reality in this fucked up imaginary playground of blood-soaked colonial tradition.

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

**JT:** Don't be convinced that your reality has to be what has been created by others.

The political spectrum of right and left has us all duped and set up for failure. This fallacy of traditional colonial beliefs will destroy you only if you allow it. Don't. In the eyes of those who have assumed power over you, you are not serving a purpose until your purpose is to serve. Refuse. Never



forget that the gender binary is a construct of colonialism, put in place by the self-proclaimed ruling class to debase and enslave the natural human experience. Pride is protest. Modern humanity's greatest achievement could be that of epistemic humility. Yet, our collective aversion to it is proving to be our most loathsome downfall. Resistance is existence.

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## TV Dead

### Ucluelet Punk Rock

#### Interview by AU Editorial

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

**TV Dead:** Scott drums/vox, Mark bass/vox, Larry guitar/vox. Famous for being The TV Dead, starting pits, and bashing curbs from coast to coast since 2018.

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

**TV Dead:** We each have our side project bands that keep us busy in our down time. Scott has his cover band Tim Horton Heat, Mark has his Celtic punk band Old Friend, and Larry plays in the lo-fi garage band Death Drops.

**AU: What don't you want your mom to know?**

**TV Dead:** Lee's phone number.

**AU: What's the music scene like up in Ukee?**

**TV Dead:** It's thriving—we've been booking a lot of shows here over the years, bringing in bands with big help from Bronwyn at the ANAF for helping us grow the scene, and giving us a rad venue thanks to all the volunteers. There's also David James Brown has his studio here Cheeseburger Mountain, and is a big help to the scene.

**AU: Please tell us about your new album.**

**TV Dead:** This is our fourth album—and almost never was. I'm sure we gave up on it, and it got lost, every possible thing that can go wrong went wrong, but somehow we managed to get it done. It is a blast of fast punk songs recorded during *Air B and E* on Victoria Road. Big thanks to David James Brown of Pretendgineer Productions in Ucluelet, BC, for mixing and saving this album from the trash.

**AU: Any particular songs you're stoked on?**

**TV Dead:** Yeah, they're all rad, fast songs where we share lead singer and song writing duties. The single off of it is "Obligation"—a song written by Mark.

**AU: Does it explore any particular themes or topics?**

**TV Dead:** It's a soundtrack to *Air B and E*, and a blueprint to the modern human condition.

**AU: This will be our 420 issue, do any you rip on the reefer?**

**TV Dead:** Yeah, who doesn't? If by reefer, you mean curbs; and by rip, you mean slappy.

**AU: If so, what's your favourite thing to do while high?**

**TV Dead:** Do you remember the time I dropped my keys, and you thought the phone was ringing?

**AU: Team Indica or Team Sativa?**

**TV Dead:** Sorry we are not a soccer fans. But

if we had to guess who wins the World Cup, it would be indica.

**AU: Munchies of choice?**

**TV Dead:** Coke and Snickers, of course. Health sucks.

**AU: Where can we find your new album?**

**TV Dead:** The hard copy of the new album *Air B and E* will be coming down line, and all our other albums are available at our shows your local record store and skate shop. You can also find us on Spotify or get a hold of us directly on our website.

**AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?**

**TV Dead:** We are always playing the ANAF here in Ukee, and are booking up the summer/fall. Right now, any bands out there want to play some shows hit us up we are always down to start a pit.

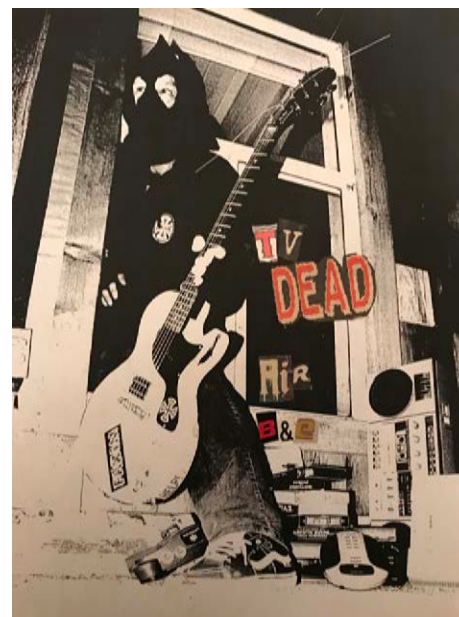
**AU: Famous last words?**

**TV Dead:** We don't need no stinking parachutes—hold my beer.

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

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## Kai Meekis

### Eclectic Skate Team

#### Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Kai Meekis:** My name is Kai Meekis and I'm a skateboarder currently living in Thunder Bay, ON. People in the community know me either as a student at Lakehead, or a skater, sometimes even skating in Lakehead.

#### AU: Where did you grow up and what is the skateboarding scene like there?

**KM:** I grew up in Thunder Bay, a small town in northern Ontario. The skate scene here was always relatively small but very tight knit. Everyone knew everyone and the vibes were always high. Being from somewhere that is usually covered in snow half the year, the spring time was always great and the community came together to make the parks and/or spots skateable as early as possible. The streets here are also very crusty and spots are few and far between, growing up skating here has really given me an eye for spots that are not always perfect.

#### AU: When did you first jump on a skateboard?

**KM:** I first got on a board from a local sports store, it was a world industries board with the devil on

the tail and an angel on the nose-- it was fucking sick. I remember begging my step dad for that board all spring and my parents finally got it for me when school got out.

#### AU: What team do you currently skate for and how did you get on it?

**KM:** I currently skate for Eclectic Skateboard Shop. I got on a few years ago mostly through skating with the rest of the team all the time and really securing myself in the scene. I do remember right before I got on, there was a local contest and I nollie flipped on the biggest gaps in the park; that could have had something to do with it, haha.

#### AU: Where is your favourite place to skate?

**KM:** I've been to many places over the years skating, but I lived in Victoria last summer for a few months and honestly, I think the new Topaz Park over there might be my favourite place to skate.

#### AU: How would you describe your skateboarding style?

**KM:** It's honestly very hard to describe one's own "style" when it comes to skating. I think what would best describe it would be like flowy street skating? I always loved the way footage looked in videos with pros just cruising in like a downtown area connecting spot after spot. I try to think and skate like that. I also love skating handrails, so I guess that's a style as well, the 7 rail at Topaz is perfect!

#### AU: What are some of your favourite tricks?

**KM:** I would definitely say that a nollie flip is my favourite flip trick, and back crooks and back tails are also up there. I do a lot of back tails.

#### AU: Where is someplace in the world you really want to skate?

**KM:** I mean just like any skater I think, I really want to skate in Barcelona. Just so many famous spots that look so cool and so good.

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

**KM:** Man, trying to describe the feeling of skating

# SHRED SESSION

is crazy difficult. I feel like it's a little different for everyone. I think the most describable moments would just be the moments of sheer triumph after landing something you have been working on for days, months... even years. Best feeling in the world!

#### AU: What do you think your strong suits are when it comes to skateboarding?

**KM:** My strong suits are definitely persevering, seeing a trick through to the end even in a battle, and just creativity. Other than that, "technically" or skill-wise my strong suits are definitely skating switch and nollie.

#### AU: What sort of attitude does it take to be a good skater?

**KM:** The attitude to be a good skater... There are a lot of skaters better than me out there, so being a "good skater" is always up to the eye of the beholder. But I'd say for me, to get to where I am, it is honestly just being driven by progress, how little that may be at times. On top of that, being outgoing and happy to reach out to new skaters or new communities that can help you become a better skater.

#### AU: Who did you look up to that influenced you on your journey?

**KM:** I looked up to many pro skaters over the years, and mostly street skaters. But locally when I was a kid I looked up to the guys putting in the work to make the local videos and the people that would send down the big sets at the skate park (usually, these were the same people).

#### AU: What sort of music and bands do you like to listen to when skateboarding?

**KM:** I don't listen to music when I am skating. I am skating with friends 9 times out of 10, so I usually just chat and try to focus on what's going on.

#### AU: Any skateboarding superstitions?

**KM:** These are always funny, I feel like everyone has their own special things that they do.

Personally, I only skate with three hardware on my front truck, specifically not putting in the top right bolt and gripping right over the hole. This might sound crazy, but one day I was filming in the streets and for some reason I only had three of the front hardware in the configuration. I got the trick with the hardware like that, and since that day haven't gone back, it's been years.

#### AU: What is it about skateboarding that makes it so enjoyable?

**KM:** I find skateboarding so enjoyable for the challenge, as well as the creative aspect of it. Not one person skates the same as the next, and therefore everyone has their own take on tricks and spots.

#### AU: Do you snowboard or surf as well? If so, what are the differences and similarities?

**KM:** I don't surf, but I do snowboard. I find they are pretty similar, but being strapped in adds a whole new level of fear for me.

#### AU: This will be our 420 issue. Do you ever skate baked?

**KM:** Personally, skating high makes me all messed up. I smoke very rarely so when I do, it doesn't work very well at all, haha. It is crazy to me seeing weed guys that blaze then skate a 10 stairs rail or something, I just couldn't.

#### AU: What's the best stoner movie of all time?

**KM:** I know there are lots out there, but my personal fave has got to be *Pineapple Express*.

#### AU: Any advice for up-and-coming skateboarders?

**KM:** Advice? Man, I would say just get connected with your local shop and really get to know everyone in your scene. Community is the most important thing in skating, so get out there and be a part of this special thing we call skating!

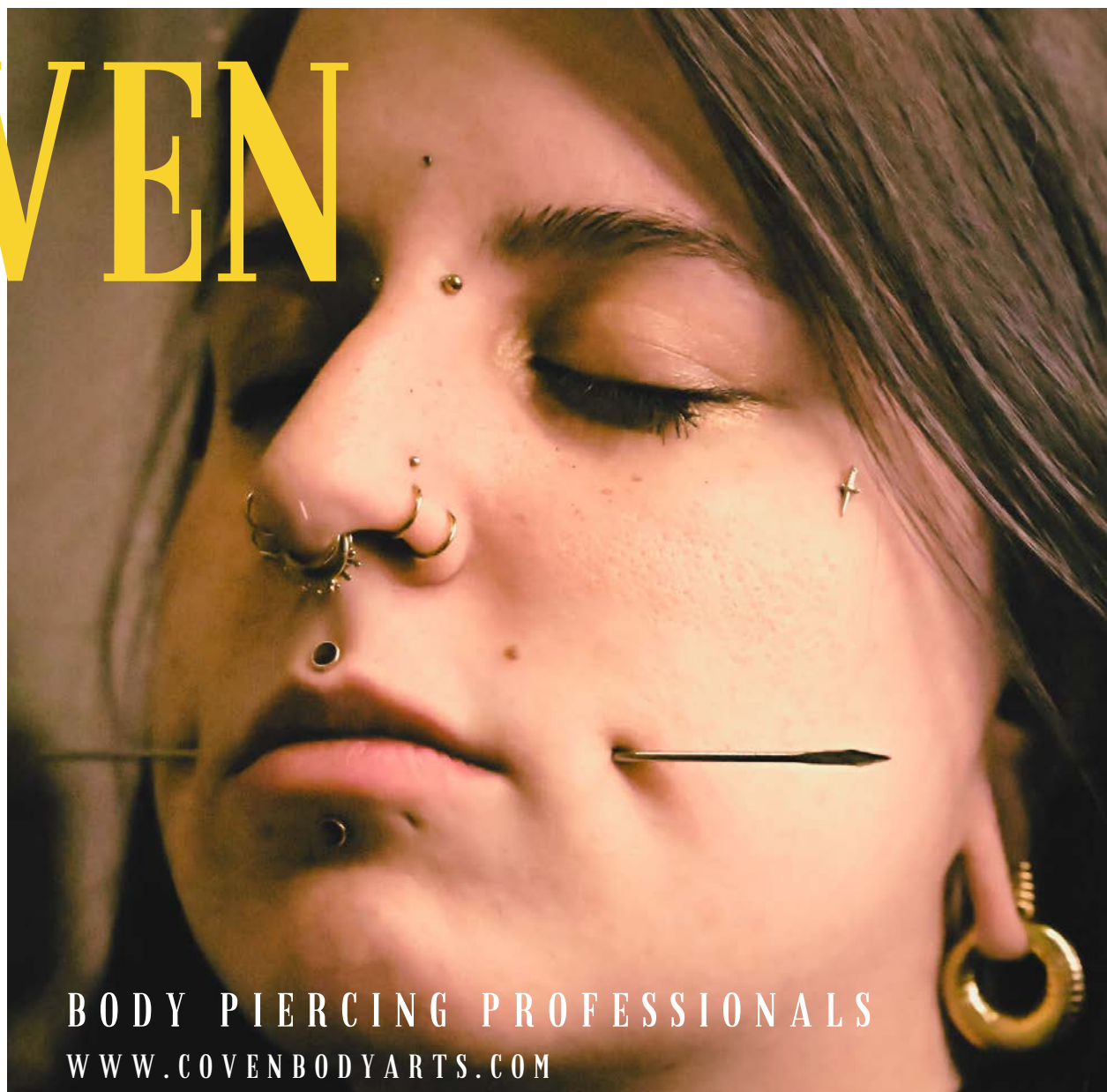
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## Wine Lips

Toronto Psych Garage Punk

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Wine Lips:** You are talking to Cam and Aurora from Wine Lips. What are we famous for? I don't think we're famous yet, haha.

**AU: Who influences your band musically?**

**WL:** Lots of stuff! I grew up on punk bands like Minor Threat, Misfits, and Dead Kennedys, but also the Beatles, Johnny Cash, and Led Zeppelin. I always have jazz or big band stuff on in the background at home. Being on tour and meeting new creative people in different music scenes can be inspiring and help keep the engines burning.

**AU: You have a new album coming out, can you tell us about that?**

**WL:** It's called *Super Mega Ultra*, and it's our fourth record. We recorded in London, Ontario at the Sugar Shack with our good friend, Simon Larochette. Our past two albums have been recorded there with Simon. It took a bit to finish, between touring and lineup changes and re-working songs, but we are proud of the end result!

**AU: Does it explore any particular themes?**

**WL:** Themes throughout kind of range from having a crisis of self persona to songs about too much partying, witches, temptation. It's kinda all over the place.

**AU: You tour a lot; how do you manage to write such bangers when you're always on the road?**

**WL:** It's hard. Sometimes, we don't write anything new for long periods of time because we are on the road so much but I usually have a backlog of ideas or riffs that I keep in my notes, so I don't forget when it comes time to start writing new material.

**AU: What are some of the challenges you've come up against as a band?**

**WL:** Usually, something happens when we're on tour. One time, we were driving to Boston for a show and our van exploded, and we were stranded on the highway about an hour away from our destination. We would have missed the show, but a stranger ended up driving us to the show in his car. He stayed and watched the whole show and then drove us back to the van, so we could get it looked at the next day. We ended up

having to rent a van for the rest of the tour, and it was a logistical nightmare to get our van back; but we did it, and now we have a wild story to tell.

**AU: You guys are seeing some major international success. Tell us about your biggest career highlight to date.**

**WL:** That's tough to nail down just one! I think just being able to travel around the world and have people sing along to our songs at shows is pretty crazy! This band was started as a side project and I never would have thought that we would be where we are right now!

**AU: If you could share a stage with anyone, who would it be?**

**WL:** I've always wanted to tour with The Hives. Their live performance is something I've been lucky to experience in

a somewhat intimate (for them) venue. It was incredible. I'd be curious to see what their tour routines are to maintain such an energy, and what their fuel of choice is for the greenroom. What are their secrets?

**AU: This will be the 420 issue, do either of you riff on the reefer?**

**WL:** All of us do, except for Cam. He used to be a younger man, but it wasn't really vibing with him after a while. Myself, mostly though, out of the lot of us. But Donut and Wes do also partake. I'll typically be the one seeking it out while on the road and researching the state/country regulations.



**AU: What's your favourite thing to do while high?**

**WL:** During the warmer weather, I like to be out and about. There are few nature areas in Toronto, but I'll make my way down there. Not so much when we're in the cold seasons. That's when the deep cleaning gets done... and the interview responses.

**AU: What was it like touring China?**

**WL:** Touring in China was interesting. We mostly played in Irish pubs owned by expats. There were tables right up to the stage so people sat down for the shows, so it almost felt like a showcase. It was cool to explore the country a bit, but the shows themselves were pretty funny compared to what we do everywhere else.

**AU: You'll be touring more in 2024, can you tell us about that?**

**WL:** Yes! We will be touring in North America in support of the new album from April until early June, and then we will be heading over to Europe and the UK from Late July to Early September. We have a few festivals and things planned for fall, but I can't really get into that yet!

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

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Photos by Alex Carre





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## Bitter State

Saskatoon, SK  
Poached Records

What can be said about Bitter State that has not already been said? Well, everything really. You probably haven't heard much from these guys yet, as they tend to only surface periodically, like locusts or the McRib. Similar to the McRib, a team of skilled professionals joined forces to create something so desirable, humans are only granted the privilege to indulge in its magnificent glory for a limited time. Once you consume it, it's all you ever want.

I'm just messing around; I've never had a fuckin' McRib. I have, however, eaten some KFC hot wings at a very sketchy gas station hitchhiking in the middle of nowhere, but that's just whatever, you know how it be. I have also witnessed Bitter State in person, and there are some things you need to know.

Let's get down to it. We are really putting things under a microscope over here at Poached these days. Nothing gets by us. Here's what I know about it,

Get the vocalist from Mechanical Separation, grab the one dude from Rehashed that plays sick guitar, but he just likes playing it way higher up

than most other people and that's ok, he fucking shreds, and he's cute as balls. Well. Well. Well. Look what we have here. He managed to fake his way through Poser Disposer on bass, may as well throw ol' LaFrench back on the low end and see what kind of David Blaine, rabbit out of the hat type crap he's gonna pull this time. Oh, yeah! What's his name from Me The Guts on drums. (I think they are all named Derek except for Greg.) and Eisner on guitar (It's a whole tax write off thing—his pay stubs are a different colour than the rest of the bands).

We don't want to say we "hand picked" these guys, or to have them come across as any sort of "boy band" or "super group" or "industry plants", but let's just say, yeah, sure, there were some phone calls made and maybe a couple email chains that have since been deleted, but that's pretty much it. Any lists you claim existed have been shredded, used as filler for livestock feed, then consumed and shat out by wild boar. So good luck cracking this code, Davinci. Oh, and then we train them just like any other bands, perfectly normal, 19 hours a day, with the special health wires with the stickers on the head and chest, couple shocks here and there, pump them full of the steroids and the green shit, like Drago in Rocky 4. Just typical, fun, punk band stuff. Nothing weird. They also really love to garden.

Tell you what, though, all that training has them bringing some serious energy to their live performances. Like a vicious fucking beast! There have been times when I was legitimately terrified for the band that had to follow them. Guys, you have been destroyed. Call your moms, you need a ride home. A wrecking ball of ferocious and heavy, Saskatoon-style hardcore punk. Seriously, invest in a diaper if you plan on staying for the entire set, because I guarantee, at the very least a little pee will come out.

Bitter State started jamming in the summer of

2020, four years before Poached Recs existed. We lied. We had no hand in bringing together this group of immaculate specimens and Eisner. After time spent writing and rehearsing, the line up was solidified in 2022. Veterans to the Saskatoon punk scene with previous projects, insert \*90% of Saskatoon's sickest bands ever\* here.

Mike Lefebvre, Derek Eisner, Simon Braun, Derek Kuchirka, and Joel Garand. Everyone (all two of us) at Poached have had the pleasure of knowing you all, sharing the stage and playing in bands together for decades. To say it has been the best times would be an understatement. We love ya. Here's to another 20 years.

Find all of us except for Greg on the internet somewhere.

Yours for now,  
*Bluto The Garbage Man*  
Aww shit, I had one job...  
My bad, Egg.



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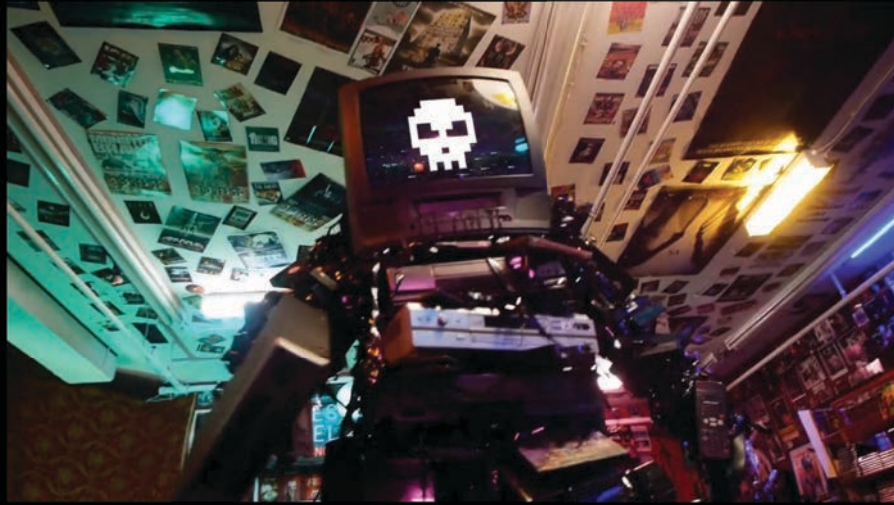
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## THE RATCHETS

### The Ratchets

Firstborn sons of the Pirates Press Records family

**Absolute Underground:** Who are we speaking with?

**Jed:** Hey, this is Jed, tele-wielder and middle-stander in The Ratchets.

**Zak:** My name is Zak and I'm a lesser-known character.

**AU:** The Ratchets are celebrating 20 years, which is a milestone every band aspires to hit, but few do. What do you attest to your longevity?

**Zak:** Distance makes the heart grow fonder. Not being a band for ten of those years helps, too.

**Jed:** Ha, true, but we also did like hanging out with each other, even during those less-active years. I think if you're lucky you're in a band that finds its sound organically without much trouble. And, if you're really lucky, everyone likes hanging out despite the music and also because of it—we're one of those bands.

**AU:** You dropped a new single called "Street Manners". How'd the song come about? What's it about?

**Jed:** Well, "Street Manners" is intentionally an aggressively broad song when it comes to the verses— but the whole message is really in the title; and we got some great gang vocals in there to boot.

The middle eight is where the song finds resolution: "Just watch the kids they always get it right." I remember working on the lyrics to that middle bit a long time to get to an answer; that



we can look at all the frustrations of modern life right in the eye with manners on the street. Our goal is you walk a little taller after you hear the whole thing, too.

**AU:** Are there plans for more tunes in the future?

**Jed:** Yes, we're planning to release a new non-album digital single via Pirates Press Records every month or so starting with "Street Manners". It's been a different way of working for us and we really get to focus song to song, versus a whole LP of songs at once. It's a bit of an adventure! And I think it's gonna be fun to release the songs pretty quickly after we finish them. It brings everyone listening along for the ride.

**AU:** There was also a remix featured with the single called "Manners Avenue". What's the story behind that?

**Zak:** We've always wanted to experiment with remixes, versions, etc., but we were never able to find the right person to work with. Enter Strawberry Zaiquiri; it's tough to pull him away from the all-inclusive resort scene; but when we can get him, it's magical.

**AU:** Speaking of singles, when you released your 2019 album *First Light*, you also paired it with a 7" holographic single for the track "Gotta Be Cool". There's a lot that goes into making it. What's that process like?

**Zak:** It involves proprietary processes, and some very secretive Eastern Europeans... I think we've already said too much.

**AU:** The artwork you have has to be inspired by some herbs, yeah?

**Zak:** What are you—a cop? The story of The Ratchets is one rolled of a thousand joints, but now that we're rappers, we don't have time for

## PIRATES PRESS RECORDS

that business.

**Jed:** All the joints go directly to Strawberry Zaiquiri. And for good reason.

**AU:** What's going on for the future with The Ratchets?

**Jed:** Well, this multi-year non-album digital-only singles project is going to be interesting and gonna keep coaxing Strawberry Zaiquiri to do remixes, too. We're also back at it live, doing all the things bands do.

**AU:** Where can people check you out?

**Jed:** You can find our vinyl via Pirates Press Records and on your favourite streaming platform. Omni-directional punk rockers. Come hang!

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# BENT WINDOW RECORDS

## Idiot Child

Violent, nihilistic sludge metal/ noise rock

Idiot Child delivers their debut full-length *The First Breath Is The Beginning Of Death*. The album is eleven tracks of pounding unforgivable chaos from this five-piece demolition crew out of Sweden. Fans of Eyehategod, Today Is The Day, Noothgrush, Goatsblood, Dystopia take note! The CD and cassette will be available on April 19th via Bent Window Records (Canada) with vinyl to be released through För Vidare Läsning (Sweden).



### IDIOT CHILD

**AU:** You're releasing the album *The First Breath Is The Beginning Of Death* in April. Tell us about it, what can we expect to hear?

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

**Idiot Child:** You are talking to Mikey and Jonas from Idiot Child. We are not infamous, nor famous for anything.

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

**IC:** Idiot Child is the brainchild of Mikey and Oliver. Mikey and Oliver started the band in 2021. During the last three years some people have come and gone, and then we split up for about 6-7 months. Then Mikey, Melker, and Isak started playing our old songs and Oliver rejoined; and in March last year, Jonas joined, and we felt that we had found the final formula. Our mission, we would say, is to try and conceive nasty songs for nasty people.

**AU:** Describe the band's sound if possible.

**IC:** We think for the general masses, we sound pretty horrible. But then again, if that's what you're looking for, you're in luck. And since you are reading this, you now know about us – now go listen!

**IC:** The album is definitely a sign of the band's natural progression. It's still a nasty noise rock record but we won't lie about sludge and alternative metal being a part of where we drawn inspiration from writing the songs.

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

**IC:** Self loathing. Misanthropy. Nihilism. Pessimism.

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

**IC:** All the songs are equally meaningful to us. Although, the last song is particularly special. And you will only find out why if you buy the vinyl!

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

**IC:** Just listen to us and let the hurting do the talking. You can find us on Bandcamp, Spotify, Instagram and you can reach us at [ihateidiotchild@gmail.com](mailto:ihateidiotchild@gmail.com) [ihateidiotchild.bandcamp.com](http://ihateidiotchild.bandcamp.com)

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### MESS

## VOICE OF THE STREETS

Mexican Oi!  
Punk

By Chuck Andrews and Daryl Bidner

**Absolute Underground: Who am I speaking with and what are your roles in the band?**

**MESS:** MESS is Abraham (vocals/guitar), Affif (guitar), Chespi (bass), and Migue (drums).

**AU: Where are MESS from?**

**MESS:** Abraham is from Mexico City and the rest of us are from Guadalajara.

**AU: How long has the band been around?**

**MESS:** We started at the beginning of 2020.

**AU: Where have you played outside of Mexico?**

**MESS:** We've done two tours in Europe, (Germany, Spain, France, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium), Bogotá Colombia and Vancouver, Canada.

**AU: Where are you playing next?**

**MESS:** We have a couple shows in Mexico before we head north to Montreal, then to the US for the first time, doing a few dates there. Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego-- plus some other dates in the works.

**AU: Do you ever plan on playing in Canada?**

**MESS:** Yes. We already have. We played Have A Good Laugh Fest in Vancouver in 2023. Shout out to all involved!

**AU: Is there a strong skinhead scene where you're from in Mexico?**

**MESS:** It comes in waves. I think that happens everywhere. Some years are better than others. Sometimes you get a great turn out. Sometimes not so much, but everyone is there because they like to support, and that's always very appreciated.

**AU: How many records has MESS put out?**

**MESS:** Five so far. Two 12" EPs, a 7" single, a full length LP, and a split.



**AU: Who are your current favourite bands?**

**MESS:** Rolling Stones, The Crack and Los Cadetes De Linares.

**AU: Any members in any other bands past and present?**

**MESS:** Abraham has Sparrow 68 that's still active, Affif has Himnos that's currently on hiatus, and Migue is in Cooperativa Pascual.

**AU: What are your biggest musical influences?**

**MESS:** We all have similar influences as far as punk and rock 'n' roll, but also have various intakes of influences. This is a question that can't be answered in a few lines.

**AU: Top three bands you'd like to play with?**

**MESS:** Rolling Stones, The Crack and Los Cadetes De Linares

**AU: What's one thing about the Oi! scene these days that you don't like?**

**MESS:** That a lot of people care more about social media than the real world, real social issues.

**AU: Thanks for the interview anything you would like to add?**

**MESS:** We hope to see everyone soon. Wherever you might be while you read this... we hope to get to you soon. Cheers! We are MESS, not NICE!

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

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# UNDER THE OUTHOUSE



## HARSH

**Chaotic Queer Power**  
Interview by Laurie Storrie

**Absolute Underground: Who are we speaking to and what is your role in the band?**

**Jamie:** Jamie! I yell.

**Megan:** Megan. Drummer, organizer, and merch maker extraordinaire.

**Cam:** I'm Cam, and I like to Rock

**Syd:** Lead dingus that plays geeetar

**AU: Give us a brief history of HARSH.**

**Cam:** Alright, I'll admit it, HARSH is just a scam to get into Vern's for free that got out of hand...

**AU: Calgary gets a reputation for being quite conservative. How does it feel to be a queer punk band in a town like that?**

**Jamie:** Important. It's critical to be here and show we exist and we're not alone.

**Megan:** Sometimes it feels like we are the diversity hire that someone needed to add to a bill last minute. "Oops, we booked all straight white men, let's get HARSH to open and that will make it ok". Because there is such a conservative side to Calgary, we also have an extremely vibrant



and inclusive queer community. We've had the privilege of seeing "baby queers" who came to our all ages shows grow up into full ass queer adults and start their own shitty punk bands. And that's special.

**AU: Your songs cover all tempos, with lyrics ranging from collecting house plants to being unapologetically political. What's your songwriting process like?**

**Megan:** We all bring something to the table. It's quite a collaborative process. Our most recent release .../Wish I Did Better... was a pressure cooker for ourselves

where we sat down one day and wrote a song and then recorded it the next. Giving us little time to second guess and really pushed us to trust our creative instincts. Sometimes we have something we want to say and sometimes we just yell at each other about how much we like bugs until it becomes something.

**AU: What does being a DIY band mean to you?**

**Jamie:** Everything we do has our love in it.

**Megan:** It's more than just printing our t-shirts ourselves in the basement. It's learning how everything works. It's being self-reliant, so we can make the

best (and worst) art we can. And if something doesn't work out quite right, it's fine cause we probably learned something along the way about how to do it better next time.

**AU: 2023 saw two new HARSH EPs. What can you tell us about those?**

**Megan:** *Garbage Sale* saw us working with Casey Lewis at Echo Base Studios. We worked for a long time on those three songs over the back half of those pandemic days. Some fun pop punk and '90s influenced stuff. And our longest song by far at four minutes. After working so intensively on those three songs we decided to go the complete opposite direction with .../Wish I Did Better... and push ourselves by writing a song in one day and recording it ourselves the next. There are a lot of easter eggs with that album and it's genuinely a piece of art.

**AU: What does 2024 hold?**

**Megan:** So far 2024 is stacked! The highlights so far being we are so excited to be part of *Bring 'Em In Vol. 1* the inaugural compilation presented by our wonderful label Outhouse Records! We are also going on tour through the prairies with our pals in Midnight Peg, May 29th - June 1st. I'm sure we will get into more shenanigans, as we seem to do!

**AU: What other bands are at the top of your list these days?**

**Jamie:** Direct Hit! We've played with Pears and I would love to play with the other side of that split.



**Megan:** Tipless, Toxic Fem, Dial Up, Brain Bent, Man Meat, Midnight Peg, Half Dead, Rubber Cement, Bad Ham, Less Miserable, Grimelda, Quit it, and Stuttr. I keep going back to Grumpster, Dogleg, Stuck, and Oceanator.

**Cam:** Five Man Electrical Band! Güttröt, The Canadian Dispatch, and Dial Up have been pretty sick, too.

**Syd:** Nothing but our Outhouse Records Labelmates, babe!

**AU: Is there anything else you want to share?**

**Megan:** Be gay; do crime. But mostly be gay. Probably also eat the rich. And make bad art! Just make art for the sake of making it!

**Cam:** Listen to *The Good Medicine Show* on CJSW 90.9FM in Calgary, AB. Thursdays 12 - 2 MST Listen live, or in the past with the CJSW App.

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

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**THE DREAD CREW OF ODDWOOD**

## Hyperspace Metal Fest

April 11th-13th in Vancouver, BC

Wise Hall and Rickshaw Theatre

Canada's premier melodic and power metal festival Hyperspace Metal Fest announces the addition of Edmonton thrashers TYMO and Vancouver melodeath KAYAS to their lineup to replace Tylor Dory Trio and Sleepership on day 1 of the event on April 11th at The Wise Hall! Hyperspace Metal Festival returns for its fifth edition after selling out its first two of three nights during its 2023 event. The lineup will feature headliners Týr, Flotsam and Jetsam, and Skeletor along with additions of Trollfest, The Dread Crew of Oddwood to join Ather Realm, Iron Kingdom, and more out of the 15 bands performing over the three nights.

Festival organizer Joey Hockin of Journeyman Productions adds, "Here we go with another Hyperspace Metal Festival, and this is the biggest one yet! I feel like this is a dream lineup for us, one that we've been working towards since the inception of the festival! Unfortunately, Transgressive has had to drop out of the lineup. We hope to have them in 2025! We couldn't have come nearly this far without the incredible support we've received from the power metal community. So, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN! See you in April!"

Hailing from the Faroe Islands, Týr has been performing Viking and folk metal since first forming in 1998. The band will be supporting their upcoming 2024 album *Battle Ballads* being released by Metal Blade Records. The album follows their 2022 live record *A Night at the Nordic House* and their eighth full-length *Hel* (2019).

Legends in their own right, Phoenix, AZ's Flotsam and Jetsam have been rumbling thrash around the world since their beginnings in the early '80s, touring alongside every heavyweight known in metal. They have released fourteen studio albums in their career, with the latest being 2021's *Blood in the Water* (AFM Records). No filler, all killer, *Blood in the Water* is once again mixed and mastered by Jacob Hansen (U.D.O., Volbeat, Amaranthe, Powerwolf) and sees Flotsam and Jetsam exploding with creativity, moving forward but nodding to their past.

Seattle, WA's Skelator are all speed and no need for posers with their epic heavy and thrash metal spirit conquering fans for 20 years. Over the span of their career, they have shared with fans six full-lengths and two EPs, their latest *Blood Empire* was released in 2022 from Gates of Hell Records.

From Oslo, Norway, pioneers of true Norwegian Balkan Metal, Trollfest are all fun, with titles such as "All Drinks On Me", "Piña Colada", "Twenty Mile and Hour" and "Flamingo Libre" among many more from their 10-album discography. Their latest *Flamingo Overlord* (Napalm Records)

was released in 2022. The band makes sure their tracks have the highest possible singalong factor and are guaranteed to make you stomp your feet and sing yourself hoarse while sharing the best of times with your finest friends.

The Dread Crew of Oddwood is an acoustic pirate band from San Diego, CA. They play a combination of folk music, heavy metal, and traditional Celtic music. The band performs using only traditional and acoustic instruments, including the accordian, mandolin, tin whistle, bouzouki, toy piano, and stand-up bass. They have unleashed four self-released albums, their latest being *Lawful Evil* (2016).

Hailing from Greenville, North Carolina's Æther Realm is set to unleash their blend of melodic death metal and folk metal, with lyrical themes of fantasy and mythology. They are joined by festival alumni local Vancouver heavy metal warriors Iron Kingdom, who have been touring hard for their new and fifth album *The Blood Of Creation*. Metal Temple has described them as, "A distinctively distinguished experience in Heavy Metal... an injection in infectiously venomous momentum most definitely deserves interest - do check it out."

Making their first appearance at HMF will be Borealis, a power/progressive metal band from Orangeville, Ontario. Their latest album *Illusions* has gotten praise from across the metal community, My Global Mind has stated, "Borealis have proven themselves to be one of the most

consistent bands when it comes to producing excellent dark power/prog metal, and this album is no exception, standing as possibly their best work to date. Longtime fans should be very pleased with this album, and newcomers are highly recommended to start with this album."

Other bands joining the lineup will be Odinfist (Okanagan, BC), Naitaka (Kelowna, BC), and Calgary's Osyron, Syryn and Balroghath.

**Hyperspace Metal Festival V**

April 11-13, 2024

3 Day Pass - \$90

Thursday - The Wise Hall, Vancouver

Doors 6PM \$30

Friday & Saturday - Rickshaw Theatre, Vancouver

Doors 7PM \$40

To follow updates for Hyperspace Metal Festival 2024, find us on Facebook or Instagram.

**HMF 2024 Spotify Playlist:** [spoti.fi/44bNcLT](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/306416908428221)

[facebook.com/events/306416908428221](https://www.facebook.com/events/306416908428221)

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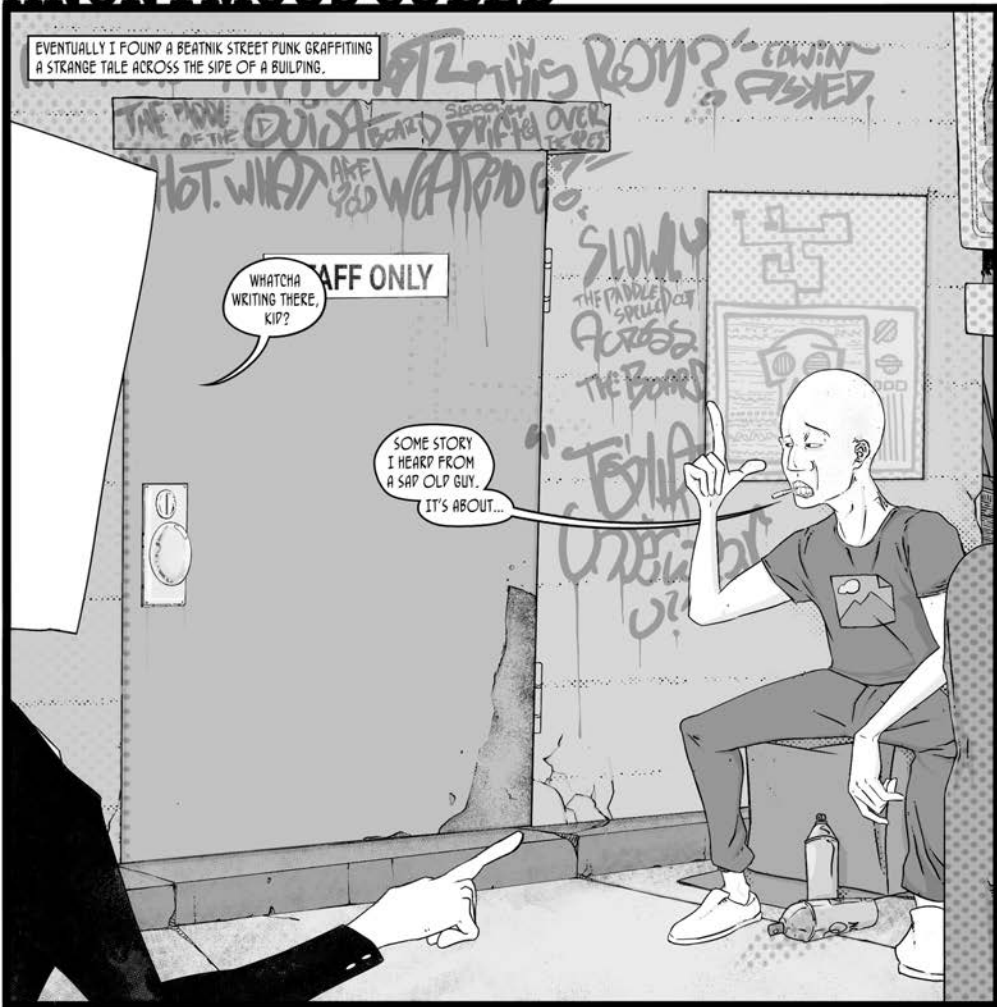
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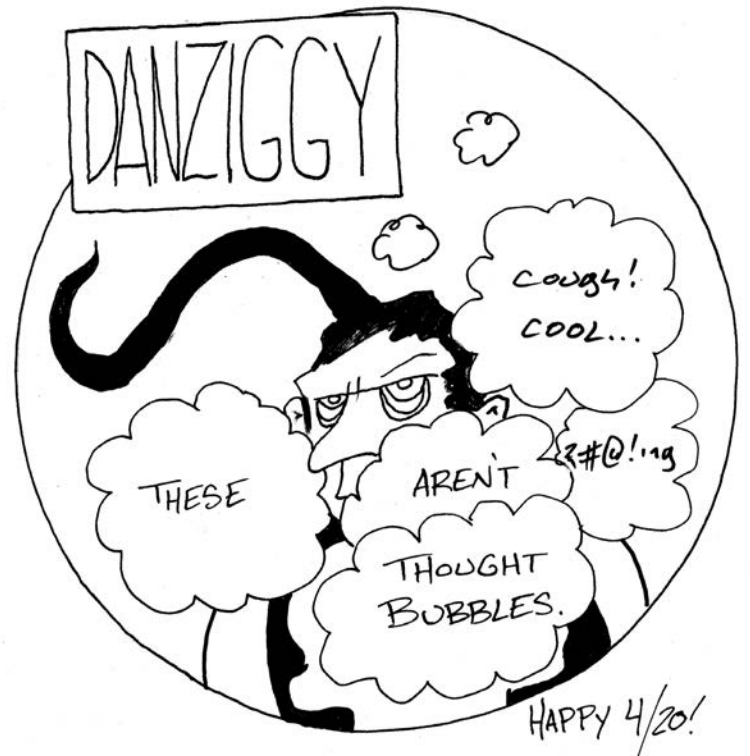
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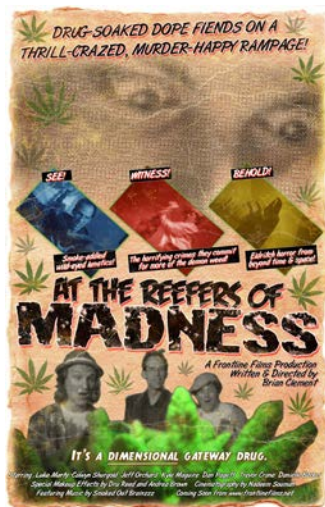
# UNEARTHED HORROR

## At the Reefers of Madness!

By Brian Clement

In 2009, like a mad scientist out of an old Universal horror picture, I hit on the idea of combining two different styles of movie into a new, heretofore unseen type of mutant amalgam: the stoner comedy and the Lovecraftian horror. Surely, such an idea was ludicrous. What, after all, does the dopey humour of Cheech and Chong have in common with a 1920s author of “weird fiction” and his idea of a cold, indifferent universe and the unknowable monstrosities that lurk beyond the veil of our perception? A combination of these two things couldn't possibly work. Or, might we harness the powers of non-Euclidean geometry to fuse together a genre consisting of weed-based jokes and famously unfilmable eldritch nightmares?

Having tried my hand at Lovecraft-influenced micro-budget horror features, *The Dead Inside* (2005) and *Dark Paradox* (2007), I decided to go for a smaller scale with a short film for one of my first projects in Toronto. The story idea was simple enough: goofy college stoner Parker (Luke Marty) sneaks into the rare books room at the Miskatonic University library, flips through the Necronomicon, and finds an ancient, forbidden joint. Naturally, he smokes it with his roommate Beetle (Calwyn Shurgold), they accidentally summon a servitor of Azathoth, and are offered a bundle of the most powerful weed in the universe— in exchange for a sacrifice. What ensues is STINKity, stupidity, and murder, naturally, as their activities are discovered by one of Miskatonic's professors (Jeff Orchard).



We managed to assemble a talented cast of amateur performers, many of whom continued acting and are still doing so today.

In making a completely unserious comedy, I thought an ideal name would be a combination of two well-known titles: the infamously ridiculous movie Reefer Madness, and one of H.P. Lovecraft's most well-known stories, *At the Mountains of Madness*. And so we had “At the Reefers of Madness”: something jettisoning Lovecraft's cynicism and antiquated racism and keeping the surreal sci-fi elements, but making absurd comedy out of the horror by using the utter nonsense of 1930s-era drug paranoia. To top it off, I received permission from Victoria band Smoked Out Brainzzz for the use of some of their music. The result was fun, silly, and reasonably polished for a movie made with negligible money and resources.

At least some people thought it worked, as ATROM ended up playing at a few film fests, including the 2010 H.P. Lovecraft Film Festival in Portland, Oregon.

And now 15 years later I've even revived the “weed cult” with a cameo in my new feature *Our Gods are Real!*

The entire short is available for free to watch online:

[youtube.com/watch?v=D8o2DFWPkEM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8o2DFWPkEM)



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# Absolute Movie Reviews



The Making of 4

Anyone who doesn't know Gibson as a guitar maker will get to discover them as a documentary producer with the debut of *The Making of 4*, available to freely view on YouTube.

The Gibson Films label is official, and while this work is no different from the other videos on this streaming channel, what's offered shows higher production values and even bigger names getting involved in this venture.

This feature length work takes viewers into a look back at how Slash put together his band, why he continues

touring, and what Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators (SMKC) feel while on stage with this legend. After parting ways with Guns N' Roses (and returning), he formed other groups to collaborate with

to keep on rocking. After working with this particular crew for over a

decade across four albums, we see what they've been up to during the pandemic years. These recordings (edited to music video standard) represent their best tracks! Although I wanted to know more about Myles and the group, what's presented is a fair balance between them and who Slash is before taking up the guitar.

Simply titled, "4," their latest effort topped the charts when it was released in 2022. It was recorded during the pandemic, and to get it done sounds amazing in and of itself. What's revealed in this documentary mentions the hurdles; especially when one of them even got the dreaded COVID-19 virus.

My favourite track includes "Actions" with its hard rock country vibe, and "Fall Back to Earth," where the high squealing melodies are cosmic! Although this work is more than a

love letter to the man, it's still a good watch to cement why he's a rock icon for years to come!

4 Stars out of 5

Ed Sum



## The Old Ones

Chad Ferrin is back with another Crappy World Film's production, and H.P. Lovecraft's *The Old Ones* is just as campy. Here, Russel Marsh from *The*

*Deep Ones*, the prior film, returns as a hero, and he is back to dispense justice *Die Hard with a Vengeance* style! And what's put together surprisingly makes sense.

After father (Scott Vogel) and his son Gideon (Benjamin Philip) rescues a sailor, this director wastes no time to see him fight. Marsh (Robert Miano) is ready and although the kid is simply along for the ride, he has a few moments to shine. At least he's not like Podcast doing nothing in *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*.

When compared to the last film, Captain Marsh is a much more developed personality. He wants to reunite with a lost love. Also, since I saw an early draft, I thought about making comparisons. In the past, I interviewed him about *The Deep Ones*, and although that was produced for fun, this one has more thought put into it.

The wait is worthwhile, and I expected nothing more than seeing Marsh killing random members from the Esoteric order of Dagon left, right, and centre. Once Nyarlathotep enters the picture, I knew it'd be game over. Rico E. Anderson is wonderful in the role, and he chews up the scenery. If a third movie gets made, then I really hope he returns since when he gets involved, there's often a serious plot to reveal!

Ed Sum

# Absolute Album Reviews

Tim Blake

Cherry Red Records

Eight out of Ten

Tim Blake is probably one of the most influential musicians you've never heard of. Yet, his influence on modern music is palpable and still felt to this day.

Tim first came to the public's attention as a member of none more cult band Gong, playing on their acclaimed *Angel's Egg*, *You*, and *Flying Teapot* albums. He also played with Hawkwind, which really is the pedigree of an extraordinary musician.

These three solo albums of Tim's represent the apex of experimental electronic creativity. Bear in my mind that in the '70s, technology for creating electronic music was both in its infancy and very bulky! This makes the extraordinary sounds captured on his debut 1977 solo album *Crystal Machine* and 1978's *Blake's New Jerusalem* all the more impressive. There is a warmth and creativity to these two albums that is extraordinary and uplifting.

This fine collection of Tim's music is completed with 1991's aptly named

Magick.

Music both timeless and inspiring.

- Steve Earles

Midnight Lust

Lesbian Bed Death

When I'm not listening to industrial and EBM, and not painting Zoats or Night Lords, I like to stretch my tattered bat wings and check out other sonic offerings I'm not usually into. So it goes, and Lesbian Bed Death (LBD) fell into my lap, so to speak. This isn't weird or anything, I swear. Anyway, LBD personify themselves "gothic punk" and "heavy metal", and upon seeing this is in ye olde press release, I expected something much different. Thankfully, it is not at all what I expected...

Lesbian Bed Death's *Midnight Lust* reminds me a lot of the Satanic and Evil™-themed stuff I'd hear a lot of back in the '80s and '90s when I wasn't jamming out to Nitzer Ebb and Bolt Thrower. It's straight up, spooky, glam-hair metal by way of Mötley Crüe meets Heart, with some trash elements if they were done by the likes of Lita Ford. But with a

modern twist, terrific not-too-slick production, and tight arrangements. The vocals will fuck your shit up, as well, but in a good way—I promise. JJ's vox seethes and croons with the confidence and blood-soaked aplomb a band like this needs; Dan Peach's guitar is the excellent hammer-driving element to the mix; and Aimee Violet's drums and Leisl Heath's bass are the dark rods and revenant glue that stitch this delightful, sexy beast together. Yes, there's also killer guitar solos.

Stand-out cuts include "Roadkill", "Satanic Suicide Sex Cult", and "She Loves Lilith" for me, but *Midnight Lust* is a bone-shrieking gem, as a whole. This is like if GWAR had a glammy metal project, but decided to infuse it with attitudes from The Damned's and My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult's style guides. Don't get me wrong, though, while Lesbian Bed Death certainly wears its influences upon its Dracula Castle Bone Altar, it's also not painfully derivative. Truly, a fantastic change of pace.

- Steve Saunders

Secret Show (Live In San Francisco)

The Residents

Cherry Red Records

Ten out of Ten

I've observed an interesting thing reviewing The Residents. With many bands, you describe their music as sounding like band X or band Y, whereas The Residents sound like no one else; so you compare other bands to them, while they are in a self-created genre of their own music. And a most glorious genre of music it is, too! Insane, witty, adroit, inclusive, and life-affirming.

Recorded to celebrate their 50th anniversary, this is a marvellous show, as evidenced on the fine package Cherry Red have put together to commemorate it, of both CD and DVD.

The guests are the icing on an already tasty cake: Les Claypool of Primus, the beautiful piano playing of Sarah Cahill, the heavenly sounds of Conspiracy of Beards, and more; it's just aural and visual magic!

The set listing is amazing, especially the live version of "Semolina", "Would We Be Alive", and "Life Would Be Wonderful". The spoken word pieces are utterly made, too.

So, fifty years on and still no one sounds like The Residents! How many bands can say that?

- Steve Earles

**420 Mixtape**

- 1) Black Sabbath - Sweet Leaf
- 2) Steve Miller - The Joker
- 3) The Monks - Drugs in My Pocket
- 4) Musical Youth - Pass the Dutchie
- 5) Tone Loc - Chiba Chiba
- 6) Simpletones - I like drugs
- 7) Zeke - Let's Get Drugs
- 8) The Tubes - White Punks on Dope
- 9) Peter Tosh - Legalize it
- 10) Rick James - Fire It Up
- 11) Master P - Weed & Money
- 12) Quartz - Wildfire
- 13) Eazy E - Down 2 Tha Last Roach

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14	U	B	E	R	15	A	B	O	I	L	18	E	R	O	S		
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45	F	R	A	N	48	A	N	I	M	E	S	51	T	O	E		
54	F	O	R	G	O	T	T	E	N	R	E	B	E	L	S		
61	E	M	T	62	N	E	A	R	O	R	65	L	A	I	T		
68	R	O	A	S	T	71	P	E	T	74	D	A	R	C	Y		
77	H	O	A	78	M	O	S	79									
82	T	H	E	M	E	G	E	N	E	R	A	T	I	O	N		
89	R	O	T	E	92	O	R	A	L	S	95	O	K	P	A		
96	A	L	T	A	99	T	I	T	A	N	102	F	E	E	T		
105	Y	O	U	R	108	H	E	L	L	O	111	F	A	C	E		

CROSSWORD NO. 104

SPRING, 2024

# Absolute Graphic Novel Reviews



**Girl Juice**

**Benji Nate**

*Girl Juice* is a comic about roommates, one of whom is an obnoxiously charming, narcissistically kinky freak who thinks she's so hot that it's now a brag to talk about how unpopular she was in high school. There's ghostly apparitions, puppy-play, attempts at having a successful YouTube channel, and well-deserved rants about why camping sucks and proms are pointless.

*Girl Juice* is funny. That's what you need to know. It's slice-of-life storytelling, that manages to be dirty while not overtly lewd. Or maybe that's the other way around. Either way, it's not a graphically sexual comic, so much as a comic where characters, or at least one character, talks a lot about banging. We all have that one friend, that one roommate, who gets a little obsessed about their own drama, and she's getting a lot of page time in this book. And I'm glad, because she's hilarious.

Let me be clear: *Girl Juice* is one of the silliest, cutest, horniest comics I've ever read, and I love it as much

as some of the characters love themselves. It's worth reading if you're a human with a heart who enjoys things which are good.

- Hank Pattison

## Night Fever

**Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips**

*Night Fever* is the new book from writer Ed Brubaker and artist Sean Phillips, who've previously teamed up on dozens of best-selling neo-noir mature-reader comic books. *Night Fever* is a singular graphic novel, and tells the tale of a wildly dangerous misadventure experienced by what appears to be a fairly ordinary man on a business trip in Europe.

The story is largely an exploration of who you can be when you're not stuck being yourself at home. The mutability of personal identity, and the nasty stuff you can get up to when nobody knows who you really are.

I don't know if all the beats landed perfectly for me; there were a few interesting points raised that didn't seem to get proper resolutions,



but I might be mistaking narrative window-dressings for support-beams. There were points when I wanted to know more about the weirder parts of the tale, but in the end we weren't really there for explanations; we were there to drink and fight and fuck until the house burned down.

It's a fun story from two excellent storytellers. It's not the highest point of their careers, but it's still an entertaining read full of sex, violence, shiny cars, and shady characters. If you enjoy spending time in those sorts of worlds, then you'll enjoy reading this story.

- Hank Pattison

## The Hood:

**The Saga of Parker Robins**

**Brian K. Vaughan, Jeff Parker, and Kyle Hotz**

*The Hood* is a graphic novel collecting three comic book mini-series featuring the Marvel anti-hero, The Hood. The second two are generically fine, but the first story, from writer Brian K. Vaughan and artist Kyle Hotz, published back in 2002 as part of the Marvel MAX line for more adult stories, is one of the darkest, and sometimes most hilariously realistic Marvel comics you'll ever read.

The story features a cast of classic supervillains, all of whom get to be portrayed with a greater depth of character than usual, often cursing and lamenting their own life choices, from the ignobly of getting stuck with cheesy nicknames, to the regrets of marrying the wrong person for the wrong reasons. Both the characters and the world feel grounded in a way that superhero comics rarely get to, allowing the mini-series to feel vastly different from the family-friendly media being produced by Marvel/Disney



these days.

The story, like *The Hood* himself, can be nasty and mean and obnoxious. It's also remarkably well-drawn and well-written. If you like superhuman stories, but crave a bit more realism and cynicism, mixed with some dark humour, *The Hood* has you covered.

- Hank Pattison

## Godzilla

**James Stokoe**

Sometimes you just get the right talent combined with the right franchise, and it's pure, brain-blistering magic. Writer/Artist James Stokoe and *Godzilla* are one of those combinations. Stokoe's art sits somewhere in the sweet-spot between cartoony and complex, resulting in a story that's simultaneously realistic and ridiculous. The monsters are massive, and the body count is brutally high.

The first story takes us through a soldier's POV of Godzilla's first appearance in Japan, and follows several decades of horrific damage done by the warring of gargantuan creatures across the globe.

Then, just when we think things can't get any more intense or insane, we follow Godzilla straight into Hell, where the King of Kaiju does battle with various famous foes from the character's chronology! Some will live and some will die— or maybe everybody's already dead since we're in the underworld of the afterlife, but either way, Godzilla takes on all comers and shows no mercy!

Are we witnessing the ending of the world, or does civilization somehow stand a chance? Only James Stokoe knows for sure!

- Hank Pattison



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# Absolute Live



## The Electric Highway 2024 April 4 - 6, Dickens, Calgary AB

My name is Ryan Dyer and I am an advocate for the Electric Highway Festival. That's right, I believe in what the festival does. I believe in what it stands for. It is a festival of opportunity—giving young bands the space to play as equals to established peers. It is a festival of connectivity—with bands and fans from across Canada converging together to build connections and memories with one another. It is a festival of musical discovery—throughout the three days, even if you're aware of a few of the bands, there are some you will surely add to your future playlists.

All snowy roads, from B.C., Yellowknife or even Southeast Calgary, led to one place and for three days, Dickens Pub turned into the Electric Highway pit stop. Within the basement complex, all outside problems had the volume turned down. Indeed, I got 99 problems but a riff ain't one. Along with the bands, who represented Western Canada's best offerings of stoner, doom,

psychedelic, prog, rock and heavy metal, the vendors were also in full swing, with such local expo participants such as Killers and Demons, Analog Universe Games and Knox Your Sox Off Hot Sauces all setting up shop at the festival.

If you went to the Electric Highway, you already know it ruled, but for those who didn't, what convincing is needed (if you live in Calgary)? Well, if you don't know the bands, have you ever listened to a Black Sabbath song? Did you like it? Well, that's all you need—you'll like the bands chosen. Do you feel it might be too expensive? Nonsense—Thursday was \$25 at the door, with Friday being \$35 and Saturday being the same. Were you busy? This thing is three days—choose one if you can. No excuses next time, okay?

With that out of the way, let's get into the meat of the thing. Thursday featured headliners Hombre performing with Solid Brown, Set & Stoned, Owls & Eagles, Black Daggers, Prisoner and Mors Sanctorum. I won't comment much on each band

for this, but I will say that Owls & Eagles have that special something—their songs and presentation lend themselves to much potential and at this point, maybe like the festival, they are Calgary's best kept secret. I hope to see them soar further.

Friday saw Buffalo Bud Buster headline along with Flashback, Pharm, The Bodies of Everest, The Getmines,

Blacksmith and Brewer, Atomic Yeti, and Passing Pluto. Buffalo Bud Buster, I will admit, is my favorite band at this festival. I feel as if their super heavy form of stoner rock mixed with humorous, storytelling lyrics also beckons a bigger following world wide. Flashback are another band who are unbelievably talented. Blacksmith and Brewer had an interesting gimmick—bringing an anvil onstage, they had something of a blacksmith demonstration—the clanging of the anvil



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becoming a percussive instrument to go along with stoner riffs.

Saturday brought out the big boys with the three headlining bands of the festival all being from Vancouver, the Juno Award winning Ancients, Dead Quiet and Empress. Gnarwhal came all the way from Yellowknife while Tebby and the Heavy and Musing both made their return to the festival. Stone Spear from Kelowna and Conjure Hand from Victoria opening this day's festivities.

The legend of The Electric Highway is growing and this was an opportunity to pass along the good word. If you're a fan of stoner, doom, sludge, whatever—go. If you're a band who plays this type of music, try to look into playing. It may be Western Canada's best kept secret, but there's always room for more drivers and passengers alike on The Electric Highway.

- Ryan Dyer



## Twenty Twenty Gwar The Age Of Befuddlement Tour

After two years in GWARantine, Vancouver has once again been occupied by Antarctica's number one band.

Infiltrating the Vogue Theatre, the elite Scumdogs from Space took the stage and launched right in to "Let Us Slay".

Alternating between introductions and skits, the band brought out a larger-than-life Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss his actions in Gaza before having his face ripped off, spraying blood all over the crowd. Lead singer Blothar solved the issues in the Middle East a little while later by sewing together the effigies of an Israeli child and a Palestinian child.

In classic GWAR form, current (and one could say befuddled) U.S. President Biden was allowed to wander out on to the stage looking for a misplaced laptop that new guitarist Grodius Maximus had found and decided to keep, owing to it containing an allegedly copious amount of lewd material.

In total, 18 songs spanning the band's four-decade career were offered up for the audience's destruction before the soaking wet audience was turned out on to the streets of Vancouver.

Opening for GWAR were Massachusetts trio Fuming Mouth and Canadian hardcore band Cancer Bats who themselves are fresh off of their Bat Sabbath tour.

Renee Hutchinson

Photo Credit: Colin Smith Takes Pics



## GWAR, Cancer Bats, Fuming Mouth

March 18, The Back Alley, Calgary AB

GWAR. We meet again at The Back Alley. The Crack Alley. The "Crack in the Egg" Alley. Yes, the nightclub known for drunk bros singing "Down with the Sickness" on the speakers has welcomed Antarctica's finest for a sold-out show.

Now listen, I know GWAR are Absolute Underground's favorite band, but as I was in China the past eight years, I haven't encountered the band in roughly a decade. No, GWAR didn't come to China, or even Japan, and I must say that the people there are seriously deprived, because of that. So, this show was my first GWAR experience post-Dave Brockie, and I was extremely curious if it would still hold up to the several shows I saw with the former vocalist.

GWAR have always picked suitable openers, and Cancer Bats and Fuming Mouth are two more nice additions for when we look at GWAR tour posters in 2040. Fuming Mouth ended their set with a Metallica "For Whom the Bell Tolls" cover, which was strangely played again on the PA ten minutes later during the change-over. Cancer Bats exclaimed they've been coming to Calgary for 20 years. Their shows in smaller venues are usually hectic, and as a lot of the crowd weren't that familiar with them, this set was less so, but you can bet they made an impression on those who haven't heard them before.

The Back Alley seems to be the place to perform if your set is fluid heavy. Insane Clown Posse did their festival at the venue; and now an equally, or even more moist band, GWAR, has the staff mopping up blood and cum at the end of the night.

What differs with a GWAR concert now when compared to those with Dave Brockie, I feel, is with Oderus, there was a feeling of

unpredictability— you never knew what sort of unhinged thing he would say. With current GWAR, the bits are still clever, but it feels a little safer; except for new guitarist Grodius Maximus, who has a needed unhinged quality. He was the topic of many of the bits on stage, and as a new member of such an established band, he really shined, even walking on bar tables during "Maggots". Blöthar as a frontman feels about as equal as any of the other members of GWAR. Balsac the Jaws of Death looked massive— the progression of his character made him look like The Giant Gonzalez with a guitar. All in all, this era of the band feels like it's more about unity and celebration of the brand, while also progressing it.

Will GWAR still be playing in 2040? Hopefully, as it feels now that although members switch, the spirit of GWAR is still intact. As long as they keep up with the times and present something topical, crude, and funny to each tour (like A.I. for this one finally getting a proper use, sucking dick), they don't seem dry, much like a musical version of South Park.

The GWAR set was fairly long, with songs like "Let Us Slay", "Crack in the Egg", and the immortal "Sick of You" played. There were lots of celebrity appearances and monsters, making this big show feel like it should have been at a bigger venue. But maybe because it wasn't, this will be more vividly remembered.

Ryan Dyer



## Led Zepagain

May 18th, McPherson Playhouse, Victoria BC

Tribute bands are a dime a dozen; and to say which one is better at honouring a specific group really requires the praise from the surviving original members. Led Zeppelin is an English band which pioneered many things that define stadium rock, and their music really must be experienced live. But when John Bonham died, the rest of the band decided it was best not to continue. He was considered one of the best, and although they can reunite for what many have said less than stellar performances, thankfully Led Zepagain can step up to the plate and rock the house down!

I'm amused that vocalist Swan Montgomery ("Robert Plant") said they have been performing longer than the group has. During a break between songs, he interacts with audiences to get them hyped up and remind them about what they are. Together, with guitar/mandolin player Anthony David ("Jimmy Page"), bassist/keyboardist/mandolinist Jim Wootten ("John Paul Jones") and drummer/percussionist Derek Smith ("John Bonham"), they provide an experience that has many old fans giving their seal of approval. Nobody should be surprised that Page saw them perform and even said they got it.

There's something in the live sound that'll send shivers as "Stairway to Heaven" is played, especially when moments get improved in a live show. "Kashmir" is my favourite, and to see them up close from a prime seat in this rendition got me bouncing on my seat. It's rare to enjoy both sight and sound of a performance. Although part of Montgomery's voice is not easily picked up through the microphone, I fault that with equipment-handling and the person at the sound booth rather than the performer.

I could see his lips moving as "rock and roll" started to resonate through the McPherson Theatre. When you see Anthony David really work those solos and give an energetic shuffle while playing that guitar, I'm sure Paul Stanley of KISS would be jealous. He's much older, so isn't as graceful; but for David, he's got it, and I would not tire of watching him for another decade!

Ed Sum

## Pussy Riot, Midnight Peg

March 7, Dickens, Calgary AB

It was a cold night, but probably familiar weather for the ladies in the legendary Pussy Riot, as they made a stop in the city of Calgary at Dickens Pub. The sold-out show was a highly anticipated one, with many wondering just what it would be like— a concert/political demonstration/rally/drama? Yes, and based off of Maria Alyokhina's memoir, *Riot Days*. Still, how they would go about presenting this was of high intrigue.

Edmonton's Midnight Peg were granted the privilege of opening Pussy Riot's shows in Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Calgary. They were perfectly suitable as an opener for this show, so kudos to the booking team for making the right choice. The only issue I saw with the post hardcore band was their set length— it went around 45 minutes, which felt at about the 30-minute mark that they were overstaying their welcome a little. Two openers at 25 minutes each would have been a better option to avoid this.

Before Pussy Riot's show began, the show's producer, Alexander Cheparukhin, introduced the show with his history with Pussy Riot, who will be appearing tonight in the production, how it came together, and how proceeds from merchandise go to a children's hospital in Kiev.

Then, the Pussy Riot experience began. Alina Petrova led the members in via her electric violin, Maria Alyokhina and Olga Borisova in Pussy Riot's iconic balaclavas, and Diana Burkot on the drums and keyboards. Alyokhina, knowing the content the best, was what you would call the lead vocal of the group while Borisova, the ex policewoman, provided intense energy as their second primary vocalist.

The style of music played was driving and electronic, which was styled to fit Pussy Riot's prose slam style which would better emphasize the passages from the *Riot Days* memoir. They sang/spoke/ slammed in Russian while a screen behind Pussy Riot displayed subtitles in English and images which corresponded with whichever part of the memoir they were telling. As the screen was directly behind Pussy Riot, I imagine it was hard to see the screen if you weren't standing up front. At larger venues I imagine the screen was more so above them, which would have made it easier to see the words clearly.

An upside to this is that more eyes were focused on the performance, which was determined and inspiring. From performing at the chapel, to getting arrested, to vicious dogs in the courtroom, to time in prison and the penal colony, to a final release, the story was told in a suitable musical form. It was as if Atari Teenage Riot adopted a

## Absolute Live

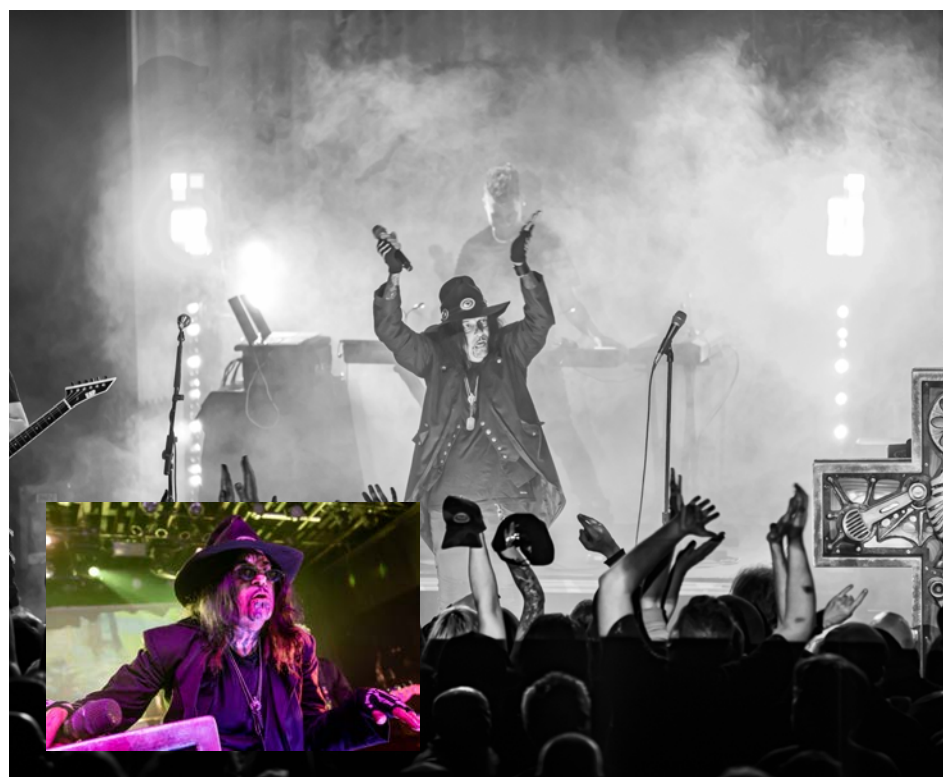


Skinny Puppy type of storytelling approach. It did the memoir justice and then some. They ended the performance by showing photos of political prisoners in Russian prison for protesting the war, such as Alexey Moskalev. They then held up the Ukrainian flag as a sign of their ongoing stand against Putin.



Two security guards afterwards were talking, and one said he didn't understand what he just saw. Hopefully this inspires him to seek out the story of Pussy Riot since "Everyone can be Pussy Riot". Once the *Riot Days* tour finishes up, Pussy Riot will be presenting their Velvet Terrorism art exhibition at The Polygon Gallery in Vancouver from March 21st to June 2nd.

Ryan Dyer



## Ministry

Commodore Ballroom

March 3, 2024

48 hours after the release of their 16th studio album *HOPIUM FORTHEMASSES* on Nuclear Blast Records, Ministry showed up at the Commodore Ballroom ready to rock.

The band, who is currently on tour in support of their new album, kicked off their set with five new tracks including the, unapologetic commentary on the state of conspiracy theories and their followers in "Goddamn White Trash", which had the crowd chanting along!

Vocalist and founder of Ministry, Al Jourgensen

then let the crowd know "You've been patient and good through all this new stuff, and now I'm going to throw you some doggie treats." They ripped into a track from 2021 called "Broken System" then kicked it way back playing some crowd favourites like "Jesus Built my Hotrod" "Thieves" and "N.W.O".

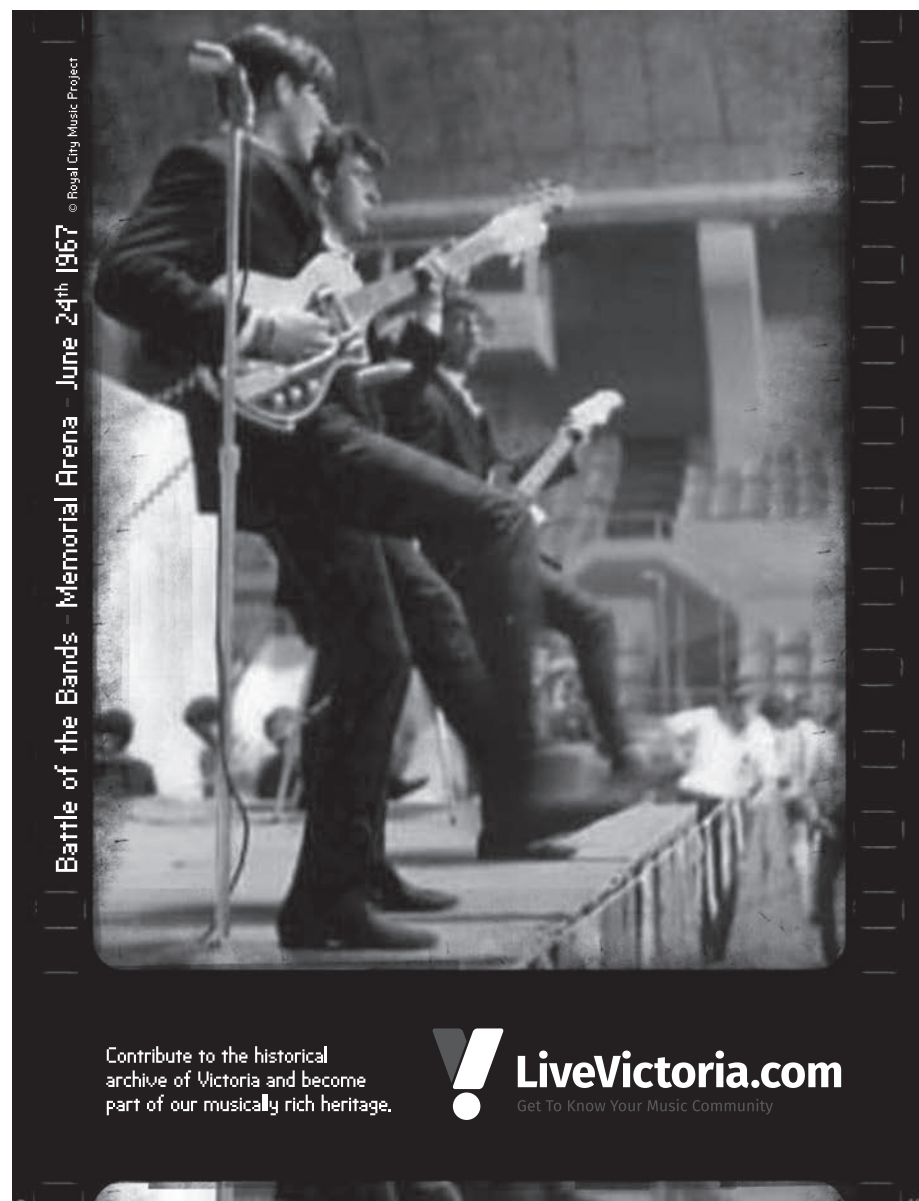
You can expect that the band will tease the crowd by saying "good night" twice before actually ending the night, so don't leave early.

Ministry has sold out every show on this tour so far, and tomorrow night in Calgary just sold out!

Check with @weareministry about upcoming tour dates, and don't miss out!

You won't be disappointed.

Colin Smith





## Images in Vogue: Part 1

**You Can Call It a Lust for Love, If You Want To!**

**By Billy Hopeless**

Throughout my life as a born and raised Canadian lover of music, there have been many hits and misses. I remember watching video shows like *Switchback* and *Good Rockin' Tonite* on CBC and *Soundproof* on cable access faithfully for anything new and exciting to be the heartbeat to my ever-changing life. When I first heard Images in Vogue, the melodies were classic timeless pop hooks, yet with fashion-forward sounds and looks—I was an instant fan. Many years later, I can still hear the songs in my head just by thinking about them, and I'm excited to say they'll be playing the Rickshaw Theatre June 8th. So, come on my fellow romantic wavers, new and old, let's dance with founding member and keyboardist Joe Vizvary!

**AU: I'm from the old generation that remembers new wave when it was new, but for any of the new generation who weren't old enough to have been and all the rest of us who live for nostalgia, you guys started in 1981 here in Vancouver. What was the musical landscape like back then?**

**Joe Vizvary:** In 1981, it seemed like the energy of punk had been depleted and commercialized as "new wave", and lots of people and bands were looking backward, which was the start of the classic rock revival, which seemed to take over FM radio. Here in Vancouver, in most clubs, top 40 cover bands were the most popular and there weren't many venues a band playing original material could play. The original wave of punk bands had come and gone, with DOA, Subhumans, K-Tels, among others still around; the second wave of more poppy punk like the Pointed Sticks, Modernettes, Payolas, even Doug and the Slugs were doing shows and releasing records. By 1981, lots of musicians were looking at more experimental approaches, particularly using keyboards or synthesizers, less conventional instrumentation away from traditional guitar bass drums that wasn't present in the early punk period, but retaining the punk DIY attitude. So, the third wave was bands like us, Moev, 54-40, and others who made up post-punk wave of Vancouver bands.

**AU: How did the band form and what was everyone in the band's occupation at the time?**

**JV:** In April 1981, Gary Smith worked at Discus

Records in Pacific Centre, Don Gordon (later, Numb) was a marine biologist for the department of fisheries. Don and Gary had a band called Pin-Ups that did a few shows around town. Kevin (later cEvin Key of Skinny Puppy) worked as a checkout clerk at Safeway in North Van. Dale Martinale, who joined in December 1981 was a student at Emily Carr School of Art. I was a working musician in a quirky cover band called NV doing the bar circuit around BC. I had previously completed my B.Ed. at UBC, so shortly after the band formed, I first worked at a sawmill then started substitute teaching in Delta. Don and Gary were looking to form a more synth-based band after Pin-Ups ended. Gary met Kevin at Discus when he came in looking for a record by Japan, a group we all liked. When my band NV ended, I called Don in response to a note in Ellie O'day's column in the Georgia Straight about a band looking for a keyboard player with equipment. We got together and found we all had a similar interest in synth music and how we wanted to approach creating our music. We thought we might be able to try to create something different together. One of the key ideas we had was rather than playing bars and clubs to build an audience, we would not perform live until we had written and recorded enough songs for an album. To pay for our recordings and gear, we all kept our day jobs until we went on our first Canadian tour in 1983. When we did start to play live, we promoted our own shows as events and tried to stay away from the usual venues where local bands played. The name of the band was thought up by Gary and Don, inspired by a song "In Vogue" by Japan on their *Quiet Life* album, and the



idea of observing all the changing images in the world around us.

**AU: I remember when I first heard, saw, and fell in love with your art. I was just a lad watching a video program back in '83. I was totally won over by the video for your single "Lust for**

**Love", directed brilliantly by Doug Bennett of Doug and the Slugs. I still feel it's one of the greatest Canadian music videos, as the whole film noir theme really hit perfect, especially with vocalist Dale Martindale's silent film star Harold goes at Luv My Hair image. Who came up with the concept and what was it like working with Doug Bennett?**

**JV:** We didn't want to do a typical band performance video, as we had released a live performance of "Breaking Up" on the Vancouver Show as our first official video, and wanted to stay away from the cliched love related videos that were popular. I had studied film and media (I teach those now!) at UBC, so I felt we needed something more obtuse and metaphorical. I thought we should look at what is the consequence of mistaking "Lust for Love" from the victim's perspective. So, the video isn't about murdering someone—it's about the trial and judgment. It's not only influenced by noir's

# HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU

sense of inevitability, but even more-so the Perry Mason TV show, with the confrontational big suits (which we bought at thrift stores many sizes too big but for some reason are too small now) and crazy camera angles.

Doug Bennett was great to work with, very open to trying something different and new. There weren't many videos made in Vancouver yet using experienced film people (as opposed to TV studio people or film students), so we had enough of a budget to use a film cinematographer and lighting people as well as pro equipment. Doug and I, with Kim Champniss, our manager at the time, spent several evenings at the bar at the top of the Blue Horizon working out the concept and story. It was shot in 24 hours at the old Vancouver Coroner's Court, which is now the police museum on East Cordova.

**AU: Sorry if I got the genre wrong earlier. It's a fine line between old new romantics and old new wave that I often get crossed wires on like glam and glitter. In 1985, you reached number 85 on the Canadian music charts, and got nominated for a Juno with your debut full-length *In the House*. How was that album recorded, and how did it feel to be 85 in '85?**

**JV:** The *In the House* album, like most of our released records, has a convoluted genesis. We had half the songs on the album written before the release of our first Warners EP with "Lust for Love" on it in the fall of '83, but the record company only wanted to release an EP. In early '84, we demoed some of those songs and started searching for a producer who could take us to ricananother level, as we were mostly self-produced to that point. We gave our record company a list of potential producers, but most were unavailable or unreachable by our record company. They gave us a list of their suggested producers, mostly Canadian, with whom we met, but few had any idea of what we were trying to do and wouldn't be more than engineers for us. Gary Wright, of Dream Weaver fame, was suggested, partly because he was American, so it might be easier to get released on the American affiliate of our label. We met with him and seemed like he might be ok to work with. He had been a pioneer of all-keyboard synth-based bands and had a great studio in California pack with synthesizers.

However, things didn't go as planned. We had six weeks booked with Gary to record the album; two weeks with me and Dale to do preproduction with Gary, and four weeks with the band. Instead of six weeks, it took 14 weeks, with me left in Los Angeles by myself living in Gary's house (because of the '84 Olympics, there were no hotels available). We were used to 12-hour recording sessions all night long at Mushroom, but Gary only worked 6-8 hours, only during the day.



IMAGES IN VOGUE

A T · T H E · L U V A F A I R

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Despite his slow pace and overly relaxed attitude, Gary was one of the nicest people I've ever met. We learned a lot from him, but he wasn't the right person for a band like us at that point in our career. When I got back to Vancouver late August, I played the finished album for the band. Our reaction was to ask our label not to release it, as it would ruin our career! It sounded terrible, not like our Mushroom recordings and some of our best songs weren't even on it. When the label wanted to release "Rescue Me" as the first single from the album, we added four songs, including "Call It Love" and "Save It", which we had recorded and mixed at our expense, as a big B-side and created the *Rituals* EP. While "Rescue Me" got little radio play, stations started playing "Call It Love" off the B-side. Based on the early success of "Call It Love", the label decided to release the album, so we remixed it at Mushroom again at our own expense and added "Call It love", "Save it", and one newly recorded song to the album. So, the first two singles from the album, "Call It Love" and "Save It", were originally recorded before we even went to California, and the single and 12" versions of "In the House" were a rerecording of the song by Dee Long of Klaatu done in Ontario after we had left the label. That we had some relative success with the album in '85 and '86 is ironic, as we almost broke up a few times, our drummer Kevin left the band, and we left our label during that period of uncertainty and strife. It was great that despite all that, our fans responded positively to the final released version of the album.

**AU: Before we go, will you have merch at the show? If so, can you drop a large t-shirt with the goddess of DJ depravity, Evilyn Thirteen, who will be spinning her charms before you play on June 8th? Unfortunately, I will be on tour.**

**JV:** OK Will do!

Stay tuned for Part Two in the next issue of *Absolute Underground*, and don't forget to mark your calendars for May 23rd-25th in Mississauga, ON and June 8th at The Rickshaw in Vancouver!

[rickshawtheatre.com/show\\_listings/images-in-vogue](http://rickshawtheatre.com/show_listings/images-in-vogue)



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# POWELL RIVER

## If You Love the Beatles Let it Be the Liverpool Legends

By Billy hopeless

Okay, for me tribute bands can be either really good or really bad— there's no in room for between.

Remember in *Wayne's World* when Tiny, played by Meatloaf, mentions the Shitty Beatles, and when Wayne asks if they're any good, Tiny tells him "No, they suck" and Wayne replies back "So, it's not just a clever name"? Well, the Liverpool Legends are the opposite, created and presented by George Harrison's sister, this fab four have won acclaim praise and awards across the globe, and as a Beatles fan I personally can't wait to see and hear them live on Broadway in May. So, let's fly across the universe and talk to Mr. Marty Scott, who plays George and is currently flying on tour with the rest of those lovable mop tops.

**Absolute Underground: It seems like yesterday when I first got bitten by the Beatles. I was a young lad and saw their mop top movies rerun as children's matinees at my local theatre. When did you first become infected?**

**Marty Scott:** My sister had the Blue Album when I was a kid. It's basically a greatest hits of the later Beatles stuff. I fell in love instantly and stole the record from her. I still have it to this day.

**AU: Better a stolen Beatles record than a police record, right? For me I saw *A Hard Day's Night* and I was all into this boy named Ringo, then John became revolutionary; but with age, I realized that George was kind of the Keith Richards cool in the group. Who is your favourite Beatle and why?**

**MS:** I really don't have a favourite Beatle. I love them all. I play George, and as a musician I think he was maybe the best of the four. But if I had to pick the coolest solo post-Beatles stuff, I think I'd pick John.



**AU: Wow, I never would have imagined George saying that about John! Well, it must certainly be quite an honour to be in a tribute band put all together now by Mr. George Harrison's sister Louise. How did you meet her majesty, and how hard was it to get her to let you into her life and show?**

**MS:** When I met Louise, I was singing at a Beatles convention in Chicago. It was right after George had passed away; just a couple of months. Louise was the guest of honor at the festival. She's there at this three-day Beatles convention thing, and I was singing. The way she puts it, she hadn't really grieved for George's passing yet. She's pretty spiritual, and I think she thought that I was brought to her by some powers that be. My life has never been the same since. It's started a whole sort of life in "Beatleland" for me. We just really hit it off. We spent the weekend hanging out and getting to know each other. She told me so many stories-- it was insane. Literally, a week later, she brought me to meet Paul McCartney. I'm sitting on a couch between her and Paul for 45 minutes. It was an amazing time in my life, and super cool. After few years of being really close friends, we decided that we wanted to put together a really special Beatles tribute show. Something that she would be proud of being a part of, and something that if George was still alive that he would hopefully think was great, too!

**AU: What has been the highlight of your long and winding road that began back in 2005?**

**MS:** Probably getting a Grammy nomination. It was so unexpected. It was a project that I didn't really even want to do at the time. Louise got us involved in this project. We recorded all the Beatles songs for a spoken word interview record that Louise was narrating. We were so busy at the time, I kinda thought it was a waste of time, but out of the blue, it ended up being nominated for a Grammy in the spoken word category. Normally, that isn't a big category, but that particular year we were up against major stars Val Kilmer, Betty White, and Tina Fey. Betty White won the Grammy that year, but we got to go there and get

## HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU

interviewed on the red carpet. It was amazing. And Paul performed there that year as well, so we got to visit with him again.

Other than that, headlining Carnegie Hall was a pretty big deal. That's when my grandfather finally said we made it! Haha. Headlining The Rose Bowl was pretty insane, as well... We've also done really big shows all over the world, and it's been just a great experience traveling and meeting Beatles fans everywhere.

**AU: Let's play "I've just seen a face"! Other than Linda Harrison, have any other Beatles family members or celebrities caught the really big show; and what did they tell you they thought about it?**

**MS:** Well, nobody else as far as family has seen the show. George had already passed by the time we started the show. Paul has a DVD of us though, and he gave it a thumbs-up, at least! We've also done shows with many of our heroes, like Joey Molland from Badfinger, and Denny Laine from Wings and The Moody Blues.

**AU: Going straight to the core of this apple, you're playing amazing covers of the Beatles legendary catalogue. It's a well-known fact that John Lennon berated the Flying Lizards cover of "Money", yet Paul praised Canada's own Emma Stevens for her Mi'kmaq language rendition of "Blackbird". For me, I'm very fond of Alice Cooper's "Sun King" and Aerosmith's "Come Together" from the Sgt. Pepper's movie. What's your favourite cover of a Beatles song?**

**MS:** "We Can Work It Out" by Stevie Wonder is cool. And I love Elton John's Lucy in the "Sky with Diamonds". I think when I first heard it I thought he wrote it, haha!

**AU: So, you're coming to the Commonwealth country of Canada to play— is this your first time? If not, how did you find it last time?**

**MS:** This will be our first time anywhere near Vancouver, so we are super excited. We've toured on the other side of Canada though, and it's

always been amazing. We are looking forward to exploring the area.

**AU: If I was talking to Ringo, he would have answered "how did you find Canada" with "turn left at Greenland." Anyways, before we say goodnight and I crawl through the bathroom window, let's get back to the begging of this interview. Once again, when I was a lad in the '70s, I convinced my rad dad to take me to see the tribute act Beatlemania. Though I was very young, I still hold the whole mystery tour as magical. Now, why should I and all our readers come see you lovely lads from Liverpool Legends? (Yes, I put a Jimmy Osmond reference in there— deal with it.)**

**MS:** There are lots of good tribute shows out there. We have a little different take on it since George's sis helped put it together. We do lots and lots of George tunes. More than most... George finally gets his due... haha.

Actually, the whole show is pretty even amongst all four Beatles. Even Ringo get lots of tunes. Let's face it, these days there are fans of *all* four Beatles. And the show is narrated by Louise Harrison herself, so it's really unique. We have a great cast and it's a super fun show!

**AU: I have to say, Ringo's Beatles songs— not so much. Though, he did have a few solo hits and with a little help from his friend George Harrison, he did hit big with the song "Photograph". In the end, I must ask you your top Beatles song in this day in the life, and why is it "Only a Northern Song"?**

**MS:** I love "In My Life". I think it has so many meaningful elements that make it just the perfect ballad and melody. And the piano solo George Martin played is just the icing on the cake. We will be playing that one at The Rio for sure!

**The Liverpool Legends will be playing the Rio theatre in Vancouver on May 9th, 2024.**

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



# The Last Drive-Interview

By Billy Hopeless

So, I'm sitting in the parlour of the Jones mansion with me brudder Richy enjoying a few libations and Richy being an always bullseye shooting source of all things cool says to me "Hey, I got something that's right up your eye-socket." Before my eyes, I'm drawn into the coolest show currently and possibly ever to disgrace the boob tube, *The Last Drive-In* on Shudder TV! From reading my periodicals, I had heard about this ode to the treasures of trash cinema; but after witnessing it in person, I became a devout mutant follower. Without further ado, let me present to you one of the hugest honors and my favourite interview to-date: The Texas Gentleman of Horror, Mister Joe Bob Briggs.

**Absolute Underground: You started out as a sports and true crime book writer— how did you become the legendary cult film guru that you are today?**

**Joe Bob:** In 1982, I started writing a column for the Dallas Times Herald called *Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In*. I was the first reviewer of exploitation films at any major newspaper up to that time. Everything evolved from that— the writing, the performing, the drive-in totals.

**AU: What was the first B-movie or horror masterpiece that really won you over to the dark side?**

**JB:** *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*— I saw it when I was nine years old and never recovered. I'm still scared of Bette Davis, and she's been dead for 35 years.

**AU: Everybody loves to see Baby Jane dance! Okay, since I'm talking to the lord of the last drive-in and our local last drive in here in the Lower Mainland (Twilight Drive-In) is running its last season before shutting down permanently, what was the first movie you remember seeing at a drive-in theatre, and what made and still makes the drive-in theatre**

**so special and important in our culture?**

**JB:** When I was a very young boy, my parents would drive from our little town of Earth, Texas, to the Golden Horseshoe Drive-In in Lubbock— a round trip of 120 miles— but I was too small to remember the names of any of the movies. I have much stronger memories of the Razorback Twin Drive-In in Little Rock, Arkansas, during my elementary and junior high years. We saw everything, but there was very little horror at the time.

**AU: For me, it was *The Apple Dumpling Gang* that took my drive-in virginity, and I've always held a special place in my heart for the smell of the concession stand. So, let's go to the famous Joe Bob board for a few questions. First off, what are Joe Bob's top go-to snacks and beverages at the snack bar and for home-viewing?**

**JB:** I'm afraid I'm not very adventurous— popcorn and hot dogs. But they do have a delicacy at Texas drive-ins that I've never seen sold anywhere else. Frozen pickle juice. A dollar a cup.

**AU: A dollar a cup... that's a great dill. Man, I remember on the summer nights of my youth, we used to ride our banana-seat bikes down to our now long-gone neighbourhood drive in the Cascades and climb the trees to watch the blue exploitation and horror films at night. So, next on the board, what are Joe Bob's top summer sex 'n' slasher drive-in movies?**

**JB:** Well, they don't really make those anymore; but the only series that consistently combined sex and gore is, of course, *Friday the 13th*.

**AU: Can't go wrong with *Summer Camp Blood*. Okay, one more from the board then we'll move on... What are the top features that makes a great trash movie a treasure?**

**JB:** The three Bs: Blood, Breasts, and Beasts.

**AU: The fourth B— Billy— agrees! Now, not only do I bow to you, oh sensei, but I must kiss the feet of your cohost, the goddess Dianna, aka Darcy the Mail Girl. How did you meet this amazing woman and get her to *The Last Drive-In*?**

# HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU

**JB:** She found me. God smiled on me, and she walked into a book signing I was doing back in 2016— and she was wearing the Mail Girl uniform!

**AU: That's quite the special package, indeed. What a great delivery. As I mentioned, you've written a true crime book and reviews of exploitation films and such in the past. Have you ever thought about writing a book on the subject of mutant movies or drive-ins?**

**JB:** I've written several. *Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In*, *Joe Bob Goes Back to the Drive-In*, *Profoundly Disturbing: Shocking Movies That Changed History*, and *Profoundly Erotic: Sexy Movies That Changed History*.

**AU: Okay, well, guess it's time to hit the books and pick those up for my next flight. As a musician, and since music does play a huge role in this magazine, who are some of your favorite spins on the dashboard deck?**

**JB:** Lyle Lovett. Johnny Cash.

**AU: Those were two of my top guesses for a man from Texas. Though, I'm sure you've answered it a trillion times more than I've watched it, I've got to ask, as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* is on one of my all-time favorite horror films (and though your scenes were deleted from the flick), what was it like to work on that set with the genius Tobe Hooper? You know the saw is family, after all.**

**JB:** Tobe was not a social guy. He was a friendly guy, but you didn't really hang out with him— you

just smoked dope with him. Which was good enough.

**AU: Wow a non-social smoker, that's rare; but since this is our 420 issue, that gets my pot content in for this column. Speaking of family, though I'm sure my guitarist brother and a lot of my readers will make it, I unfortunately am killing myself that I won't, but you're appearing at the horror convention and film fest Shock Stock 2024 in London, Ontario May 1-5. What can the lucky attendees expect from you and Darcy, and what do you know and love about Canada?**

**JB:** Mostly, we're just gonna hang with the fans, and I think I'm doing one movie presentation— title yet to be determined.

**AU: Well, thank you again. What can we expect in the future from Joe Bob Briggs and *The Last Drive-In*, and do you have any last words for our readers before we drive off into the night?**

**JB:** I will be producing a movie later this year that will bring about peace in all nations of the world.

**AU: We'll be lined at the ticket booth for that, and may your popcorn always be golden and your credits forever be noted, Mr. Joe Bob Briggs.**

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

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<p><b>NEW!</b></p> <p>SE61</p> <p><b>THE SCENICS</b> <i>New Part in Town</i> 12" LP   1976   Proto-Punk / New Wave Toronto, ON, Canada</p> <p>"New York had Talking Heads, and London XTC, but here was their equal in Toronto." — Bob Mersereau, author of <i>The Top 100 Canadian Albums</i></p>	<p>SE51</p> <p><b>DERANGED</b> <i>Lacerations</i> 12" LP   1988-89 Ferocious Deathrash Victoria/Langford, BC, Canada</p>	<p>SE50</p> <p><b>JONAS</b> <i>Patterns of Dominance</i> 12" EP   1996 Blistering Fast Political Grindcore Metchosin, BC, Canada</p>	<p>SE45</p> <p><b>AS SHERIFF</b> <i>Six Ways To The Ace</i> 12" LP   1969-70 Folk / Blues Psych Rock Victoria, BC, Canada</p>	<p>SE47</p> <p><b>DISTORTED INFLUENCE</b> <i>Cold</i> 12" LP   1992 Crossover Thrash Victoria, BC, Canada</p>	<p>SE48</p> <p><b>BLUE OIL</b> <i>Blue Oil</i> 12" LP   1981-83 Punk / New Wave / Post-Punk Montréal, QC, Canada</p>	<p>SE43</p> <p><b>PHARAONS</b> <i>Evil World</i> 12" LP   1989-91 Chaotic Deathrash / Punk Antananarivo, Madagascar</p>
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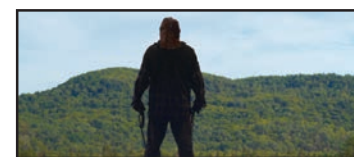


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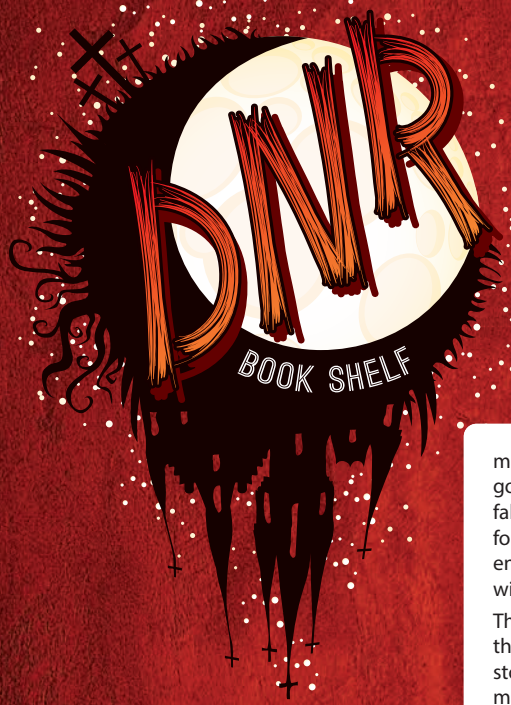
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## A HAUNTING ON THE HILL



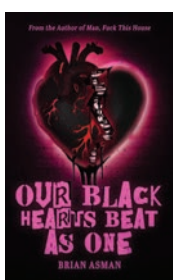
**Elizabeth Hand**  
Mulholland Books  
October 3, 2023

The works of Shirley Jackson are particularly iconic in the world of horror. Many are introduced to her writing in grade school with stories like *The Lottery*, but *The Haunting of Hill House* holds a special status as one of the most influential ghost stories of all time. With a legacy like that, who would willingly invite comparison to such a literary megalith? With formal authorization from Shirley Jackson's estate, Elizabeth Hand does just that, returning to the infamous house with *A Haunting on the Hill*.

This contemporary story brings a modern cast of characters to Hugh Crain's unnerving mansion in the form of a disparate troupe of creatives workshoping a play on which each has pinned their aspirations of dominating the acclaim. Much of the power of Jackson's original tale lies in the subtlety, and little feels subtle about Hand's approach. The house is the only returning character, but breadcrumbs of reference to past events are sprinkled throughout (even if they are at times more the size of a dinner roll than a crumb). *A Haunting on the Hill* introduces a number of elements not previously present at Hill House and while they aren't particularly bad inventions, they don't quite feel at home in this world. Elizabeth Hand's storytelling is not necessarily at fault, but I think she did herself a fundamental disservice by framing this as the follow up to Jackson's classic of the genre. As a stand-alone novel it would have burned stronger and been more likely to unsettle on its own merit. As it is, the lens of expectation leaves it wanting.

Laura Phaneuf

## OUR BLACK HEARTS BEAT AS ONE



**Brian Asman**  
Mutated Media  
October 24, 2023

A quick, lively read from Brian Asman with really thoughtful art throughout. This book is reminiscent of the MySpace days, with huge emo music vibes. Starting off with the central figure (the lead singer of Modern Love, Mike Mallory), we walk into the

middle of his breakup with the witchy, hot goth woman, Evangeline. Heartbroken and falling to pieces, we are flung into the story forthwith. We are then taken on a grief-stricken endangerment in the city's hidden underbelly with Mike as he processes his loss.

There are stories with in the main story as there are some secondary characters telling stories; some of which are good, some are maybe not needed. It's kind of an urban fantasy book with some creepy and ambient culty moodiness rather than straight up horror. Heartache is the main focus here, something we can all relate to. It also has a Modern Love songbook at the end which is a cool idea, but ultimately it doesn't really add much to it as we don't know what they sound like. Possibly, this was something to get Asman's creative juices flowing during the writing process- which I can appreciate. I'm certain any pop-punk, emo fan would enjoy this.

Demonika

## THE REJECTS: An Alternative History of



**Popular Music**  
**Jamie Collinson**  
Constable

February 22, 2024

We seldom spare a thought for *The Rejects*- those who were part either of a famous band, or of a band that became famous; and, for whatever

reason, found themselves out of the group.

For some, Lemmy Kilmister, who was fired from Hawkwind for taking the "wrong" drugs (and what initially seemed a disaster), turned to success when Lemmy formed Motörhead (named after "Motorhead", the last song Lemmy wrote for Hawkwind; and an apt title, "Motorhead" is a slang term for a speed-freak- which Lem most certainly was- in contrast to the more sedate drug habits of Hawkwind). Motörhead would go on to major success, including a number one UK album with *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith*. Despite some ups and downs over the course of a lengthy career, Motörhead's success would certainly eclipse Hawkwind's; Motörhead's influence on heavy metal cannot be underestimated.

I must share Lemmy's quote on the hypocrisy of his sacking: "If I'd been caught with acid, their guys would have rallied around me. I think even if I'd been doing heroin, it would have been better for them. The whole hippie subculture was so fucking two-faced when you get down to it."

The chapter on Jason Everman, formerly of Nirvana and Soundgarden, is particularly outstanding. Jason paid for the recording of Bleach, and it's not hard to think of an element of his being used by band and label here. I quote the author: "This meant that Everman had been thrown out of not one, but two of the biggest bands in the 1990s- a unique level of achievement in the world of rejection."

It seems that both bands found Jason's silences unnerving. What is it about silence that so unnerves so many people? Silence never hurt anyone; but harsh words often do.

Jason went on to become a decorated Green Beret; and after that, a graduate in philosophy from Columbia University. He had become a warrior poet.

*The Rejects* is brilliantly written, superbly researched, and sympathetically handled; after all, we're all human. Rejection hurts... something people all too often forget in our inhuman post-internet world.

By the way, I must share the following fantastic and inspiring quote from *The Rejects*:

"There's something called a "Sex Pistols Moment", originating from two gigs the Pistols played at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall in 1976. Watching those performances was a wee Morrissey, Ian Curtis, Tony Wilson, The Buzzcocks, and Mark E. Smith, and each of them went home alight with inspiration. A Sex Pistols moment is when you find the thing you love and realise anything is possible. In his book *I Swear I Was There: Sex Pistols, Manchester and the Gig That Changed the World*, author David Nolan wrote that without this gig, there would be no Buzzcocks, Magazine, Joy Division, New Order, Factory records, indie scene... no The Fall, The Smiths, Hacienda, Madchester, Happy Mondays or Oasis... Maybe there would be no Nirvana."

I, for one, am glad we don't live in a world where that gig never happened!

Steve Earles

## AROUND THE WORLD WITH CHI PIG



**Chris Walter**  
GFY Press

January 10, 2024

*Around the World with Mr. Chi Pig* details the long and precipitous journey of legendary punk innovators SNFU; but the main purpose of this book is to highlight

the late Chi Pig's unbridled love affair with art. Described by Walter as a "Tasmanian devil on speed", the singer also had an artistic side, creating an abundance of remarkable and curious works when his declining health made touring unfeasible. Chi's simple but instantly familiar style offered fans a visual glimpse into his "strange and terrible mind" and underlined his love for everything offbeat and obscure. With Chris Walter as his curator and Vancouver's finest dive bar Pub 340 as his de facto art studio, Chi Pig produced hundreds of canvasses that now hang proudly on walls around the world. I'm lucky enough to own one of those pieces.

The part that sings loudest to me was the enduring friendship between Chris and Chi. From their first meeting in 1981, to their long struggles with addiction, their lives run parallel through the pages, both unaware that they would eventually collaborate to present Chi's final artistic statement. Strewn with iconic photos and colourful art on every page, this huge magazine-shaped book is a time capsule into the wild world of Mr. Chi Pig, the unconventional and eccentric genius we will never forget.

Lori Meyers

## DRAGONS AND SERPENTS: Earth



**Mysteries and the Time of Change**  
**Stefan Broennte**  
Earthdancer Books  
February 27, 2024

In his seminal book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a huge influence on both the *Mad Max* and *Star Wars*

sagas, author Joseph Campbell talks about the significance of dragons in various cultures and lands around the world. The idea of dragons is indeed deeply buried in our subconscious minds, and this is explained in great detail in this well-researched, well-written, and engaging work.

*Dragons and Serpents* covers a great many dragon myths and legends; but, moreover, it delves into the spiritual significance of dragons. To me, dragons represent nobility and freedom. I have a dragon tattoo; so, it must have long struck a chord with me.

It's no coincidence that the energy believed to flow along ley lines is called the Earth Serpent.

Dragons are also a part of mainstream culture- witness the popularity of *Game of Thrones* and, my personal favourite dragon film, *Reign of Fire*, filmed in my native Ireland.

Overall, this is a very uplifting book, and just what we need right now.

Steve Earles

## DIRT IN THE SKY



**Max Booth III, Daniel Sheen, Ira Rat, Xavier Garcia**  
Filthy Loot

January 1, 2023

This excellent micro horror collection has a lot to say with only 4 authors contributing.

Max Booth III lives

up to his hype as his story kicks it off as unequivocally the strongest and weirdest tale within. *You are my Neighbor* is told from a young man, Dennis' perspective. He has a chaotic home life with Oxy addicted parents. Anger boils within as he sees a 'perfect' family next door. He begins by breaking their basement window and feels how insignificant this is, as it gets fixed right away. Like a moth to a flame, he continues to detonate his rage on the family next door until one day he finds himself in their basement discovering a secret that changes his life forever.

Xavier Garcia's urban horror *Shoegaze Blisters* is another curious one where Selena is supposed to meet her ex Terrance at a gig who never shows. It turns out to be something culty she cannot escape from. Ira Rat's *That Constant Irritation* is one I've read already in another collection that is so graceful with the most unsightly footing - so poetic with his words. Lastly Daniel Sheen's *Predator* grips you right from the start. Your forehead creases with empathy for the central character, a child who looses his best friend. Kidnapped, we believe until we are thoroughly kicked with the ending.

Demonika

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# GLOBAL STREET ART



**AU: Do you have any other talents or hobbies?**

**BDSM:** I play guitar, drums, or bass in a couple bands. I'm pretty much a lifelong martial artist.



**AU: Do you have an internet presence?**

**BDSM:** No. Keep it in the streets. Some people probably post my shit on Instagram, but nothing official. I used to trade flicks with a dude

back in the day I met in the pen pal section of Can Control magazine (I think, anyway). That was dope. Mags were the only real exposure at the time other than trading flicks. Small publications like CC, On the Go, and Fat Cap were tough to find in stores, and were totally coveted by graffiti heads



at the time. Video graff was dope too. Low budget, low production value VHS tapes. Grainy footage of kids

wrecking trains, walls, etc. Mostly bombing, and mostly East Coast cats. There were interviews, too, if memory serves me.

**AU: Who or what inspires you?**

**BDSM:** I'm inspired by a lot of old illustrators. Robert Fawcett and Howard Pyle come to mind.



I'm also a fan of '80s comic books. Guys like Jorge Zaffino. He was considered pretty avant-garde at the time. I like old school sign-painting stuff and custom hand-lettering for hot rods. That's a lost art.

Graffiti-wise, it's probably pretty obscure. I like this cat from France called Horfee. That dude's work is a trip. Also, there's this kid from Oregon, who is a total unknown, who writes BLEACH.

He mainly paints the inside walls of abandoned houses. His work is super grim, but quirky. He's definitely original, though. Of course, there are a few legends in the mix. SPone, Cap MPC, Tracy 168, Iz the Wiz, COPE2, Cost and Revs, Risk, and Giant. I have a lot of tattoos, so I'm definitely interested in tattoo art, too.



**AU: What kind of music do you listen to when you're getting creative?**

**BDSM:** It runs the gamut, from first wave black metal (Bathory, Hellhammer, Sodom, Venom), to old school hip hop (Mobb Deep, Wu Tang, Nas).

**AU: What is street art to you? What makes it so powerful?**

**BDSM:** Even cave people wrote on walls. It's in us.

**AU: Can you describe your process?**

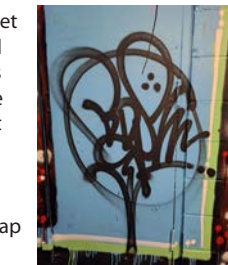
**BDSM:** Process-wise, I go backwards. I lay everything down with my outline color first.

**AU: Any advice for up and coming artists?**

**BDSM:** Don't just focus on existing graffiti styles. Bring other interests

from your life into your work. Graffiti can be an echo chamber, and has been pretty incestuous over the last 50 years. Bring something personal to it. Even if you think it might not be "Graffiti" enough. As far as graffiti the trade craft goes, start with the basics, and move up. Don't go too fast too soon. At its essence, graffiti is about writing your name. Work on your tag and get it solid. You gotta hold your name down. If your handstyles suck then you missed the point.

Once that's solid, get your bubble throws on lock. Keep it basic. After



that, straight letters. Finally, burners. Work that system and you'll get good. Get serious about letter study.

Start to understand basic letter form. All wildstyle is built off understanding those basic forms. Google is great, but get yourself a copy of *Subway Art* by Henry Chalfant. It's the original Bible. Everything you need graffiti-wise is there. Keep physical media alive.

Last, make your black book your bitch. Draw all the time. Even if the drawings suck and you're not

happy with them. Every drawing serves a function to teach you something. Even badly drawn ones. The law of averages alone states the more you do, you're bound to get a few good ones--you can't shortcut the process, though.

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

**BDSM:** No one gets good at something from being good at something already. Whatever you want to do, if the passion is there, then do it. Even if you're no good to start. Do it for long enough, and one day it'll be what you're known for.



## Global Street Art

### Interview with BDSM

By Aeryn Shrapnel

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and where are you from?**

**BDSM:** I write BDSM. Born and raised in Burnaby, British Columbia.

**AU: What do you do for a living?**

**BDSM:** I'm in music distribution, and I'm a professional musician, as well. I also dabble in crime.

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

**BDSM:** Grisly imagery, with satanic themes mixed with whimsical humor and traditional graffiti.

**AU: When did you start?**

**BDSM:** Got hip to graff back in the early '80s. I stole a copy of subway art from the Vancouver public library in '88, which is what really got me started. Before that, I remember seeing the same few guys' tags running in the very early '80s in Vancouver and tried to copy them.

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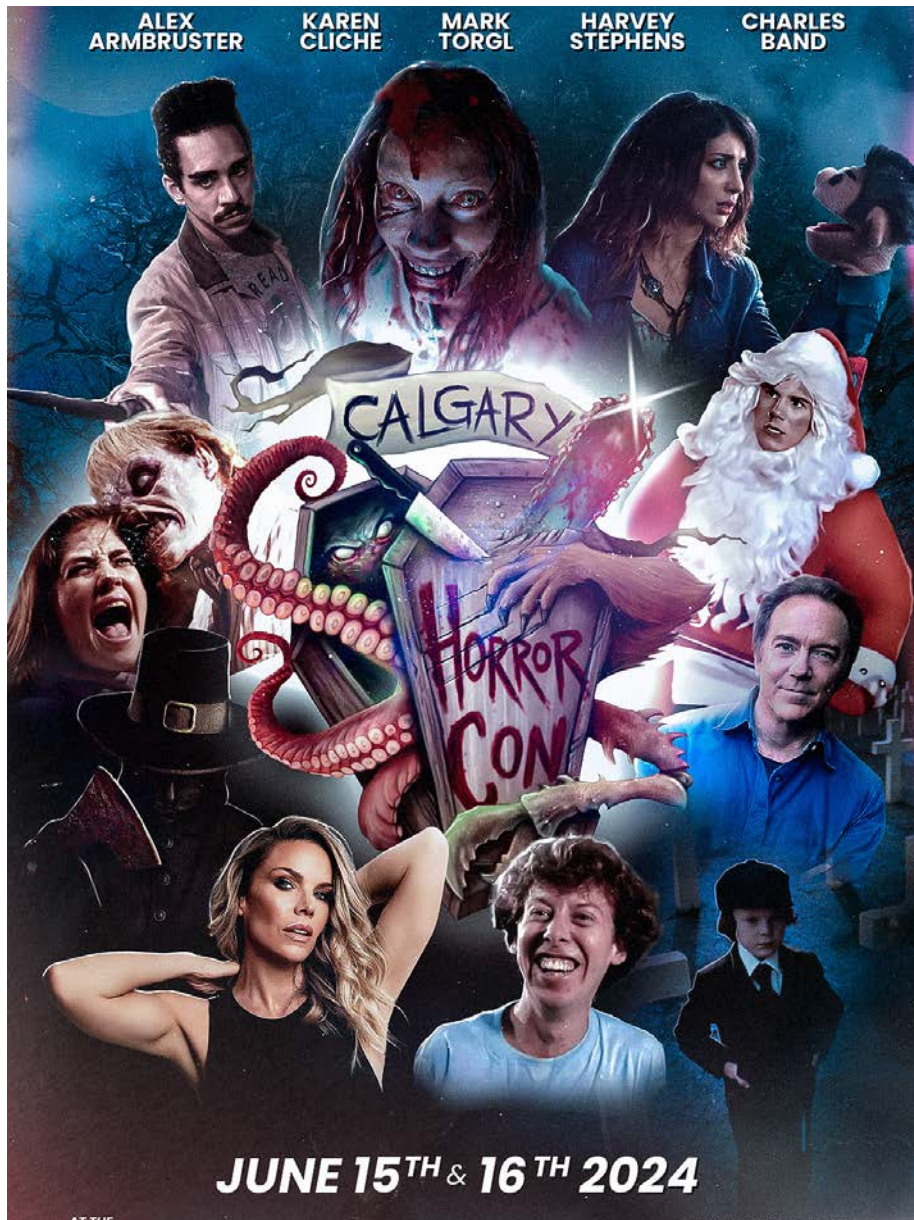
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# COMIC-GEDDON

## Justice League Vs. Godzilla Vs. Kong

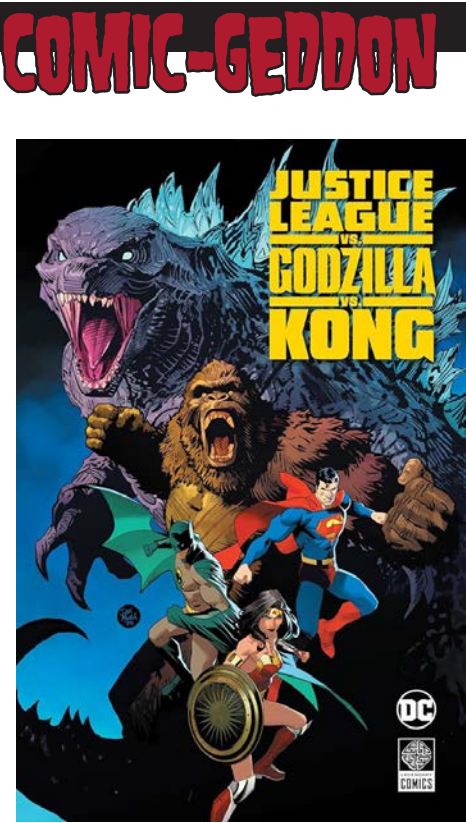
By Ed Sum

The fact that *Justice League Vs. Godzilla Vs. Kong* is a seven-issue comic book miniseries may well have some people feeling confused. Usually, there's four or six in these runs. Had Brian Buccellato been able to write the story without stretching out some subplots too far, it might have ended with five. The idea to pit superheroes with kaijus and a mighty ape is really nothing new when I know about the Shōwa era films; Gojira fought them all, which includes King Caesar, a different furry beast, and Jet Jaguar, who was a superhero of sorts.

The stakes aren't quite the same in this comic book Elseworld, where Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Hawkgirl, et al. meet the King of the Monsters and realise they can't take him out. I'm not as invested when the creators reveal everything is taking place in an alternate reality, and here, the "death" of Superman (again) is hardly a shock. After his fall, it's up to the Justice League to figure out why a Pacific Rim-type rift has formed to invite the MonsterVerse in.

The story that's been offered so far (I've read up to number six at the time of writing, and by the time this review publishes, all seven will be available) reveals that the kaiju were brought to the DC universe for all the wrong reasons. The Toymaker's motives fall flat, and his importance seems to be thrown away in favour of focusing the tale on Lex Luthor.

Overall, while I like Christian Duce's splash pages of the mighty beasts duking it out amongst one another, Brian Buccellato's story has plot holes. The heroes are pretty much useless. And as for the Marvel Comics version of the monster intruding in their universe, my money is on that fond favourite since back then, comics weren't written with the thought of how this will affect various individuals in the long run, in mind. The Avengers fared



better, if I remember correctly.

When Kong is in the title, it's safe to say that somehow, he'll be goaded to wrangle Godzilla home. The sixth issue was a let-down because it seems Supergirl is having a hard time convincing the ape like a certain young girl in Legendary's films. And as for Grodd and his kind trying to honour their self-proclaimed master, that story felt like it came out of nowhere. With only one issue remaining, I hope all the subplots see some closure.

And honestly, I'm not impressed with Lex Luthor's Mechagodzilla. I've seen better designs.

3 Stars out of 5



### Introducing Island FanCon

By Ed Sum

There's a new convention taking place in Langford, British Columbia! Although it's being set up for the local community to enjoy all things fandom related, Lonnie Eckardt hopes Island FanCon will attract people far and wide. After having chaired Northern FanCon, located in Prince George since 2021, and being a devoted attendee for even longer, he'll be bringing what he loves of that show to Southern Vancouver Island!

Among the first guests announced are Hafþór Júlíus Björnsson, best known as Gregor "The Mountain" Clegane from *Game of Thrones*, or Þórhinnr Tooth-Gnasher from *The Northman*! Next up is Emily Swallow, AKA the Armorer in *The Mandalorian*. There's also co-founder of the comedy group *The Kids in the Hall*, Dave Foley; and former UFC Light Heavyweight Champion Forrest Griffin in the names of those announced, so far. The list will keep growing, as every Tuesday on their Facebook page will be another guest announcement; and they're taking in last minute vendors and sponsors, too! It's not too late to get in. According to this organiser, "Because they are familiar with our events, these individuals reached out to us rather than the other way around."

But, as for convincing those living outside the municipality to come, Eckardt's arms are open to welcome them all like the master of ceremonies that he is. He said that those unable to make it this year can mark their calendars and plan for the next one. And since he knows a lot of young families live in this area, there's a market to tap into. He's glad to say kids under 12 can attend Island FanCon for free. Westshore Rebels wanted to make this happen and is this event's latest sponsor.

As for corporate support, sometimes knowing just how well this brand has done in one city can mean continued help in another. Harris Dodge is a car dealership supporting both events. That's because one of the general managers, Kyle Bachman, also made the move from Prince George to Langford. He recognises the value of what Island FanCon represents and was quick to jump on board once again.

Another name is a condo company known as Viking Sales. It's easy to read between the lines to realise these groups simply want this community to grow. In order to make this event viable for the long term, Eckardt said he hopes to work with the city council on a regular, ongoing basis. They were very helpful in helping him set up the inaugural event, and everything is to do what's best for the municipality. He also stated there's no plan on taking it out, either.

And unlike the big events where they oversell, he's smart to recognize the limits. He stated, "We also want Island FanCon to not feel like it's too crowded or jam-packed. So, we're actually limiting ticket sales."

"In the future, we will be limited by capacity and people's willingness and desire to join. While our location does not have the same square footage that Fan Expo Calgary or Vancouver has, we want to deliver an experience that'll be formidable."

[islandfancon.ca](http://islandfancon.ca)

[@islandfancon](https://www.instagram.com/islandfancon)



# LUNCHMEAT

## VHS is a Friend of the Reaper!

By Josh Schafer

There seems to be an inextricable marriage between horror and metal. The aesthetics and values meld together like something along the line of proverbial beer and nachos. So, when my brother from another mother showed up in my basement last weekend with the UK heavy metal awesomeness that is Grim Reaper – *Fear No Evil* on LP, you know it was time to kick back a few cold ones, spin that slab o’ sinister sounds and bang our heads, air guitar in hand.

But what fell out of the LP sleeve as I was unloading the record was something I couldn’t have been more delighted to find: a Grim Reaper giveaway sponsored by Media Home Entertainment where you could not only win bitchin’ Grim Reaper goodies, but get this: the grand prize winner scored an RCA VLT 250 VCR and a collection of five, count ‘em FIVE, Media VHS tapes including *Night Of The Living Dead*, *Halloween*, *The Dorm That Dripped Blood*, *Blood Beach* and, of course, *Reefer Madness* to round it all out. Of course, we all know why...

And even if you didn’t win the grand prize, hell, you could still score some kick-ass goodies: Second prize is your very own set of the five killer

Media video titles listed above, Third prize is a Grim Reaper baseball jersey (!?) and fourth prize is a Grim Reaper head band. DAMN! I want ALL of this stuff!

Winning the contest seemed easy enough. All you needed to do was answer the six questions listed on the back of the insert and send it to the Media Entertainment contest trolls. The questions are too damn easy if you’re any kind of self-respecting metalhead, but thoroughly entertaining (check out the scan!) My favorite multiple choice inquiry is #5! My answer: Who cares! But the absolute best must have been the responses to question #6. This is where the answers will be judged on “creativity, originality, imagination, and writing skills.” Man, if we could only see the collection of answers for this one!



Reefer Madness stepped out back for... erm... "a smoke break"

And without a doubt, you know Grim Reaper did not miss out on an opportunity to thrust their branded wares out to their rabid fan base. And how righteous it is! A bunch of shirts, a photo pack, a fan club, and let’s not forget that baseball jersey and headband! DAMN! I STILL want ALL this stuff!

Bitchin’ ups to Grim Reaper not only for having one of the coolest names in the history of UK heavy metal, but also for teaming up with Media Home Entertainment and creating one of the most kick-ass video-related contests I’ve seen to date. When I get my time machine, I’m going straight back to 1985 and entering Reaper Madness with this twenty word answer:



Who’s gonna pay for this window, Reaper Dude? Damn... nice bike, though...

“Travel the land in my airbrushed Reaper metal van, gather my metal brethren and rock those aliens back to planet LAME-ASS!”

Okay, so that’s twenty-one words. But that’s what I’d be doing! How are YOU going to prove that you’re a rock ‘n’ roll maniac and save the world from a non-metal existence!?

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

**Hansom Jeff**

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## NoiseAgonyMayhem Nanaimo Record/Culture Shop and Record Label

Interview by AU  
Editorial

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?**

**Dave Read:** This is Dave Read, in addition to being the co-proprietor of the freshly opened NoiseAgonyMayhem record store/rock shop here in beautiful Nanaimo, BC, I also am one half of psychedelic punk weirdos Caveman & The Banshee, and I've also played with Nanaimo psych rock juggernaut Moths & Locusts and psychedelic doom duo Anunnaki, amongst many other musical projects. I've also promoted countless shows here in Nanaimo over the years.

**AU: What is NoiseAgonyMayhem, and how did it come to be?**

**DR:** NoiseAgonyMayhem is currently a record store/rock shop that opened back in November 2023, specializing in heavy metal, punk rock and psych rock culture. It is also a record label that has

been in operation since 2007, releasing music by Nanaimo locals such as Moths & Locusts, Anunnaki, Behaviors, Caveman & The Banshee, Massirraytorr and Colliding Canyons, as well as from such luminaries as Krautrock legend Damo Suzuki (Can), UK 60s psychedelic wizard Twink (Pink Fairies/Tomorrow), Ian Blurton's C'Mon and jazz mainstay Ornette Coleman, as well as mid-80s OG Toronto kult thrash metal band Death Militia. The imprint was initially used on Death Militia gig fliers back in the 80s, was rebooted in 2007 with the start of the label, and it only seemed fitting to use the name when we opened the store. We started out selling metal records at records shows around Vancouver Island and the lower mainland, and with so many customers asking where the store was, it seemed like a no-brainer to open a store once we found the right spot. We prefer to remain a brick & mortar store rather than engaging in e-commerce, it's so expensive to mail order music these

days, and it's more fun to shop in-store anyways. Our logo was created by the incredible Lord Of The Logos, Christophe Szpajdel (he's done logos for Emperor, Borknagar, Enthroned and literally thousands more bands), and we now have it emblazoned on our store signage for all to see.

**AU: What do you sell there?**



## RECORD SHOP PROFILE

**DR:** We sell metal, punk and psych rock records, CDs, tapes, patches, flags, rock paraphernalia, DVDs, books, artwork, toys, and more. Coming this spring, we'll be carrying band t-shirts as well. Our vinyl selection is a combination of classic and cult titles, with a healthy stock of Japanese pressings as well.

**AU: What makes your record store unique?**

**DR:** We're more of an old-school record store— nothing trendy in here, it's strictly for the heads. You'll always hear good music in the store too, no elevator music, haha. We love to talk music, heads welcome!

**AU: What is your mission statement as a business?**

**DR:** To make metal/punk/psych culture available to anyone who wants to find it. The best feeling for us is when some kid walks out with a copy of *Deathcrush*, the first Damned record, or Les Rallizes Dénudés or something like that, and knowing we helped get them started down a lifelong path.

**AU: Any special events planned in the near future?**

**DR:** The store is currently only 300 sq feet, but we haven't ruled out doing in-stores, haha! We are



also co-hosting the 8th Annual Nanaimo Record Show on April 21st 2024.

**AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?**

**DR:** Bands, please bring your merch by if/when you are in Nanaimo, especially patches, vinyl and CDs; we love to support independent artists!

**AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?**

**DR:** Don't eat the yellow snow.

**AU: Where can people find your shop?**

**DR:** We are located at 183 Commercial Street

in downtown Nanaimo. Our label releases are available on Bandcamp, and our store inventory is on Discogs (it's cheaper to come into the store, or contacting us outside of Discogs). We are typically open Wednesday through Saturday, 12 pm - 5 pm (6 pm on Friday).

[discogs.com/seller/NoiseAgonyMayhem](https://discogs.com/seller/NoiseAgonyMayhem)  
[noiseagonymayhem.bandcamp](https://noiseagonymayhem.bandcamp.com)

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## Vigilant Guitars

Interview by AU Editorial

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

**Trevor Woodland:** My name is Trevor Woodland, I have been building custom electric guitars under the brand Vigilant since 2015. I've also been the head organizer of the Victoria Guitar Show for three years and am soon to be the owner of Guitars Plus as of April 1, 2024.

I think I'm best known as someone who doesn't shy away from a challenge. Whether that be building a guitar with cutting edge technologies, organizing an annual public event or buying a retail business, I enjoy the excitement that you find in uncharted waters.



**AU: What is the origin story of Vigilant Guitars?**

**TW:** Vigilant Guitars started in 2015 with a few tools, a shed and contract to build an electric guitar. One deal led to another and I slowly bought better tools, upgraded my shed and taught myself how to hone new skills and become a better guitar builder. I built my name

shipping handmade guitars all over the world: Italy, Denmark, Japan, Australia, the US and throughout Canada just to name a few. With each contract I added more skills to my roster and as of 2024, I've built or modified over 300 guitars. I try to use as many Canadian made parts, woods and sub-

contractors as possible to give clients a truly Canadian guitar and spread the wealth among our local trades and artists.

**AU: What makes Vigilant unique?**

**TW:** Vigilant became unique among other guitar brands because we were willing to show every step of our process. We are fortunate to have a healthy supply of fallers, sawyers and other trades that could take a tree down, process it into workable timber and collaborate to see an instrument come to fruition. In many cases I can tell a customer the exact tree stump their guitar

came from before they head on tour to play in front of thousands of people. Many companies shy away from showing their process under the guise of "trade secrets" but Vigilant's approach to transparency gave us a unique advantage and a dedicated fanbase for which we are very grateful. You can check out Vigilant's build

history through our Instagram or [vigilantguitars.com](http://vigilantguitars.com)

**AU: You'll be taking over Guitars Plus in Victoria, BC. What will that look like?**

**TW:** I've been shopping at Guitars Plus ever since I moved to Victoria. It has been the one shop that always has a steady flow of vintage, rare,

and quality inventory and a healthy supply of parts for repairs and modifications. I felt that it's a place that has always welcomed unique people and strived to tell their stories through music. I'm hoping I can continue that direction as the new owner and bring my experience with content creation to bring in more unique inventory and showcase the talent that Victoria has through more media and collaboration.

**AU: What kind of changes will be happening?**

**TW:** Kurt Phillips, the most recent owner, has done a fantastic job of cultivating a warm and inviting guitar shop. I'm not planning to change much of the brick and mortar appearance. However, I'm hoping to bring the Guitars Plus experience online with more media and a web store. This will give us the ability to ship consigned instruments across the world and bring in new, used, and vintage instruments to supply local musicians. In the long term, we will be looking into using the space for more interactions with bands, performers, interviews, and workshops all as a possibility.

**AU: Are you going to keep building guitars?**

**TW:** Guitar building will take a bit of a backseat while we get the store up and running but I'm planning to have custom Vigilant guitars available at Guitars Plus. Ideally, we will have a few necks and bodies roughly shaped and customers can come to Guitars Plus to customize their instrument like one might get a fine suit at a tailor. We also have a great network of local luthiers we are planning to showcase at Guitars Plus so folks have the option to work with a local builder, pickup winder or finisher if their project leans outside of Vigilant's wheelhouse.

**AU: What can you tell us about the guitar show coming up?**



**TW:** This year's Victoria Guitar Show will be Saturday April 27th at the Victoria Conference Center with free admission open to the public from 10am-3pm. There is a great roster of builders coming from around Vancouver and the Island with both returning and first time exhibitors

bringing their best foot forward. There will be prize giveaways, raffles, lots of promotions, and the show is a great place to try, buy, and demo boutique guitars and meet the builders who bring it all together.

Check out [victoriaguitarshow.com](http://victoriaguitarshow.com) for details and to see this year's very talented roster of exhibitors.

**AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?**

**TW:** I've always found it wise to let your work speak over your words; let the rubber hit the road and ignore the backseat drivers. I'm looking forward to this new adventure where I can support the immense talent

that Victoria has and use Guitars Plus, Vigilant Guitars and the Victoria Guitar Show as platforms to grow our community of artists.

[victoriaguitarshow.com](http://victoriaguitarshow.com)  
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## In Praise of Non-Moms

By CJ Sleez

With Mother's Day here again, it got me thinking about how we still collectively glorify the act of childbearing. The concept that continuing your name and bloodline is the most noble and meaningful thing that a woman can hope to accomplish in life all seems a bit "Dark Ages" to me.

Last August, Toronto's Exclaim! Magazine (a media outlet that I usually consider to be pretty cool), published an article about artists who have children that began, "What could be more creative than literally bringing a new human life into existence?" You'll have to picture me rolling my eyes now. This is the kind of ridiculous statement I hear all the time, and it's symptomatic of a society that essentially still believes the most significant contribution a woman can make to the world is to successfully breed. If an article instead opened with something like, "Being childfree is the best gift you can give the world," people would probably lose their shit.

We've all heard bad cliches like, "You'll never truly understand love until you have a child," or "Being a mom is the hardest job in the world." I mean, sure, being a good mom can't be easy. In fact, I'm willing to bet that no one ever said it was! But that was the commitment you made when you chose to become one, wasn't it? Here's a thought: if we're handing out annual accolades for responsibly following through on our own life decisions, why not also take a day to give props to the women who chose something different? The ones defying the traditional expectations set upon them by society and deciding instead to live in a way that they see as better; better for them and in many ways, better for the rest of us.

This year, let's flip the script; and in addition to Mother's Day, let's also take some time and give a shout out to all the Non-Moms. You know, the "child-free" by choice ladies who will never ruin your flight with their screaming baby, or make

# CALL ME CRAZY



your line-up at the DMV even more tedious because their toddler is bored and throwing a tantrum.

But putting aside the occasional social irritant of other people's annoying children, having kids costs a lot— and it costs us all. The more children the average household has, the more funding is needed for fundamental stuff like education, health care, and public resources; and, of course, there's a greater stress on the infrastructure and the environment. I mean, we all know that overpopulation is a major problem that's only getting worse, yet we keep reproducing at a rate that the planet's natural resources cannot possibly sustain.

So, let's cheers to the unsung heroines who help to hold steady the scales of humanity's heavy weight. Thank you, Non-Moms, for not adding yet another coal to the raging inferno; for not bringing yet more consumers into an environment that's already on a countdown clock to global devastation. Mad respect to all the ladies who are keeping their bodies tight and baggage light! Call me crazy, but I believe we need to reshape what we value as being women's main contribution to our society and consider that in some cases, less may be more.

*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.*

## 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 SEVEN

#### TOUR TIP NUMBER 37



#### HAVE A DESIGNATED LOADER

It's Punk Jenga.  
The smaller the vehicle,  
the more important this becomes.

#### TOUR TIP NUMBER 38



#### SWAP STORIES, SWAP INFO, SWAP CONTACTS

The more you share,  
the stronger the Scene gets.

#### TOUR TIP NUMBER 39



#### NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF COFFEE

Tours are powered by a combination  
of sugar, adrenaline and caffeine.

#### TOUR TIP NUMBER 40



#### MAKE AN EXTRA EFFORT TO WELCOME 'NON-PUNKS'

...whether they're a kid at their first show  
or the anchor of Global National.

#### TOUR TIP NUMBER 41



#### SLEEP WHEREVER YOU CAN WHENEVER YOU CAN

#### TOUR TIP NUMBER 42



#### TAKE THE TIME TO BE A TOURIST.

Remember, it's a vacation,  
not a job. Relax.

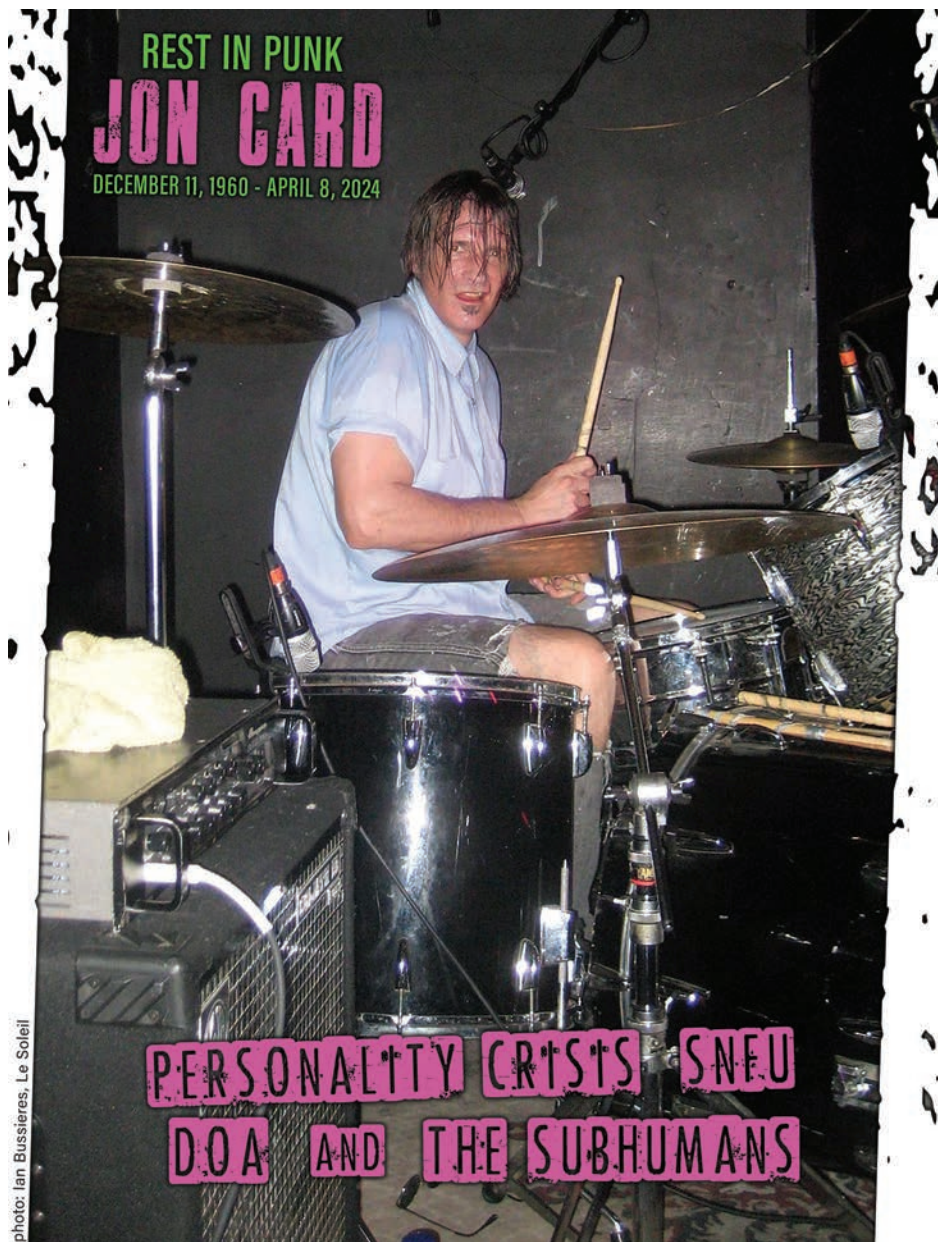
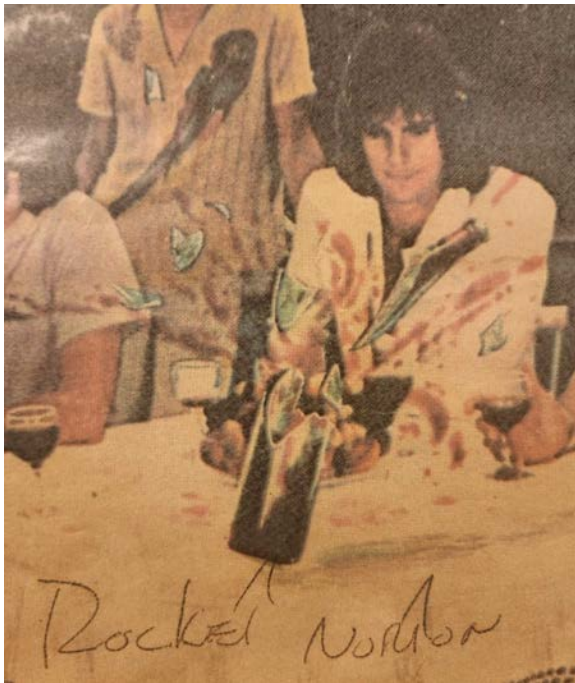


photo: Ian Bussieres, Le Soleil

Find more tips and other stuff on our facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/ripcordzpunk> and instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/ripcordz.punk>



He started drumming in his teens and in the late 60s, he was in the Seeds of Time, a groovy rock 'n' roll band from Vancouver, where he lived. Rocket eventually found himself in the legendary Canadian band Prism. In 1977 through 1980, he played on four award-winning albums, *Prism*, *See Forever Eyes*, *Armageddon* and *Young and Restless*, when their singer Ron Tabak sadly died from a bike accident. Rocket played on one more LP and left permanently. He became an author of five novels. The first being *Rocket Norton Lost in Space*.

He coached baseball as a passion and continued to drum in various fun-time groups and after his cancer diagnosis, he performed several shows called Fuck Cancer up until recently.

My first big concert in Victoria turned out to be Prism's last show on Dec 5th 1980, with the classic lineup. In 1990 on my 23rd birthday, I was hired to set up for Prism in Vancouver and it was an honor to meet and work with

## R.I.P. Rocket Norton

By Clark "Super" Mantei

Sadly passed away from cancer on April 5th 2024. He was 73 years Young and Restless.



Rocket. I last met him when Prism released their final LP in 2006 and Rocket was as kind as ever to us all.

Peaceful wishes to all his friends and family. He was a great human and stellar drummer. Just drop the needle on "Spaceship Superstar" or "Armageddon" or "Night to Remember", and you'll feel his prowess. R.I.Space Rocket. Until we meet again.



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## R.I.P. Louis Gossett Jr.

May 27, 1936 - March 29, 2024

One of the Best Film Dads You Could Ever Have

By Steve Saunders

Louis Gossett Jr. was my dad's age, which makes sense, as he was kind of like a Film Dad for me— or, more like a Movie Uncle, as my dad is a unique, amazing human being who I'm proud to have as my father. But let's just call him a Film Dad, because that's what he is to me, really. As a kid in the late '70s and '80s, I distinctly remember my dad talking about *The Deep* (1977), which we enjoyed together a couple years later. That was my first exposure to the incredible on-screen talent of Lou Gossett Jr. Not too long after that, I watched *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982) with my dad, and I was probably the only kid in my class to do so. We loved it. It's a terrific film, and it certainly deserved all the accolades it received (Gossett was the first African-American to win an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor— they should have given him two!). But Gossett was the lynchpin for that movie, make no mistake. Of course, my dad and I saw *Jaws 3-D* (1983) together, in a theatre in Belgium. Was it high cinema? No. But I was something like eight years old, so it was high cinema to me. And wouldn't

you know it, there was Lou Gossett Jr., holding that weird film together.

The film that truly stuck with me— to this very day— is *Enemy Mine* (1985), which is one of those things that truly changed my life and how I view movies in general. Even covered in make-up and prosthetics, Gossett soared in that performance as Jeriba Shigan; he should have won an Oscar for it. This time-period also marks when I started mostly ignoring movie critics. In 1986, I was stoked to see *Iron Eagle*. Not because it was said to be some sort of masterpiece, but because Lou Gossett Jr. was starring in it. *Firewalker* (1986) was a blast, and he was very welcome in the now mostly forgotten *The Punisher* (1989).

Look, we'll be here all day with me yapping about Lou Gossett Jr.'s filmography. He was— no, is— a legend. This man worked his ass off giving solid, outstanding performance after solid, outstanding performance. My dad and I are both gutted by his passing. Most of the Lou Gossett Jr. films I've seen, I've seen with my father. It really felt like he was a part of our extended family in some bizarre way. Mr. Gossett, sir, you were one-of-a-kind and a hell of a human being. You will be dearly missed. Thank you for being such a wonderful Film Dad.

Photo courtesy of AMPAS

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