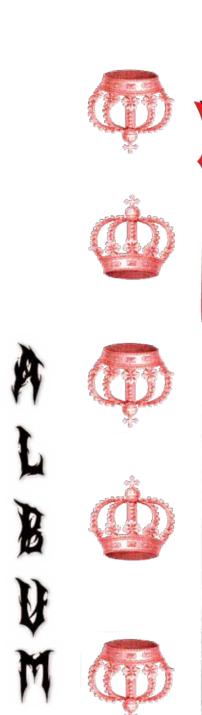


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- Delegare (AB)

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**13/12** - Mantrey (WE)

11/14 - Thomas Day (M) **11/15** - Lendon ((11))

OR/16 - Compress (CCC) **12/17** – Toronio ((17))







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#### COVER ART - Chris Shary @chrisshary With Special Thanks to Todd Huber at PRB

Writers - Ira Hunter, Dan Potter, Ed Sum, Vince D'Amato, Chuck Andrews, Jason Flower, Dustin Jak, Clark Mantei, Jason Lamb, Erik Lindholm, Jon Asher, Raymond MacKay, Claude Montreuil, Billy Hopeless, Demonika, Ryan Dyer, John Carlow, Brydon Parker, Ty Stranglehold, Steve Earles, Aeryn Shrapnel, Sheldon Byer, Daryl Baryl, Brian Clement, B.A. Johnston, Jimmy Miller, Hatchetface, Liam Crocker, Nick Gibas, Daniel Van Netten, Jerry Cordeiro, Scarlett Rose Stewart, Dustin Jak, Kip Phillips. Bowser Tabarnak, Lily Fawn, Rae Chatten, Jamo Lorswal, Nick Workman, Peter Illing, Malcolm Quick, Josh Schafer, Mike Croy, Laurie Storrie, Johnny Bandura, Mike F., Cody "No Teeth" Cook, Sadie 'Miss.Gory' Rae, Hank Pattison, Ary Vogelaar, Alia Synesthesia, Dennis Lightheart, Brains Desfosses, Ross Hansen. Dre Calderon, Peter Barret, Ted Smith, Glenn Mendoza, Ted Gilbert, Jean-François Gosselin, Luke B., Mayo, Chris Walter

**Photographers** - John Carlow, Colin Smith. Scott Fraser. Aeryn Shrapnel, David Jacklin, Crazy Robdog, Ira Hunter, Brydon Parker, Ryan Dyer, Bev Davies, Don Denton, Darren Ho, Rae Chatten, J Kiernan, Dana Zuk, JJ Seager Tamilia, Genevieve Packer, Dan Michener, Kirchner, Alan Snodgrass, Ryan Mumby, Jason Wiener, T.Koelman-C.Ursu, Rowena Brown, Brett Classen Brandynn Leigh, Emberlit Ethos Photography, Jean-François Gosselin

**Comic Artists** – Danziggy by Gareth Gaudin Coffeetration by Dick Kaupf Backboard Cartoons by Vaudville Demon Lancegoiter by Cam Hayden Anonymous Cubed by Hank Pattison & Zac Zemantic The Fart Slide Comics - Keenan Poloncsak Ghouls Night Out - Jamie MacPherson Wrong Spell Comicks - N.M.B

## Crossword - Paul Gott

Transcription – Stevinator, Tara Zamalynski, Luke Higgs Interns - Apply to info@absoluteunderground.ca Logo Design - Dirty Donny

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## Published by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground PO Box 48076, Victoria, BC V8Z 7H5 info@absoluteunderground.ca www.absoluteunderground.tv

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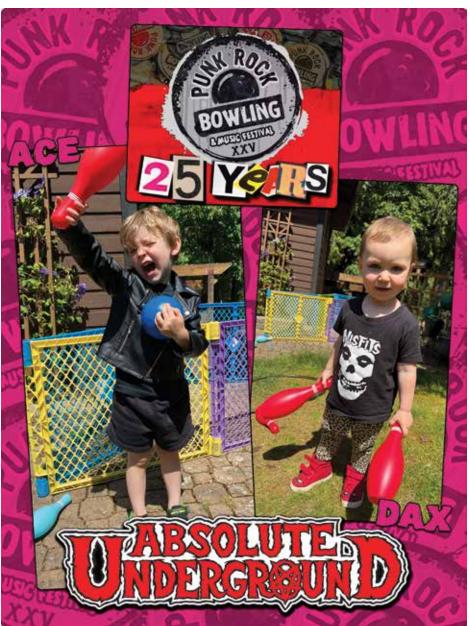
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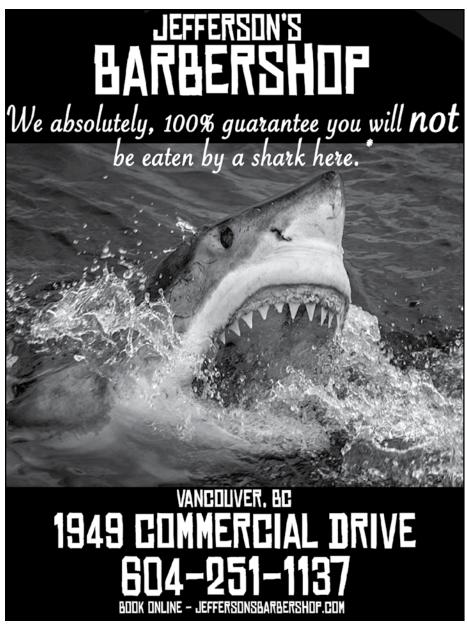




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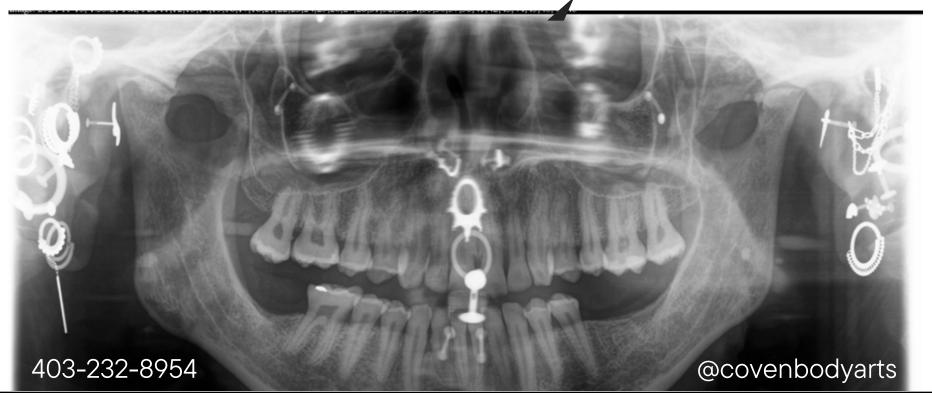
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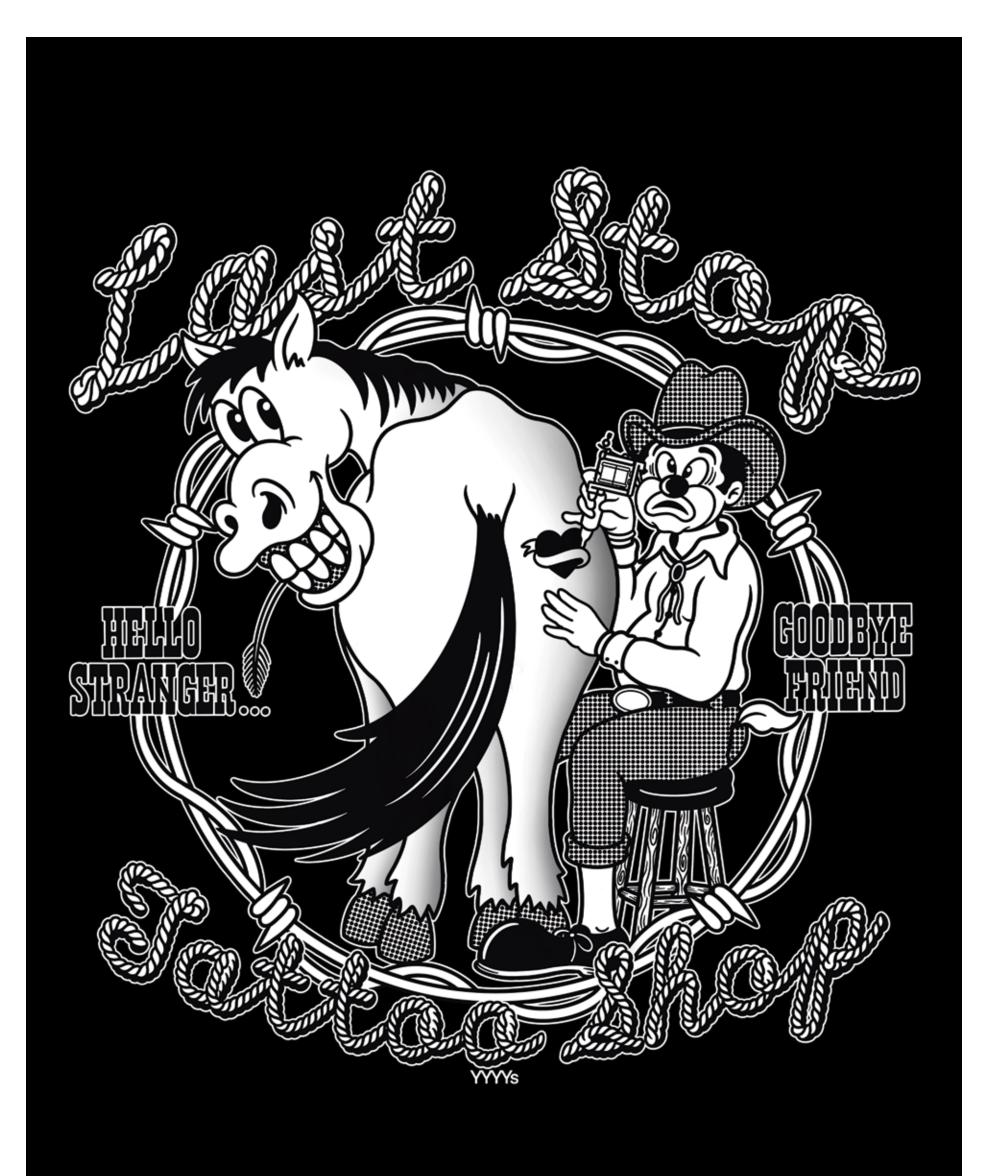
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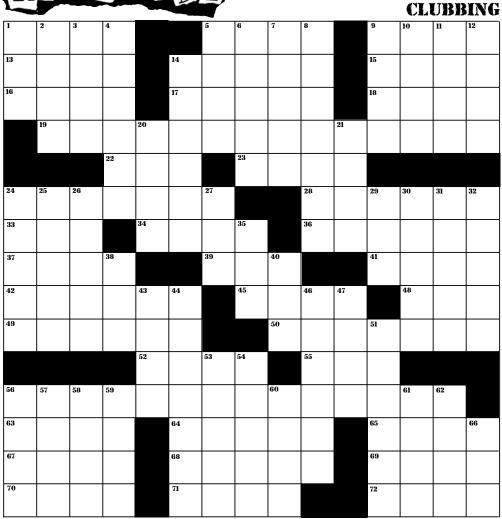
## ACROSS

- 1. Toddler
- 5. Record collectors
- 9. Lion or Argo supporter
- 13. Singer of "99 Luftballons"
- 14. Blackwood who replaced her sister Jen in The Creepshow
- 15. Actress Lena
- 16. Member of a celtic group
- 17. Overact
- 18. Word with golf or skirt
- 19. Minneapolis label and zine
- **22.** Org. at all public pools (abbr.)
- 23. Tesla's compact SUV
- 24. Disney film and Montreal fest
- 28. Senora in Des Moines
- 33. Ringo's son
- **34.** Description for some powerful CPU cooling systems
- 36. Salon specialty
- 37. "Hi!" in Jamaica
- **39.** Common screen type
- 41. "See ya!" in Southampton
- 42. Amateur
- **45.** Western classic "3:10 to
- 48. Minor Threat's MacKaye
- 49. Reaches a place
- 50. Distillers album
- **52.** Make a snake safe (or a vampire)
- 55. In baseball they're red or white
- 56. Specials album
- **63.** "My feelings" online
- **64.** Nuts
- **65.** " Runnings"
- 67. Big tune for Gob
- 68. " \_ won" : Harlan Ellison
- **69.** Alt-digest The Reader
- 70. Least clothed
- 71. Gets organized again
- 72. Suit accessory

## DOWN

- 1. Finance giant
- 2. Moderate tide
- **3.** A bad batter, on occasion
- 4. Eagle's claws
- 5. Not 65-across
- Someone who has your vote
- Supporter who is too supportive?
- Cramps song with a "Woo, ee, ah, ah!" chorus





**CROSSWORD NO. 115** 

**SUMMER. 2025** 

- 9. Nirvana's "\_ As You Are"
- 10. Half a Manitoba town
- 11. One of the Mod Squad
- Mae (US mortgage Ass.)
- 14. Playground staple
- 20. Some amateur fiction
- **21.** Pitt swords & sandals film
- **24.** Sniffin' Glue or RearGarde, for example
- **25.** British actor Egerton
- **26.** Two of
- 27. The sun
- 29. Ottawa band \_ For Days
- \_sentence (two years **30.** minus a day, for example)
- 31. "Don't like it.'
- **32.** You may go out with this **35.** Disney's "Fun and \_\_\_\_\_ H
- \_ Free"
- **38.** 10" records, often

- **40.** Wetlands conservation grp.
- **43.** A front 540 in gymnastics
- 44. "Free alcohol!"
- 46. Wanders in the West
- **47.** Streak words
- **51.** Triangle in a tree trunk
- **53.** Unauthorized Pokemon, for ex.
- **54.** Sisters of Mercy, for ex.
- **56.** Throw the lawyer out
- **57.** It may test the waters
- **58.** Powerful arms (abbr.)
- **59.** When tripled, a song by The Damned
- **60.** Orange sodas
- **61.** Indian flatbread
- **62.** Tops
- 66. Beginning of many club names in Quebec



THE DEATH... AND REBURDH OF CONTENANT

# BLASPHEME



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## APRECORDS.CA

## NEW MUSIC SHOWCASE TALKS W/ TOXIC AVENGER BAND



TOXIC AVENGER BAND

INTERVIEW BY DENNIS LIGHTHEART

ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND: WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

T.A: ERIC ON THE GUITAR JER ON BASS (FOUR-STRING) KYLE CRUSHING THE DRUMS BEEGEE ON VOCALS

AU: GIVE US A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUR BAND.

T.A: MUSIC WAS COMPOSED BY BEEGEE IN DEC 2024. JER TOOK THE LEAD IN 2025 TO START THE BAND UP IMMEDIATELY GRABBING ERIC FOR GUITAR MEAN WHILE BEEGEE TRYING TO FIT IN THE RIGHT DRUMMER KYLE CAME IN AND TOOK THE SPOT AND CRUSHED IT OUT!

AU: DESCRIBE TOXIC AVENGER'S SOUND, IF POSSIBLE

T.A:80S 90S HARDCORE VIBED PUNKROCK

AU: HAVE YOU RELEASED ANY SONGS RECENTLY?

T.A: YES WE HAVE MUSIC OUT ON ALL PLATFORMS OUR EP (KINGS & PAWNS) RELEASED MAY 9TH WITH APRECORDS.CA PLUS WE HAVE 2 OTHERS ON TOXICAVENGERBAND.BANDCAMP.COM

AU: WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR BEST SONGS ABOUT?

T.A: ABOUT BEING A COMMUNITY AND STICKING TOGETHER NO MATTER WHAT

AU: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR NAME?

T.A: "BEEGEE" I JUST LOVED THE MOVIE TOXIC AVENGER GROWING UP THE BIKE PART STILL STICKS IN MY HEAD IT'S INSANE! JUST THOUGHT IT WOULD STICK GREAT TO OUR BAND SOUND. I TRIED OTHER PROJECTS NO RELEASES WITH THIS NAME NOTHING STUCK!

AU: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START PLAYING MUSIC.

T.A: "BEEGEE" HONESTLY MY BEST FRIEND MIKE WOULD WALK OVER WITH HIS GUITAR OFTEN SO I JUST STARTED LEARNING GUITAR FROM HIM THEN NEXT WE NO IT WE ARE JAMMING "IN OUR GARAGE WERE WE FEEL SAFE PLAYING OUR MUSIC AT A MEDIUM PACE" WEEZER LOL!

AU:ANY MESSAGE YOU WANT TO SPREAD WITH YOUR MUSIC

T.A: "JER & BEEGEE" LET'S STICK TOGETHER AS A SCENE! UNITY BUILDS A SCENE ITS ALL ABOUT BANDS SUPPORTING BANDS!

AU: ANY LOCAL BANDS YOU WANT TO SHOUT OUT OR SHARE THE STAGE WITH IN THE FUTURE?

T.A: SHOUT OUT TO THE KAPUTNIKS THEY ALWAYS CRUSH OUT A KILLER SET SHOUT OUT TO SLIGHTLY INTOXICATED PLUS OUR CLOSE AP FAM JAM IRON MOOSE, LIP CRUNCH, THE DORKIES, PRIOR CONVICTIONS, MENTAL INFLICTION

AU:FAVORITE VENUE TO PLAY, OR VENUE YOU HOPE TO PLAY?

T.A: BEEGEE - WAREHOUSE CONCERT HALL & CAMP CATARACT WITH THE BANGER SHOWS DEFINITELY CHECK OUT TAPSBREWHOUSE

KYLE - THE BOVINE & CAMP CATARACT BECAUSE IT'S LIKE HOME BASE

JER - EL MOCOMBO IS UP THERE, PLAYING WARPED TOUR WAS OBVIOUSLY DOPE AS HELL

ERIC - FAVOURITE VENUE IS WHEREVER THE NEXT SHOW IS PUBS, CLUBS, HOUSE SHOWS I LOVE EM ALL ALONG WITH WAREHOUSE & CAMP CATARACT

AU: WHERE DO YOU SEE TA IN 5 YEAR'S

T.A: TANNING IN OUR SPEEDOS ON A BEACH!

AU:WHERE CAN WE FIND TOXIC AVENGER MUSIC AND PAGES

T.A: APRECORDS.CA, TOXICAVENGERBAND.BANDGAMP.COM FB AND IG PLUS ON ALL PLATFORMS



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> WESTERN CANADA

> > 2025

7.11: VICTORIA

7.12: VANCOUVER

7.13: KAMLOOPS

7:15 EDMONTON

7.16: CALGARY

7.17: KELOWNA



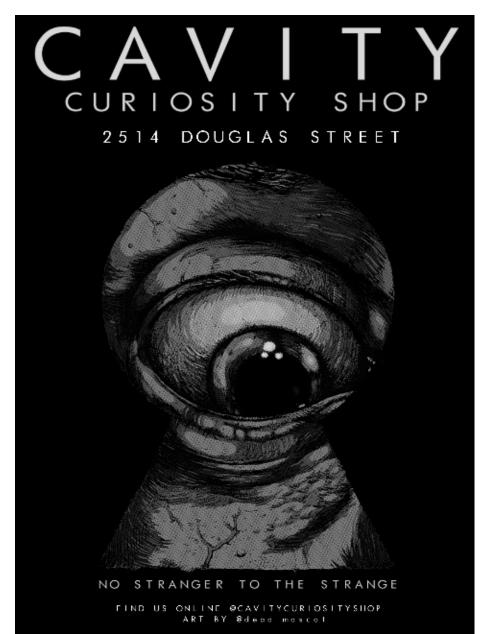
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## White Collar

Interview by John **Carlow** 

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves

White Collar: T3 - bass

Peggy Strap On - drums Loosey C - vocals

Lewis - guitar

AU: Tell us how and when White Collar came about?

WC: Demo was written and recorded by Lewis and Loosey 2022 in a rat-infested basement in Kamloops. Peggy Strap On and T3 joined in 2023 in a mould

infested basement in Vic. We were planning to have them in the group from the beginning, so it all came together when we got here.

AU: What's behind the name?

**WC:** It's the name of a song by a band (not ours).

AU: Three best words to describe your sound?

WC: Angry lunch lady – Arielle.

AU: What are your songs about?

**WC:** Satirizing misplaced hope.

PROUDLY SERVING YOU SINCE

AU: What do you like most about playing live?

WC: Going to Biryani Palace after the gig

AU: What kind of feedback do you want to hear after someone has seen you for the first time?

WC: None; that's rude, mind your own business.

AU: Shout outs to those who have helped put your recordings together.

**WC:** Will Killingsworth, Cody @ Circle A, Tom at Static

AU: Your thoughts on the Victoria hardcore scene? WC: It's great how many young kids come out and go

off. There are great bands and better people right now. Shout out especially to these three kids in Duncan who always travel out to everything

## AU: What bands have your attention right now?

WC: Assistert Sjølmord from Oslo, Wanted from Massachusetts, G\*U\*N\*N\* from OC, Sexyy Red from Missouri.

#### AU: What do you want people to know?

Lewis: All 78 songs of Öwannibalism are worth your

Peggy Strap On: My test came back negative.

Loosey: If your adjusted net family income is under \$90,000 a year you will have access to the Canada dental plan late May.

T3: I lied about camping in Port Alberni after the show, I drove back at 3 am.

HOME OF THE NOTORIOUS P.I.G

## AU: Whereabouts do folks find you?

WC: Instagram, Bandcamp, or Biryani Palace, mate.

IG: @whitecollarbanned

whitecollarbanned.bandcamp.com

Photography by Finding Charlotte Photography

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## Crüzer

## **By Asher Thrasher**

AU: Welcome to Absolute Underground Magazine. Who are you, and what do you do?

Crüzer: We are Crüzer, a thrash metal band from Vancouver, Canada, featuring:

Eric Willmott - lead vocals Ben Higgins - guitar

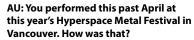
Nico Miraftab - quitar Esteban Lleuful - bass Alex Gain - drums

blue dot, or the furthest, iciest reaches of the Milky Way galaxy, Crüzer's muzik can be enjoyed anywhere in the universe!

#### AU: You released a new EP, Look at the Skies. What can you tell us about it?

Crüzer: Five rip-roaring tracks of THRASH, in varying flavours! We love to offer a veritable buffet, a smorgasbord if you will, of cosmic delights for our listeners, whether it be classic melodic speed metal ("Pit Vyper"), a more hardcore/crossover approach ("Born to Rise") or a full-on thrashing assault ("I Need Thrash"), we've got a little something for everyone, all tied together by the stylings of our vocal chameleon,

Crüzer: Absolutely! The less mainstream niche genres always tend towards



are even making a comeback!

Crüzer: It was amazing!! A few of us have attended and even played at the festival before in other bands. Joey, Colton, and all those guys are great and good at what they do! And of course, it was great to see so many old and new faces moshing to our tunes!

physical media, a niche interest in itself! (Fancy

Several of our members have quite the physical

collection themselves, spanning across vinyl, CD,

and even cassette. Speaking of, we hear THOSE

that!)

## AU: Are there plans for a full-length album

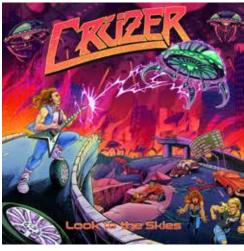
Crüzer: We're probably going to do another EP first. We've been rehearsing some new material (and even playing some of it live), and we have about five or six solid tracks that we're really digging! After that, a full-length has definitely been in talks, but only time will tell. Either way, we will definitely want to work with our producer/engineer, Michael Kraushaar, again! He was so fast and easy to work with; it's insane how much we got accomplished in just a few days

#### AU: Any tour plans this year or upcoming shows?

**Crüzer:** We have a gig coming up at the Astoria in late June, with several more shows pending for July, August, and October. We're still sorting out the dates, so be sure to follow us and stay tuned for details!

After that, we'll probably cool down for a bit while we polish our new tunes. One thing we definitely want to do in the future is play shows outside our comfort zone. Playing in Vancouver is great, but if you REALLY wanna build a fanbase, the key is to

go out on the road and play the shows in rural BC, Alberta, etc. (maybe not the States though haha), then tell them you're coming back. Then, a year or two later, you actually come back and play again. Do that, and you'll win a headbanger's heart forever. Take notes, kids!



## AU: Anything else you'd like to add for our

Crüzer: EARTHLINGS!! FOLLOW AND WORSHIP YOUR ALIEN OVERLORDS!!!

You can find us @cruzermuzik on Twitter. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Bluesky! Follow us on Spotify and Bandcamp; keep up to date on show and merch announcements and listen to Look to the Skies until your ears fall off and your brain explodes from space dust poisoning!!! DO IT, EARTHLINGS!!!

cruzermuzik.carrd.co



#### AU: You describe your music as cosmic thrash. What is that?

Crüzer: Crüzer makes thrash that is OUTTA THIS WORLD! The whole reason behind our name is that it's "muzik to cruze to," whether that be down the streets of your hometown on this pale Eric Willmott.

AU: You plan to release the EP on CD later this year. Do you find metalheads are still loyal to getting physical copies of metal (Vinyl, CD, Cassette)?



## Woodhawk

#### Interview by Asher Thrasher

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

**Turner:** Thanks for having me! Always a pleasure. My name is Turner and I play guitar and sing in Woodhawk from Calgary, AB. We're a three-piece rock band. Been around for 11 years now!

AU: The band has a new album out on June 6th, Love Finds a Way. What can you tell us about your third studio album?

Turner: Yeah, we do! We are all so excited to get

this new album out. It took us a long time to really get it together. We had a few songs shortly after *Violent Nature* was released, and then we just hit a very long pause. With Covid and all, we didn't see each other as much. As well as Mike had his first child so he moved into dad mode. We all just kind of took a much need step back from the band for a while. Then in about 2022, we really just put the pedal to metal and started writing like crazy and jamming as much as we could. Really set our sights on making a new album. It was such a journey for us to get here, that we really wanted to kind of tell that story. The struggles, the wins, the losses. I feel like this is easily the most

'Woodhawk' album yet.

## AU: What does the title of the album, *Love Finds a Way*, mean to you?

**Turner:** It was this attachment we felt to the situation and each other. We did step away from this band for a while and we found our way back to each other. Stronger and closer than ever. We felt like we really let this love of ours find a way and keep us together. I think we are closer than we ever were and get along and laugh more than ever with each other.

#### AU: You commented that Love Finds a Way is

"a journey through the last couple of years." How were the last few years for the band, and how has the band evolved on this record from your previous albums?

Turner: We went through a few more hardships in between Violent Nature and Love Finds a Way. From deaths, to divorces, losses in general. Even with Covid, we all changed. This album became so therapeutic for us and we made sure to really put it all on our

sleeves. I think we can tell a story through this album of the good, the bad and the ugly.

## AU: What would you like fans to take away from this new album's listening experience?

**Turner:** It's a rocking album. There are still big riffs and choruses that we love playing. We really wanted to make a big, dark and heavy, honest album. I think we got exactly what we wanted. I know we are all so happy with it. We weren't afraid to take a few more risks on this album and do what we had to, to really make each song the best it could be. Tuning guitars differently,

CHENCY CHANGE

lots of acoustic or piano. Just whatever the songs needed to make them the best.

## AU: You were unable to tour 2019's Violent Nature, due to Covid times, will you be hitting the road to support Love Finds a Way?

**Turner:** Yeah, that was super bummer. We had all been pretty much ready to quit our jobs and hit the road for months. We cancelled all our plans about a week before Covid really took off, but we are stoked that we will be making up that lost tour later this year. We'll be announcing a

Canadian tour pretty quick here. We'll be going from Vancouver to Quebec and back over a few weeks later in August/ September!

AU: What can fans expect to see from Woodhawk at this year's Loud as Hell Festival in Drumheller, AB?

Turner: We always try to play a high-energy rock show. Whether it's in a packed basement club, or an afternoon at a sweet metal festival in Drumheller. We're more on the rock side than the rest

of the bands and I love that. 30 minutes of rocking riffs.

## AU: Anything else you'd like to add for our readers?

**Turner:** Thanks so so much for all your support. 11 years as a band is wild to us and we are so stoked to still have so much love and support. Thanks for allowing us to keep doing it. Be nice to each other. There is enough negativity and assholes in the world, just be kind. If we are coming to a city near you, come say hey!

woodhawk.ca







## **Famous Strangers**

#### Interview by Demonika

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to, and what is your role in Famous Strangers?

Jeff Kittlitz, guitar. Amanda Kiernan, vocalist. Braden Sustrik, bass. Brian "Beej" Beej, drums.

## AU: Who is Famous Strangers made up of? How did you get together?

Amanda Kiernan is our vocalist. She comes from a history of high-energy, emotionally driven metal such as The Order of Chaos and Into Eternity.

Braden Sustrik holds down the low end on bass and has deep roots in hardcore (Compromise, White Walls, Ignatius). Brought in to help with a cover project, which eventually led to the formation of a short-lived band called The Rogue Species with Jeff and Beej. When that ran its course, the three of them kept jamming, knowing they were onto something real.

Jeff Kittlitz plays guitar. Jeff and Beej were in a band called This Is War, and after it split, the two of them kept writing. Some of those early riffs and songs became the foundation of what Famous Strangers is now.

Brian "Beej" Beej is on drums and brings precision, power, and experience from every corner of the local scene.

We've all been in the trenches, done the gigs, burned through vans and late nights. It's the band we were all working toward without knowing it.

#### AU: Who are the influences for the sound?



There is definitely a strong metal foundation, but it's not limited to that. For Jeff, the influence of Judas Priest, Devin Townsend, Gojira, and Tool shows up heavily in his writing.

Beej brings a mix of classic and metal inspiration, from Zeppelin to Dio. It is not just about distortion and speed. It's about groove, weight, and soul. Braden adds another flavor with a hardcore and emo background, but also draws from early influences like BB King and blues-based rhythm.

A big influence on the sound also comes from Jeff's dad, Darrell Kittlitz, who played in a band called The Young Ones back in the sixties and seventies. That legacy shows up in the way Jeff plays and approaches guitar.

#### AU: Tell us about your latest release.

Our latest release is a new single called "LSC". The song was inspired by the mating behavior of black widow spiders. They lure in their partners, mate, and then kill them. It is brutal, raw, and strangely honest, which made it feel like the perfect metaphor for certain kinds of relationships.

Beneath all that, the song is really about female strength, survival, and emotional control. It tells the story from the perspective of a hybrid woman-spider, reclaiming power and making no apologies. It is one of the most intense and meaningful tracks we have written to date.

"LSC" comes out on June 3, with pre-saves available starting May 20. It was recorded by Phil Anderson and Jeff Kittlitz, mixed by Joe Wanasek and mastered by Maor Applebaum.

We are also releasing a full official video for the song on June 12. We are proud of this one and excited to finally get it out into the world.

AU: How does Famous Strangers fit into the Edmonton/Alberta metal/ Hard Rock/Alternative scene? We do not think we fully fit into any one scene, and we are good with that. Some of our songs definitely line up with the heavier side of things in Edmonton, but not all of them. We are not trying to mold ourselves to fit one genre or one expectation.

We write based on how we feel. If it comes out heavy, it is heavy. If it comes out soft, bluesy, weird, or emotional, then that is what it is. We are more interested in connecting with people than checking genre boxes. Our goal is to be part of all the scenes, not just one.

## AU: What does the writing process look like for Famous Strangers?

Our writing process is fully collaborative and always starts with riff. Jeff or Beej will bring something into the room, and the two of them work out the rhythm and structure. Once that foundation is there, Braden comes in on bass. He usually just needs the key and a general idea, and then he builds his parts based on feel. His creativity brings a whole new layer to the music.

Once a rough structure is in place, Amanda starts working on melody and lyrics. As soon as vocals are added, everything shifts. The rest of us adjust our parts around that, refining and rewriting as needed. It is a constant back and forth, and everyone is involved in shaping the final version of the song.

## AU: What are some goals you seek for the

Getting out of Canada and playing to new crowds is definitely on the list.

Whether it is in a sweaty club or a big stage, we want people to walk away feeling connected to something real.

Most of all, we want to keep playing music with our best friends. No backup plans. No part-time. Just music, full-time, for life.

#### AU: What can guests expect at a live show?

We like to keep things fun, weird, and full of energy. People can expect connection — we mean it when we say you're going to feel



something. The energy is real, the crowd is part of it, and we leave everything on that stage.

#### AU: Any upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

Yes, we've got a stacked summer lined starting with Decimate MetalFest in Millet, Alberta on Friday, June 13. Right after that, we're hitting the road with Grave Mass for shows in Calgary and the Armstrong MetalFest. Then Loud As Hell in Drumheller later this summer. To stay up to date on all future announcements, make sure to follow us on Bandsintown or our website.

#### AU: Anything else you'd like to say?

Thank you. To everyone who's been following us, supporting us, streaming the music, showing up at shows — we love you. You are fucking epic.

## famousstrangersband.com

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# THE STARLITE ROOM

**June. 19** – Bridge City Sinners with Dr. Draw & The Strange Parade & Night Howl

June. 23 - CREEPING DEATH & KRUELTY with UPON STONE & DYING REMAINS

July. 5 – AMIGO THE DEVIL

**July. 6** - John Garcia performs KYUSS with Telekinetik Yeti and OiiO

**July. 7** - Born of Osiris with The Browning & Convictions

**July. 10** – Virvum with Stortregn & Vaegon

**July. 15** – EROSION with Altered Dead, Everythingyoueverloved & Autolysis

**July. 19** - Anomalyptic EP Release with Tyrants Demise, Tidebringer & Warwolf



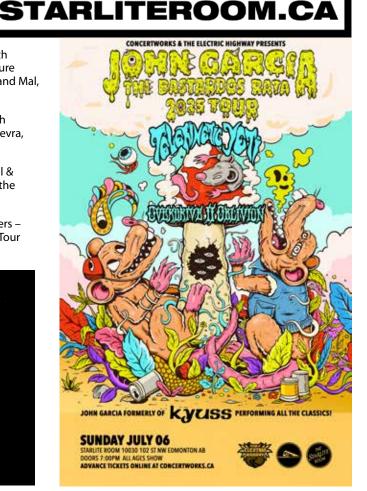
July. 25 - Kings Rot with Tekarra, Sorguinazia, Pure Love Eternal Peace, Grand Mal, Stone Crown

**July. 26** – Misyrion with Crown of Madness, Kelevra, Phorboda

**July. 26** – Power Of Evil & Autolysis with Red 40, the 20/20's & Cumfetti

**July. 30** – Nick Shoulders – The Universe of Battle Tour









## The Man Who Sold Lubbock By Peter Illing

In the United States of recorded music, Texas has remained an outlier– a breeding ground without confines. I'd like to think that without Texas, there'd be no Beatles. While I mostly mean this tongue-in-cheek, there is a certain amount of validity to the statement. Looking into The Crickets would be a good start for those curiosities I've piqued.

In West Texas, close to nowhere and far from everything, a town named Lubbock has been the birthplace of world-renowned musicians like The Maines Family, Buddy Holly, Terry Allen, Joe Ely and his band Flatlanders, and the subject of this article, a man by the name of Carl Odem. Though from Lubbock, Odem was in a different orbit than his counterparts. Que Paso, Canada– today I bring you the arc of the bizarre, unconventional godfather of outsider music "Legendary Stardust"

Cowboy," or Ledge for short.

You know that one radio hit you detest, you're over it and there is no one who can change your mind that it's a good song? For some reason though, the ear worm is set, and you catch vourself humming the melody. Ledge may fit that bill- his music blends cowpoke, rock n' roll, country, punk and psychobilly to create cosmic twang masterpieces.

Ledge started his career performing around Lubbock wherever a stage presented itself. Though I would say stage is a loose term

to use here, as he would perform in parking lots, his school's steps, and on top of his car. A fast realization for Ledge was the slow-moving town was not going to provide much opportunity to catapult his music career, he had to take his art and mould the opportunity himself.

He left Texas, and thus the path to cult stardom began. Major record label Mercury Records caught wind of Ledge's single "Paralyzed" after it gained regional notoriety and signed him. A young David Bowie was on their roster at this time. Mercury Records gifted Ledge's singles to Bowie, which led Bowie to adopt "Stardust" from Ledge for his persona Ziggy Stardust.

Ledge's music spawned fans in many obscure places where you wouldn't expect to hear it. "Paralyzed" was used by NASA to wake up its space crew from sleep. Though this was shortlived, as the crews were said to be distracted for the rest of the day. NBC's Rowan & Martin's Laugh-



In comedy show booked Ledge as a musical guest, but the performance ended abruptly when Ledge ran off to the side stage, upset after the cast infiltrated his space and performance.

Present day, there is a documentary in production by Jeff Feuerzeig. Ledge's music remains in rotation, and he has dedicated cult fans around the world. Occasionally, Ledge busts out his guitar and 10-gallon hat to find a stage and perform. Consider us lucky to exist at the same time as the Legendary Stardust Cowboy.

The following are interviews of prolific individuals who, like me, love Legendary Stardust Cowboy.

## **ROB WEINER**

## Absolute Underground: Who are you and what is your role in academia and music?

Rob Weiner: I am Rob Weiner, the popular culture librarian at Texas Tech University. I also teach classes on popular culture for the Honors College. I worked for ten years in the local music industry and have been to over 1,000 concerts in my lifetime. If anything, my role in preserving music is through my articles about Lubbock/West Texas music and being in four documentaries on West Texas/Lubbock music.

## AU: Tell me about why you would like to see Ledge in the Lubbock Walk of Fame?

**RW:** The Ledge is important culturally, and being from Lubbock, he deserves to be in the West Texas/Lubbock Walk of Fame. He was on the national television program *Laugh-In*, which was amazing for the time (late 1960s). "Paralyzed" was a minor hit, so yes, The Ledge's contributions to Lubbock/West Texas Music are notable despite its outsider status.

## AU: What is something you would want people to know about Ledge?

**RW:** The Ledge's music is like a roller coaster. It goes up and down and the thrill never lets up. The Ledge sounds like nothing else on Earth. He is a true creative genius. He is the originator of "cow



punk" rock. His music is part of the fabric of artists who did their music on their own terms without commercial considerations. The Ledge belongs in the same category as other important outsider music artists like Frank Zappa, Throbbing Gristle, Nurse with Wound, Syd Barrett, Daevid Allen and

## LLYOD MAINES

Gong, Tommy Hancock (also from Lubbock), and

so many others who deserve a mention.

AU: Who are you, and what is your role in Texas recorded music?

**Lloyd Maines:** Lloyd Maines, musician and music producer.

AU: Ledge's cult stardom has a unique trajectory starting as a young man in Lubbock, where you're also from, did y'all's paths ever cross?

**LM:** I never knew about Norman, until my early 20s, and I've never met him. He's about eight years older than me. When I finally heard "Paralyzed", I thought it was interesting. Sort of hilarious, especially when I found out that T-Bone Burnett produced it and played drums on it.

#### AU: Did growing up in Lubbock influence Legendary Stardust Cowboy's music and his artistic vision? What was the response to Ledge's music around town?

LM: Norman was way ahead of his time. He would have had more of an impact nowadays. Lubbock gave him no attention at all. Over the last few years, I've suggested him for consideration for induction into the Buddy Holly Walk of Fame. No response. The powers that be, just don't get it. Their loss. I regret not meeting Norman. I did meet his mom; she was very nice.

Thank you, Lloyd and Rob, for y'all's time. Keep on loving and listening, @yoyallpeter

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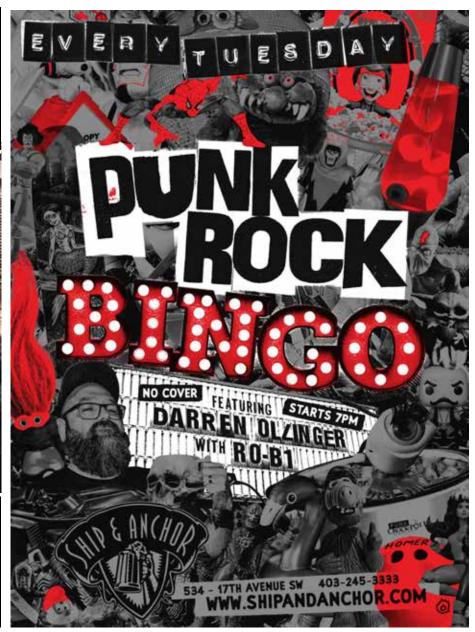
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# A Deep Dive into the Rivers of Nihil

Interview by Alia Synesthesia

Absolute Underground: How do you spend your downtime between the shows? Do you do any record shopping or check out local food?

**Andy Thomas:** Yeah, I like to try whatever good food is around. A bunch of the guys in the band and I also like to go to the gym, so we pass the

time doing that. I just got out of the sauna not too long ago. I like to try local beer and stuff like that, but record shopping is not really my thing. I think Brody, our other guitar player, would be more into that.

## AU: And what's your favourite go-to beer type?

**AT:** I like Belgian trappist beers, but you don't find them everywhere. If I'm going to a local brewery, I try to get a good pilsner. It's always kinda hard to miss, you know?

AU: Rivers Of Nihil has a self-titled album that came out on May 30th, and both singles ("Water & Time" and "House of Light") really stood out to me. What are some of your musical influences for this album?

AT: If you asked every one of us, it would probably be a different answer. My musical influences are kind of boring because they haven't really changed over time. I listen to Metallica, Pantera, Black Sabbath, Opeth, Meshuggah. I also like Sigur Rós, and a lot of Steven Wilson's stuff.

## AU: Music videos for both singles seem connected and tell some kind of story. What's the story about and who wrote it?

AT: Adam Biggs writes all of our lyrics, and he's really the creative force behind any of the conceptual stuff. I know that the music videos were intended to tell a story, but backwards. So, I guess I could give you that clue.

## AU: What do you think about meet and greets? Some musicians enjoy these, others— hate them. What do you think?

AT: I'm kind of neutral. If that's something someone enjoys, they don't mind paying for it, and they show up— then I'm gonna do my best to make sure they have a good time. I'm thankful that there are people who want to have a meet and greet with us. The other day, we did our first one ever, and it was cool. We were just hanging out, talking, and making it a nice experience for people. I remember doing that myself when I was younger: I went to a Gojira and Meshuggah meet and greet, and I was really excited to be there. When it comes to bands being critical of meet and greets, I think one of the problems with society these days is people lack the ability to just say, "not my thing," and leave it alone.

## AU: Do you have any pre-show rituals?

AT: I warm up my voice and guitar. I might drink a beer or two, but I wouldn't say I have any specific rituals. Sometimes I still get a bit of stage fright, so if I happen to feel anxious, I do some breathing exercises to calm down, but I haven't done this in a while

## AU: Is there any specific show memory that stands out to you as particularly

**AT:** Yeah, it was 2022, and on my birthday, we played ArcTanGent, a festival in England. I just remember seeing the crowd of 10,000 people, and it was a really cool way to celebrate. So that one definitely sticks out for me.

## AU: Touring can be stressful, and not everyone handles that type of lifestyle well. Some bands find it easy, others— challenging. Where do you stand on that spectrum?

AT: Man, that's a tough question to answer. I mean, it's kind of how life is: there are times where it's super difficult, and times when it's super easy, there are times when it's super fun, and others— when it's not, and you just want to go home. Touring juxtaposes moments of extreme boredom with the most fun you could ever have. Do I deal with it well? I think so. I am generally fun and pretty even-keeled, I don't flip out or lose my cool. But yeah, touring is a complex thing to tackle, and every day is different. Your attitude depends on so many variables: where you are, what's going on at home, is your family all right? That can change everything. But I mean, at the end of the day, you're lucky to do it. I'm lucky to do it. We're creating experiences that some people never get, and others would kill for. I'm lucky to be doing what I'm doing and I try to remember that at all times.

## Catch Rivers of Nihil on tour - June 21st at Fairmount in Montreal and June 22 at Lee's Palace in Toronto.

IG: @riversofnihil

Bandcamp: @riversofnihil.bandcamp.com Spotify: @Rivers of Nihil

Youtube: @Riversofnihilpa



# Gag Order Brantford Punk Legends

**By New Music Showcase** 

Gag Order is a hardcore punk band hailing from Brantford, Ontario. Formed in 2010, the band has undergone various lineup changes over the years, solidifying their presence in the local punk scene. The current lineup comprises

founding member and lead vocalist Chico, Tamilia bassist Glen Grimster, drummer Terry Martin, and guitarist Jeremy Butler.

Drawing inspiration from 1980s hardcore punk, Gag Order has developed a distinctive sound that pays homage to the genre's roots while incorporating their unique flair. Their music is by aggressive guitar riffs, rapid tempos, and raw, unfiltered vocals, reflecting the band's commitment to the hardcore punk ethos.

Gag Order's discography showcases their evolution as a

band and their dedication to the punk genre. Notable releases include:

Refuse To Be Silent (October 5, 2020): This album embodies the band's relentless energy and commitment to voicing societal issues through their music.

Spree Killers Split 12" (October 11, 2020): A collaborative project that highlights Gag Order's versatility and ability to blend seamlessly with other punk acts.

Gag Nasty (October 13, 2020): This release further cements their place in the punk scene, offering tracks that are both hard-hitting and thought-provoking.

In addition to these albums, Gag Order has participated in various split records and compilations, contributing tracks that resonate with their core themes of resistance and authenticity.

Known for their electrifying live shows, Gag Order has performed extensively in venues across Toronto and Hamilton. Their performances are characterized by high energy, audience interaction, and a palpable sense of community. The band members emphasize inclusivity at their shows, creating safe spaces where attendees can express themselves freely. They have been vocal about their zero-tolerance stance on fascism and discrimination, ensuring that their concerts are welcoming to all.

As long-standing figures in Brantford's punk

scene, Gag Order offers insightful reflections on its evolution. They acknowledge the cyclical nature of the scene, noting high points between 1995-2000 and current challenges. The band has expressed concerns about the lack of local venues, which has led them to perform more frequently in neighbouring cities.

Despite these challenges, they remain optimistic about the future, observing a positive shift in youth culture towards individuality and self-

in Brantford's punk perceptions of nor

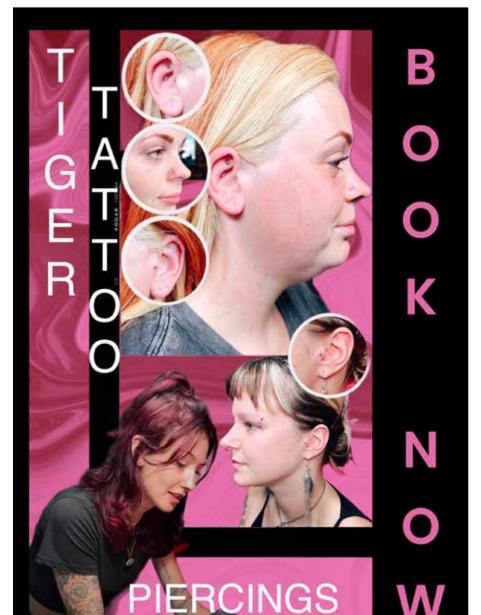
advocating for individuality, resistance against societal norms, and community solidarity. They reject rigid definitions of punk, embracing it as a diverse and inclusive culture. Their music and actions reflect a commitment to smashing perceptions of normalcy and creating spaces

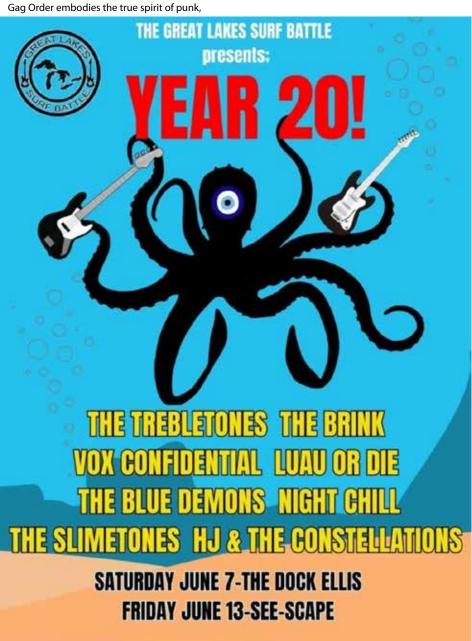
where everyone, regardless of background, can feel safe and accepted.

Gag Order stands as a testament to the enduring power of punk music as a vehicle for expression, resistance, and community building. Through their relentless energy, thought-provoking lyrics, and unwavering commitment to inclusivity, they continue to inspire and invigorate the punk scene in Brantford and beyond.

gagorderpunk@gmail.com IG: @gag\_order\_punx FB: GagOrder1

Photo by JJ Seager Tamilia





## **Marble Ghosts**

#### **Interview by Asher Thrasher**

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

Marble Ghosts: Marble Ghosts is a five-piece (we added a second guitar) based out of Gatineau, Quebec. We are a blend of genres and generations, mixing elements of classic metal, metalcore, grunge and punk. We speak

truth to power through our message, attempting to uplift and empower listeners.

AU: Last time we spoke, you released your debut 2024 self-titled EP. What can you tell us about this next sampler from the band, The Greatest Divide?

MG: Much like the first EP, this one is an eclectic mix. No one song sounds the same, but listeners will definitely notice some similarities as the Marble Ghosts' style slowly cements itself. The soaring, huge choruses are back. At the same time, The Greatest

Divide is definitely more of a metal album, especially with songs like "Osmium" that features, of all things, a solo that starts with a dive bomb. Then, there's "Distance Between" which sounds like it could be an Iron Maiden track until the vocals come in, and then, it becomes something completely different.

AU: I get a very lyrical Rage Against the Machine vibe from your lyrics, they very politically charged and passionate for pointing out the wrongs in Canada and beyond. What do you hope fans take away from your messaging?

MG: We don't see the lyrics as political because

fundamental human rights aren't political. The right to choose what to do with your body as a woman, to the right to choose who to love, and in some cases just the right to exist- none of this should be political, but unfortunately. in a political climate built on cruelty, ignorance and a complete lack of empathy, some will always politicize human rights. We hope that fans feel empowered by the messaging, that fans who are members of marginalized and victimized groups (particularly 2SLGBTQIA+ communities) will be uplifted and feel supported, and that those who



feel powerless to affect any change in the world will be feel a sense of belonging, that they aren't the only ones that care deeply about these issues. That they aren't alone.

AU: Do you think more bands should be making political statements these days? Have you found there are fewer or more bands pointing out the wrongs and need for change in today's bizarro-feeling world?

MG: This is entirely up to them and how they want to present themselves as a band and their message. Art and especially music has always been a form of counter culture, so there is

definitely a place for bands like us and others in this current political environment. Look at Green Day's recent lyric change. The protest

songs in the 1960s and '70s against the Vietnam War. And in the early 2000s, we had both RATM and System of a Down seriously questioning their government. In the metal genre, there aren't a lot of bands doing what we

do. We would like to see more bands standing up for causes that they believe in, but we also understand that for some, music is an escape from reality. There's nothing wrong with using music to write an epic space opera or retell a fantasy saga through melodic metal! Both are valid forms of art.

#### AU: What has been the main motivator of lyrics and music for the band's sound?

MG: The lyrics are a reflection of our reality, where the growing chasm in ideology, politics, beliefs, and morality deepens by the day. Crossing 'The Greatest Divide', which involves reaching a state of mutual understanding, becomes more and more difficult the further individuals move away from each other. Some will choose to breach the gap, finding forgiveness and acceptance, while others might be forced as they grapple with who they are, but also who they want to be. The songs were each inspired by a story where individuals crossed that growing chasm, and in most cases, the result was positive. Whether accepting someone for who they want and need to be, accepting that there is growing inequality between the classes, or that a horrific crime exists in plain sight, all crossed 'The Greatest Divide'.

I don't think our main musical influences have changed (Alice in Chains, Bullet for My Valentine, Metallica, and RHCP). But for the music, it continues to be a shared desire to create together. The guys are very excited to get writing the next album, so this enthusiasm also inspires.

AU: You signed with Self-Made Records/ Earache Digital Distro, how has this partnership been with them for the band?

MG: This has just happened recently, but it has

been a huge positive for the band. The label brings a wealth of experience in the industry and a very handson approach, caring deeply about the overall success of the band without stymying any of the band's creativity or message. In fact, the label is fully on board with the band's advocacy through their message.

AU: Are there plans for a full album in the works from Marble Ghosts?

MG: Yes, the next album we release will be a full-length. Between 8-12 tracks. In the meantime, we have plans to record acoustic versions of a few songs from our first two EPs.

THE GREATEST DIVIDE

#### AU: Any plans for touring this year in Canada or beyond?

MG: Our label and management team are working on this, but since we signed with them around the time of the release, there was nothing planned. We are looking at shows in Montreal, Kingston, and the GTA currently. Currently, we have an all-ages show booked in Carleton Place on June 28 and a show on July 17 at the Dominion Tavern.

#### AU: Anything else you would like to add?

MG: Thank you for giving us an opportunity to talk about the band and the importance of our message to your readers.

marbleghosts.bandcamp.com marbleghosts.com

## BRUTAL ROSS BAY DEATH METAL





**Debt of Nature / Crepitus** *Imminent Purge, Eternal Unrest* 12" LP | 1991-94 | Extreme Death Metal | Victoria, BC, Canada

A true Canadian skullcrusher. **Debt of Nature** was a short-lived **extreme** Insert with story, photos, art, and death metal band from Victoria, BC, 1991-92 - unrivaled in the sheer brutality of their sound as evident on Imminent Purge. Evolving out of their ashes, Crepitus grinded on, releasing **Eternal Unrest** in 1994. Featuring members of Deranged, Malevolence,

10 songs remastered by Brad Boatright. two stickers.

500 copies: 250 on black, 250 on red.

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## **Big Brother**

## By Bowser Tabarnak

## Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?

**Big Brother:** You're corresponding with Toronto's Kings of Crust, The Canuck Rock Steady 7, AKA Big Brother! Big Brother is currently composed of Chris Hardcore on vocals and sometimes guitar, Justin Sinotte shredding that lead guitar, Roman Liu keeping us locked in on second guitar, Cody Lee Rockwell bringing the low end on the bass and Demented Derek, our keeper of time, on the drums

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

BB: Big Brother formed in Spring of 2013 from the ashes of Toronto's "kingpins of skacore" Ghetto Blaster. Since then, we've written and released two LPs, four EPs, and four split albums. We have played countless shows over the last 12 years, opening for legends such as Voodoo Glow Skulls, Morning Glory, Reagan Youth, Doom Scroll... etc. We've toured a good portion of Canada and back, last year we pulled off an undercover West Coast USA tour supporting the homies Corrupt Vision, and we have been so graciously honoured to get the chance to tour across the incredible nation of Japan, twice!

## AU: Does your band have a specific message to give?

**BB:** In these Orwellian times we ask that you speak out! If you see something wrong, say something. Always question authority, but most importantly think

## AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

**BB:** Our sound is a mashup of ska, punk, hardcore, and a bit of metal. Take all these sounds and

throw them in a blender and you get skacore and the sound that is Big Brother.

## AU: What is your creative process like?

**BB:** We try to channel chaos... pure and utter chaos! When you realize that madness is in the Æther all around us, and learn how to harness that, it's really not too difficult to find the inspiration to scream about how fucked up the human race is

## AU: Have you released an album or any songs recently?

**BB:** Our last release was a split album in 2021 with

with the music scene. However, it does seem more inviting and less violent lately, the unity factor is strong right now!

## AU: What are some of the things your band does to give back to the community?

**BB:** Over the past 12 years of being a band we have played many benefit shows to support different causes we agree with, including raising money for a library in Tanzania, cancer benefits, funerals... etc. Members also host shows in Toronto and put up bands on tour in their homes. Our biggest give-back to the community is that

members of the band volunteer to work with Toronto's last FM punk show Equalize x Distort on CIUT to record hardcore punk bands performing live sessions. The bands that participate get a free live session tracking, mixing, mastering and a companion multi-cam video from our media company Rockwell Productions, as well as terrestrial radio airplay! So far this year, two out of three bands have released their sessions as live albums, which we think is pretty rad!

## AU: What are some of your best songs about?

**BB:** Some of our best songs are about the Orwellian present that we live in currently. Tracks like "They're Watching" come from the reality that we are being listened to and targeted by our phones and smart devices for advertising purposes, though that information can be, and is, used for much more sinister

agendas. A track like "Freedom is Slavery" is about societal apathy. The rights that previous generations fought and died for are being stripped from you while you're being distracted. We are just stenographing the fall of society as a whole



Tokyo skacore juggernauts U Can't Say No!. Since then, we have been writing a new album that we hope to have released by the end of 2025.

## AU: In your opinion, what is wrong with the music scene now?

**BB:** Same things that have always been wrong

## AU: Describe your band's live show verbally if you can.

**BB:** Fast paced, loud and ready to riot at any given time.

## AU: What's the music scene like in Toronto these days?

**BB:** The music scene in Toronto feels healthy, while at the same time we have been losing venues at an alarming rate since the covid shutdowns. Toronto's scene tends to suffer a little from so many different bills occurring on the same day at different venues, but it's still good to see live music being prominent in a gentrified and still yet gentrifying city like ours.

## AU: Any shows or tours planned?

**BB:** We have two dates at the end of May with The Filthy Radicals and The Write-Ups for the Filthy Written Tariffs Tour, as well as supporting K-Man and the 45s in London on July 25th. Thanks to Ryot Punx Booking we get to support The Havoc on two nights in August. We are really looking forward to all the shows lined up this year.

## AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

**BB:** We are currently writing songs for our first album since 2021. If you can make it out to the shows this summer, you may just be in the crowd when we're recording early versions of these songs!

## AU: Any final words for our readers?

**BB:** They're watching. Ignorance is strength. War is peace. Freedom is slavery.

## AU: How do people find you online?

**BB:** You can find Big Brother on Spotify and at:

## bigbrother to. band camp. com

IG: @bigbrotherskapunk

YT:@bigbrotherto
FB: BiaBroToronto

for yourself.



## **Deep Cut Film Festival**

## Interview with Founder David Briggs

By Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**David Briggs:** David Briggs, founder of the Deep Cut Film Festival, best known for being cool.

## AU: Tell us about Deep Cut Film Fest. When did it start and what are you all about?

**DB:** Deep Cut is an international all-genre film festival based in Kitchener, Ontario. We're all about supporting local culture and do our best to include films made within the region. Our programming team is always looking for unique perspectives and stories that may not fit into a typical genre. We like to keep it weird, and present the hidden gems, like the deep cut on your favourite record.

#### AU: What inspired you to start a film festival?

**DB:** After I made my first feature, *Black Forest*, I four-walled it across Northern Ontario. We played the finest venues, like the high school theatre in Blind River, and the 'large room' above the Massey Arena. We hit a few more towns as well, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, North Bay, and along the way found a hunger for indie horror.

So, I started the Northern Frights Festival to screen indie horror on an annual basis. That was in Sudbury, then in North Bay. I started the Deep Cut Film Fest about a year or two later, to have an allgenre fest. That ran in Kitchener, which I consider

my third hometown having lived there for a few great years. I ran both consecutively for about six years, then I killed them off to try something new (long story). After missing Deep Cut so much, I gave the fest a cinematic resurrection last summer. Since then, all has felt right in the world (insert joke here).

#### AU: What makes Deep Cut unique?

**DB:** Our goal is simple— to screen cool, entertaining films. Our mission statement runs something like this: This festival is the film equivalent to the deep cut on your fav record. That amazing track that never

makes the airwaves, but to you and yours, out rocks the single. Our selection committee knows where it's at

We also aren't afraid to push things a bit as far as content goes. Having no sponsors or government funding means you don't have to answer to



anyone. It also means you run on empty and sell soda pop for a dollar to supplement pay-what-you-want ticket sales. Seriously though, some help from above would be nice.

But for us to accept a sponsor, that company or product would have to be much loved, welcomed with open hearts throughout the country and represent the best of Canadian values. Yes, Banff Ice, we're talking to you.

AU: What kind of films do you screen? What's on the docket so far?

**DB:** We only screen short films in this new iteration of the festival. One day, we'll be able to rent a theatre for more than one day. We have many times in the past, but that's not in the cards these days. A one-day fest calls for short films aplenty, and we have some of the world's best. The evening shows are more horror-centric to draw out the night people.

This year's line-up? We're still selecting films, so hold tight. We'll unleash the roster in June.

## AU: Are there awards? What does that entail?

PB: Yes, there will be awards! Our new Programming Director, Tiffany Blom, has been hinting that we'll have real awards this year, worthy to display on your mantel. In the past, for thriftiness' sake, winners received laurels—still awesome, but let's face it,

pretty damn cheap— so with Tiffany's guidance and wisdom, there shall be physical awards that take up actual space. We have many categories, but we don't go too overboard. We want to keep it real, not host an 'everybody gets an award' fest.

## AU: Who were some of the winners last year?

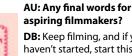
**DB:** Soderbergh, Aronofsky, Tarantino— oh wait, I'm thinking of Sundance, and over many years at that. But we have some heavy hitters as well. Last year everyone loved Andrew Balint's *The Palest Posey*, and Tamara Cook blessed the

fest again with another film from the land down under. There are so many to praise, and so few lines left to phrase.

## AU: Is there anything else you'd like to mention or promote?

**DB:** Local culture. Support your bands, shows, and films. Buy tickets, drinks too— got to support those venues — and buy merch. If your wallet is light, volunteer at a festival, or let your friend shoot a scene for her film at your uncle's shop.

Better yet, lend your acting or crew talents to said film. Everything helps, and we're in this together. It's not a competition, it's a community. Don't realize that too late.



DB: Keep filming, and if you haven't started, start this weekend. Don't overthink your script for years, or let small details like having no cast, no locations, and no money get you down. You're not making a Hollywood blockbuster, you're making your film, for your reasons. So, get to it, because nobody is going to make it for you. Things will work out. And if not, try again. Perfect does not exist. This is punk

at its purest. Fire your engine, create a lane, and remember to have fun.

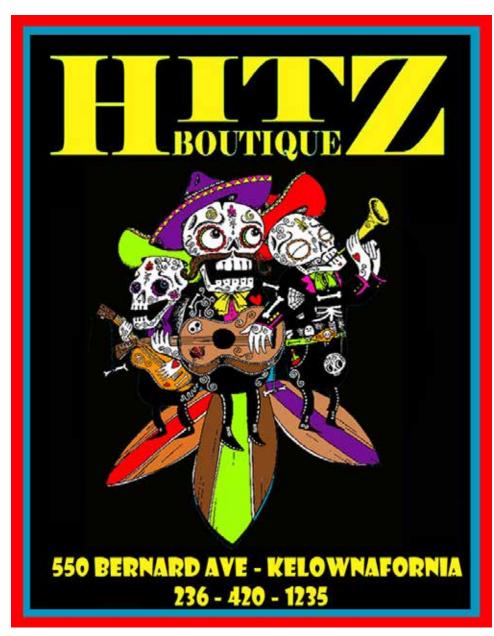
#### AU: How can people attend the festival? Where/when is it held and how can we get tickets?

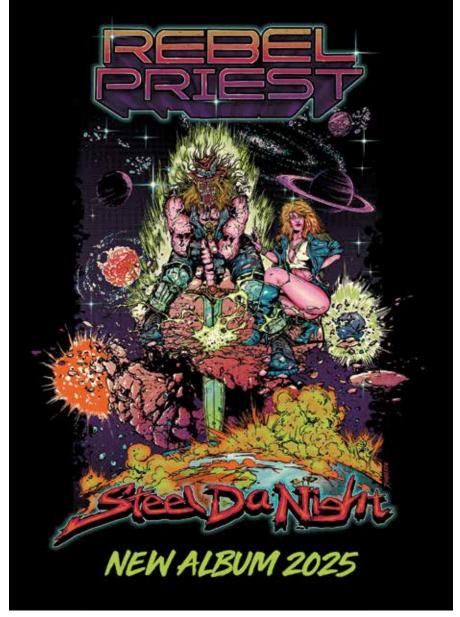
**DB:** Deep Cut is held in Kitchener every summer. This year our lucky day is July 19. Kitchener is a beautiful city about an hour and a half west of Toronto, six hours if you catch road work. It will be inhumanly hot, especially for Westerners used to your dry heat. Consider a crop top. However, once within the historic Registry Theatre, the coolness shall be legendary, and we're not just talking about the films. No advance tickets, only at the door. Cash only, we are so not equipped to accept plastic. And you can pay what you want to get what you need.

#### AU: Where can readers find you online?

**DB:** Our site is *deepcutfilm.com*, and odds are, we have the same social media pimps as you. They call us @*deepcutfilmfestival* (when they call us at all). Thanks for reading, and thanks for the space, Absolute Underground!

Photo by Genevieve Packer









# **Dan Scum**Dan Scum: The Return of Dicksee Di'anno

## **Interview by Brains Desfosses**

Absolute Underground: I'm here with my friend Dan; he's been away for a while but the man is back and we are going to set the record straight. So, Dan, tell us who you are.

Dan Scum: I am
Dan Scum aka
Dicksee Di'anno. I
am the lead singer of
Powerclown and am
also known as "that
Japan guy," as the
last interview I did
with this magazine
was from Yokohama
Prison, conducted
by Mr. Nasty aka
Radovan Gutteral
Spewage.



and there was a cow shit fight in the crowd. Something about Powerclown makes people do weird shit. Tell me, what is Powerclown?

oto Credit: Chrystal Mightie

**DS:** Powerclown is an Iron Maiden tribute band from Hoboken, New Jersey. The current lineup is Sketchy Klown (lead guitar), Lippy Dongstalkings (rhythm guitar), Steve Hairlips (bass), John Wayne Gary (drums) and myself. This is our 27th year playing only classic Iron Maiden, in character, as creepy, shitty clowns.

AU: So creepy! Yet sexy and eloquent. What does it say on your bandmates Tinder profiles and on yours?

**DS:** Well, I can't speak for the other clowns but the last time I was on Tinder, I used my clown character and my profile was as follows... "Not looking for anything serious. Because I'm a fucking clown, get it? Old. Perverted. If my face doesn't appeal to you, then you should kiss my

ass. It will leave less make up behind." You should have seen some of the weirdos who swiped right. Once you go clown, you don't turn around. Just ask my girlfriend.

#### AU: Now that you're back in Victoria, I've seen you out at shows. What do you think of our scene these days?

**DS:** Victoria has always had a happening little music scene. It's very close knit and incestuous. And the music scene's pretty cool too, haha. Lately, I've checked out shows featuring such classic Victoria bands as Gnar Gnars, Sweathogz, and of course, the legendary Dayglo

Abortions. Dirt Nap gets honourable mention as the hot newcomers (new to me anyway). Hung Up, Fully Crazed, Brewtality, Keg Killers. Lots of great bands here.

#### AU: Sex, drugs, or rock n' roll?

**DS:** For me these days, it's door number one and door number three, though I do miss those sweet sweet drugs.

AU: As you mentioned, your last interview with this magazine was from Yokohama Prison. How the hell did you end up there?

**DS:** It's best that I not get into that in too much detail. Short answer, bad decisions. (Rhymes with "struggling bugs").

AU: Fair enough, how long were you there exactly?

**DS:** Six long years.

## AU: Brutal, what was an average day like inside?

D5: Japan has one of the strictest, most regimented prison systems in the world. Every moment of every day is taken up with order, discipline, and rules, rules, rules. It's like being a cadet in the military. Extremely oppressive. I also had the culture shock and language barrier to contend with. Japanese culture is so polite and refined, with very particular subtleties of etiquette. I was like a bull in

a China shop...er, Japan shop until I learned how to act right. Summer is sweltering, and winter is so cold. In the beginning, I spent eight months in solitary confinement. Anyone charged with a crime in Japan spends all of their pre-trial time under a total communication ban. Forced labour is part of the punishment, so I spent my weekdays in a work factory, assembling ballpoint pens and automotive wiring harnesses. I met lots of Yakuza, and my spare time was spent studying Japanese and reading while sitting on the floor of my 5x10 cell. Also doing word puzzles and logic problems. I couldn't get enough of those, which should come as no surprise to you, as I used to make the crossword puzzle for this very magazine.

AU: Wow dude, remind me not to go there. Did you think about The Gnar Gnars a lot or just a little?

**DS:** Oh, every day haha. Hoon told me you guys

tried to visit when you came to Japan but couldn't find a translator. You have no idea what this means to me, and I'd like to thank anyone reading

this who wrote to me over there. Those kind words meant the world during that dark, lonely time.

AU: We (The Gnars) sure tried to visit. We missed you, buds! What should we know about you that we don't already?

**DS:** I am currently attempting standup comedy.

AU: Any future shows for your adoring fans?

**DS:** For now, it's just local shows. Vancouver at the Waldorf on June 20, Nanaimo at The Terminal on June 27, and Victoria at Lucky on June 28.

### AU: Do you have anything else to promote?

**D5:** Yes. Drink Pudgy Pigeon Kombucha. There's also a documentary about Powerclown in the works that's in the beginning stages. Coming soon to a streaming service near you.

#### AU: I shall! How do people find you online?

**DS:** Well, I'm not on Facebook. They banned me forever for violating their precious community standards somehow. I'm on Bluesky, and you can find Powerclown on Tik Tok.

AU: Now you're in Facebook Jail! Any final words of wisdom for our readers?

**DS:** Don't try to take drugs into Japan. It will not end well for you.

AU: Well, it's great to have you back and we're all looking forward to seeing you own that stage! On behalf of AU, we thank you! See you in the pit.





# + BUDDIES

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

Jon Snodgrass: I'm Jon Snodgrass. I just play music and help at Surfside 7 in Fort Collins

Colorado. Thinking about passing that along to someone else and moving up north, though. I'm interested in alpaca barbery. We'll see.

Ben Andress: I'm Ben Andress. I run a little record label called Blacktop Records here in Canada and release Tapes, CDs and Vinyl by bands you might like. I'm also

the in-house booker at a cozy little venue called Paddy's Underground here in Tillsonburg, Ontario. I'm thinking about passing that along to someone

else and working on Jon Snodgrass' alpaca farm.

#### AU: Where and when did you first come up with the idea of +BÜDDIES Fest?

JS: Last year, we played a show at Paddv's Underground and I didn't wanna leave. It was so much fun, I missed the baseball game that I planned the whole tour around. It was the season opener, the Jays and the Rockies-- whoops! I stood up Chris Cresswell, but he got over it. FLATLINERS

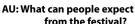
Friday. Anyhow, it's two hours from Buffalo, two hours from Toronto, two hours from Detroit, and not far from a lotta places!

> Seemed like a pretty rad place to gather people.

## year to pull the trigger?

have a rad list for next vear. Shh.

and charm had me sold on making this happen.





BA: I wish I could take credit for this idea, but Buddy Snodgrass brought up the idea and came up with the chill name.

## AU: Is this the first year? If so, what made this the

JS: It's the first year! We

BA: Jon's enthusiasm for Tillsonburg and his drive



only bands can camp there on-site. We need to look at legalities beyond that. We did indeed put this together quickly.

BA: Tillsonburg and the surrounding area has a good handful of cheap motel and hotel options. A few surrounding towns have Ontario Parks with

fairly priced campsites. Lots of Airbnb spots. A few local buddies in Tillsonburg have offered their backyard for festival folks to set up tents. Like Jon said, we're looking into the logistics and insurance to have on-site camping for guests.

#### AU: What goes into putting on a music festival?

BA: Lots of late nights staring at spreadsheets and an overflowing email inbox. Patrick McMahon, the owner of The Mill, is a gem and knows how to treat bands good. His hospitality is like no other

and word is starting to spread about how bands are treated at Paddy's Underground. It was pretty easy to snag the artists we wanted having a team like this working on dotting all the Is and crossing all the Ts.

> AU: What's your longterm vision for ⊦BÜDDIES? Where do vou see vourselves in 5 or 10 years?

JS: I'd be stoked if we were doing it that long! and if I lived there, cutting alpaca hair. That's a goal.

BA: I have a list of buddies and favourite bands that I can see fitting with the vibe of the festival. I'd love to set this festival up long enough



that I get to book them all. My kids are pretty young and hope by year 10 they can help me organize and help run the festival.

#### AU: Anything else you'd like to add or promote?

JS: I'm playing ALL over this year. A bunch with Greg Norton from Hüsker Dü. We invite local singers to play HD songs with to celebrate 1985 tünes and HD in general, but this is the gig I'm most stoked on. We'll do some DÜ there too, obvi.

> BA: Lot of bands playing Buddies Fest just released new albums and they are all bangers. Bring some extra merch money so you can leave with some new

#### AU: Final words of wisdom for the readers?

**JS:** 50/50 is 100%, 51 is success. It's ALL balance, sustain, and the Golden Rule.

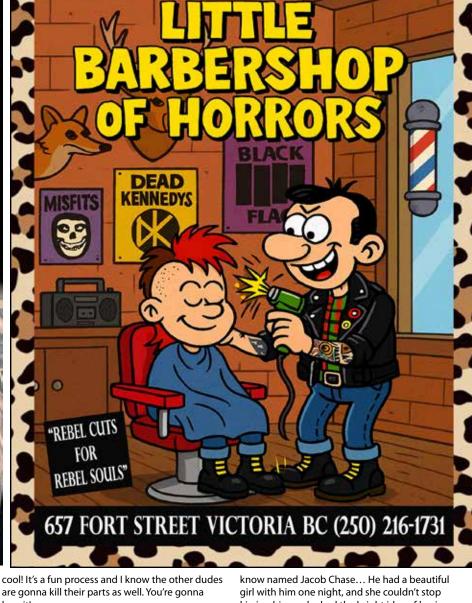
BA: I don't know, man. Jim Morrison said, "If you book them, they will come."

Live photos by Dan Michener buddiesfest.com @buddiesfest











#### record for those looking to forget their sorrows of heartbreak?

Hunter: I suppose so, yeah, the song "Bad Love" was definitely influenced by heartbreak. Í wrote the lyrics about my past, but I am way over that. Jacob was going through a tough time recently, and it inspired me to dig up my past relationship as inspiration for our song.

Aidan: And I guess

that ties into the title track too, dealing with something you can't get away from that you are fatally attracted to. This also applies to substances and shit like that too. Everyone deals with something, so the subject matter is easy to relate

#### AU: You plan to release the EP on cassette later this year. Do you find metalheads are still loyal to getting physical copies of metal?

Aidan: Yeah! On June 20th, we will have tape copies available on our Bandcamp and in person at shows. As someone who collects myself, I think that it is a really unique experience to listen to music on a physical medium. You can see the artwork better, it sounds better, and it definitely has an irreplaceable vibe that streaming and downloads can't compete with.

## AU: Is there another EP or album in the works?

**Hunter:** You bet your ass there is! We are currently working on recording our first full-length record. I just finished my drum tracks, actually, very excited about how they turned out. Aidan is doing all the recording and production himself, which is pretty

are gonna kill their parts as well. You're gonna

Aidan: Doing the production myself with my recording side hustle, Northern Sun Recordings, just means that we aren't at all rushed and can really take our time to get it perfect.

#### AU: We heard the origin story for Lover has a relation to Riot City. What's the tale there?

Aidan: Well, all of us have known the boys in Riot City for quite some time in our own different ways, and so the story is that when Jake and I were looking to start this band, we wanted the

perfect drummer and second guitar to really strengthen the lineup. Our other project, Flashback, was opening for Riot City at the Palomino in Calgary, and somehow we all ended up at the show together and partied after. Hunter had just moved back to Calgary from living in Toronto, and Chris was out after a while of not going to shows. We

were introduced that night, and we all had great chemistry. The next day, Cale from Riot City had suggested Chris come and play guitar with us, and around that same time, Jake was telling me about Hunter's old band, Midnight Malice. I was definitely wanting them both to come and jam. Turns out Hunter had the exact same plans for us, too! We ended up meeting up a few days later, and it was magic in the room.

#### AU: We heard that the EP artwork's story is pretty cool. Can you please share how that was put together?

Hunter: Well, let me tell you about a lady killer I

kissing him, so he had the bright idea of having her kiss a piece of paper with her big ol'lips, and we got our artwork! We love our Jacob, that dirty ol'dog.

#### AU: You played at this year's Electric Highway Festival in Calgary. How was that? And any plans for other fests this year or touring?

Aidan: Getting the chance to be a part of the last ever year of the Electric Highway Fest was a blast. Really enjoyed the experience, and above all, it was a great, high-energy audience. We have

a couple of dates lined up for Calgary and Edmonton this summer as well as being a part of the bill at Armstrong Metal Fest in July, which we are stoked for. It's going to be our biggest show to date, and we are looking to deliver the best version of ourselves.

#### AU: What can fans expect to see from a Lover performance at this year's Armstrong Metal Fest?

Hunter: We are gonna bring the good vibes, lots of hooks, big

guitar solos (watch out for Chris and his super speed fingers) Personally I love to hit the drums hard, so watch out for flying sticks. Jacob and Aidan are always ready to deliver a hard-hitting performance. We can't wait to melt some faces!

#### AU: Anything else you'd like to add for our readers?

Aidan: Make sure to check out our demo tape, Fatal Attraction, and pick up a copy on cassette! We hope to see everyone at a show near you.

lover rock of ficial. band camp. com



## **Interview by Asher Thrasher** Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Aidan: I'm Aidan from Lover, and I'm lead vocals and guitar.

**Hunter:** I'm Hunter, I play drums and sing in Lover. AU: What can you tell us about Lover's latest **EP, Fatal Attraction?** 

Aidan: This release marks the first two songs out in the ether for Lover. They were two of the first songs that we put together in the jam room and are a good representation of who we are and what is to come.

AU: The EP speaks of broken hearts within members of the bands. Has this release been a breakup healer? Do you recommend this





## The Helletones

## **Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel**

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

The Helletones: The Helletones, we are a three-piece rock band

from Duncan, BC. Sandy Munns on guitar and vocals, Andrew Brown on bass, and Barry Ethier on drums. You know how Spinal Tap goes through drummers? I guess we could be seen as infamous for going through horn players – our last tromboner imploded at a show in Nanaimo last year. We will stay a three-piece for the foreseeable future.

## AU: Give us a brief history of the band.

**Helletones:** Sandy started The Helletones in Victoria about ten years ago, but after moving to Duncan found a new lineup. Andrew was playing in a punk band called Slimeball Wizard just after Covid, and Barry had just moved to Duncan from Squamish when we found him. We are just here to write groovy songs and have fun.

## AU: What's the music scene like in Duncan?

Helletones: Duncan is a bit small to have any kind of music scene of its own, but we are trying to change that. We try and stay connected with other bands from the Vancouver Island music scene and book shows with a variety of bands in various genres.

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

Helletones: It started with a more rockabilly vibe back in the day, but the songs can range from aggressive post-punk to radiofriendly pop-punk to straight-forward rock n'roll... does anyone ever know how to answer this question?

AU: Tell us about your new album, Going Down. What can we expect to hear?

Helletones: We recorded these songs last summer mostly live off the floor and tried to keep it as natural-sounding as possible- we didn't even use a click track! We added a few vocal tracks to help round out the sound, and we are super pleased with the result.

## AU: Any particular tracks you're stoked on?

Helletones: "Near the Bottom" was a bit of a sleeper for us-such a simple, short song, but it came together quickly and the recording sounds awesome. It seems to be a favourite when we play it live,

## AU: Who or what inspires you most, musically speaking?

Helletones: We have such varied tastes between the three of us- Andrew likes anything weird, and is a massive fan of SNFU and Melvins. Barry is more of a straight-ahead rock and metal guy; he loves things like Metallica and Iron Maiden. Sandy likes aggressive and weird stuff like Shellac and Kittens, but also likes poppier rock like Royal Blood and The Hives too.

> AU: Any upcoming shows or tours you'd like to promote?

> Helletones: We have a few shows in early June to promote the new album, but then we will be taking the summer off. We will be booking fall shows pretty soon to help promote the album further.

## AU: Anything else to promote?

Helletones: Vinyl presales are live right now on our Bandcamp page or you can DM us on our social media accounts if you are from Vancouver Island and we will hand-deliver them. Copies are currently only \$25 each and come with some free stickers. We should have them in our hands by early September.

## AU: Any final words for our readers?

Helletones: Support local bands and venues! It is getting harder and harder for venues to stay open, and original rock bands need somewhere to call home!

## AU: Where can we find you online?

**Helletones:** The album is streaming on all the usual platforms: Spotify, Apple music, etc, and you can also download it or order a physical copy from our Bandcamp page. We use Facebook and Instagram for show announcements and messaging, and try and stay up to date on there.

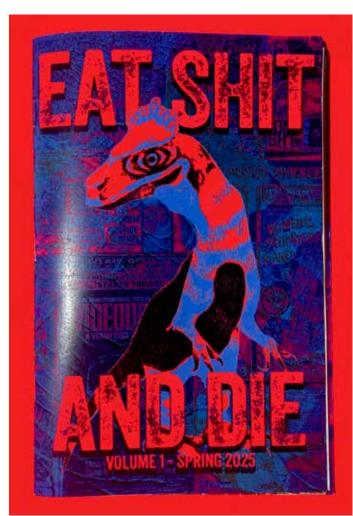
thehelletones.bandcamp.com

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## **Eat Shit and Die Zines**

## **Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel** AU: Who are we talking to?

Ceyda-Anne Altiok: You are currently speaking with Eat Shit and Die Zines' director, founder, and illustrator. I am currently a fourth-year illustration student attending the Alberta University of the Arts. My practice focuses primarily on storybook and editorial illustration, creating vibrant nostalgic pieces that speak to various individuals. Inspired by nature and animal forms, my work frequently incorporates vintage memorabilia from the 1960s to the 1990s, blending nostalgic elements with edgy and whimsical aesthetics. '90s skate culture and vintage industrial/futuristic design have had a profound impact on my illustration work, paving the path for the overall aesthetic of the Eat Shit and Die Zine. My process typically consists of traditional mediums, such as graphite and charcoal, while also incorporating digital media, collage, and pattern-like techniques.

## AU: What can you tell us about your zine?

CAA: Eat Shit and Die Zine isa student-run zine, dedicated to showcasing local talent within Calgary's vibrant underground subculture. As a grassroots organization, we are committed to delivering high-quality content while uplifting emerging artists and musicians. Whether you are a punk, goth, or metalhead, we have got you covered in every issue of our publication, creating a genre-bashed zine that caters to everyone with a wide variety of music tastes and visual interests. Fat Shit and Die takes pride in fostering a supportive community that encourages individuals to share their work, express their creativity, and tell their stories in a safe and welcoming space.

#### AU: What's your role in Eat Shit and Die? Who else is involved?

CAA: As the director of ESAD, I am mainly responsible for gathering submissions and setting up band interviews, and I also handle anything to do with zine management. As for the fun stuff, I have had the pleasure of illustrating the first eat shit and dinosaur featured on our cover along with the inside cover illustrations. Of course, all of this plus formatting the page layout of the zine has been done in collaboration with Jaden

Chornomydz, our co-director and graphic design lead. Jaden has also played a vital role in the zine, taking on the graphic design lead with the utmost dedication and professionalism, bringing our first issue unique ideas and fresh perspectives. The stunning interview pages and typography have been entirely done by Jaden, while also featuring one of his vibrant mutant illustrations. Jaden is currently a third-year Graphic Design major at the Alberta University of the Arts. His work is inspired by the found community around him, using bright colours, unique iconography, and bold type to amplify often overlooked and marginalized voices. He enjoys anything deemed 'unacceptable,' with neon mutants and punk elements seeping into his work. Drawing from the local underground music and arts scene Jaden is a technology nerd at heart, utilizing digital applications to execute grunge/punk themes and aesthetics harmoniously through his work

## AU: Who or what inspired you to start the zine?

CAA: Zines took the music and art scene by storm in the late '70s through to the '90s, highlighting art and underground music, creating platforms for artists and musicians to showcase their unique voices, sounds, and talents across a wide range of audiences. I had noticed underground zines that included primarily alternative art have fizzled out in the music world, and although zine culture is becoming big again there still wasn't anything quite like what we are doing at least

in Calgary. My plan was for Eat Shit and Die Zine to be a current-day resurgence of this D.I.Y. zine culture, bringing together works from multiple different artists spanning from a wide range of backgrounds and identities.

#### AU: What makes your zine unique?

CAA: Our zine is unique through its fluidity, its inclusiveness, and not limited to one genre or one type of art. We welcome strong, bold, and challenging themes through a wide range of subject matter, while promoting visual art alongside musicians contributing to the interconnectedness of the music scene, while giving priority to emerging bands and artists. We really wanted to start with the basics of an art-based zine, something quick and bold to flip through, while also using interview formats formally found in magazines to foster a deeper connection with local bands and the music they

#### AU: Who has been featured so far?

CAA: Along with over twenty different local Calgary-based artists, we have had the pleasure of interviewing three killer bands, sending our first issue out into the Calgary music scene with a big

welcome, we mean ANY MEDIUM. As long as your work isn't harmful or offensive we want to see it!

#### AU: How would someone go about submitting a piece for your zine?

CAA: For each of our issues we have an online Microsoft form we provide usually on our Instagram page. We also always make themed posters for the submissions which we are hoping to receive! This promotes the zine, what we are looking for, and provides artists with a scannable QR code. We are hoping to put out flyers and posters throughout the city for our second issue with hopes to expand our submission process.

#### AU: Anything else you'd like to mention or promote?

**CAA:** ESAD is always looking for shows and places to vend at! We love physically being there to connect with the community and possibly introduce people to their new favourite zine publication! We also are continuously taking show poster commissions, whether it be collaborative between Jaden and I as ESAD, or individually! It means the world to us to contribute to the growing music scene in any way we can.



bang! These bands include Radioactive Vampire Teeth, an experimental noise rock duo bringing zany vocals and distorted fast-paced sounds to your earholes. We also have WACK band that brings sentiment to the OG skate punk sound while exuding top-tier energy at every show. And finally, Run the Plank who brings power to every stage with their unique country/alt-folk punk sound. These three bands are all based in Calgary Alberta, bringing their singularity to stages across the city while connecting with and uplifting the underground music community.

## AU: What kind of submissions do you accept?

CAA: We like to think we have a set of rules pertaining to what kinds of submissions we accept, but really, we just want anything that actually breaks the rules, bends them, is jarring, bold, explicit... anything punk rock really. We accept any medium including 3D artwork as long as it's been photo documented in a way that brings life to the piece! We also have been looking for performance art and animation to feature on our Instagram, so when we say any medium is

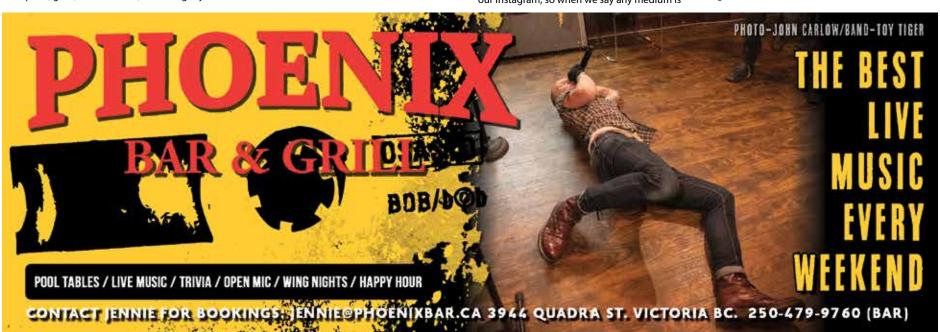
#### AU: Any words of wisdom for our readers or aspiring artists?

CAA: If you ever have a random idea one day that you become very passionate about, just go for it and don't hold back. I thought about doing this project one Tuesday afternoon and would have never guessed we would be where we are right now. There's always going to be reasons not to start something, but you gotta look at all the reasons to start something, because you never know where it will take you. Confidence and authenticity are key, and with that any small idea or project can make ripples throughout your community!

## AU: Where can people find Eat Shit and Die?

**CAA:** The second issue of Eat Shit and Die is set to come out at the beginning of November 2025, with the call for submissions going out as early as September! Physical copies are sold at alternating shows in Calgary which we update on our Instagram regularly. You can also find the digital version of our first issue in our Instagram bio!

@eatshitanddiezine

































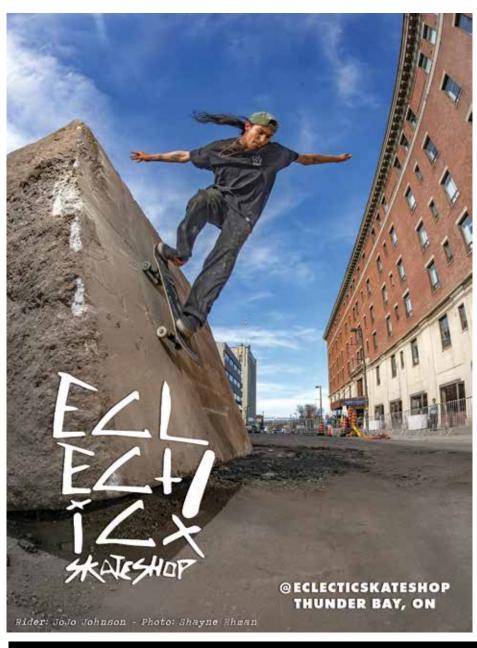
















the underdogs. It feels like bands from Europe or the US get more attention. Everyone thinks that in Canada we're all nice and polite and that it's cold. I feel we kind of get the short end of the stick a lot of the time. But when you look at it, there are so many talented bands coming out of Canada and it's a great scene. When it comes to the way it shaped me— it made me strong [laughs], because we've had to fight so hard to do what we are doing now. We're far away from Europe, we're far from the States, and this makes planning tours challenging; it'd be a much easier job in one of these countries because you'd have better access and no issues with visas. It's difficult, but it made me and my bandmates strong in that aspect.

AU: True— one advantage you gain from trying to make it in the Canadian scene is grit.

Lutharo: Oh my God, yeah. On tour, when I announce, "We're Lutharo. We came all the way from Canada to shred with you tonight," every time people come up to the merch table after the show, surprised: "You're from Canada? That's so far!" Most bands we tour with are local to their regions. We've had a few Canadian tours as well, but it's again, a challenge because things are so far apart.

AU: Your most recent album. Chasing Euphoria, if it could represent a certain feeling or emotion, what would it be?

Lutharo: I would say acceptance. Chasing Euphoria is like searching for a safe haven to belong, to be authentic. I am always searching for this in people, in places, in things, because I feel like I show up organically as myself all the time. And I want other people to do that, and I want to hold that space for other people.

#### AU: And what is your favourite song from the album to perform live?

**Lutharo:** My favourite song to perform is "Ruthless Bloodline" — I love singing that one, but my favourite song on the album is "Time to Rise". It pushed so many boundaries for me inside and outside of the studio, and I just love it.

AU: Your performances are always so dynamic and energetic— how do you prepare yourself for a live show? Physically and mentally?

Lutharo: Well, a lot of practice. But on the last tour I also noticed that I have to get into a certain headspace before I perform. I tend to beat

myself up a little before the show, but then, right before we hit the stage, everything clicks in place and I tell myself, "You're gonna go up there and you're gonna do exactly what you gotta do. Go up there, be exactly who you are and just leave it all out there." So, I have this internal battle that goes on every single time, and it's so much easier for me to reach that space of acceptance now than it was before. So yeah, before I hit the stage, I hype myself up and get myself in the right headspace where nothing else matters but the show.

Catch Lutharo live at The Horseshoe in Toronto on July 26th, and on tour in Ontario and Ouebec.

## Lutharo

## **Chasing Euphoria with Canadian Grit** Interview with Krista Shipperbottom By Alia Synesthesia

Absolute Underground: Your band name "Lutharo" is an Elven word for "the enchanter." Who is the biggest Tolkien fan in the band?

Lutharo: Victor, followed by me (Krista), When we started the band— original members being myself, Victor, bassist Mike, and drummer Zach we were all huge Lord of the Rings fans. Now it's more varied, though Jeff, our fill-in guitarist, also loves Tolkien. But Victor's likely the main fan. Even though I chose the Elvish name!

AU: You're gearing up for a European tour. As a Canadian band, how has the local metal scene shaped your sound? Are there challenges or advantages to being a melodic death metal band from Canada?

Lutharo: I think there are a lot of good bands coming out of Canada, but in a lot of ways we're







After completing my first course within the program my mentor pulled me aside and told me to "take my knowledge and go find an apprenticeship or start something." We were close and when he told me the school was shifty and I'd be better off elsewhere, I listened to him. Soon after. I started looking for an apprenticeship. Nightmare fuel. After many failed attempts and unfortunate events while trying to find an apprenticeship, I said fuck it and moved home. I started Megan Mooz Tattooz and within a few months I was picked up by a shop and about a year later moved to Victoria and started at Tiger Tattoo. It was a bumpy and winding

road trying to find where I belonged, but once I met my Tiger family the rest was history.

# AU: What style of tattooing are you best

MM: Within my first few years in the industry I've learned many styles, starting out doing fine line, ditching it for big bold designs, and now utilizing both together in different ways. If I had to blanket statement my style, I'd call it "black and grey illustrative." I'm dipping my toes into colour and it's refreshing. I'm currently obsessed with

tribal and I'm finding ways to put that shit on everything. Tribal's so back

**MM:** When I think of my biggest

#### AU: Who are some of your biggest inspirations in tattooing?

inspirations three people come to mind. First one being Ali Walters, @tattosbyali. Her neutralcoloured traditional melts my brain and she is the reason I fell in love with bold black tribal. Being tattooed by her was a dream. Second inspiration is Alex Jinho. He's quite new to tattooing but the work he pulls off is something I can't comprehend. His gory, spiky, trypophobia-esc, skulls have introduced to me to a style

period. I'm humbled by it all. Last but not least, my previous shop owner Martha Pranckuviene @nomad\_tattoocr. Not only has she been a tattoo mentor, she's been a tattoo mother. I've learned the most from her and continue

to do so while guesting at her

that I now adore. This style has saved me in creative ruts and it's just fucking cool. Point blank shop. Her ability to adapt and overcome to every style or trend over the last 13 years in the industry is truly inspiring.

#### AU: What do you want the readers to know about you as a tattoo artist?

MM: I think what I'd like my readers to know is how relaxed a tattoo experience can be. When being tattooed by me we are in a separate room with a vibe that is custom to you. On a normal day I'm playing music

your dad listens to and am chatty but if your preference is to just relax and lock in, I'm right there with you. If you're happy, I'm happy.

#### AU: How do people set up an appointment?

 $\boldsymbol{\mathsf{MM:}}$  The best way to set up an appointment is to fill out a "Tattoo Request Form" linked in the Bio of my Instagram. That form answers all my questions in the easiest way. Leave your info and I'll get back to you within a few days.

#### AU: What's the craziest request for a tattoo you have ever gotten?

MM: Within my first six months of tattooing a friend of mine requested I do a spider web full head piece in memorial for his mother. The job was WAY out of my skill range but for some reason he wanted me to do it. I did it of course. Looking back, it was an insane thing to do, but it gave me a lot of confidence to push myself. I've fixed it up in recent years and I love it. It was a special experience that I'll never forget.

@meganmooztattooz @tigertattoo





# **Megan Mooz**

**Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel** Absolute Underground: How long have you been an artist? What got you started?

Megan Mooz: I've been drawing all my life but didn't start tattooing until about three years ago. During a quarter life crisis while living away from home I stumbled upon a "fine line tattoo course." I was hesitant to trust it wasn't some sort of scam (it was). I needed a purpose so I went anyway to



#### **Mountain Collective American Tour 2017:** The Storm of the Century Part 3 By Brydo "Skunk Ape" Parker

Where did I leave off last time? Oh yes, Ira and I were leaving Mt Bachelor in Oregon heading to California during the storm of the century.



Heading down a Cascade mountain pass in an overloaded thirty four foot RV with three working brakes is dumb but compounded by ten as it was raining ice! Chains are critical to not crashing when everything is solid ice. The one thing we had going for us was there was nobody

else willing to drive anywhere so the highways

were empty as we pulled into Bend Oregon and it was beautiful. Everything was covered in ice and the play of light from all sources bounced around in a diamond world straight out of Tripsville USA. We made a wrong turn and ended up in a residential neighbourhood where the trees were heavily

burdened with ice. As we drove the deserted streets the RV's roof smashed the overhanging



tree branches. The cascading ice that looked so heavenly turned instantly to the Demons of Hell clawing at us with icy talons raking the roof of the RV. We worked our way out of town after gassing up. We followed Google maps

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and it said it was about 65 km to our destination, Mount Shasta, the first of the California resorts we planned on hitting. At 25 km an hour it should have taken two and a half hours but for some

reason we did not arrive until the next morning. We overnighted at a friendly Walmart and got moving early in the morning. We worked our way up through some scrub lands and up and up till we arrived at a dirt parking lot. We



had an early morning dooble going when we encountered a friendly parking lot attendant who was happy to sniff the dank smoke rolling out of the RV. He said we should park away from the main lot as the owners were religious and did not take kindly to grass smokers. We informed him that we were from a devil worshiping punk rock/ heavy metal/tattoo magazine. We asked him if he could pick us up in his Gator 4x4 and drive us to the ticket area and he said "Yes." So we got our shit together and grabbed a couple mags for our

new parking lot friend and off we went. He dropped us off . We bought tickets for fifty five bucks and headed up. On the first run down we were surrounded by staff and we thought, here we go they read the magazine and we are getting the boot. This fellow comes over and says. "Are you the guys from the magazine? and we replied we were. He then asked Why we did not ask at guest services for free media

passes? and Ira replied that this is a small family owned mountain and we wanted to support their business. Well unknown to us the fellow who was behind us sweeping the après ski deck was the owner! Up the mountain we went again and

when we got back down to the base the same crew surrounded us again and said the owner had overheard our conversation and wanted to offer us



rides up the mountain after it closed to take some cool photos for the magazine. Fucking rights that would be awesome was our reply. Up we went at the end of the day and Ira got a cat driver who chuffed and I got an ex DEA agent who didn't, luck of the draw, but I bought a six pack and that hit the spot. We grabbed some great shots and were told that the bar was open and waiting for us. It usually closes at 5pm but the owner said he sent the bartender home and we could help ourselves. I know it is unbelievable but it's true.

Ira also scored a really good interview with the owner who told us all about the Lemurians who are a local cult who worship space aliens living in Mt Shasta and the owner had some epic bigfoot stories to boot. The mountain is not a fancy pants ski resort with night clubs etc. but it is totally awesome with steep terrain and we had unreal fresh powder and Snowcat runs all day for the low low price of 55 bucks American. Might be more



now but I doubt it. There is no doubt in my mind that they are stuck in a time loop like groundhog day but with cults, aliens and bigfoot stories too. Next issue the Sierra Nevada mountain range and more Northern California snowboard adventures in the Storm Of The Century!

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#### Bigstone to the Big Apple Interview with Melody McArthur **By Johnny Bandura**

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

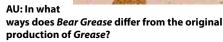
Melody McArthur: You are talking to Melody McArthur, Treaty 8 Northern Cree singer and songwriter, also known for playing Sandy in Bear Grease, the Indigenized version of the musical Grease. Bear Grease will be debuting in New York

off Broadway starting June 10.2025.

AU: Can you give us a history of yourself and where you're from?

MM:

Originally from Northern Alberta, Bigstone Cree Nation. Grew up in a small rural town (Canyon Creek) as well as on and off reserve and was educated in Slave Lake AB.



MM: Bear Grease differs from the original in that firstly, there is diverse representation, in the original film there was one minority and they were a background character. Bear Grease is interwoven with iconic Grease moments and the plot still centers around Danny and Sandy's love story, but

otherwise it's a completely different show from the costumes (still in era but Indigenized) to the slang, to the incorporation of traditional Nehivaw language, to the humour and internalization of the actors portraying each role. The moment is much bigger than me, I feel blessed and privileged to be part of this moment in time.

#### AU: What toll does it take personally to be in a traveling musical?

MM: We're Indigenous and all from remote and rural areas, we grew up in situations of lateral and domestic violence and family addictions with ties

to colonialism and the residential school system. You need to be on a healed level so that you can communicate with a co-star.

AU: What should we know that we don't already know? MM: A lot

of what I achieved in my life does not make sense for where I came from, but the creator had

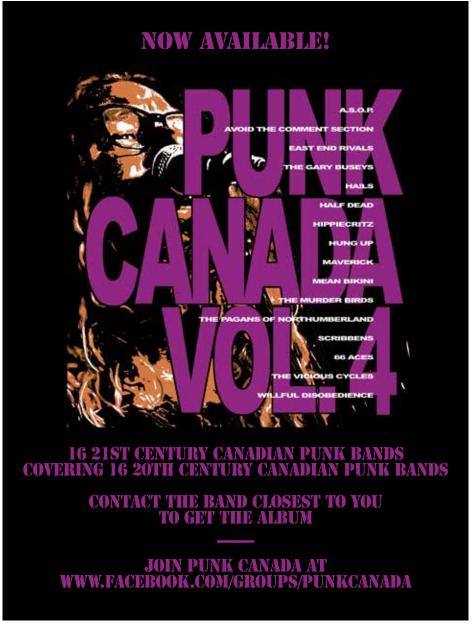
different plans for me.

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

MM: I wouldn't have made it anywhere if I didn't do things afraid. Do anything afraid, take the risk, and the magic happens outside the comfort zone every time.

beargreaselive.com







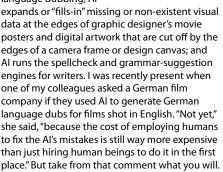




#### **Cronenberg's Unintentional** Allegory on Al By Vince D'Amato

The subject of AI and creativity is breeding more involved conversation within creative industries: film, writing, art, graphic design, and most

recently even audio books. Al is being used in ways the everyday contentwatcher may not fully know, including in the creation of subtitles and closed captions or international language dubbing; Al



James Cameron painted a crazy picture of Al run amuck in 1984's The Terminator and then he and other filmmakers took those technological concepts even further through the film's sequels. Kubrick wondered what would occur if AI was left unchecked and placed in charge of human beings' welfare in 1968's 2001: A Space Odyssey. Kubrick would further explore

themes and ethical questions of building and using AI for our own frivolous and selfish benefit in A.I., a film that was completed by Steven Spielberg after Kubrick's death. None of these "scifi" or "futuristic" films are categorized as "horror" (obviously), despite some objectively horrifying or existentially anxiety-inducing elements and

concepts. But now that AI exists outside of cinema and imagination, and human beings have now become aware of its existence and implications (if not its quietly insidious applications in our everyday lives),

controversies and conversations and ethical and existential questions are now constantly coming up both online and IRL among concerned human beings. It's a heated topic. Even so, there is an aspect of AI that seems to have only skimmed the surface of these conversations, and as time quickly moves forward, the subject is even falling back from the conversations altogether: regurgitive training and model collapse. This was talked about in 2024 articles in Forbes and The Conversation and was introduced in a paper from Lincoln University, and it is basically what

trained on Al-generated data, sort of a technological inbreeding. This creates a decaying cycle where the "intellectual" output from AI systems gets more degraded over time and builds biases into the training data, which gets amplified as each Al system is trained on the output of the previous one, and ultimately leads to constantly declining quality and diversity. Without even knowing it, David Cronenberg crafted a perfectly horrifying allegory for this in 1986 with his viscerally gore

happens when AI systems get

soaked retelling of The Flv. which starred Jeff Goldblum as the geek-chic and charming scientist Seth Brundle, and Geena Davis as a technology journalist.

Davis' character becomes somewhat enthralled with Brundle's life-sized mattertransporter prototype (i.e. "teleportation device"). They also become romantically enthralled with each other. Fuelled by the euphoric inspiration of this new love coming from his new-found muse, a passionately-wired

Brundle then pushes his computer to solve the wildly sophisticated untangling of transporting living matter-living, pulsating flesh and bloodsomething his machine has been unable to interpret and decode, and hence has been unable to transport correctly (to put it mildly). Brundle obsessively enters data into the transporter's computer brain; however, he leaves the computer itself to decode and apply that data as best it can. The words "Artificial Intelligence" are never once uttered in Cronenberg's film, but with the hindsight of the last few years, we can see that's exactly what's happening. The real unspoken problem here is that Brundle, a recluse, doesn't completely understand the workings of the flesh himself, either. He is not a biologist, and his experience with love and sex are heavily implied to be extremely limited (we get the feeling that Geena Davis' intrepid reporter character may be his first relation in a very long time). The subtext of this is gleefully and viscerally symbolized in

the infamous mid-film arm wrestling scene, where clearly the aloof Brundle lacks an understanding of strength and pressure against human flesh- or simply doesn't care. (But you have to care about the flesh). And so, we can piece together that there is a web of informational inbreeding that is taking place first between the scientist and his machine, which he

himself programmed in the first place, and then within the machine itself as it tries to decode the solutions to moving the living matter through time and space that Brundle has been manically searching for since his burst of inspiration.

This machine-inbred interpretation of what Brundle wants from the transporter, and the machine's internal recalculation of what it's supposed to do with that data, leads to some unforeseen variables being filled in by the machine's computer itself, without human checks or inputs, acting only on its own informed "intelligence" – it thinks it's doing what Brundle wants when it proceeds to seamlessly fuse

the living flesh of scientist and wayward fly together in Brundle's first human test-run of his teleportation device. But the important thing here is that the machine made an artificiallyintelligent decision to do this on its own, it was never told to do this. Obviously, this "AI" decision leads to disastrous results, which incredibly gets even more horrifying by the time we arrive at the final act of The Fly, where Seth Brundle's body

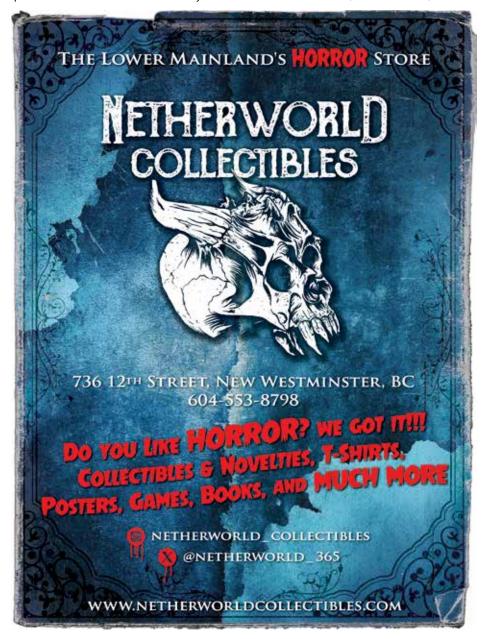


becomes informed by the genetic fly-infusion that the computer has done in order to "solve" the problem of transporting the two separate living entities through the matter-transporter- the genetic problem now a deep horrifying reflection of the technological "Al" inbreeding that had gone on previous to the human experiment. Possibly even more weirdly, this is not the first time Cronenberg has invented a sort of "genetic Al" horror film: 1977's Rabid was exactly that. and while many of Cronenberg's films deal with themes of flesh reinventing itself to suit whatever weird environment or situation Cronenberg has constructed for his stories. Rabid is the only other film where the flesh has taken on a sort of intelligence of its own in order to medically "help" or enhance the flesh of the body of Marilyn Chambers, effectively turning her into a neovampire. As a horror film, Cronenberg's plotting of these ideas in The Fly are creatively brilliant, especially in hindsight- or in other words, The



Fly seems to get better with time and with  $consideration\ of\ our\ own\ technological\ advances.$ Even on a very basic level, one could compare the events in *The Fly* with simply trying to generate an Al picture without using extended or exacting prompts (and letting the Al figure out what it is that you want), and seeing what abstract weirdness the AI engine comes up with for you. Cronenberg may not have set out to create an allegory for AI, but forty years after-the-fact, it appears that this is exactly what he's done.

darksidereleasing.com









# Freeze the Fall

#### **Interview by Ross Hansen**

AU: Can you tell us a bit about yourselves?

Freeze The Fall: We are Freeze the Fall, a teenage hard rock power trio. We have been a band since the Summer of 2022.

Quinn - Lead Vocals and Guitar Aria – Bass and Backup Vocals

Jonah – Drums

#### AU: What was the "Let's start a band" moment?

FTF: It's not like we were friends first and decided to form a band. Music is what actually brought us together, so we became a band and friends simultaneously. Quinn and Aria met in the hallways at middle school through shared appreciation of each other's metal and hard rock T-shirts. Jonah came into the picture about a month later in July, 2022. We connected to jam in Jonah's basement and have never looked back. Wrote our first original, "Insomnia", a month later.

#### AU: What kind of sound influenced you?

FTF: No specific single sound, it's more a mashup of influences. We all have really varied musical influences, it comes together in what we hope is a unique way. We also try not to put ourselves

in any kind of box. Our songwriting is always evolving and so are our tastes, so hopefully we keep it interesting, and people keep listening.

#### AU: It seems surreal that at your age to be a touring band. What's that like for you guys?

FTF: The balance between high school and band life is complicated. It takes a lot of support from our families and our team. We are playing shows farther from home more recently which is a dream come true. It's a wild feeling to play in a city you have never been to before and win some new fans over, you can feel it in the audience when they are having fun and enjoying the

#### AU: Describe your experience from the start of the band to where you are now.

FTF: Surreal. We say all the time that our job is very cool. We get to do some of the craziest things and call it work. We all love making music videos, it's one of our favourite parts of this whole journey. Ultimately, we are storytellers and making a great music video is a way to visually show our fans what the lyrics mean to us and to bring the story to life. The whole process of writing, recording, and playing shows is something we all love and we hope we get to keep doing it on bigger stages all over the world.

#### AU: Spotify lists a lot of your listeners from Mexico and Brazil, is there a story behind that?

FTF: That is mostly connected to the YouTube reactor community that has been so incredibly supportive of us. There is a bit of a shared fan base between us and the Mexican rock band The Warning. Many of The Warning fans have really embraced our music so you see some cross over there. We are so grateful for the YouTube reactor community; what they do to share music and help emerging bands gain an audience is invaluable. We are beyond grateful for all of the fans around the world listening to our music. It's crazy to think about someone driving a stretch of highway somewhere in Brazil or New Zealand or wherever and rocking out to one of our songs.

freezethefallband.com Photo Credit: DoUPhotograpy!



WHERE TO FIND US

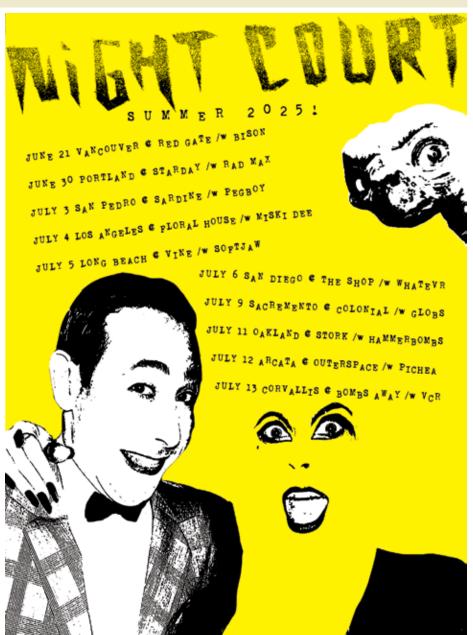
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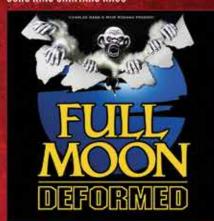
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## **Powerlöad**

#### **Interview with Shel Shock**

#### By Dre Calderon

Absolute Underground: Who am I talking to and why are you going on tour?

**Shel Shock:** We are Powerlöad, and one of us is your biological father. Sorry we had to meet this way. We are going on tour to impregnate Ogopogo as she has DD knockers and we're planning on creating a race of humanoid water gods to destroy posers both on land and sea.

# AU: What dates and locations do you have set up for this regional tour?

**SS:** We are preparing ourselves by canvassing the great region of Saskatoon June 21st. After that the hunt for Ogopogo is on. July, we start in

Calgary on the third, then Kamloops the fourth and the fifth in Kelowna. Check our socials for event info.

# AU: What show are you looking forward to the most, and why?

**SS:** We look forward to all our gigs and especially to having an orgy with Ogopogo, but we have a special night on July 19th in Edmonton. We are releasing our first vinyl offering, our single that was released on New Year's Day, "Hotline" c/w "All Ass No Breaks".

# AU: Have you played outside of Edmonton before? How was the experience, if so?

**S5:** Yeah, we did a string of dates out east. They call it the "rust belt", we call it the "rusty igloo." Look it up. All we know is Cleveland certainly does rock. Hell Hammered played the gig, got drunk, made out with his buddy from Necroprophecy, attempted to pole dance (he

can't) and then ate three 300mg peach gummy rings and passed out.

# AU: How do you guys stay sane on tour? Do you?

**SS:** Dude, you gotta be sane to stay sane. Don't threaten us with a good time.

# AU: Any future touring plans? Where to?

**SS:** Once we conquer Ogopogo, we are going to Scotland to fuck Nessie. He's older and not as good looking, but it's all good. We've rode the Nessie's Revenge waterslide at West Edmonton Mall like eight times and that thing can prepare your ass for any kind of beating. If someone wants to book us, reach out. Us sluts will go anywhere.

# AU: Is the band testing out any new songs on tour?

**SS:** Yeah, we have been VERY HARD at work preparing new tunes to get everyone wet and hard.

# AU: Tell us about the Edmonton show? This is a record release?

SS: Yup all seven inches of our Löad are coming straight to ya with the bad boys in Revelator opening up the festivities. We invited Lover and Bottom Line from Calgary cuz if anyone knows how to throw a party it's Powerlöad with a bunch of guys from a city that floods yearly.

#### AU: When do we get a full-length already?

**SS:** This winter sounds good enough for us. It's cold when you never wear a shirt.

#### AU: Any famous last words?

SS: No one will be able to hear our last words

# SENEWATHE WHEEL



because Powerlöad will outlive you all once we harness Ogopogo's immortality through her sex parts.

powerload.bandcamp.com FB: powerload.yeg





#### Chris Gordon, Chris Griffin & Sidekick Steve McGowan

Interview by Ross Hansen

AU: Tell me about your podcast.

Gord: Every time we come here, we do a podcast called *The Sleepover Studs: Pop Culture and Poppin' Boners*. Every episode you're going to be up past your bedtimes. We talk about toys, video games, babes, earrings. On Sunday we're going to the Vancouver Toy Show.

AU: What do you do at the Toy Show?

**Griff:** Make fun of nerds... Steal their babes.

AU: Haha, because there's a lot of babes at the Toy Show.

**Griff:** We mostly just talk to the booths, I guess. **Gord:** Talk to the boobs. Get 'em all jigglin' and stuff.

**Gord:** Anyways, Griff and I try and do shows... When you get to a point of comedy like when you start out, you work together, 'cuz you're so new. Then you get to work with a headliner.

**Griff:** For me, it was kind of different because I started late in comedy, I was pretty much 30,

which was awesome because I got to open for Gord, but then you get to a certain point where you're both headlining, it's like... shit...

Gord: So now we're both headlining so we try to host for each other, open for each other, tour together. Even stuff like this, Griff is on the show with me tonight and McGowan, I'm staying at his place tonight, and McGowan's like, "Fuck! I never get to work on these shows," which is awesome because he's hosting the show at Surrey Yuk's in May and then he's coming to

Calgary Yuk's. That's confirmed, right?

**Steve:** Pretty much.

**Gord:** Steve... You should sell air fresheners at your shows.

**Griff:** There's a girl who does that in the states, but they're gross. The names are terrible, like "pussy fart."

**Gord:** Haha, Steve said "girls love it when your place smells good." Oh, that's how you're trying to get them now? Because your place smells so intense, like an air freshener? Wafting out the window, attracting women.

**Steve:** Leave the patio door open a bit with the fan [laughs]. So, I started this in 2020...

**Gord:** ... "Oh hey, hey! That apartment smells like a generic gas station. We should go in there."

AU: Haha! I understand you guys are close friends, how did this all come around?

Gord/Griff: Oh boy...

**Griff:** Well, we were basically separated at borth [sic], haha oops, can you not print that?

**Gord:** We were identical twins separated at birth... fell in love, realized we were related so

we couldn't, y'know, so we had to become friends, kinda like *Star Wars*. We were conjoined, but like, at the genitals, but when they separated us, I got a lot more of the dick.

**Griff:** Mmhmm, yeah, I got the balls. It was a trade-off, I guess. So, if it's on record, that's exactly what happened. That's the truth. When they found out, they weren't 100% sure about our lineage. They tested our DNA, and both of our chromosomes were XXX.

**Gord:** Our parents, when we were older told us when they consummated, they were hit by lightning.

#### AU: So, you guys have an extra chromosome?

**Gord:** Yeah, XXX chromosome. Yeah, we're like two Vin Diesel's, 2 Vin Diesel 2 Furious Diesel.

AU: Is there a joke, or routine where you realized you can make a career out of this?

**Gord:** Oh fuck, not yet. I remember thinking, the first time I went on stage, I thought I was going to be funny, they would see it, and instant fame and fortune

**Griff:** Which is very common.

**Gord:** I think you have to have that delusion and confidence to first to go on stage. At first, I was insanely scared but I knew it was something I wanted to do. First time, I didn't kill, I didn't bomb, but I knew I was addicted. I don't know if there was a point where I thought of it as a career. You move from an amateur night to a pro-am night, host a show, longer shows, and then send you out by a promoter to a road gig.

**Griff:** We started in Alberta, which is a lot more road-work, basically every town will have gigs. **Gord:** Or there are other comics, who need somebody, somebody who's good that they can take on the road with them.

**Griff:** It's funny, one of the first times I was in the car with Gordon to do a guest spot on some show, then his agent called him and said "Hey, we'll book you back for these gigs, but we want you to headline now." That's the step in your career where you realize "I can make a bit of a

# and and and

living off this."The agent said to Gord, "We can book you for this headlining tour but you'll need an opener." Gord said to her "Well, I'm in the car with a guy right now..."The agent replied, "Ok, we need him for 30 minutes." I only got 10 minutes, at the time but I got through the show.

AU: Where in Canada have you performed where you thought "this place is kinda fucked up"?

Gord/Griff: Cranbrook!

Gord: I remember making jokes there because they had a porn shop right beside a religious literature place, I'd make jokes about two people exiting and the same time and "BWHEEEEH". Remember Zellers? They also had a mall that had two Zellers, at each end of the mall. How fucked up of a town are you?

**Griff:** You'd be doing a show, and it was a thing where you'd make fun of the shittier town beside it, but Cranbrook is the only town where you can say "So, I was in Cranbrook..." and the crowd would yell "Fuck that place!" because there's no place shittier.

#### AU: You guys got anything coming up?

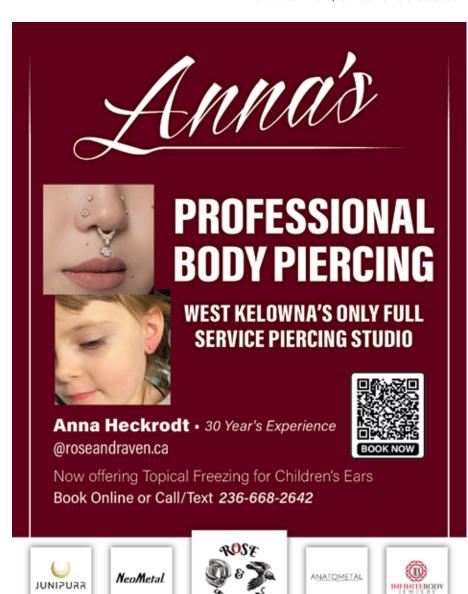
**Gord:** Oh, yeah, we do, Chris Griffin and Chris Gordon will be at the Ottawa Absolute Comedy, June 10; Griffin is headlining there, which will be fucking awesome.

**Steve:** I'm gonna back you up to June 6th and 7th.

**Gord:** Oh yeah! Steve McGowan is putting on some shows, June 6th at Brookswood Brewing. Where are we on the 7th?

**Steve:** Jamestown, which is in Langley. It's a cancer fundraiser hosted by Chris and Jamie Ruscheinski. You can get more info at *twinscancerfundraising.com*.

**AU:** Thank you all for your time, I look forward to seeing the Chris Griffin and Chris Gordon duo, and Steve. I guess.













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

**Big Fist:** What's up, we are Big Fist from Toronto, ON! Not sure how infamous we are in general but if we were infamous for anything it would probably be for our stupid name, haha!

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

BF: Big Fist actually started as my little side project during the pandemic. It was only supposed to be that first EP (Real Birds) recorded/ mixed/mastered by myself and just thrown on SoundCloud for fun, but then I showed the demos to Vadim and he wanted to get on-board as the bass player and record/mix/master the record. We then got a few show offers, so we rounded out the band with myself (Joe Galbrand, vox), Vadim Balanyuk (bass/vox), Dave Galbrand (guitar/vox), Chris Cadieux (quitar/vox) and most recently Kai Castro (drums). Also shout out to our first drummers Dan Goldstein and Taylor Martin! Three EPs and a few shows later, here we are. We're just about having fun and writing good music really. DIY is also very important to us and we take great pride in doing most things from recording/ mixing/mastering to artwork and music videos all ourselves! Our huge project which is set to release in the fall I think is a testament to that. We make a great team and everyone in the band is incredibly talented not only on their instruments and song writing but in various parts of the band.

#### AU: What inspired the name?

**BF:** The name actually came from one of Bayonetta's moves in *Super Smash Bros Wii U*. The move in question is her summoning a big fist made out of her hair and every time someone would do the move, my friends and I would just say "Big Fist." My friend Joey Martel turned to me at some point and said "That's the name of your

hardcore band," and he was correct.

# AU: What was your first introduction to hardcore?

**BF:** My first introduction to hardcore was probably from the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* series soundtracks as a kid. Later on, I randomly picked up Descendents' *Everything Sux* at Sonic Boom and from there started to discover other hardcore bands like Minor Threat and Gorilla Biscuits.

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

**BF:** For myself, I draw a lot of inspiration from classic hardcore punk bands for that pure energy and speed. Lyrically, I like to write about whatever I'm thinking about at that time or what's going on in my life; it could span from a song about

how I feel like my life is going nowhere ("Another Fender Bender") to a song about how ridiculous it is to wear jeans at the gym ("Proper Gym Wear"). Lately I've been experimenting with more storytelling and horror themes which has been a fun change of pace!

# AU: What do you consider to be the essential hardcore

**BF:** There's too many to choose from! Gun to my head though, I'd have to say Minor Threat's *First Two Seven Inches* compilation, it really is Hardcore 101 and also, it's just the bees' knees.

# AU: Who are your strongest musical influences?

**BF:** Definitely Minor Threat, some of our other influences include Black Flag, Gorilla Biscuits, Mr.Bungle, Descendents, The Misfits, Bad Religion, Turnstile, NOFX, Frenzal Rhomb, The Dillinger Escape Plan, Avenged Sevenfold, Strung Out, Propagandhi, and A LOT more.

AU: What can you tell us about your latest

#### album? What can we expect to hear?

**BF:** It's our more ambitious project for sure. We are really trying to stretch out our sound and get weird with it! We've got some rocky tracks, we have some death metal moments, of course we have some incredibly fast d-beats (Sorry Kai), it's really all over the place and that's exactly what I wanted for this project. I went into it with the goal of being the Ween of punk rock/hardcore and the guys really helped realize that goal by bringing their own not necessarily hardcore influences into the mix.

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

**BF:** I wanted to try and do more storytelling on this record just to break out of the constant woe



is me move that I tend to fall back into a lot. Some of the songs are influenced by certain horror movies, monsters and real-life events and then of course I wrote a lot about what was happening in my life, moving downtown to a not-so-great area, trying to stay positive in the face of incredible stress and self-doubt, the deterioration of a close friendship. You know, life.

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

**BF:** My personal favourite has to be Allan Gardens! It's a really fun and extremely fast (again, sorry Kai) song about the new neighborhood I had recently moved into. It's more of a melodic track with some awesome harmonies and just absolutely devastating drums.

# AU: Most underappreciated Canadian band in your opinion?

**BF:** Comeback kid! They are absolute beasts and everyone who's into hardcore should check'em out. "G.M. Vincent and I" and "False Idols Fall" are absolute bangers!

## AU: Any upcoming shows or

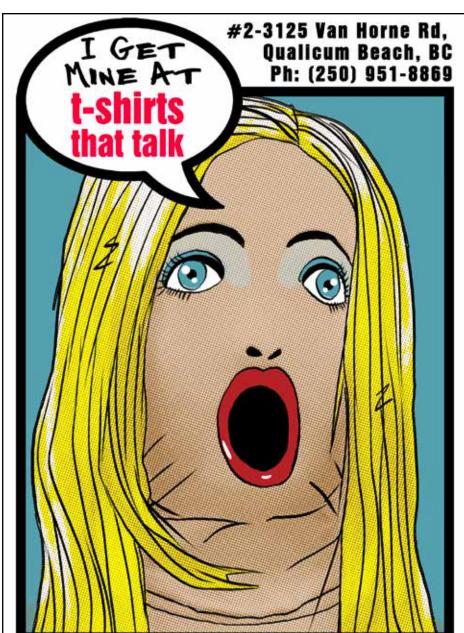
**BF:** As of right now, we have a show coming up in August with a lineup of bands who all have "Big" in the name aptly named "The Big Show" but nothing has been announced as of yet. We also are planning a release show with a bunch of friends and are kicking around the idea of doing a little run once the record drops so keep tabs on us for updates!

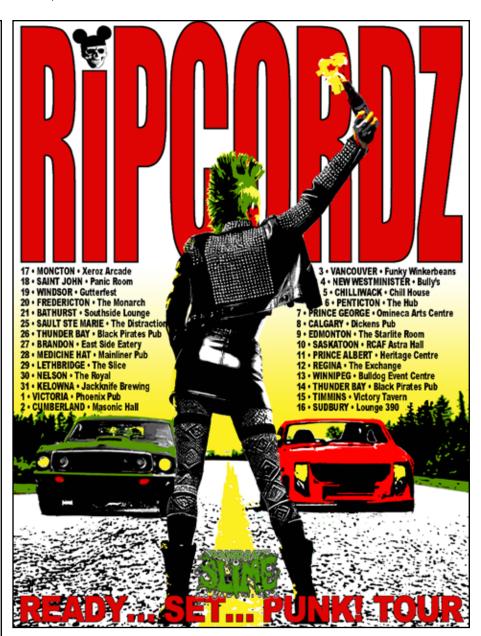
#### AU: Any final words for our readers?

**BF:** Go out there and make some cool stuff! Make some noise, draw a picture, do a dance, try not to get stuck on your screens for too long and live while you can. If you

read this far and/or have ever listened to us or come to a show, thank you so much! We can't wait to share what we've been working on! Shout out to Absolute Underground for having us, we appreciate it!

You can find Big First on all streaming services. IG: @BIGFISTHARDCORE









#### **Underground In Recovery By Peter Barret**

Punk and metal have always been about rebellion, standing against the grain, and screaming for a change. Breaking down the walls society builds around us. Somewhere along the way, the rebellious spirit got hijacked. Whether drugs, alcohol, or even toxic relationships, addiction has become an ugly parasite, feeding on the very rebellion we hold dear. We need to recognize that addiction is not a badge of honor; it's a trap, a chain that keeps us from being the fully empowered individuals we were meant to be. And the only real way out of this shitstorm is through self-work.

I get it. Addiction promises escape. It promises relief from the grind, the pain, the noise of the world. When life is shit, even dirt tastes better. It's that exact lie that tells you that the next high will give you the escape you're searching for. It's seductive, like the way the scene originally promised freedom from conformity. But here's the twist: addiction doesn't liberate you; it enslaves you. Trapped in a cycle of desperation and destruction, feeding off the need for instant gratification while stealing your life. The chase for the next boost only leaves you lower than before, disconnected from the very people and ideals that should matter most.

"We will not witness, this anymore, this is the end for you my friend, I can't forgive I won't forget, on and on we sing our songs on and on, the wars wage on..."- Anti-Flag

In the scene, we see it everywhere. The stories of legends who fell victim. The countless friends in the crowd whose addiction pulled them away from their own potential. Homelessness. Crime. Suicide. ODs. I lost two more friends since my last article. Two dead, one back into the hard spiral. It's easy to get lost in the haze of rebellion, but a needle isn't real rebellion—it's something far more sinister. It's a sensual deception away from the real work that needs to be done: facing the

world, taking responsibility, and building a real future.

Let's be real: escaping addiction isn't as easy as breaking up with someone or dropping a bad habit. You can't just "ghost" on fentanyl. The key lies in hard, very hard, self-work. It hurts, and nobody can do it for you. Take a hard look in the mirror, confront those dragons that come at you, and start clawing your way out of the hole you've dug. The underground music scene has always been about self-expression and authenticity, why sell out to the same vices that lock you into the most hollow and broken version of yourself? Why trust the morality of the dealer who kept supplying your dead friend, even when everybody saw her spiralling and turning into a skeleton?

Self-work doesn't have to mean turning into some polished version of success. You don't have to turn into some militant straightedge dickhead. It's just taking control of your own narrative, learning from the hard knocks, refusing to let your weakest moments define who you are. This has always been the struggle— the grind to stay present, stay focused, and fight through the bullshit around us. Recovery is about reclaiming yourself, your mind, your body, and your soul, no matter how hard this world checks us. If you're going to break the chains of addiction, it's going to take effort, sweat, and a hell of a lot of grit. But the reward is your authentic self, to live life on your terms, to create, feel, and fight for something better.

This scene, the gigs, the skate parks, the record stores, has always been about communityabout creating a space for people who feel out of place, misfits who were lost in a world that didn't understand them. The same goes for recovery. It's not about isolating yourself or pretending you can do it all alone. Reach out. Check out a 12-step meeting. Talk to people who get it. Build a network of like-minded folks who are trying to rebuild themselves, too. We're stronger together than apart.

Addiction may be a dark force, but it doesn't have to win. Coming into the underground scene wasn't supposed to be about escaping the world— it was about facing it with balls, defiance, and resilience. The most rebellious thing you can do is take control of your life, take care of your body, mind, and spirit, and refuse to let addiction dictate your future. It's literally "hip to be square" in 2025. When scumbags profit from your addiction, the real revolution is in self-work. So, fight back. Build yourself up. It's a battle, but

it's one worth fighting. Punk rock isn't dead. And neither are you. Next article: "A playlist of deadly recovery songs" WhatIsTheProgram.com







# **Maribou State**

TroyBoi • The Victoria Symphony plays Daft Punk AHEE · Mary Droppinz · Mat The Alien · Pigeon Hole

Abstrakt Sonance • Prayer Handz • Dust Cwaine

# **Public Enemy**

Descendents • The Funk Hunters feat. Chali 2na Shakey Graves • Macy Gray

WHIPPED CREAM . Hollow Coves . ProbCause Set OMBIIGIZI • Handsome Tiger • Thomas Anthony Return Of The Jaded • Canadian Beauty

NXWOTTIES (Anderson .Paak & Knxwledge)

Sleater-Kinney • The Dead South • JP Saxe

Billianne • Phibes • TVBOO • Fort Knox Five Mood Swing & Chevy Bass • Wyatt C. Louis • Control Room

Westwood In The Dome • The Choirs YYJ does Radiohead • Frog Eyes Stund • Naturalist • T3MPR • S@M I @M b2b Steph Tsunami

# Alessia Cara

Charlotte Cardin • Walk Off The Earth William Prince • Taiki Nulight

Dirtwire • Honeycomb • Hoang Jake Vaadeland & The Sturgeon River Boys . Cadence Weapon But The Choirs YYJ does Divas • oncor • GRIIMM • DJ Boitano • DJ Dabbler



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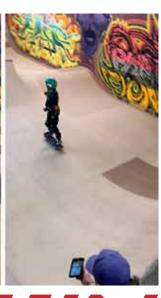












# **Evie Pritchard**

#### **By Jimmy Miller**

These days, local skateparks are full of skateboard talent and everyone on Instagram is amazing The pace behind today's modern scene feels

the fastest it has ever moved. Kids seeminaly start rolling right out of the womb and parents are increasingly keen to be involved in their child's skateboard journey.

Compared to the past, it's overwhelming to calibrate the vast access to

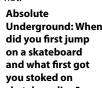
trick development and exposure to different styles through a simple scroll on your phone. It's intriguing to see the variety of terrain one can envision for a line or even how a trick gets dissected for better learning; for the right skater, these are fruitful times to explore.

At only 12 years old, Nanaimo's Evie Pritchard is paying attention and ready to rip. She is a hungry competitor who is globally ranked but also keen to simply roll for fun. She skates for the thrill and the joy, and her family is down to support her goals, contest oriented or not.

> did you first jump on a skateboard and what first got you stoked on skateboarding?

Evie Pritchard: My dad got us onto scooters and bikes when I was about three and I did that until I was seven. Eventually he got us skateboards because

he wanted us to surf with him, but when the pandemic hit everything was less accessible. So, we ended up skating for fun on the parkway trail near our house. In 2021, I started skating even more and trying a little harder.



tend to skate more. so intense? EP: Not really. You just have

to stay calm, focused and rely on your practicing prior to the competition.

#### AU: You've recently been part of some skateboard programming put on by Victoria's 94 Forward in conjunction with Canada Skateboard. Please tell us more about this.

these really fun camps closer to home. It's a good chance to skate with more people and to progress and I hope I get to do more in the future

AU: You crossed paths with Vans Shoes

Phoenix, Arizona (where you got secnd place in PHX AM Women's Street). What was it like meeting him and getting a tour of the Vans offices?

EP: It was surreal to think I was meeting THE legendary face of the best skate shoes in the world. It was so amazing to get a tour of the Vans headquarters. Everyone with Vans was so cool and supportive. We got to see where the magic happens, where they design all their products. I saw so much skateboarding history-old, original skateboards and wild vintage shoes! It was the opportunity of a lifetime.

#### AU: In addition to Vans, who else are you sponsored by?

**EP:** I skate for Primary Skateshop in Nanaimo,

and I am also thankful to be sponsored by Real through Supra Distribution and DLXSF.

#### AU: Where is your favourite place to skate?

EP: I love Poods in California and Zelienople in Pennsylvania. In Canada, Topaz and Legacy in Lethbridge, as well as Spin and Le Taz for indoors.

#### AU: Where is someplace in the world you still really want to skate?

# THRED SESS

AU: Many of us caught our first glimpse of you through @thepritchardsisters Instagram page, yet nowadays you seem to be really going for

it individually. Are your sisters still skating as much?

EP: My sisters have started to focus on their other interests like volleyball, swimming, and other sports, but we still go to the skatepark together and when we're on vacation they

AU: You're obviously good at competing in contests, is there a secret to performing well when the pressure can be

EP: I am just thankful for the opportunity to have

Steve Van Doren down in

Skateboards, Thunder Trucks and Spitfire Wheels

EP: I really want to skate in the Philippines and Japan and skate the amazing scenic skateparks and explore the culture. I have a grandmother

from the Philippines.

#### AU: What are some of your favourite tricks?

EP: Favourite tricks are blunts and heelflips, but I like all tricks.

#### AU: What sort of attitude does it take to be a good skater?

**EP:** You need to be persistent and be okay with taking some hard falls. Being calm and focused, but also having fun will make the journey easier

#### AU: Who did you look up to that influenced you on your journey?

**EP:** Rayssa Leal because her story is super inspiring - she worked really hard, got so far, and she's so positive that it makes me think that you can get there with persistence and

#### AU: What sort of music and bands do you like to listen to when skateboarding?

**EP:** I like all music but my favorites are Depeche mode, Modern Talking, Bob Marley, Grateful Dead, and '80s music.

#### AU: What is it about skateboarding that makes it so enjoyable?

EP: It is so free and flowy and it feels like you're flying. I love to try new tricks. I love how it's impossible that you can never get too good.

You can always learn something new and discover a new variation. You can go so fast and ollie so far and high that it is the closest thing to flying I've felt, and the feeling of landing a new trick is almost surreal. It's like a rush of energy... that's so strong... and it's so exciting. Once you finish your skate session you go back to normal after all the energy has finally settled.

#### AU: Any advice for up-and-coming skateboarders?

**EP:** Don't be intimidated to skate in front of nonbeginners because they're not judaina vou- thev were also once beginners. Also, don't be scared to ask for advice

#### AU: Any shout-outs to

EP: I want to thank my sponsors for everything they've done for me. I also want to give many thanks to those who believe in me and who have shown their support in many ways. It all means a lot to me.

#### IG: @evie.p.pritchard YT: @EviePritchardSK8

Photos by Matt McLeod Action Sequence by Jimmy Miller







Absolute **Underground: Who are** we talking to today and what do you do?

Janeen Davis: I am the Vice President of sales at DEALR Cannabis Inc. I lead our incredible sales



JD: I entered the cannabis industry in 2001. selling cannabis, but I didn't live on my first grow until 2005. When legalization occurred in 2018, I knew I needed to focus on compliance and sales because, truthfully, my husband is the one with the incredible green thumb. I tend to kill plants, but I can sell them exceptionally well. When I met the team that founded DEALR Cannabis, our visions aligned. We started by packaging and processing some of the best growers' cannabis into our brands and have since moved into in-house cultivation.

#### AU: What drew you to the cannabis industry?

JD: While everyone I grew up with enjoyed getting drunk, I was drawn to smoking cannabis. I have a high-energy personality, and cannabis helps me find a calmer, more mellow state. By the time I was 16, I started selling it to smoke for free, which turned into a lifelong endeavour.

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

JD: Transitioning to the legal market has been straightforward for me because I've always balanced a corporate career alongside selling cannabis and have a knack for handling the extensive paperwork and regulatory compliance involved. Participating in the legal cannabis industry is not for the faint of heart. We pay nearly 38% of our top-line revenue to the government—it's like paying for protection, except the

protection is avoiding

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

JD: The best part of my job is working with the same people I stood shoulder-to-shoulder

with back when we risked our freedom to grow and sell cannabis. There's a true camaraderie among those who built the thriving cannabis market that the government and corporations stepped into in 2018

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

JD: We have over 80 products on the market, focusing on the latest trending strains and unique genetics. You can find us under the brands BC Smalls, DEALR, BC OZ Lineup, BC Doobies, and

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

**JD:** At least 97% of the genetics on the market today are technically hybrids, and I'll stand by that. I prefer to smoke weed with a fuel-like aroma. The shift in vernacular around the term "gas" confuses a seasoned gal like myself, it's a flavour profile not a quality metric in my opinion.

AU: What is your favourite all-time strain to

JD: Dosidos Gelato by Paradise Valley Genetics. It hasn't hit the market vet. but it's my all-time favourite strain.

#### AU: What are some medicinal properties of cannabis that people might not know about?

JD: Cannabis, specifically THC, can act as a vasodilator, meaning it widens blood vessels rather than constricting

them. As someone with asthma, I find this beneficial, as of me, it can aid in bronchodilation, relaxing the muscles around the airways and making

it easier to breathe.

#### AU: What makes an expert grower, in your opinion?

JD: An expert grower is a constant student of the craft. The most knowledgeable experts don't claim to know everything; they are always seeking to learn and expand their expertise.

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

JD: While I'm not a grower, I can say that genetics are critical for yield, flavor, bud structure, potency,

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CANNABIS

and resistance to diseases or microbial issues like powdery mildew. Follow breeders like Ryan Lee of Chemovar to learn from him and other reputable

#### AU: Why is it important to support local

growers?

JD: Supporting local growers means supporting local businesses and the industry that has been built over decades in

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

JD: Our brands—BC Smalls, DEALR, BC OZ Lineup, BC Doobies, and Minpins— are available at Evergreen in Kitsilano, which delivers anywhere in the province via ecsvan.ca.

dealrcannabis.com

IG: @supportyourlocaldealr\_

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X: @yourdealrbrand



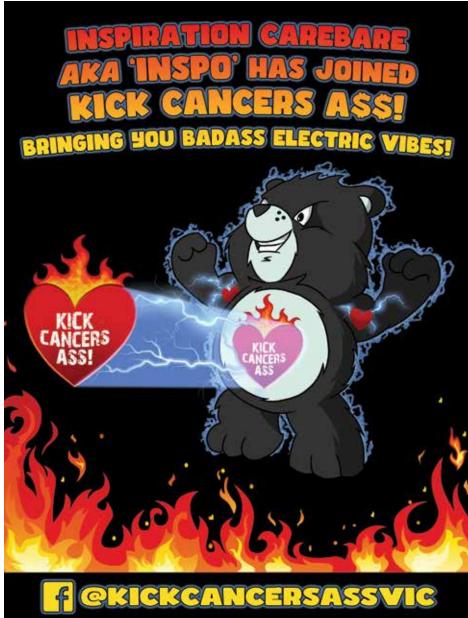
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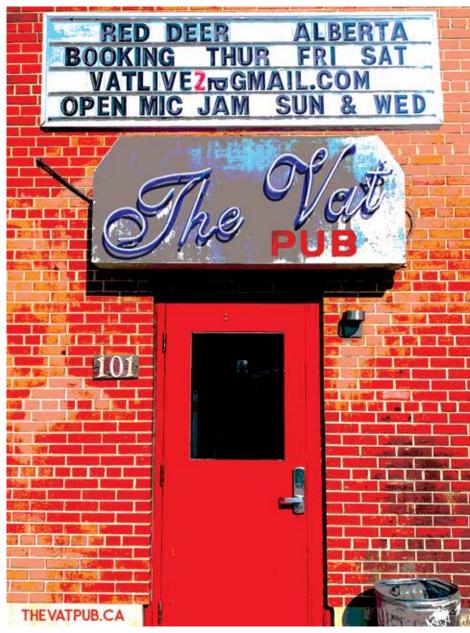
Mr.FertilizerVictoria@gmail.com

**Phone** (250) 381-4644











#### Grassroots Harm Reduction Uprooted By Legalization By Ted Smith

Research acknowledging the benefits of compassion clubs over the legal medical cannabis program and the stark, negative consequences of legalization have been recently published in

the Harm Reduction Journal. In the study, Marilou Gagnon and Heather Hobbs explain how compassion clubs have practiced harm reduction for decades, yet they have been left out of academic discussions of harm reduction and out of the new legal framework. By documenting the various benefits witnessed in the non-profit distribution of medical cannabis, this analysis highlights the

profound loss experienced in B.C. after almost all long-standing clubs closed down after legalization.

The report builds on the premises that "(1) 'cannabis harm reduction' is not new and that it predates the current toxic drug supply crisis, (2) that 'cannabis harm reduction' has been practiced in community for decades, developed

by people with lived experience, and championed by compassion clubs and medical dispensaries that not only provided low-threshold access to medical cannabis but also worked together to develop guidelines for community-based distribution of medical cannabis that incorporated harm reduction principles, (3) that conceptualizing 'cannabis harm reduction' based on the substitution

effect of cannabis is too narrow in focus, and finally (4) that turning to cannabis compassion clubs and medical dispensaries to understand how 'cannabis harm reduction' was practiced before cannabis legalization is imperative to resist epistemic erasure." Pg 3

For members of the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club, this study provides solid evidence to

support our arguments for a temporary exemption to the Cannabis Act. Packed with powerful quotes from participants, "Conceptualizing'cannabis harm reduction': lessons learned from cannabis compassion clubs and medical dispensaries in British Columbia, Canada," recognizes the role these organizations play in

reducing the harms of drug use and drug policies. Addressing the gaping hole left behind when storefront medical dispensaries closed across the province after 2018, Gagnon and Hobbs have redefined the role of compassion clubs from the traditional framework of being substitution projects or medical facilities into the more accurate and compelling framework of being a harm reduction service.

#### harmreductionjournal.biomedcentral. com/articles/10.1186/s12954-025-01199-8

"As noted above, we believe that there is a real risk of epistemic erasure with the loss of cannabis compassion clubs and medical dispensaries in British Columbia. And while the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club (VCBC) and The Medicinal Cannabis Dispensary (TMCD) continue to operate at this time and resist enforcement measures (including by taken legal actions), it is important to document what made cannabis compassion clubs and medical dispensaries so effective, impactful and innovative before legalization." Pg 26 Cannabis as a harm reduction tool has always

been a central theme behind compassion clubs, though it has usually been framed as a medical or substitution product. By viewing the activities of compassion clubs through a harm reduction lens, this study brings cannabis into the larger discussion of drug use and illustrates how it can help mitigate the opiate crisis. While the general public ignorantly believes that legalization made all of the problems with medical cannabis disappear, this research documents the harsh effect it has had on patients and the communities that once supported them.





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#### All the Love You Cannes By Vince D'Amato

Die-hard Troma fans might know about their film documenting their utterly nutty involvement in the 2001 Cannes Film Festival, All the Love You

Cannes- and while I personally tried to avoid those Troma cameras as much as possible, that was in fact the first time I'd worked with Troma, and my first time in Cannes. 24 years later, that film festival still brings up nostalgia for that Tromatic era, which was really the last of Troma's heyday. Sadly, as each year passes, the nostalgia wanes just ever so

slightly, and attending now with Troma nowhere in sight makes my heart feel a little heavy. This year, almost all of our business was finished mid-festival, so I had time to actually see a few films. A standout was Alpha, the new film by Julia Ducournau, whose film *Titane* won the Palme d'Or four years ago. Alpha is brilliant and unsettling,

could have never existed if not for George Romero's original "Dead Trilogy" – in fact, the themes and aesthetics in the first two-thirds of Alpha could have placed it comfortably between the events of Romero's Night of the Living Dead and Dawn of the Dead. You could almost even watch

those films in that order to create some weirdly transcendent fan-fictional storyline... until you realize that Ducournau's film is actually something else altogether. As it gets into the last third, where what at first appeared to be something akin to a possible zombie movie, Alpha takes a sharp turn

and clearly crystalizes into its own imaginative virus-apocalypse, and we realize that we can't completely trust what we've been shown so far. Groundbreaking and unsettling; intensely dramatic and somewhat stunning with its orchestration of soundtrack, music, and visuals. This year was the first time I'd been able to see so many films since my visit there

with Troma so many years ago, which in itself made me long for those long-gone heyday years, when we saw Citizen Toxie: The Toxic Avenger Part IV in that cinema just off the Croisette; it was also the year we saw David Lynch's Mullholland Drive and Troma's market screening of Parts of the Family, which I'd thought would've been one

#### of their bigger hits, the

leading actress had even shown up at Cannes to promote the movie, but somehow it never took off for them. I wonder now if it was the timing of the whole thing. It was all a young and wildly energized sprint back then. That

was something special. Now the festival is filled with important international and Hollywood

films, there isn't really any room left for The Toxic Avenger anymore (maybe this upcoming Hollywood remake will change all that?), so we rely on the innovative international genre filmmakers like Julia Ducournau to fill that inspirational gap. I can only imagine what this festival was like back when George Romero's  ${\it Dawn\ of}$ 

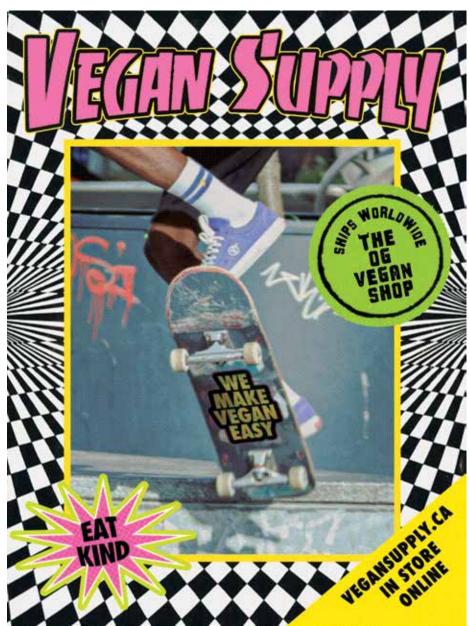
 $\textit{the Dead} \ \mathsf{premiered} \ \mathsf{there.} \ \mathsf{Only imagine...}$ 







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# **DECIMATE METALFEST**ANNOUNCES 2025 LINEUP

Decimate Metalfest is an all-ages music and arts Festival w/ camping in Millet, Alberta on June 13 and 14, 2025

Decimate Metalfest is thrilled to announce its return to the Millet Agriplex Arena in Millet, Alberta, on June 13th and 14th, 2025, for another electrifying weekend of heavy metal music and community spirit. As one of Western Canada's premier metal festivals, Decimate Metalfest continues to deliver unforgettable experiences for metal enthusiasts of all kinds!

#### The Official Lineup for Decimate 2025:

Building on the momentum of previous years, Decimate Metalfest 2025 promises to elevate the experience even further. Organizers have diligently curated a roster of bands that will deliver high-octane performances, featuring an incredible lineup of talent from across Canada and beyond:

INTO ETERNITY (Regina, SK), THE BUNNY
THE BEAR (New York / Florida, USA), FAMOUS
STRANGERS (Edmonton, AB), UNTIMELY DEMISE
(Saskatoon, SK), HAWKING (Vancouver, BC),
NECHT (Calgary / Ireland), THE UNENDING
(Kelowna, BC), SYRYN (Calgary, AB), BRAIN STEM
(Edmonton, AB), AGE OF ASHES (Edmonton, AB),
ALMOST DEAD (San Francisco, USA), FLOODGATE
(Kelowna, BC), SKEPSIS (Edmonton, AB), THE 21ST
AGENDA (Red Deer, AB), WARWOLF (Edmonton,
AB), OCEANS UNDER STARS (Edmonton, AB),
RENEGADES (Edmonton, AB), SUPERMODEL
TAXIDERMY (Fort McMurray, AB), BEYOND
SUFFERING (Calgary, AB), ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

(Edmonton, AB), VICTORIA LIES (Calgary, AB), COUNTED AMONG SAINTS (Edmonton, AB), PER VELUM (YOUTH) (Calgary, AB), KRADYIL (YOUTH) (Banff, AB), BIRTHDAY GIRL (Calgary, AB), RED SILENCE (Edmonton, AB), DAMIEN GHOUL (Edmonton, AB), MORTIS X (Edmonton, AB), ABOYACTUALLY (Edmonton, AB), and JOJOMOJO (Edmonton, AB).

# Ticket Information can be found at: decimatemetalfest.com/tickets Camping Accommodations:

Camping is available at the Millet Lions Memorial Campground, conveniently located within walking distance of the Millet Agriplex Arena. Camping rates are not-for-profit and go towards maintaining the wonderful community of Millet! Please note that camping reservations must be made separately through the campground's official website: milletlionscampground.com/

# reserve-campsite Vendor and Volunteer Applications Now Open:

Vendors can take advantage of the opportunity to sell their products to a dedicated audience while volunteers gain behind-the-scenes experience and help bring the festival to life ( accepting youth volunteers).

Vendor Applications: *decimatemetalfest.com/ vend* 

#### Volunteer Applications: *decimatemetalfest.com/*

For the latest updates, lineup announcements, ticket purchases, and more check out the Decimate Metalfest website and Decimate Metalfest's social media. Check out the playlist "Decimate Metalfest 2025" on Spotify.



# ARMSTRONG METALFEST Unveils 2025 Lineup

#### July 11-12, Armstrong, BC

Since 2009, West Metal Entertainment and Armstrong Metalfest have not only fostered the talent of hundreds of local bands, but have imported well-known, international acts to the quiet, Canadian town of Armstrong, British Columbia

Each year hundreds of metal music fans from Canada and the USA descend into the picturesque Okanagan Valley and under the blistering sun, they spend three days camping, taking in a ton of heavy metal fun over two days, spectating wrestling events, participating in scavenger hunts, and catching up with their extended metal family.

The festival has seen such renowned headliners as Kataklysm, Cattle Decapitation, Archspire, Nekrogoblikon, Origin, Rivers of Nihil, Warbinger, Fallujah, Striker, and Beyond Creation as well as emerging artists from across North America. At the end of the revelry, the festival disappears without a trace, leaving the landscape as pristine as it has always been.

Now Armstrong Metalfest is celebrating 15 years of mountain moshing in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, and has unveiled its conquering 2025 lineup, featuring such hard-thrashing bands such as Havok, Glyph, Riot City, Born of Osiris, The Browning, Virvum, Gravemass, Drowning in Blood, Hísemtuks Hímin and much more.

#### AMF 2025 FULL Lineup:

Havok (Denver, CO), Born of Osiris (Chicago, IL), Glyph (Seattle, WA), Riot City (Calgary, AB), The

Browning (Kansas City, KS), Virvum (Zürich, Switzerland), Atavistia (Vancouver, BC), Drowning, In Blood (Montreal, QC), Convictions (Fremont, OH), Scalding (Vancouver, BC), Syryn (Calgary, AB), Stortregn (Geneva, Switzerland), The Defect (Kansas City, KS), Gravemass (Vancouver, BC), Lover (Calgary, AB), Yegg (Vancouver Island, BC), Hísemtuks Hími•n (Spokane,

WA), The Spruce Moose (Edmonton, AB), Volt (Fort McMurray, AB), Jisei (Vancouver, BC), Nomad (Okanagan Valley, BC), Planetkiller (Kelowna, BC), Shackled To The Throne (Edmonton, AB), The Cadavor Dog (High River, AB), Famous Strangers (Edmonton, AB), Valley of Despair (Edmonton, AB), Naitaka, (Kelowna, BC), and FloodGate (Kelowna, BC)

In addition to the performing bands, Armstrong Metal Fest will be bringing back the following onsite activities: Yeti Games, Metal Madness Market, and Thrash Wrestling.

# AMF Weekend Passes are available at armstrongmetalfest.ca/tickets

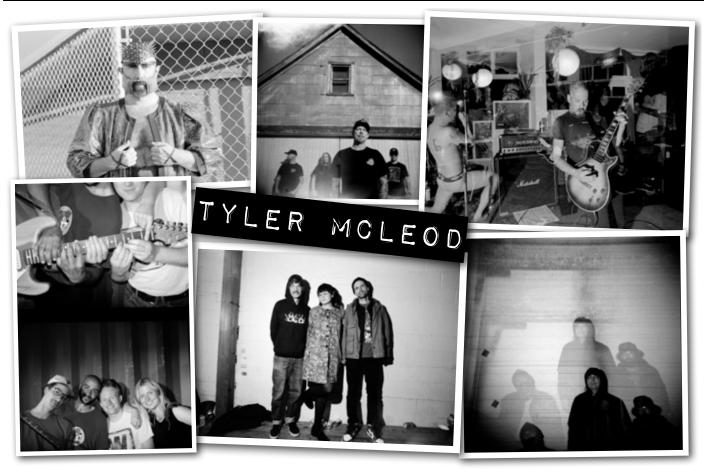
All tickets provide general admission and grant access to the festival grounds, camping area, and arena from 9:00 AM on Friday, July 11, 2025, until 10:00 AM on Sunday, July 13, 2025. Free camping is included. (Tickets will be mailed starting after March 1st if you have chosen the "Ticket Mailed" option.)

Please Note: Camping - RV / Non-Hookup RV / Vehicle Passes: Make sure to reserve your vehicle spot to get the best location on the grounds. A fee is required for a weekend pass per vehicle in addition to your day or weekend pass. RV hookups include water and power. If you choose to park your vehicle outside the camping area in the main parking lot, then a vehicle pass is not required.

# Check out the Armstrong Metal Fest 2025 Playlist on Spotify.

Armstrongmetalfest.ca
IG: @Amrstrongmetalfest
FB: @Armstrong MetalFest - AMF





#### Vancouver BC's Tyler McLeod **By John Carlow**

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

Tyler McLeod: The name I was given at birth is Tyler James McLeod. People call me Ty, Little Ty, LT, my Insta is @smalltyler. I guess I am best known for being a photo snapper guy, always blasting around town.

#### AU: First interest in photography?

TM: When I was just a wee little gipper I would flip through the family photo albums and get mesmerized by old black and white polaroids of my dead ancestors. I liked the weird off-white crusty borders and the faded colours of old instant camera shots.

At 8 years old I got a disposable camera and shot my first roll of film of friends roller skating. The photos are sick. That was my first experience with a camera. After that I wouldn't pick up a camera again until photography class in high school.

I hated academics, sports and most people so the darkroom was a rad place to be. I learned how to develop film and use a mechanical SLR. My mind was blown every time I got a good photo. It was black and white for me cause that's what the school provided. I couldn't afford a camera of my own, so I just used the shit out of that thing. I have zero proof that I took that photography course. No prints, no negatives. I lost all that a long time ago.

I remember the smell of that first darkroom. Old fixer leaves a stain on your brain. After school, I had no camera or signs of ever getting one again because I was more into LSD, skateboarding and getting drunk with friends. I slowly got back into taking photos but was more into videography then. I eventually realized that stills were more important to me, though they both have their place. When you shoot a good photo, you can stare at the image for longer. It's harder to appreciate video

because it's forever moving.

#### AU: Formal training?

TM: I do not have any formal training whatsoever, I'm more of a teach vourself the hard way type of person. I was always afraid to be shown how to shoot properly because I really loved the look of the accidental magic that happens when you don't know what you're doing. I liked to experiment and still do, but I've tried all the wild shit like melting negatives or cross processing slide film.

#### AU: What do you shoot with?

TM: I use a few types of cameras. I do digi photography during the day because I shoot photos for work and most people I work with don't want to bother with film. It's expensive and doesn't translate well for certain projects. I have a

without fear of dying. Other than for certain jobs I don't shoot much digi stuff. I like the look and limitations of film. My 'go-to' camera is a Canon F1

AU: What do you like shooting most?

cool looking scenes. Equal parts exciting and scary. When you're out in the alleys with a tripod it kind of feels like you're a bit of a target. If you act ninja like, it's cool. Sometimes the cops come sniffing around asking what I'm doing taking photos of people's houses at night. They frig off after I show them I'm not crazy, but just another photographer trying his best to practice.

# AU: Aside from the local scene, have you shot

TM: I like the closeness of smaller venues. I can't stand trying to get shots of bands playing on high stages. I'm like 5'4, so even the lowest stage is a bit tough. I prefer the sound of small venues. I don't go to bigger festivals or stadium shows that often. They usually sound like crap and that does not get me stoked. I saw Dinosaur Jr at Rogers Arena, and it was brutal. Didn't take a single photo that night.

#### AU: Why music photography?

TM: I kind of grew up being in bands and hanging out at small halls and skateboarding. They all sort of mashed together so it was a natural fit to just be taking photos of music stuff. I had a camera. I was at a gig. I took a photo. Wasn't doing it for the bands and most of the time I didn't even get prints or show anyone because I was just doing it because that's just what I did.

#### AU: Best venue to shoot in of the ones you've shot in?

TM: I think the best venue to shoot for me is Green Auto in Vancouver just because I like the space and the variety of bands. I like the different people that work there and the owner Mike who is a rad person and community member. I pretty much call that place home.

#### AU: Biggest hurdle with photography?

TM: I think the biggest hurdle in photography,

or any art really is remembering why you are doing it in the first place. I love taking photos. Cool if someone likes them but they're usually for me.

#### AU: Your measure of success?

TM: I'm not really interested in measuring my success but if I were to have criteria for that sort of thing I think it would have to be if what I was doing was making me happy. Some cash is good too!

#### AU: Where can people find your work?

TM: Like most of my stuff, it's peppered throughout

the internets and deep within my external hard drives. I use Instagram for my digital archives. If anyone wants to see more, they will just have to dig around.



drone that I shoot photos and video with. I hated

high quality drone shots. I remember being hired

to shoot photos from a helicopter. It was hard. I

felt like barfing the whole time. Fast forward to

the future and I've got my own flying machine

that will be able to shoot better photos with

myself when I bought it, but people pay up for



with black and white film.

C FOR PEOPLE WHO LIKE THE WORD In 2005, Ricky Butcher was a Rock God on Teletoon's adult cartoon series Sons of Butcher. Fifteen years later, he's gone fucking solo. Fuck: The Album by Ricky Butcher is OUT NOW!
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# **Bad Dog Brewing**

#### Interview by AU Editorial

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

Bad Dog Brewing: My name is John Lyle, I'm the Owner/Brewer of Bad Dog Brewing Company Inc. Brewing beer is the name of the game. The skills to pay the bills is my wife Rosanne (she is the boss). Somehow, she always seems to keep the brewery in the black and keep the lights on.

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

BDB: I think my first time brewing beer was in 2002-2003 at a U-Brew place. After a couple of times, I started to mess with the recipes, adding more hops or changing the grain to get the

flavors I was more interested in. Then in 2005 I started to build my home brew system. In the end I had four taps on the beer fridge and a mini brewery in the garage.

#### AU: How Bad Dog get its start?

BDB: In 2010 Rosie's brother Glenn Barlow who owns Cook Street Liquor said that my beer tasted better than many craft beers that he sells. The bug was in my head rattling around for a couple of years. So, I thought maybe I should try my hand at it. We were on vacation in Hawaii 2013 and started to really think that it was possible. We incorporated that November and bought a small canning line. The next year we started to acquire equipment and slowly we were on our way to opening a brewery in my front yard.

AU: What are some of the types of beer you

#### brew?

BDB: We make all ales. We have our 642, which is all things in a lager but ale yeast. We have some fruit beers that are like a sour, but not as acidic and more palatable for my taste. Lots of IPA's ranging from orange on the nose to west coast style IPA to one named Phat Pug that tastes a lot how it sounds like. We also have dark beers and our biggest seller,

Honey Blonde Ale.

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

**BDB:** Small batches that are brewed by me. haha. That's a hard one to answer. All brewers have their unique way of making their styles of beers. I make beer that I think everyone would like.

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

BDB: Keep a good relationship with other brewers that you can talk to and get feedback from.

#### AU: Where can your beer currently be found on tap?

BDB: The 17 Mile House, West Coast Grill Sooke, Wild Mountain, The Beagle, Maude Hunter's Church Hill, Sooke Harbour House, Route 14, Brickyard Pizza, My-Chosen Cafe

AU: Do you plan to attend any events this summer like the Great Canadian Beer Festival?

BDB: Probably not, we are just too short staffed all the time.

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

BDB: I love cooking and making beer is like cooking, when you do it right everyone loves your cooking and you get compliments. That makes it

worthwhile

#### AU: Anything else vou'd like to mention or promote?

BDB: Without my wife's help this business would have probably gone broke in the first couple of years.

#### **AU: Famous last** words?

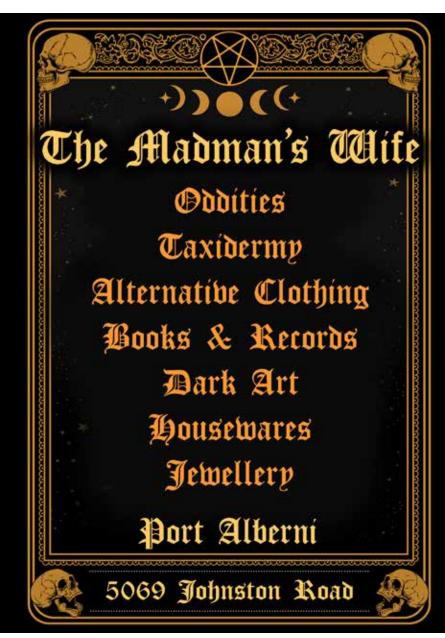
**BDB:** A brewery is a business of passion, if you don't have the drive, you won't make it. Don't open a brewery, there's no money in it.

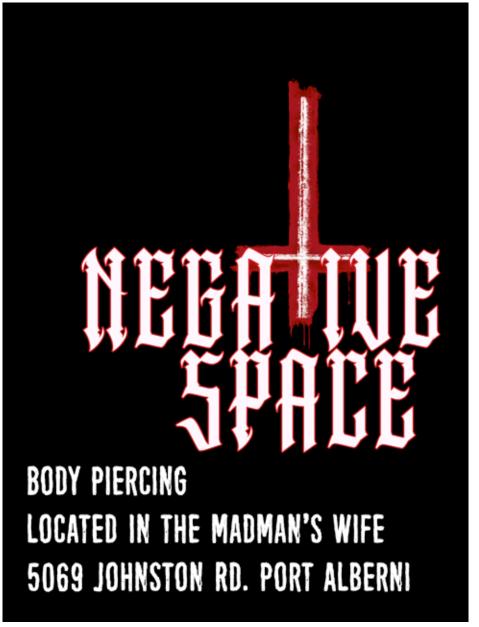
AU: Where are vou located? Can people stop by to sample your beer?

**BDB:** Bad Dog Brewing Company is located at 7861 Tugwell Rd in Sooke. We open daily at 12:00 and close at 7:00 in the summer

and 12:00 to 6:00 in the winter.

baddogbrewing.ca FB: @Sookebaddogbrewing IG: @baddogbrewingco







**QI:** The Clash, Propagandhi, and the Ramones.

AU: Have you released an album recently and when can we expect to hear it?

**QI:** There's an album coming up to release in the fall.

AU: Does this new album explore any types of themes and topics?

**QI:** Yes, it does explore themes and topics. It's darker and it's reflective of a society that has its back very much against the wall.

AU: Does Quit It have any tours or shows coming up?

**QI:** Two festivals: May Long in Montreal and Calgary in June.

AU: Anything we should know about Quit It we don't already know?

**QI:** We have a new tour van still looking for a name, we're currently referring to it as Van Aykroyd, but we are taking suggestions.

Quit It can be found on both Bandcamp and Apple Music.

quitit.bandcamp.com

# **Quit It**

#### Interview by Johnny Bandura

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking

to and what are you most infamous for?

**Quit It:** You're talking to Quit It from Calgary. We're Mikey, Tyler, Spencer and Jordan and we're not infamous for anything. Yet.

AU: Are you able to describe your band's sound?

**QI:** Punk rock by committee, with a heavy emphasis on the teamwork of it all.

AU: Can you give us some musical influences?



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SATURDRY RUGUST 16TH - KELOWNR BC - DUNNENZIES
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## **Great Outdoors Comedy Festival's Mike** Anderson

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what is your role at the Great **Outdoors Comedy Festival?** 

Mike Anderson: My name is Mike Anderson. I'm the President of Trixstar LIVE, which produces the Great Outdoors Comedy Festival.

#### AU: What was the genesis of the Great **Outdoors Comedy** Festival?

MA: The idea first came to me around 2017 when I was working at the Big Valley Jamboree. Late one night, I watched a TV special featuring Adam Sandler, David Spade, Norm Macdonald, and Nick Swardson touring outdoor amphitheatres. It struck me that

comedians deserved the same grand outdoor stages typically reserved for rock stars. From there, we began planning a comedy-Coachellastyle event designed to celebrate comedy in spectacular outdoor settings.

# AU: Does the festival have a motto or mission

MA: Our tagline is "Wildly Hilarious," and our mission as a team is to bring joy and happiness to people's lives through the events we produce.

#### AU: How do you select the diverse lineup of comedians?

MA: Our entire team loves comedy, but we each have different tastes. We intentionally curate a diverse lineup to ensure there's something for everyone, while also introducing audiences to comedians they might not yet know— much like discovering new favourite bands at a music festival.

#### AU: How do you curate a lineup that balances headliners with emerging talent?

MA: We focus on showcasing comedians at every stage of their careers. Alongside marquee headliners, we spotlight emerging talent and actively support local comedians, providing opportunities for them to perform alongside their comedy heroes.

#### AU: What makes GOCF unique compared to other comedy festivals, in your opinion?

MA: It's outdoors, and it's great! Beyond the

humour, we carefully select iconic locations in each city to highlight local charm and natural beauty. This commitment results in unforgettable comedy experiences in some of the most stunning venues imaginable.

#### AU: What goes into planning a festival that spans multiple cities?

MA: We have a dedicated core team of 15 people working year-round, expanding to 50 during summer months, and ultimately growing to around 1,000 staff and volunteers

per city at festival time. We pride ourselves on offering world-class VIP experiences, combining large-scale festival excitement with the intimacy of the world's largest stand-up comedy club.

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

MA: Definitely the ability to create joy and happiness through comedy. In a world often filled with stress and uncertainty, it's incredibly rewarding to provide people with a chance to

relax, laugh, and genuinely enjoy themselves.

#### AU: Can you share any memorable stories from past events?

MA: One of my favourite memories was brainstorming local content backstage with Shane Gillis and Andrew Schulz. Watching them flawlessly execute that material just 45 minutes later was unforgettable—like witnessing instant comedy magic unfold.

#### AU: Who are some comedians on your wish list for future

# events?

MA: I'd love to see legends like Eddie Murphy or Jim Carrey return to stand-up. Having either of them choose the Great Outdoors Comedy Festival as their comeback stage would be a dream come true.

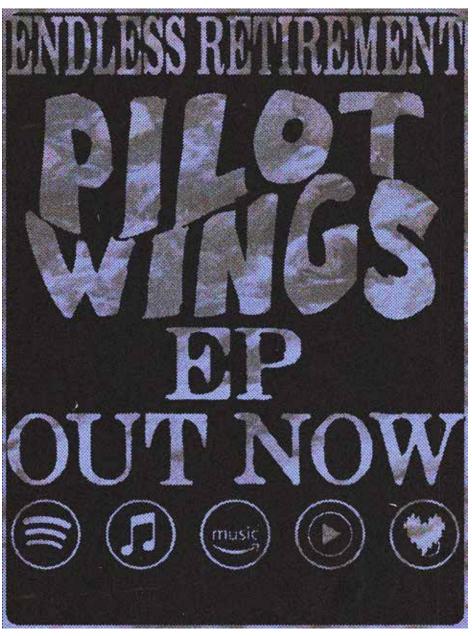
#### AU: Anything else to mention or promote? MA: Our VIP

experience is unmatched. The

first 3,000 attendees enjoy reserved seating with table-side service; just scan the barcode at your table, and your food and drinks arrive quickly and seamlessly. There's nothing quite like it, except perhaps our friends at Topeka Live in Florida

greatoutdoorscomedyfestival.com







#### **Curiosities in Regina, SK**

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

**Evan Sentes:** My name is Evan Sentes and I am the Manager and Curator for Karavan.

AU: What is the origin story of Karavan?

**ES:** Karavan was summoned to the earthly realm by my wife and I.

# AU: What kind of curiosities do you typically carry?

**ES:** Curiosities of all kinds are always coming in and out of the shop. Everything from old quack medical devices, vintage poison bottles, and post-mortem pictures. Cow skulls and Ouija boards (new and used) find their way to us as well.

#### AU: What makes Karavan unique?

**ES:** We are the only store in our area that is dedicated to everything horror, weird, and pro wrestling!

# AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

ES: We welcome everyone! Anybody, no matter what they look like or how they identify, will feel safe and accepted within our walls.

# AU: What kind of music do you like to play in your store?

ES: It really depends on who is working that day. We allow our staff to play what they feel like. Most days it's metal or punk. Other days it's grunge or goth metal. It's the best when a customer is walking around and rocking out to what is playing. One day I played Motörhead all day.

# AU: Any special events planned in the near future?

**ES:** Not in the "near future" but in November we will be hosting our fourth annual "Things I'd Kill For" alternative arts sale. Artists from all over Saskatchewan who create strange or weird art all gather under

# AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?

**ES:** Please follow us on your preferred social media. All happenings and fun are posted there.

**AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers? ES:** You only use 10% of your brain so let the

zombies eat the other 90%. karavancurio.square.site

IG: @karavan\_yqr

one roof.

FB: @Karavan - Curio & Collectibles

TT: @karavanyqr

# AUGUST 1-3, 2025 LOUD AS HELL OPEN AIR WWW.LOUDASHELL.CA

EXTRA! EXTRA! Loud as Hell XIII Featuring...
REVOCATION, FILTH & FIRST FRAGMENT

#### LOUD AS HELL Open Air Festival Announces 2025 Lineup

Hosted in Drumheller, AB from August 1st to 3rd at the Dinosaurs Down Stampede, LAH showcases the best up-and-coming Canadian and international talent to roar through the country's largest dinosaur fossil grounds. LOUD AS HELL OPEN AIR FESTIVAL has hosted hundreds of Canadian and international bands annually since 2012. During its decade of showcasing Canadian and international bands, the festival has grown into a pilgrimage for metalheads from across the country.

LOUD AS HELL OPEN AIR FESTIVAL 2025 will be celebrating its 13th festival event presented by Loud As Hell Productions, Jurassic Ink Custom Tattoo, Prairie Fire Events, and Asher Media Relations. LAH always works its hardest to deliver the best lineup in the West ready to melt your face off. Featuring bands from across Canada and beyond, you won't want to miss any of it. And don't forget about their freak shows, burlesque dancers, clinics, vendors, and dinosaurs!

#### LOUD AS HELL OPEN AIR 2025 LINEUP: Thursday, July 31 – Kick Off Party

Vapor (California, USA), Display Of Decay (Edmonton, AB), Black Pestilence (Calgary, AB), Decrepitation (Edmonton, AB)

#### Friday, August 1

Filth (Shelby, NC, USA), Auzzy Blood – Freak Show (Las Vegas, NV, USA), Opal In Sky (Vancouver, BC), Hazzardous Material – Burlesque (Alberta), Spit On Your Grave (Monterrey, Mexico), Hazzerd (Calgary, AB), Ascension Blacklist (Newburgh, ON), Black Friday (Edmonton, AB), Daniel Martin's The Infamous (Edmonton, AB)

#### Saturday, August 2

First Fragment (Montreal, QC), Kyle Pullan – Acoustic (Canmore, AB), Gorgatron (Fargo, ND, USA), Hazzardous Material – Burlesque

(Alberta), Heartsick (Lansing, MI, USA), Judicator (Salt Lake City, UT, USA), Casket Robbery (Munroe, WI, USA), Kelevra (Regina, SK), Lycanthro (Ottawa, ON), Frontal Assault (Cedar Rapids, IA, USA), Cabrakaan (Calgary, AB), Spectre (Winnipeg, MB), Pridelands (Red Deer, AB), Pharm (Kelowna, BC), Berserker (Lethbridge, AB)

#### Sunday, August 3

Revocation (Boston, MA, USA), Kyle Pullan – Acoustic (Canmore, AB), Insurrection (Gatineau, QC), Auzzy Blood – Freak Show (Las Vegas, NV, USA), Gorepig (Hot Springs, AZ, USA), Hazzardous Material – Burlesque (Alberta), Cyborg Octopus (San Francisco, CA, USA), Squidhammer (Waterton, WI, USA), Truent (Vancouver, BC), Beguiler (Toronto, ON), Reaping Asmodeia (Minneapolis, MN, USA), Endless Chaos (Winnipeg, MB), Hog Meets Frog (Vienna, Austria), Thirteen Goats (Vancouver, BC), Woodhawk (Calgary, AB), Famous Strangers (Edmonton, AB

# Weekend Passes (Aug 1-3) are available at: loudashell.ca/shop

This weekend pass grants you full access to all the headbanging, moshing, and metal mayhem that Loud As Hell Open Air offers.

For the latest updates, lineup announcements, ticket purchases, and more check out the LAH website and social media. Check out the Loud As Hell Open Air Festival 2025 Playlist on Spotify.

LoudAsHell.ca linktr.ee/decimatemf





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

Jason Kolins: I'm Jason Kolins, the vocalist for O.C.O.D. Famous is a huge stretch but I'm probably most known as the vocalist for the late '90s/early 2000s Vancouver straight edge hardcore band BURDEN, or as the doorman at the Rickshaw Theatre.

Ken Fleming: My name is Ken Fleming and I'm likely most famous for playing in S.N.F.U. and the Unwanted, and infamous for turning merch guys into Gerry Cheevers with a new sharpie. Never

#### AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

JK: I'm from Langley, which is a municipality 35 minutes east of Vancouver. Not much of a scene here but Vancouver is strong. There's multiple shows every week and weekend and there's lots of venues and great bands of every genre.

KF: I'm born and raised in Winnipeg and the music scene here in Vancouver where I am now, is really what you make of it.

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

JK: O.C.O.D. Started as a project with Ken and our now bass player Liam Morgan on drums in 2019. Shortly after, Ken asked his longtime Winnipeg friend Richard Souque (guitar) and myself (vocals) to participate, and in 2020 during Covid we got together in my home studio and began working on the songs that would become our debut release. In July 2021 we started the recording process with Ken's guitars and drums, and slowly finished everything else piece-by-piece over the next three years. After the album was mixed and mastered in November 2024, we were really happy with the end result, and Ken decided to turn the project into a band. In February we practiced for the first time with everyone together. Liam had since moved to Edmonton and switched to bass and a month later our friend Rodney Riot joined, filling the drum spot and completing the lineup. We are all about five old dudes from three provinces that still love making music, getting together one weekend a month to hang out, practice, work on music, laugh and eat

## AU: What does each band member bring to the

JK: Ken brings the overall experience factor going on 45 years of having been in a million bands, playing shows, touring and recording. He also wrote almost all the music on the album. Richard is a great guitar player, contributor, and also a major problem solver especially with and fixing gear. Liam brings experience, plays every instrument, has the best band shirts and like all of us, is into a lot of different styles of music. Rodney is the young blood of the band at 47, and also has a lot of playing, touring and recording experience. He brings the bad joke factor and Red Ryder B.B. gun sniper skills. Myself, aside from yelling, do what I can be it recording, band graphics or handling our social media. I've been around as well, doing bands since I was 15 and involved in the scene in numerous ways since I was 17.

#### AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

JK: That's a tough one, we have songs that are more fast punk/hardcore sounding and songs that are tuned down and way more metal influenced. We've been described as crossover, and I think that's a fair description

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

KF: My influence when writing music is a band that moves me to the point where it inspires me to write better songs.

#### AU: How do you approach writing music?

KF: I like to write a song in its entirety and bone it down so it eliminates guessing where the song is going it's already there

#### AU: Tell us about your latest album. What can we expect to hear?

JK: Our debut album, The Nightmare is Coming, is seven songs of angry music that has elements of punk, metal and hardcore, or as previously mentioned, crossover.

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

JK: The majority of the songs are about things that were going on during Covid. My son came out as trans, and I wrote "Sirens" about his best friend's mom who forbade him to see or hang out with her daughter because of it, and the ignorance of the anti-LGBQT mob that also started around that time. We lost Mr. Chi Pig and that hit everybody that knew him really hard. Ken had written a song for S.N.F.U. that was never used, so he reworked it, and I wrote "M.R. C.H.I. P.I.G." as a tribute. Ken wanted to write a song about racism as his wife who is Japanese has had some unfortunate experiences since they moved back to Canada. That became "Waste of Life". There can never be too many anti-racism songs. "Freedom" is my thoughts on the Covid pandemic and the "freedom" tantrum, I mean "convoy." "The Village" is based on the great M. Night Shyamalan movie of the same name.

#### AU: Most underappreciated Canadian bands in your opinion?

JK: Death Sentence, Strain, and Sacrifice.

KF: Voivod as well as Razor.

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

JK: Yes, we have our first show/record release show on June 13th at the Wise Hall in East Vancouver, with Victoria the next night. In July we play Vancouver and Nanaimo, and in August we head to Alberta to play Edmonton and Calgary. This fall/winter we hope to make it out to Ontario/ Quebec and Manitoba.

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

JK: We self-released 100 limited, hand numbered copies of The Nightmare is Coming 12" records and CDs, and the Mr. Chi Pig Tribute 7" on green vinyl, as well as T-shirts that are available for order online directly from the band.

#### AU: Famous last words?

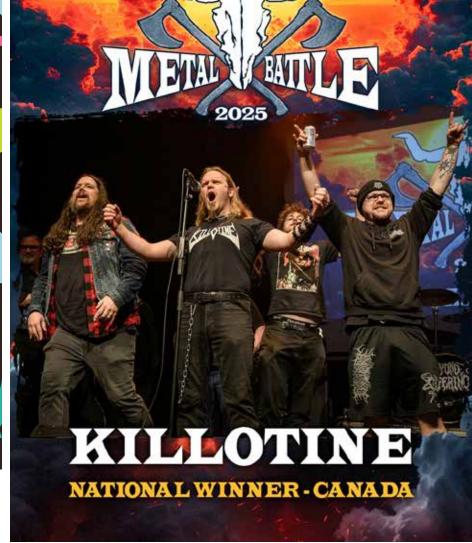
JK: Never forget the Prune Daddy, and we hope to see you all on the Canadian Weekend Warriors

You can find OCOD streaming on all the usual platforms.

Bandcamp: ocod.bandcamp.com FB: @OCOD Occultivators of Doom IG: @OCOD604

Info, Booking: O.C.O.D.604@gmail.com Merch orders: OCCULTIVATORSOFDOOM@amail.





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# **Endless Retirement**

Interview by Ray MacKay

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

Endless Retirement: We are Endless Retirement, a three-piece band from Regina. The most frequent thing we hear after a set are that we sound really tight as a band, so that's probably what we'd be best known for.

AU: Tell us about your band—its members, its history, and what you've done.

**ER:** We have three members, Aidan, Archer, and Ethan.

Although we knew each other beforehand from school, our first gig as a band was a couple years ago when we somehow landed something for welcome week at the University of Regina. Since then, we've gotten the opportunity to record with an awesome producer and put out some songs

and an ep we're really proud of. We're also just coming off our first out of province show, which was in Edmonton. It was fun getting to do some road shows, we're hoping to do more of that.

# AU: Where are you from? What's the music scene like there?

ER: We're from Regina, Saskatchewan. The music scene here is a lot better than what most people would think for Regina. Although there's A LOT of country music,

there's also a ton of young alternative bands that have been doing an awesome job of putting on great shows and writing good music. It helps that some of the people that have been in the

scene for a while seem happy to encourage the new acts. It feels like a very supportive scene; you'll see a lot of regulars at shows that are there specifically because they want to help out indie music.

#### AU: Endless Retirement is a new, up-and-coming band. What has that experience been like in the modern music scene?

**ER:** Obviously streaming platforms and social media are the biggest things. They have their downsides, but it is really

cool to see people from all over the world have listened to our music.

AU: You have an EP coming out this month- tell us about it!

**ER:** It's been an awesome process getting to

work on a little bit of a longer project. It has a lot of different sounds from song to song, which feels true to us as a band. We also got the chance to film a music video for one of our singles, "Finklestein", which was another really cool experience. I will say that running around the city in a full suit in 30-degree heat while recording was not ideal though.

# AU: What are some of the songs you are most stoked on?

**ER:** Collectively, we're pretty proud of "Nostalgia Rambling". It has a little bit of a different structure

and has evolved a lot since we first wrote it. It felt like a really good song to close the EP with.

# AU: Describe your live performance if possible.

ER: Electric. It's a lot of fun getting to play one of our more chill songs and getting people swaying on the spot, then turning around and having a pit start with something heavier. Lately, the energy has been really good from the crowd, so it's been really easy to work off that.

# AU: Besides this EP, what else do you have in the works?

**ER:** We're getting started on recording more stuff again right away. We've been writing a lot of stuff and really want people to be able to listen to it after they come to a show.

# AU: What's been your experience with Absolute Underground?

**ER:** We found out about Absolute Underground a few months ago when we were playing a show at the Exchange. It's super nice to be able to have a source to find venues and bands that get a bit more specific to provinces.

#### AU: Who are your major musical influences?

**ER:** We have a variety of influences, we've got some songs with a more Backseat Lovers/Steve

Lacey sound, but we've been writing a lot of stuff with inspiration from Breeders, Shonen Knife, the Shaggs, Pixies, Nirvana, and other bands like that. One of Archer's biggest influences on drums is Dennis Chambers, but he also likes the drums in jungle/drum and bass as well.

# AU: What's your favourite song to cover- or what's your dream song to cover?

**ER:** A couple favourites of ours are both ones that we used to play a lot when we first started out. One is "Kilby Girl" by The Backseat Lovers, the other is "Drain You" by Nirvana.



# AU: Playing any tours, shows, or festivals this Summer?

**ER:** We have some shows booked around Regina for sure, and we're hoping to get out to Saskatoon again this summer. Our Instagram is definitely the best place to see what exactly we've got going on though.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

**ER:** Just fuckin' go listen to the EP.

You can find Endless Retirement on streaming platforms and Bandcamp

IG: @endlessretirementband



#### The Dirty Nil Ready New Album, The Lash, Out July 25th

The glitter and glam of Hamilton, Ontario's The Dirty Nil take a backseat as the band dives headfirst into something rawer and more stripped-down on their fifth studio album. The Lash, arriving July 25th via Dine Alone Records and available for pre-order now.

Wasting no time in second-guessing, TheLash came together in a flash, with the band completing the entire record in just over two weeks alongside rising producer and engineer Vince Solveri. The result? A record that captures The Dirty Nil at their most urgent and electrifying.

The blistering "Gallop of the Hounds" is a noholds-barred anthem that hits like an out-ofcontrol freight train. Setting the pace for The Lash, the track embodies the album's relentless energyan unflinching ride through self-reckoning and the mirage of revenge, even in its quieter moments.

"The verses are very celebratory, but then the chorus is about that sinking feeling that's waiting for you."vocalist/guitarist Luke Bentham

The Dirty Nil continue peeling back their layers with "Spider Dream," this new track reveals a gentler- but no less potent- side of the band. Spider Dream" finds The Dirty Nil turning down the distortion and tapping into something more tender. "I think that we have some of our more raging tunes on this record, but also some of our more, dare I say, delicate moments that we've ever committed to tape on this thing," says Bentham. "It feels like the truest Nil record."

The song came from an unexpected placewaking from a nightmare. "I woke up one morning, completely refreshed by a nightmare, Bentham explains, "It was a strange feeling but enough to animate a song. I had also just watched the Beatles documentary that the Lord of the Rings fella made, so I was inspired to use more jangly chords than I usually do." While it was a departure for the group, the arrangement came together instantly and never changed from its original

Everything about *The Lash* evokes a certain sort of brutality. During a trip to the Vatican, Bentham found inspiration in some of its forgotten art: I was in a very dusty part of the basement, and they had these crazy bronze reliefs that were some of the most brutal things I've ever seen. There was a particular one called "The Horrors of War". It was two guys fighting over a knife. That image ended up guiding a lot of this record.

From there, the band brought in UK designer Jack Sabbat for his acerbic, bootleg punk-flyer style, assuring The Lash would look right at home in a beat-up bin of old Crass records or in a Medieval torture dungeon.

Thematically, the album's 10 tracks trade Bentham's usual happy-go-lucky romanticism for a cathartic vent session about everything from music industry bullsh\*t to the dissolution of a relationship. Drummer and co-conspirator Kyle Fisher jokes: I've been telling people that this is Luke's therapy record.

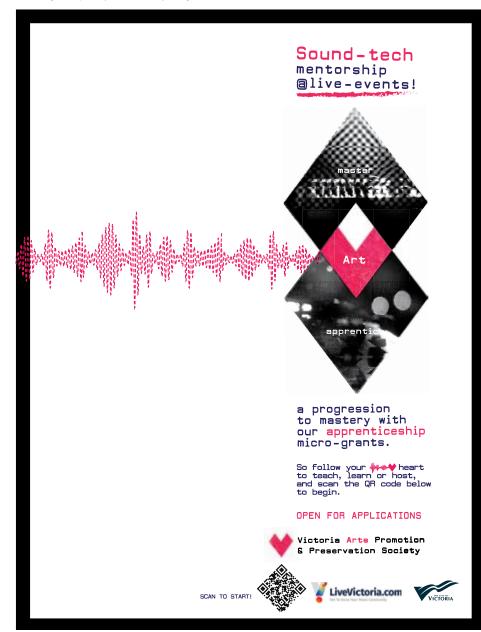
Since forming in 2006, The Dirty Nil have always embraced the flashier side of punk. But with The Lash, they strip it all down to the essentials—just two friends in a room, playing like everything is

For fans of The Jesus Lizard, The Bronx, and Metz, The Lash is a high-stakes rock record from a band that has spent over a decade tearing up stages, building a worldwide following, and even winning a JUNO Award for Breakthrough Band in 2017. They've played the game and jumped through the hoops – now, The Dirty Nil are doing things entirely on their own terms.

The Dirty Nil will be on tour with Heart Attack Man, Carpool, and Dear Seattle this summer.

#### thedirtvnil.com

Photo by Drew Thomson





#### **PRISONER Announces New Album** Kill the King, Out June 20, 2025!

Prisoner's latest album, Kill the King, marks a

defining moment in the band's evolution. Drawing inspiration from current events, personal struggles and a deep desire to uncover life's meaning, the album is a bold and unapologetic statement about questioning the world around you and striving for personal growth. The title itself reflects the band's raw. no-holds-barred approach to rock music, delivering a sound that's direct, powerful, and visceral.

This album is especially different for us as this is a full band production from start to finish in a very short time (five months to write and record the album). Everything released previously (apart from singles) was the works of myself as a teenager still learning my instrument and craft. This is a direct representation of who we are as a band in 2025 and sets the baseline for what Prisoner is and where we will be headed in the future." said frontman Murray Emery.

The album was recorded by Emery and Cody Anstey (Osyron) at Crooks Hollow Studio in Calgary Alberta, mixed by Cody Anstey at Clarity Recording Studio, mastered by Tyler Corbett (Red Cain, Osyron, Doxian) at Sole Audio and produced by Cody Anstey, Reed Alton (In Vertigo), and Murray Emery.

The announcement follows the release of single "Lost in Control", a hard rock anthem that encompasses everything you want from heavy music. Emotion bleeds through and through in the desperation of what this song proposes, fitting a mood of self-reflection or thrill-seeking angst.

"Lost In Control" received streaming and media support from Apple Music (added to Breaking Metal), Idobi HOWL, V13, Exclaim Magazine, Distorted Sound and more!

Hailing from Calgary, Alberta, Prisoner is a highenergy rock band that blends the raw power of classic rock, the intensity of heavy metal, and the soul of blues into a sound that is all their

own. Formed in 2020, the band consists of frontman Murray Emery, guitarist Marco Cioffi, bassist Trevor Macdonald, and drummer Karl Pflug, all of whom bring their unique influences to create a powerhouse of hard-hitting riffs and unmistakable grooves. Whether they're delivering thunderous anthems or introspective ballads, Prisoner's music is a celebration of rock 'n' roll in its purest form— loud, bold, and deeply rooted in the spirit of rebellion. In Prisoner,

you'll find a band that refuses to play by the rules, dedicated to pushing boundaries and making an impact that will last.

#### **UPCOMING CANADIAN TOUR DATES:**

05.27.25 Kelowna, BC @ Jack Knife Brewery 05.29.25 Vancouver, BC @ The Cobalt Cabaret 05.30.25 Kamloops, BC @ Bridgeview 05.31.25 Penticton, BC @ Clancy's Pub 06.05.25 Cranbrook, BC @ Shotties 06.07.25 Lethbridge, AB @ The Owl 06.13.25 Red Deer, AB @ The Vat 06.14.25 Edmonton, AB @ Dive Bar 08.08.25 Medicine Hat, AB @ Liquid Event Center 08.09.25 Brandon, MB @ The 40 08.12.25 Winnipeg, MB @ Handsome Daughter 08.13.25 Thunder Bay, ON @ Black Pirate Pub 08.15. 25 London, ON @ Palisade Socialbowl 08.16.25 Hamilton, ON @ Doors Pub 08.17.25 Toronto, ON @ Bovine Sex Club

prisonerband.ca IG: @prisonerbandofficial YT: @PrisonerBand FB: @Prisoner Band



#### Feel the Rhythm: Trois-Rivières Reggae Fest 2025 Brings Reggae Vibes to Quebec

This summer, reggae fans from across Canada and beyond will converge in the heart of Quebec for an unforgettable celebration of music, culture, and community. The inaugural Trois-Rivières Reggae Fest is set to take over Hippodrome 3R from August 22 to 24, 2025, bringing together

legendary artists, emerging talent, and reggae lovers of all stripes for a three-day festival like no other.

#### A New Festival with Big Vibes

Set against the scenic backdrop of Trois-Rivières, a charming city nestled between Montreal and Quebec City, the festival makes its debut with ambitious goals and a world-class experience. Hosted at Hippodrome 3R, a venue that normally draws crowds for horse racing, the

festival site will be transformed into a full-blown reggae village. With a 10,000-seat capacity, modern amenities, and both outdoor and indoor stages, it's a venue made for music.

Fans can catch live performances at the outdoor main stage, while DJs keep the beats flowing in

a dedicated indoor Red Stripe Room. For those looking to elevate their festival experience, the Platinum Viewing Section offers premium seating, air-conditioned comfort, and exclusive food and drink service. There's even camping available— whether you're pitching a tent or pulling in with your RV, the festival grounds have you covered for the full weekend immersion.

#### A Lineup That Honours the Roots— and the Future

With more than 50

artists set to perform, Trois-Rivières Reggae Fest delivers a diverse and powerful lineup that honours reggae's roots while pushing the genre forward.

Friday, August 22 kicks off with a spotlight on Quebec's homegrown talent. Expect powerful

#### performances from:

- Jah Cutta, the Montreal reggae veteran who has shared stages with the likes of Peter Tosh and Buju Banton.
- Shauit, an Indigenous artist from Quebec's North Coast, who blends French and Innu lyrics with reggae rhythms.
- Okapi, a genre-fusing group out of Montreal known for combining world music and reggae influences.

# Saturday, August 23 turns up the heat with an international roster of reggae royalty:

• The iconic Sister Carol, aka the "Black Cinderella," brings decades of conscious lyrics and musical

wisdom.

- Junior Toots, son of the legendary Toots Hibbert, keeps the legacy alive with his energetic performances.
- The Itals, long-time ambassadors of roots reggae, deliver their signature harmonies and classic sound.
- The Original Wailers, led by Al Anderson, a former member of Bob Marley's band, are sure to stir nostalgia with timeless hits.

# Sunday, August 24 closes the festival with a sonic celebration of reggae's evolution:

- Third World, a cornerstone of the genre for over 50 years, blends reggae with soul, funk, and pop for a powerful set.
- John Brown's Body, the American dub-reggae band, brings their boundary-pushing sound to the stage.
- Subatomic Sound System, based in NYC, delivers

a modern take on dub with explosive energy and heavy basslines.

Plus, special more than 20 DJs, adding even more excitement to an already stellar lineup.

# More Than Music: A Full Festival Experience

Trois-Rivières Reggae Fest isn't just about music—it's a cultural gathering that celebrates the spirit of reggae. Visitors can explore a vibrant vendor village filled with handmade goods, discover inspiring art exhibits, and sample global flavours from local food trucks. Whether you're grooving to the beats or exploring the grounds, there's always something to discover.



## Getting There and Staying There

Conveniently located between major cities, Trois-Rivières is just 90 minutes from Montreal, Quebec City, and Sherbrooke, and only 2.5 hours from Plattsburgh, New York. The area offers a wide range of accommodation options, from budget-friendly bed-

and-breakfasts to comfortable hotels— perfect for those not opting for the on-site camping experience.

#### **Tickets and Camping Options**

With multiple ticket tiers, the festival is accessible to everyone:

- General Admission grants access to the main festival grounds.
- VIP includes a dedicated bar, exclusive seating, and private restrooms.
- VIP Gold adds the bonus of the air-conditioned Platinum Viewing Section with upgraded amenities.

Want to stay on-site? Tent camping is available for \$150 and RV spots for \$250 for the full weekend.

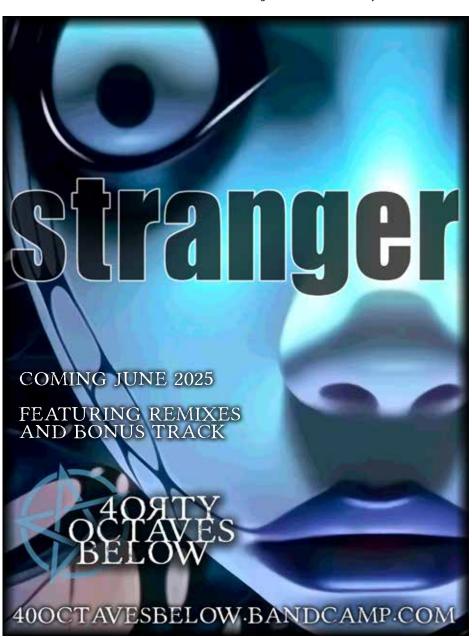
#### Don't Miss It

With its incredible lineup, unique venue, and infectious atmosphere, Trois-Rivières Reggae Fest 2025 is poised to become a cornerstone of Eastern Canada's summer festival circuit. Whether you're a die-hard reggae enthusiast or simply looking for an unforgettable weekend, this is

the place to be.

Early bird tickets are on sale now, so grab yours before they're gone. Come for the music, stay for the culture— and leave with memories that will last a lifetime.

For tickets and more information, visit the official festival website. *roisrivieresreggaefest.ca* 







#### The Spirit of 1985 Tales from the Clarkside By Clark'Super'Mantei

Hello again past blasters. This issue travels 'Back in Time' to 1985 and then returns 'Back to the Future' of 2025. Let's go back shall we?

March 16th, 1985: Vancouver: I saw the band

Triumph in concert. I had been following the band since I moved to Victoria for school in 1978/79. "Lay it on the Line" was a radio hit in '79. At that time the **Edmonton Oilers** were a sensation and won the Stanley Cup many years in a row and as they did Triumph put out many LPs too. Seeing them in grade 12 was cool as I'd discovered them in Gr. 6. Here I was years later on their 'Thunder Seven" toui



which was a memorable experience of a magically powerful 'Rock and Roll Machine'.

May 2nd to May 9th '85: Our Lambrick Park senior band takes a trip via train from Vancouver to Edmonton to perform. Then a rumble happened and the train stopped as an avalanche covered the tracks ahead. We were stuck on that train for a couple days until a train towed us back far enough to board a bus instead. During that bus ride through Banff we encountered Steve Fonyo

29th 1985 at mile zero. We met him in Banff and now I was witnessing him dip his leg into the Pacific Ocean. He received the Order of Canada for this incredible accomplishment and both him and Terry Fox are remembered for their efforts. Sadly, Steve also passed away on February 16th, 2022. May 29th, 1985: I rode my bike from mile zero to

coming to Vancouver on June 10th, '85 and I was going. It was his 3rd LP with the same band, vet Phil Collins wasn't on drums. It was Richie Hayward (from Little Feat) and being a drummer I was excited with the new style of music. Robert also added 'Toni Halliday' on vocals. We went to the concert in Vancouver and it was fantastic. For the 2nd part of the show a giant inflatable jukebox stood about 50 feet high and Robert's new group 'The Honeydrippers' hit the stage. He wore a sparkling purple suit and

my local record store to

purchase the brand new

Robert Plant LP 'Shakin 'n'

Stirred'. I had seen him in

concert in '83 and he was

Terry Fox started the run with a prosthetic leg in

1980 to raise money for cancer. When in Thunder

Bay, Terry received news the cancer had spread.

sadly. At 12 Steve lost his leg and at 18 years old

Terry died 9 months later on June 28th 1981

he attempted the cross country journey also.

He started March 31st, '84 in St. John dipping

his leg in the Atlantic Ocean and successfully

made it to Victoria, B.C. 425 days later on May

along with his band he added 4 horn players and 3 female backup singers. Everyone was dressed in 1950s attire. After that he returned to perform a long encore of hits. We then made our way to the ferry to light a fire through the evening and enjoy life. I graduated 2 weeks later. Music and Movie hits of 1985: MTV was the norm. Videos drove hit songs up the charts and many movies used hit songs too. The 'Simple Minds' made a #1 hit with "Don't You Forget About Me" from the movie 'The Breakfast Club' which was originally written for Billy Idol, yet he turned it down. 'Huey Lewis and the News'

"The Power of Love" from the film 'Back To The Future' and today in 2025 there is a world wide search for Marty McFly's missing guitar. Its been missing since 1985. Do you have it? Other #1 hits came from bands like Bryan Adams, Robert Palmer, Kate Bush and also Dire Straights with the mega smash video song "Money For Nothing" from the LP'Brothers In Arms' and catapulted them to mega stardom. In fact, I saw that Dire Straits tour here in Victoria, B.C. on September 22nd, 1985. It was a blast as I had a band called 'The Tinted Spectacles' and I was the drummer who also sang the song "Sultans of Swing" when we performed. Fun times

July 13th, 1985: The LIVE AID concert. Bob

indeed.

Geldof and Midge Ure put together a massive live streamed concert event in both Philadelphia, at the JFK stadium as well as the Wembley stadium in the U.K., to raise money and awareness to assist



that day. Reuniting for a mega hit set in just 20 minutes. Freddie brought everyone together effortlessly too. June 6th, 2025: Back to Edmonton for the Stanley Cup Final. Edmonton Oilers take on the Florida Panthers in game 2. Yet there is another reunion going on. Yes folks, it is the band 'Triumph' along with the band 'Toque who played together pregame outside to a massive crowd, bringing music and hockey fans together to celebrate and cheer on Canada's Edmonton Oilers. Triumph members Rik Emmett (guitar vocals) and Gil Moore (drums) played three classic songs well known to us all. "Allied Forces" and

"Fight the Good Fight" along with the classic "Lay it on the Line" raised the spirit and brought smiles to the crowd. Their new LP is called 'Magic Power. All-Star Tribute To Triumph' with many current



in the famine in Ethiopia. I watched the event live with my father and friends. The single "We Are The World" was written by Micheal Jackson and Lionel Richie. Produced by Quincy Jones and brought

together dozens of famous musicians to perform the song. The single topped the charts in over 20 countries and raised millions for the cause. Other acts that played at LIVE AID were David Bowie, Tina Turner, Bryan Adams, The Boomtown Rats, and also Black Sabbath reformed with Ozzy for the event. Yet, Phil Collins played in the U.K. and then boarded the Concord and flew to Philadelphia to

perform on drums with the remaining 3 members for a 'Led Zeppelin' reunion. It was magical indeed. Lastly, as well all know now, it was 'Queen' who

classics. I highly recommend this to all to enjoy. 1985 was a great year to be alive, one to look and listen back on for fun. Bryan Adams' hit "Summer of '69" seemed to capture the vibe of that year.

> living and teenage fun. Maybe I'll write a smash hit and call it "Summer of '85". That brings this issue to a close. On the 1985 Triumph LP there are 2 songs that hit home for me. One is "Follow Your Heart" and the other I use to end my articles. It's a great title and a great song too. "Rock Out and Rrrrroll On" everyone. Have a great

High energy. Easy

summer. Be safe



Clark'Super'Mantei

also had a #1 hit with



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#### Have I mentioned It's Hot? PRB 2025

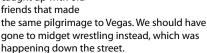
"What if they don't let me in?"

"You think TSA has the resources to go through every phone looking for slights against the orange man? International travel would be crippled."

And with several questions of the yes or no variety, we were admitted to the warped zone.

Night one, I ventured to Hogs'n Heifers to see

Aage Birch, formerly of Onward etc. It was the Punk rock saves lives showcase. Aage Birch had a strippeddown rowdiness to them, the absence of a fiddle that was a mainstay in their early albums, was missed, as the songs did fall flat. A fiddle pops, yo! The rest of the show was a simple meh as we caught up with old friends that made



#### Friday Club Shows

Friday night was at a new-to-PRB venue, called The Substance. Concrete floors, large concrete pillars, and a metal roof doesn't exactly lend itself

to a quality sound experience. The venue and staff were garbage, but I digress.

First up, a band I'm very familiar with was 1876, with their brand of Pow Wow punk. 1876 is an Indigenous band from Portland, and we arrived early solely just to catch their set. They got the crowd engaged, and even coaxed us into a singalong.

After Billy Liar played, they snuck in a cover of "500 Miles" by The Proclaimers. Dead to Me took the stage. It seemed that Chicken was freshly sprung from rehab, as he kept making jokes about Ken being in rehab. It was so fun to sing along to those songs, and I was very happy to see them play most of the Little Brother EP. Jack Dalrymple pulled double duty with the Swingin' Utters after Dead to Me's set. I was forced to make a difficult decision, stay for the Utters, or abandon ship and catch Mariachi El Bronx at another venue. Mariachi El Bronx it was, we headed over to the Citrus pool with very little time to spare, what a great way to end the night. Having never seen Mariachi El Bronx before, this was a must-see

#### for me **Saturday Festival**

(Day 1)

It was hot. I will never be prepared for how hot it gets in the desert. I sauntered down to catch Maid of ace, Civic, Lambrini Girls, Upchuck, with the latter three having a fuzzy, bass-heavy sound, with similar qualities to stoner metal. Upchuck was amazing, and having

listened to zero playlists this year, were a nice surprise. Upchuck reminded me of early Beastie Boys, they had amazing energy.

A humble Youth Brigade took the second stage. Our fearless leader (Shawn Stern) took to the stage with his brother by his side. It was great to see a Stern play drums again.



Holy shit! I got to see Power Trip on the front barricade. It was primal and reasonably chill at the front, what a fun set. From there, I looped around to catch Bouncing Souls close out the second stage.

Cock Sparrer ended the main stage as the headliner. For the majority of the crowd, this would be the last time seeing the lads from the UK. Everyone in our area had their arm around their friends singing along.

Saturday Club Shows

Club shows were stacked again this year with so many choices. Nothington announced it was probably their last show, and H2O brought their brand of no breakdown hardcore to the stage. The drums were anchored by a young whippersnapper, Maximus Henry Morse, the son of vocalist Toby Morse. Very cool to see a father and son crank out some classics.

Up last was Hot Water Music. Chris Wollard has been absent from live shows for years now. In his place is the equally talented slick shoed Chris Cresswell, so we were in good hands. Let's hope **HWM** keeps Cresswell busy enough that he won't release any new Flatliners music that

resembles the last two albums.

#### Sunday Festival (Day 2)

Another scorching hot day, I dipped in late. I meant to catch Nobro, but I had the shit cramps, so other plans were in store for me. I fell ass backwards into seeing Spiritual Cramp. Wow is all I can say; they were incredible to watch, super groovy set. I will track them down to see them

Up next was Laura Jane Grace w/The Mississippi Medicals, featuring Mikey Erg of the Chicago punk band The Ergs. It has been a while since any touring version of LJG had a backing band. The crowd sang all the solo album songs and screamed out the Against Me! songs. I sorely missed having LJG with a band.

Fidlar would be the last set I'd watch as the line up quickly fell apart for me (my problem). So many songs about cocaine, it almost felt like they were mocking me for my past life.

#### **Sunday Club Shows**

I made the long walk to the Usual Place for the first club show of the night. It's a great venue but it's so far away from everything, it was all just to see Western Addiction. Western Addiction put on a great show, as always. They tour infrequently and you will most likely have to come to them. Right after that set it was time to cruise over to another venue for The Briefs. I missed Béton Armé and was rotted over it, but the boys from Quebec will be back, they are undeniable. Up next was Street Dogs, the only band to have Dorchester

as a singalong chorus. The Street Dogs, back after being on the cusp of cancellation (just ask Mable Syndrome), play a few of the hits before settling on their 2004 album,



Back to the World in its entirety.

#### Monday Festival (Day 3)

A late start again has me at the second stage to watch Leftöver Crack. It was interesting to say the least. Bridge city sinners took the main stage; I was not in the mood for either (again my problem). Riverboat Gamblers however, are always great, no matter your mood. The band is starting to look their age; we are no longer young.

The next band I wanted to see was FLAG. I was really anticipating this show and made my way to the barrier in front of Dez and Chuck. It was six years since I last saw them, and six vears since they last played. Everyone looked healthy and

that means a lot to most of us. Dez even sang a six-song set

Amigo the Devil had the honours of closing the second stage. It was just him with, solo without a backing band. It's been a rare occurrence lately. to see him solo. It was nice to see him return to his humble beginning as a solo artist. Social Distortion closed out the festival with their first

appearance at PRB.

#### **Monday Club Shows**

It's Monday, it's late, it's been a grind to get to this point, have I mentioned it's hot? I managed to drag my ass down to the Fremont Country Club for the very last Las Vegas appearance of Cock Sparrer, Seeing five school friends that go way back to 1972 is pretty fucking amazing. Much like Toby and Maximus

Morse, Cock Sparrer's Colin McFaull and son T.J. McFaull of the Bar Stool Preachers, played the last Cock Sparrer North American show together. The theme of family was thick in the air. Within our group friends. Steve has brought his son Heath the last couple of years. It's pretty cool to see the next generation be handed the torch. Heath is now one of the boys and we don't treat him like a kid anymore. He even kept his moustache intact this year.

Will I be back next year? I can't say for sure, but the odds are better today than they were last

- Glenn Mendoza





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Interview by Ray MacKay and Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what's your role in Teenage Bottlerocket?

Miguel: Hey, this is Miguel. I play bass and sing some vocals in Teenage Bottlerocket. I've been with the band for a long time now, and somehow, they still let me do this.

AU: What can you tell us about Ready to Roll, your upcoming album set to debut on September 12th from Pirates Press Records?

Miguel: It's our 10th record, which is kind of hard to believe. Same as usual— we wanted to write songs that felt good to play, and that we'd want to hear ourselves. It also marks the first time I sing lead on a couple tracks, which has been a fun shift.

AU: What are this album's influences? What can old fans look forward to and what can new

fans find in it? Miguel: Honestly, same influences as always-Ramones, Screeching Weasel, punk, new wave, little bit of metal. Old fans will recognize the

speed and melodies. New fans will think

"damn these guys are old."

AU: If someone had never heard of Teenage Bottlerocket, what song would you recommend to start them off?

Miguel: "Skate or Die" is a good gateway drug.

AU: You played Punk Rock Bowling this yearhow was it? Do any of you bowl? And what do

TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET



you think the connection between punk rock and bowling is, if any?

Miguel: Most fun PRB yet! And yeah, we bowl. I bowled a 198 once and I've been bragging about it ever since. Growing up in Wyoming means you bowl and/or start a punk band because you're

> AU: Tell us about the PRB show you played this year. What did people miss if they weren't there?

bored to death.

Miguel: We headlined two shows: a sold-out club gig at the Usual

Place, and a pool party that turned into full-blown chaos. At one point there were two circle pitsone on the ground and one in the actual pool.

AU: What makes the Punk Rock Bowling music festival unique in your opinion?

Miguel: It still feels like a festival run by punks for

AU: Were there any bands playing this year at PRB that you were extra stoked to check out?

Miguel: I didn't get to check out much, I had to take a red-eye flight to get back home for my daughter's dance recital. I was, however, extremely stoked to see Dead to Me and Power Trip both back playing shows. Definitely two of my favourite bands.

AU: Where do you think the future of punk rock is headed?

Miguel: Much like the Thing from John

Carpenter's The Thing, punk rock survives by constantly mutating. It's no longer locked to a coast or a label or a look, it's something new. Then it'll be something new again after that.

#### AU: Tell us about your upcoming tour. Where are you most excited to play?

Miguel: We're heading to Europe this summer— can't wait to get back over there. Always wild shows, great crowds, weird snacks, the whole deal. After that we hit a quick weekend run in the PNW including Boise, Bend OR and Fourth Corner Punk Fest in Bellingham Washington!

Canada tour in August and September. For the first chunk, we've got Broadway Calls joining us for shows in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, Kelowna, and

Vancouver. Then we're linking up with We Were Sharks for London, Toronto, Kingston, Montreal,

Quebec City, and Ottawa. I'm extra stoked for Montreal where I live with my family—and I know Chewka's pumped for Edmonton. But really, every show's gonna rip.

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

Miguel: Thanks for being part of this ride. Ready to Roll drops September 12 on Pirates Press Records— pick that

teenagebottlerocket.

piratespressrecords.

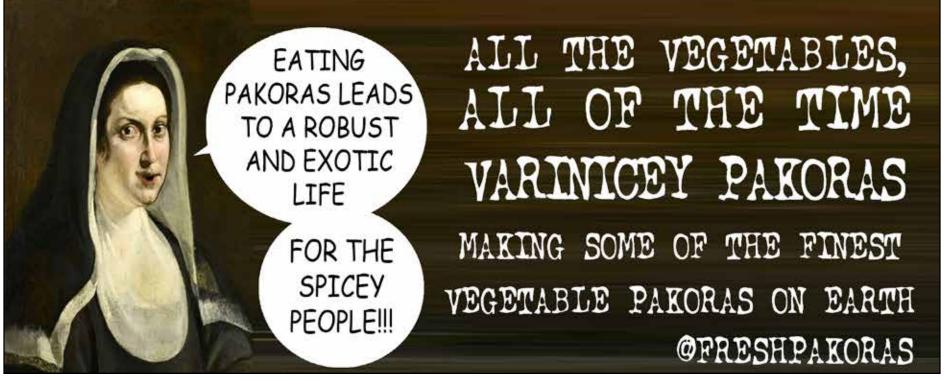
Band Photo by Kirchner



AU: Any plans to tour Canada in the near future?

Miquel: We're about to hit the road for our Shred









#### **NOBRO**

#### **Interview by Ray MacKay**

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what's your role in NOBRO?

**NOBRO:** Kathryn and Karo. Kathryn sings and plays bass. Karo plays guitar and sings.

AU: What's the meaning behind the name?

**NOBRO:** We are an all-female band, hence NOBRO.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the punk music scene like there?

**NOBRO:** Montreal, Quebec. The scene is super vibrant and fun! Lots of really cool music has come and continues to flow out of the city!

AU: Who is in the band and what does it say on your dating profiles?

**NOBRO:** We are all in relationships except Tara. She is looking for her muse. Maybe she will find one at our show!

AU: Your band's music is often described as "garage punk". In your opinion what differentiates "garage punk" from the rest of the punk genre?

**NOBRO:** I guess maybe because we use open chords? Our guitars have more fuzz!

AU: How would you describe your live performance?

**NOBRO:** Fun! Lots of energy! We like to party and we like to get rowdy!

AU: Your most recent album was Set Your Pussy Free in 2023. What can you tell us about your upcoming projects?

**NOBRO:** We have lots of new music on the way! Working on tunes and refining old demos. Really excited to unleash something new in the world!

AU: What was the inspiration and writing process behind Set Your Pussy Free?

NOBRO: When Roe vs. Wade was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2023, we felt an urge to say something! We came up with our motto, mantra, and mission statement to set our pussies free and it just kinda stuck!

AU: What record label will your album be released on and what do they bring to the table?

**NOBRO:** Not sure... yet. We hope to get on a cool US-based label!

AU: You'll be going on tour in America this year; what are you excited and anxious about while touring the United States? Where will you be touring?

**NOBRO:** We are touring all over! Both coasts and lots of big cities. We feel anxious obviously because the relationship between our two countries isn't as good as it has been but we are overall excited to take our message to the streets!

AU: Tell us about your Juno Award win. What was it like? How has it affected you personally, as well as the band as a whole?

**NOBRO:** It was unbelievable! We were up against some pretty stiff competition and it was so unreal to be picked as the winners! It has definitely raised the moral!

AU: Tell us about the PRB show you played this year. What did people miss if they weren't there?

**NOBRO:** They missed one hell of a show and a big heat wave!

AU: What makes the Punk Rock Bowling music festival unique in your opinion?

**NOBRO:** It really feels like a community! The vibes are so nice and everyone just feels like they are having a great time and there for the right reasons. Also it was cool to watch so many incredible acts perform.



AU: Were there any bands playing this year at PRB that you were extra stoked to check out? NOBRO: Bad Nerves.

AU: Did you witness or partake in any Vegas debauchery this year?

**NOBRO:** We didn't, but two of our members (Josee and Tara) stayed at the Golden Nugget, smoked cigs and won \$30 gambling.

AU: Where do you think the future of punk rock is headed?

NOBRO: Female!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

**NOBRO:** Come buy a ticket to the greatest rock show ever!

nobroband.com



# **BAD WAITRESS**

#### **Vegas Party Bangers**

By Ira "Too Many Bad Habits" Hunter and Johnny "Acid Brain" Bandura

**Punk Rock Bowling Interview** 

Kali-Ann Butala (vocals and guitar)

Katelyn Molgard (guitar)

Moon Palmar (drums)

Nicole Cain (bass)

by Ira "Too Many Bad Habits" Hunter

#### AU: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

BW: We're Bad Waitress and we are known for all talking at the same time.

AU: Where are you from?

BW: We all live in Toronto.

AU: What does it say on your dating profile?

**BW:** I'm window shopping. Don't be a pig.

AU: How did you end up on the main stage

Bowling this year? **BW:** We we paid

them off. No. we have a booking agent he's really great and he got us the gig. We love you Brandon. We were supposed to play five years ago and it got cancelled from the pandemic. AU: Did you bowl

this year? BW: Is there really, actually bowling

AU: Yes, there is a bowling

> tournament and you could end up bowling against like NOFX or someone and you can win money. You have to get

up at nine in the morning on Saturday and bowl. If you do good then you've got to get up at nine in the morning on Sunday. So it's actually like torture and you miss the pool parties. So I don't bowl

**BW:** You're bowling me over with this information.

AU: What is the criteria to be considered a Bad Waitress?

BW: You've got to always smell like cigarettes and forget to drop off people's ranch.

#### AU: Any new albums, videos, or updates?

BW: Yes, we just independently released our new single called Plan B. We're still working on finishing up our second album.

AU: On any particular record label?

BW: We're window shopping and still looking for label representation at this time.

AU: For people who didn't make it to Punk Rock Bowling, what are they missing out on?

**BW:** They're missing out on heat stroke damage. AU: You guys had the baking in the sun set

BW: Yeah, and we are the most fucking Canadian band.

AU: I think the most Canadian punk band is from Victoria. They're called the Frostbacks and they wear parkas and toques on stage.

**BW:** That is insane. Why would you do that? AU: What bands are you stoked to see over the

BW: We saw Gang of Four play last night and they were amazing. They had really great energy. They have a very earnest delivery, which I really liked.

#### AU: Anyone else?

PRB weekend?

time, eh?

BW: I'm excited to see Amigo the Devil. I met Danny in Toronto a couple of months ago and we became friends because he was dipping a chicken nugget in tequila.

#### AU: Any hidden talents unrelated to music?

BW: Wait, we have musical talent? Thanks man. Well, I can juggle and stilt walk at the same time.

#### AU: For someone that hasn't heard Bad Waitress yet, how would you describe your sound and live show?

BW: I feel like it always sounds like it's about to fall apart, but it doesn't, and that's nice. I feel like just like our personalities, we're all doing a bunch of random shit at the same time. But somehow it makes sense and I like that. It's a pretty eclectic mod podge of different influences that we all have and different references from various music genres. We thankfully have very good chemistry with each other, so I think that also adds to the sonic experience.

#### AU: What do you love most about Vegas?

BW: Just the lights and the energy, it's super overstimulating. But there's this weird whimsy, magical kind of feeling. I can see how people get here and are like Okay, I feel invincible and just fucking do whatever

AU: What do you hate about Vegas?

**RW**: The scams Just people trying to fuck you over while you're drunk.

AU: The money vacuum is on high



BW: Oh yeah, we tried to buy a joint and it was \$25. We're like, we're from Canada, bye. Yeah, we're not doing that.

#### AU: I live in Victoria. Will you be coming to play western Canada?

BW: We would love to go to Victoria. We wanted to get a date there last year, but it's a really expensive ferry. We're poor, so when we're richer, we'll definitely go to Victoria. We do really want to make it out to BC. Then we are going to do a Northwest Territories tour.

#### AU: Any final words of wisdom for the people out there that want to start a punk band?

BW: Just do it. Honestly, don't think about it too hard. Have fun. Play music. It's nerve-wracking but don't be scared to sound kind of shitty until you don't. We all sounded like crap at one point in our lives. You keep doing it and you find the right people. Don't give up.

#### AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

BW: We're on tour with Nobro for the next three weeks up the West Coast and through a bunch of places in the middle of America, also known as America's butthole, and then down the East side. We also just put out a single called Plan B. So check it out.

#### AU: Where can people find you online?

**BW:** Everywhere. Instagram, YouTube, Spotify, Apple, TikTok. Grindr. Über, day job bitch.

badwaitress.com @badwaitressband







Interview by Ray MacKay and Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what's your role in The Drowns?

**Rev:** I'm Rev— the singer, guitar player, joke maker, pinball player in The Drowns.

AU: Your style has often been called blue-collar punk. What separates blue-collar punk from the rest of the punk genre?

**Rev:** We've never referred to ourselves as that directly, but I think the fact that we are all working class guys, and sing about the struggles a lot of blue-collar people can relate to, is why people call us that. More often than not, we call ourselves punk rock n' roll.

AU: Tell us about your upcoming live album, Live at Rebellion. What can people expect from it?

Rev: We've always been known as a "give it

THE
DROWNS

All The solid to the band and use

all"/"tear shit up" kind of live band, and we truly tried to capture that with this live album. Rebellion [Festival, in Blackpool, UK, where the live album was recorded] as a whole is very special to us also, so it was the perfect team-up

AU: Your band has built up its rabid fanbase through a mix of relentless touring and releasing killer records. What's your wildest touring story? What's the craziest review you've gotten on a new album or track?

**Rev:** We got caught in two, that's right TWO major natural disasters at once in Tokyo, and we had to be evacuated to a school that had been converted into a disaster shelter. It was the craziest story of

this band's career for sure.

There's one guy who has reviewed a couple releases of ours, and we can tell he doesn't listen to them in the slightest. He once wrote something like "this new rock n' roll direction may upset established fans of the band because it's a bit of a departure from the 'melodic hardcore ska' their fans have grown to expect." That dude wasn't even trying. He also wrote a review describing our singer as "at times singing in a low gruff voice, and at other times, singing in a higher register like he's doing a bad Dave Wakeling impression." The fucking guy didn't realize that we have two different singers. You gotta do your homework!

# AU: How did you enjoy Punk Rock Bowling this year? What bands did you enjoy most?

**Rev:** We had a killer time. This was absolutely

one of the greatest lineups they've ever had. We loved seeing our friends in Cock Sparrer and 7 Seconds absolutely destroy. It was great to see Gang of Four and The Damned. The club shows were incredible this year. There's a newer band from Seattle called Fan Club that absolutely killed it at the club show they played with The Adverts.

AU: What did people miss if they didn't check out your set?

**Rev:** We brought our friend Anthony from the rad Texas band Bullshit Detector onstage with us at the very end of our set and we covered "Nazi Punks Fuck Off" by the Dead Kennedys. It brought the house down.

AU: What drew you to the Punk Rock Bowling music festival originally?

**Rev:** The lineups for sure. It's so many incredible

bands in one spot for one weekend.

AU: Have you ever bowled in the tournament? Any bowling tips?

**Rev:** Naw, no bowling. I am a semi-professional

semi-professional pinball player when we're not touring though. Pinball Tip: "If you're not tilting, you're not trvina."

AU: Any crazy Vegas-related stories of debauchery to share? Did you get lucky this year?

**Rev:** "Did you get lucky?" sounds like a trap, haha. Naw, we usually keep it pretty mellow. A couple of us were in a band with a dude who would

get immediately black out drunk the moment we got to Vegas, then he would just scream "Time Travel" and run full speed into a busy casino, not to be seen again for the duration of the stay

# AU: Any plans to tour Canada in the near future?

Rev: We're trying to! It's been years. We have one show in Toronto booked with New Bomb Turks this summer, but that's it at the moment. We love it up there though!

AU: Any final words for

our readers?

**Rev:** Thanks for taking the time to check this out! Rock n'roll!

thedrownsrock.com
piratespressrecords.com

Photo by Alan Snodgrass









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

**BB:** I am BB Patootie also known as Beth

Loudmouth. I play geetard in the HOT PATOOTIES.

**Kim:** My name is Kim, I play bass and sing, and am mildly famous (or infamous) mostly because of the people I have worked with in the past.

# AU: Who else is in the band and what are their hidden talents?

**BB:** Shonzie Patootie is on drums and vocals. I sing the most leads, but we all sing. Chanty choruses are the best. Kim is an awesome DJ on a local station here, Z107.7 in Joshua Tree. Her other hidden talent is surviving music festivals.

Kim: These are not really hidden talents, but Beth knows \*everyone\* and is an incredible artist, as is Shawn, who also has mad cooking skills and the talent of being able to be in a band with two very outspoken women!

# AU: Give us a brief history of your band, Hot Patooties.

**BB:** Shonzie and I moved to the high desert—we live between Palm Springs and Joshua Tree—from San Franciso in 2017. We went from city life to living half a mile off a dirt road on five acres in the middle of nowhere. Things were pretty

quiet – except for in the practice room in our house! At the time we were in a zombie two-piece called the WASTEDEAD – all our songs were about zombie stuff. (We made some great videos check them out at thewastedeads.com). It was in the WASTEDEADS that I encouraged Shonzie to play drums standing up so we could be side by side on stage.

At most of the shows we went to around the desert people were watching bands sitting down. WTF?! There are a lot of musicians out here where we live but I always joke it's kinda like being at a never-ending open mic night. Same bands play all the time. We wanted to shake shit up a bit and bring some spark and sass into the scene. We were getting tired of doing the WASTEDEADS only singing about zombies and were cooking up new

ideas for songs we wanted to play.

We thought we'd find bandmates pretty fast, but it took over six months. First line up we had an awesome bass player Josh. A year in

he had to move to Utah to help family because his mom had a stroke (we miss you, Josh!). Then COVID hit. Ugh. Three years of no live shows. We finally met Kim through friends and hit it off right away. She was really into playing the garage rock style of songs I was writing and is an awesome bass player. Kim has been in several bands... she was in Exene's Original Sinners for a couple of years.

Funny story is that back in the 1990s I was bassist in the Loudmouths and Kim (aka Kim Chi) was bassist in the Distillers. We met then when we played a show together in SF opening for our friends One Man Army. Now here we are 25 years later rocking out together!

# AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if possible.

**Kim:** I would call it dirty rock n' roll with some outlaw Americana thrown in. Live show is pure fun escapism.

**BB:** Our goal as a band is to HAVE FUN and make people happy. When we play, we are laughing and smiling and don't take ourselves too seriously. Our

sound is rooted in three chord punk rock, garage rock, rockabilly, surf, old country. We like to say "shake your booties to the Hot Patooties."

# AU: What did people miss if they weren't at the Punk Rock Bowling pool party you played this

**BB:** If you have never seen a mosh pit in a pool you missed that! Add to the mix pool floaties flying in the air and I even saw some blow-up penises. We played with Teenage Bottlerocket and Béton Armé, who blew us away! Wild stage show and really nice dudes. I love that they sing in French, the chant-a-long woooooo ooooh choruses have the crowd singing along. I saw some pics of them from other PRB shows and the singer was doing splits on-stage— wowza!

# AU: Describe Punk Rock Bowling music festival experience for the uninitiated. What makes the PRB unique in your opinion?

Kim: It started out with a small group of friends bowling together. And one show at the end for the awards ceremony! I worked at Epitaph and was part of the first Vegas PRB crew. Although it has grown an unbelievable amount since, the DIY ethics and sense of community have remained. It is a great time.

**BB:** Punk rock has really changed since I was a teenager. PRB is a well-oiled machine. So many bands, so many people. Very eclectic, something for everyone. I skip the "festival" day stuff and only go to the more intimate night club shows, more my scene. I get a kick out of seeing punk rockers take over the casinos. Like 80% of the tourists in the Golden Nugget where we were staying were punk rockers. And out at the pool there was Ramones, Buzzcocks, Clash, etc. blasting over the speakers. Honestly not something I ever thought I'd see/hear!

AU: Have you ever bowled in the tournament? Any bowling tips?

Kim: I have bowled many times for team Epitaph. I was always on the "B" team, because we had really great bowlers at epitaph for the "A" team, and they won several times!



Tips would be just to have fun. Be the best or the worst!

# AU: Any crazy Vegas-related stories of debauchery to share?

**Kim:** When I was in the bowling tournament years past, it seemed like every year I ended up bowling next to a guy who preferred bowling naked. Every year! And not the same guy either! No one kicked

them out because they weren't creepy, they just felt better being naked. So, we let them.

# AU: Were there any bands playing this year at PRB that you were stoked to check out?

BB: I would have liked to have seen the Bad Nerves, they are heavy on my playlist right now. And the Lambrini Girls who I think are bad asses! One of my fav bands I did see were Aussie dudes Civic, loved their dirgey sound. And seeing Cocksparrer at the "secret sold out"

club show was a highlight of the weekend for sure. Kim went to the day festival every day, and night shows. She'd have more to say about that.

#### AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

Kim: If you're ever in Joshua Tree, look us up!

**BB:** Next weekend is our first show with a new Patootie, David. He's gonna be on second guitar and is really filling out our sound. We are super excited about that. We just released our latest EP on bandcamp and all streaming services— check it out!

IG: @hotpatootiesrocknroll







persona of Savage Lord Mic in Drakulas. The band tells stories based in the seedy underbelly of a retro-futuristic metropolis. Tales of gang fights, porno shops and smoky arcade deals, it feels like a combination of The Warriors meets Pulp Fiction set to a searing electro-punk soundtrack. Drakulas run these streets. I jumped on the phone with Mike to talk about Punk Rock Bowling and what's happening with his bands. G.F.F.G.

# Mike Wiebe **Riverboat Gamblers,** Drakulas By Ty Stranglehold

When I got the call from Ira asking me if I'd want to interview Mike Wiebe for the Punk Rock Bowling issue of AU, of course I jumped at the chance. Not only are Mike's bands among my favourite in the last 20 years, but he's a fun guy to hang out with.

Riverboat Gamblers have played PRB more times that most, and they are always among the most memorable of bands. They bring a unique combination of adrenalized punk rock n' roll with catchy pop sensibility and incredibly heartfelt lyrics. Mike (aka The Rookie Sensation) is a frontman always in motion, who has always reminded me of Mr. Chi Pig in that manner. Jumping and flying through the air, climbing rafters or balconies, launching himself into the crowd and sometimes bandmates. There have been many injuries over the years, maybe most notably a collapsed lung during a South by Southwest showcase.

In addition to the Gamblers, Mike takes on the



AU: Hi Mike. What's going on?

Mike: Doing pretty good. We're trying to get this new Drakulas record done and out. It's getting mixed right now by Mark Ryan (The Marked Men, Mind Spiders, O-D-EX). I was iust sitting here

writing out lyrics for the insert on the record.

AU: Nice. It's good to hear that it's coming together. I've never seen Drakulas live, and that really something that I can't live with too much longer.

Mike: Yeah, Drakulas generally don't play as much at the Gamblers do.

AU: I've always considered Riverboat Gamblers kind of synonymous with Punk Rock Bowling, I think mainly because I've seen you guys there at almost every one I've gone to.

Mike: It feels like we play about every other year. AU: How many times have you played the

Mike: I don't even know, between Drakulas and Gamblers it's got to be a bunch. We weren't there the first year, but I remember being there really early on. It was it was at some weird spot out in nowheresville.

AU: The first year I went was 2006. You guys headlined the main show with The Briefs and Swingin' Utters.

Mike: I think remember that.

festival in total?

#### AU: Have you guys ever taken part in the bowling aspect of it?

Mike: Maybe one year? I can't remember if we bowled, or were just hanging out watching The Briefs bowl, I think we did one year but we didn't do very well hitting the lanes. Especially that weekend when everything is pretty debaucherous, you know.

#### AU: Yeah, I bowled for Razorcake teams a couple of times and there was never really good bowling happening.

Mike: Yeah, it's hard to focus on that with everything else going on.

#### AU: Speaking of debaucherousness at punk rock bowling. What was the flat-out weirdest thing you've ever seen at Punk Rock Bowling?

Mike: I don't know if you'd call it weird, but this year there was that guy who showed up wearing an SS shirt and the crowd just turned on him. It was pretty epic. It was nice to see everybody come together and they just pushed that guy out.

#### AU: Those videos were great. It feels like the Gamblers have been hitting the road a bit more this year than in recent years.

Mike: Yeah, we're trying to work on a new record, but it's slow going... part of it is we've been getting a little busier with these little runs of shows. We still have Punk In The Park coming up in July. That's our next one.

AU: mentioning doing like fly-out shows, it seems like touring has changed bit from the earlier days of the band. What's the biggest

#### difference these days?

Mike: It's just tough. I think I think in the right circumstances, people might be up for it, but people have families now, and they're doing jobs that they've



got to tend to. Also, nobody really wants to play Oklahoma City on a Monday night. I don't miss those Monday show in the tertiary markets.

#### AU: It's a young person's game trying to do those weeknight shows in in small towns.

Mike: It is definitely a young person's game. We are old.

#### AU: On that note, you are known to give it a little bit extra physically on stage. Is that getting tougher as you get older?

Mike: Yeah, definitely. I've been noticing it. I turn 50 soon and I can definitely tell that I'm not as limber and don't move as quickly as I used to. That's okay, I'm just trying to figure out how to keep putting on a good show. I concentrate a little bit more on singing rather than climbing. But there's a part of me that's like man; there is this thing I used to do that's not coming as easily anymore.

#### AU: It's sort of adapting, right.

Mike: Yeah, it's adapting trying to figure out how to still make it a good show even if I'm not landing on my head again... like, I don't need to collapse my lung again.

#### AU: No one wants that! Do you ever go back and listen to your music like after it's done?

Mike: Not really. I will for reference stuff like if we're like playing a song we haven't done in forever; I'll listen to it a couple of times just to try and refresh myself. We played that Flogging Molly cruise and the entire time they were pumping it through the P.A. like all the bands that were playing. I'd be wandering around, and a Gamblers song would come on. It's a weird thing to sit there and listen to yourself, especially in front of other









people. You're looking around trying to gauge everyone's reaction.

#### AU: Was playing the cruise fun?

**Mike:** It was. I've been on a cruise before and didn't love it, like a vacation kind of thing, so I came into it like it might suck, but it was really great.

AU: When you have an extensive library of music like the Gamblers have, do you feel and hear the evolution of band, or is it noticeable at all?

**Mike:** I think you just grow and everybody's taking in new influences and new inspiration. You come back together and it's like this is who I am now and then the band has to feel that out together. Nobody's a new person, but everybody's grown, so you have to figure out what the band is now.

AU: That makes sense. You mentioned that you guys have worked on putting some stuff together here and there. Are there new Gamblers songs on the horizon?

**Mike:** We've got a lot of demos. We just need to focus in and figure out what's going to get used. We're sitting on a pretty big pile of stuff in various degrees of being finished. Some of them are pretty lumpy still but there's a couple that are sculpted out a bit more.

AU: What's the connection between the song "Jack O' Lantern" (on *Backsides*), and the Marked Men song "Still Waiting"?

Mike: When we did Backsides, we did a thing where we just asked some other people to write songs for us because we were trying to get a record out really quick for this label that we were kind of stuck to. Jeff (Burke of The Marked Men) just wrote the music to that one and we recorded it. I guess at some point in the process he thought "I like this song too, I'm

going to use it", so they did their own version of it. Musically, it's the same song, just different vocals and lyrics.

AU: Is there a story behind changing the titles of songs, like "The Art Of Getting Fucked" or "Wasting Time (Smoking Crack With L.A. Reid)"?

Mike: I don't know that there's a story on that. What was "The Art Of Getting Fucked" changed to?

AU: On the album it was changed to "The Art Of Getting Faded".

Mike: Was it? I didn't even

know that! That must have been Volcom (the label). I don't remember that at all. With "Smoking Crack With L.A. Reid", I think we just decided that we felt like it was too insular of a reference... not enough people knew who L.A. Reid is. I mean the song is about getting chewed up and spit out by the record industry, and for whatever reason L.A. Reid was in our purview at the time. I don't know the joke didn't land I guess yeah, so we decided to switch it up.

AU: Let's talk a little bit about Drakulas stuff. You mentioned earlier that the new record is almost ready to go? Mike: Yeah, it's going to be coming out in the fall.

AU: It feels like the band has been fairly dormant, but now you just played at Punk Rock Bowling, you're playing at the Dirtnap 25 fest, and you have a record coming out. Is It difficult to manage schedules for this band?

**Mike:** Yeah, Zach's pretty busy so we have a fill-in guitar player. I mean, he's been a part of the band for a while now. Everybody's busy. I kind of have my "road crew" and my "home crew". Sometimes managing those two things is a real headache.

AU: I love the idea behind Drakulas. The characters and the storylines. Are the new

songs continuing on with that?

Mike: Yeah, for sure. There are some different characters in this in this one. The new record is called Midnight City, and it's still kind peeking into the lives of these various neer'do-wells in this '70s retro-future world. It's fun. It makes writing a little easier when you're not having to write about yourself.

AU: Do you have wider stories set in this world scripted out that you just pull from, or is it more like just the songs or individual stories that you just put together individually?

**Mike:** It's kind of a little bit of both. There's characters where I'm like, okay, this is from this character's point of view, and they'll get a couple of songs, and sometimes there's just songs where the story is just a song. It just kind of depends. There are some characters that are essential to different songs. This new record has a couple of the characters from the old ones, but there's a bunch of new ones in it too.

AU: So Drakulas, are not only the band but It's like a like a gang situation in this gritty, sort of retro-future New York world?

Mike: There is there's the gang, Drakulas, but a

lot of the songs are about people on the periphery of that kind of stuff. There's this occultist Andy Warhol, Kenneth Anger kind of guy who is the star of a couple of songs,



like "Fashion Forward" on the last record. I've thought about trying to write some sort of story that kind of explains everything, but I don't know, I'm not a novelist.

# AU: How does somebody get jumped into Drakulas, the gang?

**Mike:** I think there would be probably a ceremonial neck bite. I know you get neck tattoos that look like bite marks on your neck.

#### AU: Is it difficult to balance the story or idea behind Drakulas with just being a rocking live band or does it just happen?

Mike: It just kind of happens. Being in a band, you have to put on a good show and have the songs. It's like the "deep dive" stuff is there, and it's for people to find but I totally get if people don't necessarily look that deep into it. It has to be for everybody and stand on its own. It's like a band you're casually watching needs to be good enough to kind of draw people in because if it was lore alone, that's going to lose a lot of people.

AU: Thanks for taking the time to talk Mike, just to recap, the new Drakulas record Midnight City is coming out in the fall on Dirtnap Records and are also playing at Dirtnap's 25th Anniversary festival in Milwaukee at the end of August. Riverboat Gamblers are playing at Punk In The Park in July, and working on some new songs in the background. Are you doing any stand-up comedy these days?

**Mike:** Now and again, local shows here in Austin.

AU: Thanks again Mike, hope to see you in Milwaukee.

Mike: Totally! See you then. Thanks! riverboatgamblers.bandcamp.com drakulas. bandcamp.com



#### played this year. What did people miss if they weren't there?

Chris: Every year it kicks ass, so many cool bands and it's great seeing old friends. If you

weren't there you missed out!

AU: Any crazy Vegas related stories of debauchery to share?

**Chris:** Oh, there's plenty but like the saying goes.

what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas AU: Were you able to check

Chris: We just finished touring Europe; we start a US/Canadian run in July with Death by Stereo then head to South America in September. More stuff to be announced. Stay tuned...

**Interview by Ray MacKay** 

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to

Chris: This is Chris I play strings and drink coffee.

AU: Your most recent studio album was Dead

and what's your role with Strung Out?

Rebellion in 2024. What's next?

#### AU: What song at your concerts always gets the biggest reaction?

Chris: It's tough, we have a catalogue that spans over 30 years. Fans seem to like the variety we give them from new to old. Every now and then we throw in a deep cut. We're just grateful to still be playing.

AU: Tell us about the **Punk Rock Bowling** festival show you



#### out the new Punk Rock Museum in Vegas? If so, what were your thoughts?

Chris: I've never seen anything like it, so much history and memorabilia, it's incredible. I've gone a few times now and every time I discover something new. You have to check it out!

#### AU: What do you love most about Vegas?

Chris: Cocaine.

AU: What do you hate most about Vegas?

Chris: Cocaine.

AU: Any final words to share with our readers?

Chris: We love and appreciate our fans so much. Without them we'd be nowhere. Hope to see you on the road soon.

strungoutofficial.com

Photo by Ryan Mumby



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

Mikey: Hi, this is Mikey! Bassist for The Attack. I'm best known for being the clumsiest member of the band.

#### AU: Who else is in the band and what do they bring to the table?

Mikey: Charlie Bender - vocals, Brad Palkevich guitar. The three of us have officially dubbed this summer "The Summer of Drummers" since we'll have a rotating roster of drummers for the next few months, which includes TJ Howard repping Orlando, David (Gravy) Walsh repping the UK and with us for our UK and Germany dates at the end of the summer, including Rebellion Fest. Tito Esquiaqui (our original drummer) repping Nashville and helping us out with our run of shows across the Northeast U.S. with Stiff Little Fingers in the Fall.

We're a lucky group in that everyone brings so much to the table. Not just musically, but behind the scenes as well. Brad handles booking tours and promotions, Charlie is on merch, and since our last full-length, I've taken on the production and engineering duties of our recordings. We also support each other with the many different tasks it takes to keep the train rolling!

#### AU: Give us a brief history of The Attack.

Mikey: Long story short: Charlie, Brad, and I started as Knup (punk backwards). Each of us grabbed the instrument we were least comfortable with and managed to write and record a few songs. Not long after, I left the band and took a break from touring. In the meantime, Charlie and Brad made some tweaks, added some members. changed the name, and went full on! That line-up wrote and recorded

the first full-length, "Of Nostalgia and Rebellion." Lots of shows and tours later, I came in on bass when our good friend

Phil left, and I've been in the band since. We recorded our second full-length, "On Condition," with Pete Steinkopf from Bouncing Souls. We wrote and recorded a few singles. More tours and shows with friends and heroes, and here we are! Still stoked, playing, and very much looking forward to the road ahead

# AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if

for the first time.

Energetic! I think that's the best way to describe our live show. We love what we do, and I think it comes across when you see us play. Also, it's important for us to connect with people at our shows. You'll always find us hanging out by our merch, out on the floor, at the bar, happy to hang.

AU: What did people miss if they weren't at the Punk Rock Bowling club show you played this

#### year? Who else was on the bill?

Mikey: Those people missed a lot! They missed Mike McColgan from Street Dogs (original singer of Dropkick Murphys) and the Bomb Squad performing the first Dropkick Murphys album. It was unbelievable! They missed the Briggs absolutely smashing it, Dee Skusting & The Rodents bringing the noise, and they missed us! Where were you?! These club shows are something special. It's not often you get to see Dillinger Four, Mariachi El Bronx, Lee Fields, 7 Seconds, and Hot Water Music play in these intimate-sized venues down the street from each

**AU: Describe Punk** Rock Bowling music festival experience for the uninitiated. What makes PRB unique in your opinion?

Mikey: There's nothing like it! It's sensory overload in the best way. As soon as you wake up, the fun begins. In the morning, grab a coffee or

beer, or both, and head over to The Downtown Grand pool deck to catch bands like Teenage Bottlerockets, The Briefs, or Codefendants. After the pool party shenanigans, grab lunch and pool time before heading to the festival. With two stages going back and forth, it's non-stop music. And if that's not enough, you've got the club shows after the festival finishes up. The club shows are my favourite part of the festival. You've got these insane line-ups playing in various venues all around the area. It's not easy to pick which one to check out. Plus, you don't have to walk around too long before you see members of your favourite bands strolling down Fremont St or gambling at the Golden Nugget.

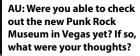
#### AU: Have you ever bowled in the tournament? Any bowling tips?

Mikey: Nope, but I'd love to! And I enjoy bowling, so here's a quick tip: When you roll, follow through all the way. You want to make sure you're shaking hands with the pins, so to speak.

**AU: Were there** any bands playing this year at PRB that you were stoked to check out?

Mikey: Where do I start?! Gang of Four, Cock Sparrer, The Damned, Riverboat Gamblers, Youth Brigade. I got to see a few bands new to me that

were fantastic, like NOBRO and Béton Armé. There are so many great bands at this event.



Mikev: Yes! We played a short set at the museum the day after our club show. My thoughts? Go! Please, check it out. It's fantastic! I got to eavesdrop on Keith Warren

of the Adicts and Smelly of NOFX as they gave guided tours. It's well worth a visit, especially if you can take one of the guided tours.

#### AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

Mikey: We have a tour at the end of summer, taking us through the UK, including Rebellion Fest, along with some dates with Circle Jerks in Germany. By then, our live split release with  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{UK}}$ friends, Kicked in the Teeth, should be out. In September, we have a week of shows with Stiff Little Fingers throughout the Northeast U.S. You'll find info on our releases, shows, and links to our social media pages.

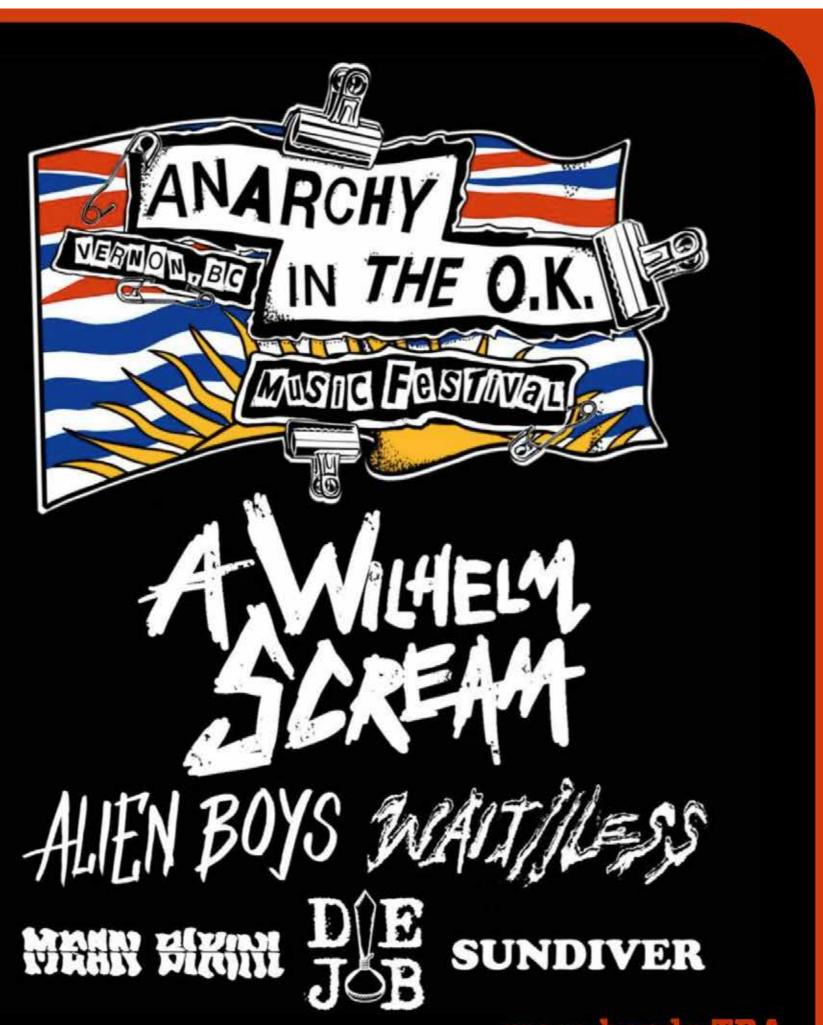
#### AU: Final words of wisdom?

Mikey: "Have a good time all the time." - Viv Savage

theattack.us @theattackpunkrock



possible. Mikey: We're a band that most certainly wears our influences on our sleeves: Generation X, The Ramones, The Clash, Rancid, H2O, Avail, and we get those comparisons from people who hear us



...more bands TBA...

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Kelowna
Harley-Davidson







# **Total Massacre**

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

Cap'n No Fun: I'm Cap'n No Fun! I guess I'm known for writing most of the words we're all screaming, and also for doing a whole lot of that screaming myself.

#### AU: Give us a brief history of Total Massacre.

CNF: Well, believe it or not, we used to be a punk rock Grateful Dead cover band, but like a lot of folks in the US, the election of a legit fascist really fucked us up. So, in 2017 we decided it was a good time to change things up and make some music about how we were feeling. Those feelings were mainly rage and horror at the beginning (and don't worry, there's still plenty of that!) But I think it's important that we have also branched out to include songs about the power and the hope of radical working class solidarity.

AU: Who else is in the band and what do they bring to the table?

CNF: Mike Massacre is our OG guitar player, so he's been pretty central to writing most of the sick riffs and even sicker guitar solos we're famous for. Jeff Massacre writes and plays the heaviest bass in hardcore. He's also a wiz at handling a lot of the behind-the-scenes bullshit that is necessary to keep this little independent operation of ours guitarist, and it has just been so awesome to melody and some different ideas to what we're doing.

AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if possible.

CNF: Loud and cathartic.

AU: What did people miss if they weren't at the Punk Rock Bowling club show you played this year? Who else was on the bill?



We Were Kids tearing it up. They missed The Mainliners tearing it up. They missed the legends Clit 45 tearing it up. They missed Fugitive absolutely blowing the doors off the fucking place. And you know, I think we played a pretty decent set too!

#### AU: What's the most important message you are trying to impart through your music?

CNF: I think if there's two things I'd really like people to understand it's this: Capitalism is going to fucking kill us. That isn't a figure of speech, I mean it literally will kill us if we don't stop it. Which leads me to the 2nd thing which is that we absolutely do have the power to stop it. There is a massive billion-dollar propaganda machine working overtime to convince us that there is nothing we can do, but we can. And we will. It's

just a matter of when we all wake up and realize it. So yeah, if it seems like a lot of our songs are about those things, that's probably

#### AU: How can punk rock change the world?

CNF: I fully believe solidarity is how we are going to turn this whole fucked up capitalism thing around, and I've found punk rock to be a pretty

goddamn good vehicle for that. We can't just stop there of course, but it's a good place to start! And besides, what good is a revolution if the music sucks?!

#### AU: Describe Punk Rock Bowling music festival experience for the uninitiated. What makes the PRB unique in your opinion?

CNF: Honestly, I think the thing that makes it special is it's run by the Sterns. It isn't put together by some shell company trying to extract value from our nostalgia. It's a real celebration of this

who are invested in it, for the folks who live and breathe and love this shit.

AU: Any crazy Vegas-related stories of debauchery to share?



CNF: I'm sure the other guys have plenty, but unfortunately, you're stuck with me. And I've got the name No Fun for a reason. Sorry!

#### AU: Were you able to check out the new Punk Rock Museum in Vegas yet? If so, what were vour thoughts?

**CNF:** I think I've been three times now! I love it.

It's gonna sound corny, and maybe a little selfabsorbed but it really means a lot to me to see this artform of ours treated with the respect it deserves. It's a rich and important history and it should be taken seriously I really recommend checking it out if you

#### AU: Any plans to play Canada?

CNF: I dunno. Does it count as a tour if we go up there and don't come

#### AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

CNF: We have a brand new four-song EP called Gross Domestic Product coming out VERY SOON on all your favourite exploitative digital media platforms! The first song called "Satisfaction Guaranteed" is already out! Don't miss it!

#### totalmassacre.com

Live photo by Jason Weiner



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## **NEW BOMB TURKS**

!!Destroy-Vegas-Oh-Boy!! By Ty "Runnin' On Go" Stranglehold and Ira "Jukebox Lean" Hunter

When it comes to rock n' roll, the question often gets asked; "what the hell is in the water in Ohio?' From Devo, The Dead Boys and The Cramps to Nine Inch Nails, Guided By Voices and The Black Keys, the state produces more than their share of notable music. In the early '90s, Columbus Ohio's New Bomb Turks turned punk rock on its head with their brand of raw, "doors blown off, adrenaline punk" with distinct nods to

what made early rock n' roll great to begin with. Imagine Mick Jagger and Keith Richards forming a punk rock band, and you're getting close. They were on the ground floor of what would become



known as "garage rock" or "garage punk" - subgenres that would birth the likes of The White Stripes, Murder City Devils and The Hives among others. Throughout the following decade or so, the Turks released nine albums (including three singles and rarities comps) on labels such as Crypt, Epitaph and Gearhead. In and around 2005.

the band more or less went into hibernation, appearing now and again for one-off shows. Fast forward to 2025. The Turks are back with an entire tour (including a club show at Punk Rock Bowling). Absolute Underground caught up with the Turks in Vegas to find out who's dressing up the naked truth

AU: What are you most famous for? Eric Davidson: I'm Eric Davidson known for singing for the New Bomb Turks.

Sam Brown: I play drums in New Bomb Turks and I am famous for having to go back and get something out of the hotel room.

Matt Reber: I am probably most famous for playing the bass guitar in the New Bomb Turks but outside of that, I don't know, I'm a dad.

Jim Weber: I'm Jim Weber the guitar player for the New Bomb Turks. I guess I'm most famous for being a high school English teacher for 20 years.

AU: We are at Punk Rock Bowling. Have you

before? NBT: No.

played PRB

AU: That's what makes this festival special is they have these shows and get these bands to play that might be a once in a lifetime opportunity for some of the fans to see.

NBT: Yeah, our friend Christina who works for the festival said that she had been trying for years to get us on and it just didn't work out, but it worked this year and it has been really fun.

AU: Describe your club show last night.

NRT: We're our own worst critics but I feel like we played great. Lots of energy. The bouncers were great. They didn't bounce anybody and they held Eric up. That one bouncer. he could've

held up the whole band. That fucker was huge. Usually, the barrier thing can be kind of annoying because we like to have people right up front. But it was cool, people were getting into it. It's cool to see people that are seeing us for the first time or hadn't seen us in 30 years

AU: New Bomb Turks hold the distinction of being considered one of the best live bands of the '90s-'00s. You obviously still bring the heat, but has the preparation changed? How do you get into show-mode these days?

NBT: Well, as you get older you've got to make sure to get a little extra working out in before shows come up. At least a little extra cardio or some shit. But otherwise, prep is usually drinking a couple of beers before the show, I suppose.

AU: Are there any young bands out there flying

the "Gunk Punk" flag today? Any heirs apparent to the New Bomb Turks?

**NBT:** We played with one last night. Civic from Australia. They are



AU: What does the future hold? Tour plans? Pacific Northwest, British Columbia? We're trying to get you to come to Canada

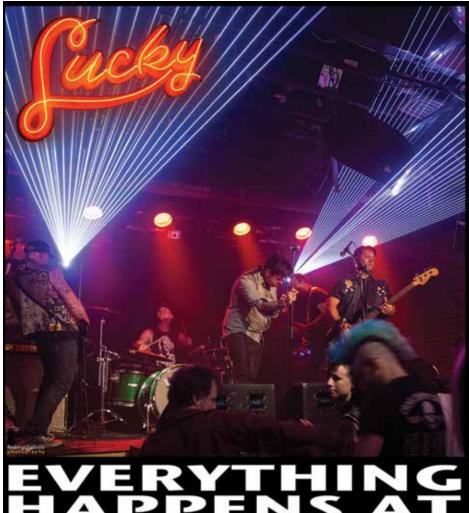
**NBT:** We are going to Toronto. So, we are going

to Canada. We're doing like 10 shows this summer in the Midwest and on the East Coast. We also kind of assume the Canadians don't really want Americans to come into their country right now.

AU: We'll take

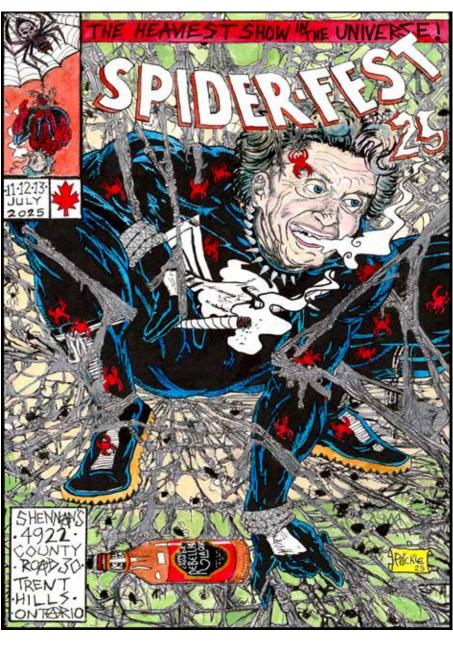
you. For any young kids not familiar with your sound and history, what are the New Bomb Turks all about?

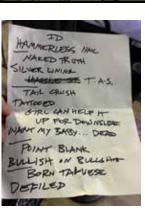
**NBT:** When we started a lot of fanzine writers would compare us to bands like the Dead Boys or early The Saints and a lot of those bands only lasted one or two albums. I always felt like I wanted to try to show that we could last and to keep doing it for a little while. Which we then did. I always felt like to try to show that you can keep the energy and the enthusiasm up. As far as young kids go that have never heard of us, I think our roots are a lot of the bands out of Cleveland and New York. Except for Sam, we all grew up near Cleveland hearing about the Dead Boys, Rocket from the Tombs, the Electric Eels, Devo from Akron and Death of Samantha. So, I think





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we're more on the rock and roll side of punk rock

AU: I discovered you from the *Punk-*O-Rama Vol. 2 compilation album.

**NBT:** Is that the one where the Epitaph E guy is peeing on the cover?

AU: Yes, it is the peeing one. Your song "Jukebox Lean" really stood out so much from everything else on there. It was just so much faster. It was ripping rock and roll. You didn't play that song last night and I came all the way from Canada to hear it, so you owe me a beer,

**NBT:** You should have been there Friday in LA; we did play it there. I like the lyrics to that song because it's about being a music lover. I mean the lyrics drop references about Prince and The

Bangles and shit. We're all record-collecting music geeks of all different genres. not just punk. I don't know if we chose that song for that comp but I like to think we're telling punk kids that it's okay to like Prince. That is important.

AU: Did vou feel the impact of those compilation albums with popularity growth?

NBT: People request "Jukebox Lean" a lot and "Defiled", which was on the other one. So that definitely got our name out there.

We did a Fat Wreck Chords 7" and it was kind of crazy how kids would know about that. Even though we had been a band for like six years, one 7" on Fat Wreck Chords and we had more kids

coming to our shows on the West Coast. Then bands would find us, like the Rancid guvs told us when they made the first Rancid record they took !!Destroy-Oh-Boy!! into the studio and were like "Make it sound like this." The guys from NOFX would show up at our shows and The Offspring.

AU: Do you have any recollections of playing in Victoria, BC in 1994 at Harpos? It happened to be the same weekend as the Jaks reunion, so the insanity was dialled a bit higher.

**NBT:** It was fun. I think we went to a peeler joint before the show, as one is wont to do in Canada.

It was like one of the most beautiful places we've ever been and we had a blast. Wait, is that where we played with Pansy Division? We got to see them do "Smells Like Queer Spirit", which they promised to never do again after Kurt died.

AU: What is the most wildly incorrect interpretation of one of your lyrics you've ever

NBT: I've got one. It's actually

"Jukebox Lean". So, we have a friend Amanda who got a tattoo of the lyrics, "My

priorities move at 45 revs." Which is for 45 revolutions per minute but she put on her tattoo 45 reps. I think it was because she just recently started working out.

#### AU: Is there a specific reason why Ohio produces more influential musicians per capita than pretty much anywhere else?

NBT: A lot of the bands in Cleveland, that to this day are some of my favourite bands, like Death of

Samantha, The Mice, and My Dad Is Dead, they were not exactly household names, but they were so great. But there was just this feeling like, no one's going to care, no one's going to give a fuck or I can't quit my job to go on a tour. Cheetah Chrome who ended up in the Dead Boys he was like "We wouldn't even have thought about trying to put together a tour." He's just like, "Nobody's going to give a fuck, we're from Cleveland."

# AU: Feelings on Punk Rock

were going to the elevator last night, it was like

Mould walks out. Jim and I pretty much right when we met, we talked about Hüsker Dü. Bob walks out and Jim's like, "Hey Bob, I got a Flying V

#### AU: Seen any crazy Vegas debauchery or passed out punks this weekend?

**NBT:** I remember when Vegas was dangerous. Walking out on Fremont Street was bizarre. But the punks were well-behaved, they just look scarv.

AU: How long have you been using the crotch phone technique? Where you grab people's phones out of the crowd and put them down

# **Bowling?**

NBT: It's been really fun. It's just been really cool to see friends we haven't seen in a while. Christina is awesome. I thought our show went good.

#### AU: Have you bumped into anyone famous in the

#### elevator at the **Golden Nugget** yet?

NBT: So, we

3 am, the elevator opens and Bob right here." It was really

cool. Then we saw T.V. Smith in the lobby. He's still great, very inspiring.



# vour pants.

NBT: Well, let's see, when did the iPhone 7 come out? No. I should probably stop doing that. It was just a dumb thing because everyone complains that people always have their phones out. Actually, there weren't that many people holding up phones last night. People were actually enjoying the show and being in the moment.





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So, one of these days, someone's going to punch me for taking it and then I'll stop doing it.

#### AU: Has the name of the band ever caused you trouble at the border or anything?

**NBT:** One time these two Turkish students were sitting at the bar and this

friend came up and said "These guys are kind of pissed off." so I had to talk to them. I was like, "This has nothing to do with bombing Turkish people." They were very nice and then we all had a beer.

#### AU: What does the name mean?



**NBT:** It's a character from a movie called The Hollywood Knights from 1980. His name is Newbomb, it's one word, Turk. Jim and I were just walking the streets desperately trying to come up with a name. I was like "What about New Bomb Turks?" I always liked that it had the same number of letters as New York Dolls.

#### AU: Any parting words for Canadian fans?

**NBT:** As Americans right now, we're really sorry. See you in Toronto on July 29th and maybe we will get out west later. Talk to your local promoter and tell them to bring us out there.

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#### NEGATIVE APPROACH Detroit Hardcore

Invades Vegas

Interview with vocalist John Brannon by Ira Hunter and Dustin Jak

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

**JB:** This is John Brannon. I'm a singer. I've been in a lot of bands. I've been in Laughing Hyenas, Negative Approach and Easy Action.

# AU: What were some of the first records you listened to growing up in Detroit?

**JB:** I've got to say Alice Cooper, The Stooges, MC5. Those were all local bands when I was growing up. To me, that was punk rock before they called it punk rock, just Detroit rock and roll.

#### AU: Did you see those bands as a teenager?

**JB:** I started going to gigs when I was 15. The first gig I ever saw was Kiss in 1975 when they played

Cobo Hall supposedly the night they recorded the Alive! album. Then later on I'd start checking out the Dead Boys, Blondie, the Ramones, Devo and The Clash. So those were exciting gigs. I saw some early Iggy Pop shows but I never saw The Stooges when they were happening. I was too young.

# AU: What inspired you to start Negative Approach?

JB: In 1981 I started Negative Approach but I've been in bands since I was like 15. My first band was Fallout. We were doing covers, battle of the bands and we had a couple originals. Then my next band was Static doing originals and we were kind of glammed out. It was in like 78-79. Actually I had a bunch of the old tapes and a couple years ago Third Man Records actually put out the Static record. Then a couple of years after I was out of high school in 1981 I started Negative Approach. At that point we'd kind of got past the punk thing and then the Oi! thing was coming up. We were checking out stuff like Sham 69, The 4-Skins, and Discharge. Then Minor Threat. We were also fans of early L.A. punk. So we wanted to do something

that would be more intense than all that stuff. So we did our best to create our own thing with our Detroit influences, our punk rock influences.

AU: You guys had a very distinctive sound that was what people would call "Hardcore" right from the start. DOA's Hardcore '81 coined the term yet your first EP, which came out under a year after, is twice as fast and twice as heavy. What influenced you to produce this sound?

JB: Well, I've got to say DOA. They were one of the early hardcore shows that I saw in Canada. We live in Detroit, so Windsor is right across the bridge. That's when I kind of met the Necros, they'd be showing up at all these shows. One day they handed me a flyer and said "We're playing with this band DOA in Windsor." So we went to that. I'd been to rock and roll shows but that was probably the first hardcore show I ever saw. Right after that Minor Threat played a show there. Then seeing early Black Flag shows in Detroit when Dez (Cadena) was still singing. Then a little bit after

that we started doing gigs with all those pioneer hardcore bands and we used to play with the English bands too, like The Damned and the U.K. Subs. We were just starting out and got a chance to do a lot of really big shows around Detroit.

# AU: With the name Negative Approach, how did you approach the songs you created?

JB: Well if you want to look into the meaning, the whole Negative Approach thing is kind of like going against the norm. Doing it your way, not doing it everybody else's way. Because we're getting past New Wave and all this stuff and everything was you had to be like this or you had to be like that. We wanted to do something shocking and do it our own way. So we're going to take a Negative Approach. We're not going to follow anybody's rules. We're going to make our

#### AU: What was the differences between the sounds of Negative Approach and you other band Easy Action?

JB: I've got to say, all the members of Negative Approach are in Easy Action. Negative Approach is its own thing. We created all those sounds in the early 80s when we were younger and had a different style. Easy Action is more like what we're writing now and it's not confined to just being hardcore. It's a real Detroit rock sound. It's still aggressive and loud and fast but we can do any kind of music we want. We don't label it.

# AU: After the band broke up, did you ever intend for Negative Approach to reform?

JB: No, not at all. The reason we got back together was because our record label Touch and Go had their 25th anniversary. They convinced us to. We hadn't done those songs in 25 years. So we got together and did a couple practices and ended up doing that show. There was about 5000 people there. We were like, Whoa. It was in Chicago, they had a big outdoor fest. That went over really good. We just thought it was going to be a one off and then a couple weeks later Thurston

Moore from Sonic Youth got a hold of us. He was putting together one of those All Tomorrow's Parties festivals in England. He's like "I want to fly you guys out to play



with The Stooges and MCS." That's something we couldn't turn down. That was like a dream come true. So we ended up doing that. Then we kept getting offers for festival shows. We thought this is too fun to turn down. So we just kind of kept doing it. To this day we do Negative Approach and we do Easy Action. It's the same guys, it's just different songs.



#### AU: What about Laughing Hyenas?

**JB:** We've got a double live record coming out on Third Man Records. It's a compilation of all my tapes of a bunch of live recordings from 1986 to 1994. I've been trying to put that together for a couple years and finally got that together.

AU: Are you finding now that there's a whole new generation of Negative Approach fans? Everywhere you look these days, you see the NA shirts on people, it's going to out do the Crimson Ghost, if you aren't careful.

JB: I think it's the internet. The kids are just



NEGATIVE APPROACH





discovering it, it's all out there. There's a lot of footage from the early days. I think kids see it and dig it. We're just so happy people still come out to the shows. When we did this stuff we didn't think it was going to last a year, let alone over 40 years. I'd like to think we can still do it and give them an intense show. If I thought we weren't doing it right, I wouldn't do it. We have fun doing the

shows and we never get sick of playing the songs.

#### AU: Tell people about the PRB club show NA played this year. Who else was on the bill?

JB: It was really fun. Stalag 13 played. The Effigies played. We played and Incendiary Device opened the show. 7 Seconds headlined. It was a good mix of bands. It wasn't the outside Punk Rock Bowling festival stage but it was in a really fucking cool club and we had a good time playing. Everybody put on a good show that night for the audience.

AU: Any chance of recording a follow up album to your Tied Down LP from 1983? Now a top 10

from 1983? Now a top 10 hardcore must have for any collector.

JB: We're always threatening

JB: We're always threatening to do that. At the end of the month Chris "Opie" Moore the original drummer is coming to town. He lives in Brooklyn and we're in Detroit, so it's hard getting together. But we're always hoping we can get another batch of songs together. But for us to do anything and

call it a Negative Approach song, it's got to be just completely out there and really good.

#### AU: Any upcoming shows?

**JB:** With Easy Action we will be touring July and August with Dinosaur Jr all over the states. Then

September and October Negative Approach is back with the Circle Jerks playing a lot of West Coast shows. I've probably played with the Circle Jerks more than any other fucking band. We've done close to 170 shows together.

# AU: Did Tesco Vee discover you guys and put you on the label Touch and Go Records?

**JB:** At that point the label had been kind of

handed over to Corey Rusk, the bass player in the Necros. I met the Necros and Tesco Vee all at same time. We used to do a bunch of early shows together. So I don't know if we were discovered. We kind of just ended up doing shows, and were friends. Then we made a recording at Corey's house and he's like, "I want to put this out on a 45." and that ended up being the The Exorcist 45.

# AU: What made you angry when you were first starting the band?

JB: I was angry about everything.

A lot of those lyrics were kind of like just kid issues, man.

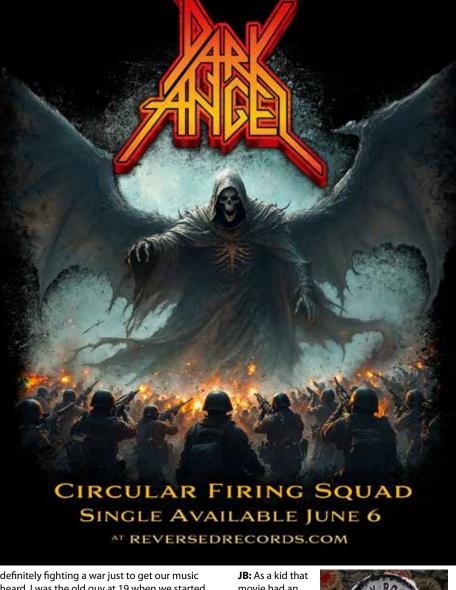
Just hating everybody in my high school, former girlfriends, people trying to tell me l couldn't do that. The whole thing about Negative Approach is just standing up for yourself and doing what you want to do. Really early on punk was still a dirty word. People used to fuck

with us all the time when we

wanted to beat us up all the time. They didn't understand

were punks in high school, they

the kind of music we were doing. They're like, Why do you guys play so fast? How come your songs are so short? Why are you guys bald? Why are you guys wearing leathers and boots? Punk rock is kind of the norm now. They play the Ramones in like a grocery store or in elevators. Back when we were doing it we were



definitely fighting a war just to get our music heard. I was the old guy at 19 when we started out, the other guys were like 15 and 16 in the band. So it was always a hassle trying to even get a club show. That turned into us finding halls and it opened up different venues so we could do the all ages thing. It was the whole do it yourself thing. We had to start our own venues and start our own scene. We didn't know how but we were just determined to do it. Starting magazines, getting the word out, doing our own promotion, putting on our own shows. Everybody's like, you guys can't do this, we don't understand this, it sucks. So it was always like fighting a war just to get out and play the show.

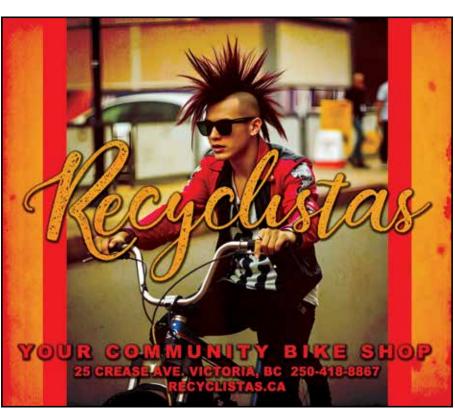
AU: What was the inspiration for The Exorcist artwork on your first release?

JB: As a kid that movie had an impact on me, it just terrified me. So I guess it was definitely in the back of my mind. Like the Misfits have got the Crimson Ghost,



we need to get something that's going to be something iconic. That image was just so strong and then it kind of became our logo.

@realjohnbrannon





room and back to our hotel after a gig and a lot of Jack Daniel's is always a bit

#### AU: How was your PRB experience this year?

Vegas is such an insane place! It's the perfect setting for a festival like Punk Rock Bowling. This year we opened the festival by headlining the Saturday night. It's always a special moment to be on stage as the Sun goes down. The thing with Festivals is, it's not always your crowd. It's a collective of people that have come together for the entire lineup. So it's always very humbling to hear the crowd sing their hearts out.

We weren't advertised to play any other show but of course people realised that we were the surprise guests for the Monday night club show at the Fremont Country Club and it was packed with Sparrer fans. So we closed out the festival too. Whilst it's great to play on a big stage in front of thousands of people we are much more 'at home' in a club. This was definitely our favourite

#### **AU: What makes Punk Rock Bowling** unique?

I think it's being in Vegas and the club shows.

line-ups around the world but to all come together in a place like Vegas and hang out is great. But to carry on partying at the club shows long after the festival has night is unique. The festival has a family vibe and meeting up with old friends is just as important as the music.

AU: You've stated that this will be Cock Sparrer's last shows in Las Vegas. Are the wives

Ha! The wives are never tired of a trip away - either with us if it's somewhere they'd like go or without us if they want to get rid of us for the weekend!

tired of the Vegas strip at this point?

We love PRB but we've done it a bunch of times and there's other places we want to go and play.

#### AU: Vegas will miss you, but you mentioned during your club show that the band is planning on returning to the US.

Our visa lasts a year so we are definitely planning on heading back. We don't tour. It would kill us (or we'd kill each other!) The reason the band has kept going for 53 years is that we do things on our own terms even if they don't always make sense. We're not doing this to line our pockets. There's no money in Punk Rock at our level anyway. We do this because we love playing together. So we tend to just go places for the weekend, do a couple of great shows, hang out with our friends and come home again. We also want every Cock Sparrer gig to be an event. There could be people in that room that are seeing us for the first time. We're not gonna short change people

#### AU: Any plans on visiting Canada before the flame dies, so to speak?

I'd love to come back to Canada. Never say never.

AU: Any songs you have never played live? There are loads of songs that we've never played live and probably never will. We have a tried and tested set of songs that everybody expects and deserves to hear.

> There's a chunk in the middle that we like to mix up a bit with some rarer songs. In 2022 we celebrated

our 50th anniversary with two shows at the legendary Roundhouse in London. We did two sets. The first set being songs that we had

never played live before. That was probably one of the most enjoyable things we've done. We played 'I Live in Marbella' and 'Bats Out' from probably our least known album Two Monkeys. We open the set with 'Out on an Island' from Shock Troops and played a few other gems.

#### AU: The new album, Hand On Heart, sounds great, it harkens back to the band's material from the 90s with songs sounding like they could've fit perfectly alongside albums like **Guilty as Charged. Was that sound intentional?**

The actual sound of the album was really important to me. I've always been proud of our songs, from the ones I've been involved with to those that I grew up listening to as a fan. But I've always thought that we've been let down by cheap sounding Production and Studios. I think all our albums have got better from that point of view as time has gone on. But whilst our albums have a place within our own scene, I still feel that bands in our genre. My goal for the last album was purely to make something that I was happy with soundwise. So the influences came more from in-studio technique than songwriting.



It's easy to write a Cock Sparrer song. But not so easy to get them to stand up against everything else that's out there. I spent more time on the Production side of things researching recording techniques and chasing the sound I had in my head. We're really pleased that the album has gone down as well as it has. Colin often says that it's his favourite Cock Sparrer album ever.

#### AU: You guys started long before punk rock was a well known genre but fell squarely in the middle of the subculture when it exploded later in the '70s. Would you consider yourselves punk pioneers? The first Oi! band? Working class pub rock? Or just a group of good friends playing music you love?

You've nailed it with the last description. We're iust a bunch of friends that love having fun together. The band started at school and like most young bands had dreams of rock 'n' roll. When Punk came along, it was just a convenient umbrella that summed up what the band were already doing. We never really fitted in though. Punk in the UK was mainly from the West End of London and formed by people that had come out of art school. The only thing we've come out of is the pub. So whilst we were kindred spirits. our backgrounds were a bit different. We were working class, going to football and playing a bit of rock 'n' roll with a bit of passion and aggression. It's sort of fitted Punk, but our faces didn't fit. The Oi! thing came about long after we'd finished in 1978 and I guess had we started then we would have been a good fit as the initial Oi! spirit was just working class Punk from the streets. We don't consider ourselves pioneers of that scene, or bandwagon jumpers of the original Punk scene. We're just a bunch of friends doing what we do. There's a really diverse crowd that comes to see us now. Punks, skins, hardcore kids etc. We're probably really a pub rock band as that was all that was around in the early days but I don't think any pub rock fans come and see us!!

#### AU: Is there a DVD of the band in production?

The two anniversary shows I mentioned earlier were recorded and the plan is to get those released with a nice package of Vinyl and a DVD.

#### AU: Parting words for Canadian fans?

Stop clubbing seals. We'd love to come back to Canada, hit up our socials with details of what clubs are putting on Punk shows. What promoters are bringing over UK bands? Come on Canada, get yourselves on our radar and we'll make it over.

cocksparrer.co.uk

Live Photos: Tina Clark

# **COCK SPARRER Vegas Belongs To Me**

Interview with guitarist Daryl Smith

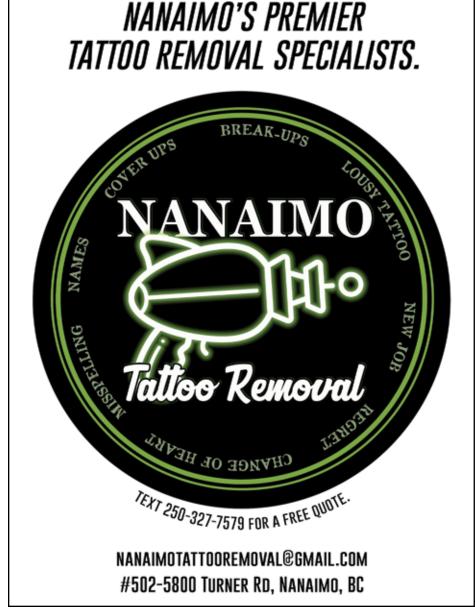
By Ira Hunter and Brenin Barrow AU: Good day kind sir and happy birthday!

Thanks for taking the time for this interview between beers and cake. Who do we have the pleasure of chatting with today and what are your duties in Earth's best band, Cock Sparrer?

Thanks for having us. This is Daryl, I'm the new boy. Only been in the band 33 years! I play guitar for Cock Sparrer - actually the easy bit. The rest of the time I deal with managing all the other aspects of the Band. We are independent and very much a DIY band. The best description is chief cat herder - trying to get my lot out of a dressing

There's loads of festivals with decent punk

wrapped up for the





## **Cock Sparrer: Part 2**

Interview with Frontman Colin McFaull By Aeryn Shrapnel and Chuck Andrews Check out Part 1 in Issue 117

# AU: Do fans ever come up to you and tell you what their favourite songs are?

**CM:** Yeah, all the time. For some bizarre reason, people love "Out on an Island" from *Shock Troops*, I think because we never played it live that often. It's sometimes quite surprising when they mention a song, or they say their favourite is something that's not on our registry; just something that's not on our registry; just something that I've never thought about for the last 20 years. That's why we never define our tunes, because once we put it out there, then that belongs to whoever's listening to it.

#### AU: I know you were originally called Cock Sparrow and it changed to Cock Sparrer to match the way you say it. Where did Cock Sparrow come from?

CM: Cock Sparrow is an old East London term; it's a term of friendliness. Rather than saying "my friend," you say, "This is my old cock sparrow, this is part of the gang." It's someone that's dear to you. We just changed it from "ow" to "er" so that it sounded as we would say it. The problem we have is that a lot of people misinterpret it to be about cockfighting and they have real trouble understanding what it is and how to pronounce it. That's our fault– it's a stupid name. Whoever thought we'd get radio play with that?

# AU: Did you have any other names in mind in your early days?

CM: Prior to that, we were called Janus, which is an awful name, but we were called that before we actually started. I think it had something to do with a Greek god with two heads. Every band in those days had names like that—but that was back in 1972 when we were 14 years old. We set out with a very small bunch of intentions; we always wanted to enjoy ourselves on stage, which we've achieved; we wanted to

give everybody else a good night out, which I think we've achieved; we wanted people to come and see us in a safe environment, which is the situation that we're in now. It wasn't always like that. Back in the '80s, it wasn't as healthy as it is now. I look out from the stage now and there's the old heads like myself out there that have been with the band all the way through, there's some young guys and girls down in the front, and the number of women that come to the shows now is phenomenal.

#### AU: You've mentioned before that you guys



# grew up together and formed the band at a young age. How did Daryl end up joining?

CM: It's a really strange route. Almost fate sort of intervened for some reason, because for a long time, even after meeting Daryl, we didn't know that it was actually Daryl's dad that signed us to our first record deal with Decca Records. Daryl was five years old, so I'm sure he had nothing to

do with it. Daryl's involvement came in the '80s after *Shock Troops* came out. We had a year or so of trying to promote the album and doing tours and gigs. As I mentioned earlier, the situation wasn't that healthy and there were fights and things, so we decided we'd had enough of that. There was an interim of eight years or so where we didn't play. During that time, *Shock Troops* became almost like a cult record. Lots of people picked up on it, lots of bands referred to it, lots of fans, who then became famous like the Murphy's and Rancid and whatever, mentioned that album

and what an influence it had been. We were asked if we'd be interested in re-forming and playing a gig at The Astoria in London, which is gone now, but was a famous rock venue. We thought they were just joking with us. We thought, "What's the point? It holds 2,000 people, nobody's going to come."We had been unaware of what had been going on in the background. We were still friends, we still met up, the wives and girlfriends were still going on famously during that time: we still would go on holiday together. But during that time, Shock Troops built up this sort of notoriety of the band that we were unaware of, So. we agreed to do the gig at the Astoria, because we thought it would be something that we'd be able to talk about later in life over a beer, or something to impress the grandchildren. As it turns out, it was sold out; people came from all over the world to that show. It was that gig that

really turned things around and made us think about playing live again.

#### AU: Any advice for young musicians?

**CM:** Only that you have to be prepared to work hard. You have to put the hours in, you have to like the people that you're traveling with enough that you can spend all these hours in the back of



a van going up and down the motorways. If you don't have that level of friendship within a band, then the band isn't gonna last very long. So, be very selective about who you decide to join up with. It's not necessarily the best guitarist, but it's the guy that has your back, as well. Just have funget out there and do it. Punk made it accessible for everybody, so everybody now should be in a position whereby they can learn their three chords and go out and play some gigs.

# AU: Anything else we should know about you? Anything you don't want your family knowing?

**CM:** Hahaha! Absolutely not. You can't be knowing everything about me!

#### AU: Any plans to come back to North America?

**CM:** We haven't finalized this year yet. We've got a dozen or so dates lined up, but we're still looking at offers coming in. We'd love to come back; we've only been twice to Canada. I mean, the problem is, we are a very expensive commodity, not because we ask for a lot of money, but because we're not doing 30 days to spread the cost over. If we go and do something like Punk Rock Bowling, we will invariably do a pub show around there as well, but we don't tend to do more than two or three shows in one hit.

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

**CM:** Really, just thank you. We hope that you like the album as much as we do. It's been hard work, and we've now completely emptied our kit; we've got no money left at all. We put it all into the recording and the release and everything that goes with it, so we hope you enjoy it.

cocksparrer.co.uk









## **CIVIC**

#### **Punk Rock Walkabout**

AU: What's your role in CIVIC?

Roland Hlavka. I play bass

AU: Where is the band from and what's the punk music scene like there?

Melbourne, Australia. Huge punk scene in Melbourne and Australia in general. Too many

AU: Who is in the band and what does it say on your dating profiles?

Jim McCullough -Vocals Lewis Hodgson - guitar Roland Hlavka - bass Eli Sthapit - drums

"It's complicated"

#### AU: Tell us about Chrome Dipped, your album that recently came out on ATO Records?

Chrome Dipped is a bit of different direction for us. Just what feels like a natural progression for moving forward. Still hints of the old CIVIC but listeners can expect some new sounds.

#### AU: For newbies to CIVIC, what songs would you recommend to start them off?

"The Hogg", Poison, New Vietnam.

#### AU: Describe your live performance?

A display of speed and strength. Chaotic but

AU: How was Punk Rock Bowling? What' the connection between punk rock and bowling? It was great! Vegas was very... interesting - haha. CIVIC was started in a bowling alley in Japan.. so there's a connection.



#### AU: Tell us about the PRB show you played.

We played with New Bomb Turks at "The Usual Place" in old Vegas on the Sunday night. It was cool. Sold out, loud as hell.

#### AU: Any bands playing this year that vou were extra stoked to check out?

Yeah, heaps. Upchuck, Lambrini Girls, Power Trip, Peter Hook, Cock Sparrer. Etc

#### AU: Did you partake in any Vegas debauchery?

Yeah. But that stuff stays there, right? AU: Where is the future of punk rock

headed? Seems to be bigger than ever right now. New bands are always popping up. I feel like the future of punk is already here. Try and keep up.

#### AU: Any upcoming tours?

We are currently on tour in USA and then heading to Europe in July. Then back home for an Australian tour in September... you should come?

#### AU: Any plans to tour Canada?

We are playing in Toronto on this current tour but definitely planning to come and do a full Canadian tour sometime soon.

#### AU: Any final words?

Variety is the spice of life. Put it on everything you do.

#### AU: How do people find you online?

@civic\_\_\_world

CIVIC on streaming sites.

All caps when you spell the band's name



at the LA Kings hockey games?

JB: That used to be their winning song. If they won, after the game that was the song they played. We actually played in the stadium a couple of years in a row during the Stanley Cup Finals. It's a good sport for punk rock. Hockey and punk rock go pretty well together.

#### AU: Take us through your discography.

JB: We morphed out of the band I Decline so I consider our first release more like a pre-release, if you will, because we repressed it as The Briggs. It was called Is This What You Believe? Our first

actual official release was called Numbers on Disaster Records, which was Duane Peters' label and he actually produced the record. Shortly after that, we signed to

SideOneDummy and did an EP called *Leaving The Ways*. After that we had our first full-length, which was *Back to Higher Ground*. I think it is probably our most popular record as a whole. The record after that was our last full-length that we did called *Come All You Madmen*. That was the record that had "This is L.A."

#### AU: Will you put out another album?

**JB:** It's something we've been kicking around for some time. We've been working on some new tunes and hopefully it'll come to fruition. It's been a mission of mine to get a new Briggs release out.

#### AU: Tell us about your recent PRB club show.

JB: That was a pretty special experience. It's been over 10 years since we played Punk Rock Bowling. We've done extensive touring with Street Dogs so they're like family to us. So when we got the call asking if we wanted to do the Mike McColgan and the Bomb Squad show I was like, absolutely. Those club shows are really great. It's hard to know if people still have the energy after leaving the festival, but the energy was great the whole night. It still blows my mind, the whole Punk Rock Bowling experience is a really unique one to tie all that together. For me, the club shows are the most fun part of it because it's more intimate.

#### AU: It's an endurance test when the Pool Parties start at 10:30 a.m., then the festival, then the club shows go to like 2 or 3 a.m.

**JB:** Oh my God, exactly. Now you're tying in the pool parties that also have bands. People are pitting in the pool and it's complete insanity.

#### AU: Have you ever bowled?

**JB:** Yeah, I was doing the timeline and the second year was the first time I ever went. We're buddies with The Unseen guys and they were playing a club show. Back then it wasn't a festival. It was just the one show tied to the bowling tournament and I bowled on The Unseen team that year. I'm not a bowler at all but I have friends that all year round they're practising for Punk Rock Bowling. They take it much more seriously.

# AU: The secret is you play really shitty the first year and then you practice all year long, so you have a really good handicap.

**JB:** Yeah, exactly. I heard the handicaps were really messing with it this year.

AU: Did you partake in any Vegas debauchery?

JB: I probably did more than I said I was going

to. When we were rehearsing we were all talking about how we're going to keep it super mellow. There's no way we're going to go out on Friday night and party. But then all of us were out till God knows what time and hanging out. So I woke up on Saturday with a massive hangover like, wow I said I wasn't going to do that. Oh well.

# AU: There wasn't as many passed out punks this year I noticed.

**JB:** Not as much, no. Which is probably a good thing. I mean it is a crazy event and honestly you

have to learn to pace yourself. I will say the first year I went I was so messed up from a whole weekend of just going so nuts. Being 20 something years old, so not having any filter or stop button. So at least I feel like I did a little bit of a better job of pacing myself and I think a lot of other people did too. Because I didn't notice nearly as much insanity as their used to be

#### AU: Tell us about the documentary Gridlocked: On Tour With The Briggs.

**JB:** My good friend Kevin Barry for about 10 years anytime we

were working on anything, he'd come into the studio and be a fly on the wall and documented a whole lot of stuff. Then we went out on tour with 7 Seconds in 2015 and he came out on the road to document that. So, it was a really cool sort of day in the life of a touring band. Also, on top of that, it's a story about guys reaching their middle age and still trying to figure out life between family, jobs and trying to create music and be a band. So, it's a fun story. It's got some good laughs, it's definitely a little emotional at times and has some cool inspiring moments.

AU: Did check out any other bands at PRB?

JB: On Friday we hopped around to quite a few shows. I saw Dead To Me and Swingin' Utters. Ran over to Chuck Ragan and Teenage Bottlerocket. On Saturday we sound checked real quick



and then went to the festival and caught a couple of sets. Obviously saw Cock Sparrer.



#### AU: Any plans to come back to play Canada?

**JB:** I would absolutely love to. Canada is pretty amazing and I miss the hell out of it. Hopefully when we do put out some new music.

#### AU: Final words about Punk Rock Bowling.

**JB:** Happy 25th Anniversary! That's pretty incredible.

@joeybriggsmusic thebriggs.bigcartel.com instagram.com/thebriggsla facebook.com/thebriggsmusic



# AU: What sets The Briggs apart from others? JB: For our generation of bands we got known for

**Come All You Bowlers** 

By Ira "Media Control" Hunter

AU: What are you best known for?

Joey Briggs: This is Joey. I'm probably most

AU: What is the origin story of The Briggs?

known for being the lead singer for The Briggs.

JB: It started out with my brother and I. When we

were teenagers we would always start different

bands with our friends and this was the one that

JB: Jettison, The Tuxedos and actually The Briggs

AU: You guys are from LA. What was happening

JB: Yeah, we're all LA natives and at that particular

time, punk rock really had a cool scene going on.

There was a lot of hall shows and backyard shows.

It was a very thriving setting in the late '90s. There

were a lot of other bands from other places that

were influencing each other. Obviously, we'd seen

the Dropkick Murphys, The Bouncing Souls and

everybody that was coming through town. A lot

area in the '90s like The Adicts, Cock Sparrer and

Angelic Upstarts. Even though we're all LA-based

Fingers. That was more what we were latching on

to at the time because it just had that cool factor.

AU: How's being in a band with your brother?

JB: It has a lot of positive aspects to it. You can

be brutally honest with a brother. Because with

someone gets super butt hurt about their song or

their ideas. Where you can really be super mean

friends you kind of beat around the bush or

to your brother and he's not going to quit.

we were less influenced by the early LA bands like Black Flag and The Weirdos but rather more

influenced by the '70s UK stuff like Stiff Little

That was the time, that was the moment.

of the older UK bands were very popular in the LA

started out as a band called I Decline that ther

finally got some traction and went somewhere.

AU: What other bands were you guys in?

morphed into the band that it is now

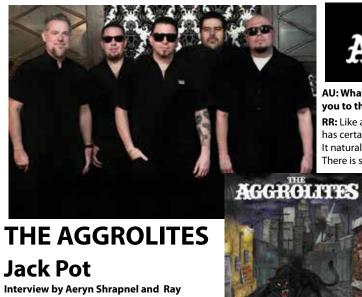
there that influenced your sound?

**Briggs** 

Interview with Frontman Joey

JB: For our generation of bands we got known for being somewhat representative of Los Angeles and that was what I think people latched on to. We grew up in the Street Punk Oi! scene and what set us apart was our songs were more melodic. We were always on tour with The Casualties or A Global Threat and our sort of throwback was more towards the street punk of the '70s and the slower tempo, singalong type stuff.

AU: Is it true they play your song "This is LA"



MacKav

Reggae.

AU: Who are we talking to?

Roger Rivas here. I play organ for The Aggrolites.

RR: Both bands were influenced by the same era

of Jamaican music...an era that is really a small

. Jamaica and the UK, centered around the years

of 1968 and 1969. Some people call it rocksteady,

were bands at the time that might have a couple

songs in their set that highlighted this, however

both The Rhythm Doctors and The Vessels strictly

played and wrote this flavor of music. When both

bands broke up, a few members from both bands

started playing together. This was really birthed

out of a recording session that was meant to be

off. The magic started and we continued to play

as a group. Initially just performing cover songs

and eventually writing original music. This would

domino into what would be our first album Dirty

a Derrick Morgan album, but never really took

piece in the timeline of music to come out of

skinhead reggae, or even early reggae. There

AU: Describe for us how the Vessels and The

Rhythm Doctors became The Aggrolites.

**A**GGRÖLITES

AU: What about reggae draws you to the subgenre of music?

RR: Like any genre, Reggae has certain characteristics to it. It naturally gets you moving. There is something infectious

and cool to it. Even songs recorded back in the 60's and 70's feel fresh and hip. When the bug bites you, you start to dig deeper. Being a musician, you then start to gravitate towards the way the musicians played on those

records. You start to analyze the way the studios and producers had a role in each of those artists' releases. Nerding out in the coolest way possible. Jamaican music has influenced so many other genres and when you are a fan of it, you can see

#### AU: Your latest studio LP was Reggae Now! from Pirate Release Records. What are you working on now that we can look forward to?

RR: We are always writing new music, or should I say, always brainstorming new ideas. It must feel right and right now, it's feeling right! Without a doubt there will be some new music. I am looking forward to seeing what the next album will sound like. Each Aggrolites album is different from the last. They are always reflective of our current life experiences and mindsets.

#### AU: Tell us about the music you contributed to 2013's The Lone Ranger. How did that happen?

RR: We got asked to write a song for the soundtrack. I remember it being fun in the studio

because we never had that opportunity before. We never wrote specifically for a movie. It was a whole new path to getting a song done. We always like to draw

influences from songs or studio productions of the past. I remember using the song "Mafia" by Reid's All Stars as a foundational influence for that session. It was also cool to base the lyrical content around the movie.

#### AU: Tell us about the Punk Rock Bowling festival show you played this year. What did people miss if they weren't there?

RR: We have been fortunate to play PRB for many years now. Super grateful every time we get asked. This year we backed up original Specials member Lynval Golding. This was extra unique since we got to perform classic Specials tunes. Songs that shaped us as kids. Tunes that were anthems to us growing up. Lynval has been a friend of the bands for years now and each time we get to hang with him, we turn into kids again. The show was a sold out one. Everyone in attendance had a rare opportunity to see The Aggrolites perform 2-Tone ska music. The whole place was moving and singing along to every song. So much fun!

#### AU: Have you ever bowled in the tournament? Any bowling tips?

RR: Sadly, The Aggrolites never really bowl. Maybe the occasional couple of games when we are on tour and looking for something to do. No pros in the squad though. We always have fun when we are on the lanes. Tips? Try to knock all the pins down in the first go.

#### AU: Any crazy Vegas-related stories of debauchery to share?

RR: Hmm. I can't remember anything specifically. Every Vegas trip in itself is a story. The Vegas vibe alone lends itself to an all-night rager. I think next time we need to shoot for creating some crazy tale to tell.

#### AU: What makes Punk Rock Bowling unique?

RR: I think it's a real challenge to give birth

and successfully maintain a festival that is defiant of regular pop or radio music. Every year PRB manages to knock it out of the park when it comes to creating a 3-day event that



you simply can't miss. The perfect blend of bands with the perfect crossover to get fans excited. A big thing that stands out is the club shows. Besides the stellar list of bands that play at the festival, PRB does an awesome job of constructing smaller club shows that tell their own story. They are strong in their own rite.

#### AU: Were there any bands playing this year at PRB that you were stoked to check out?

RR: That's a tricky question for me since I didn't really grow up listening to punk rock music. I think that's the beauty in it though. I am super stoked to attend just for the sake of being introduced to new and old sounds. So many friends from other bands. So many fans that we have known over the years. Always a blast seeing the homies the Street Dogs do their thing!

#### AU: Any plans to tour Canada?

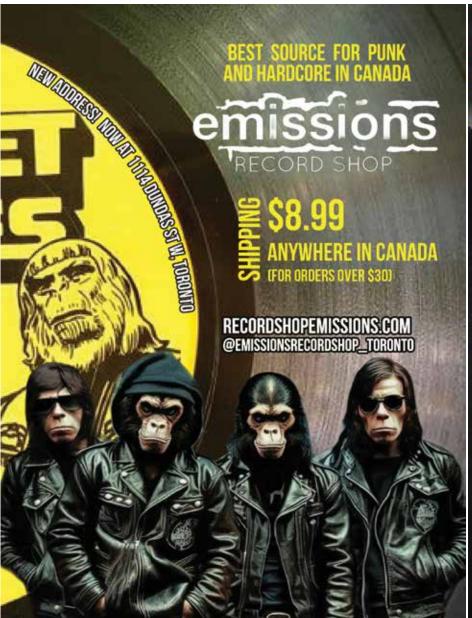
RR: We definitely want to head back up to Canada and do a proper run of shows. We LOVE it there. As for now we have a one-off show in Toronto on the 16th of August. We are totally looking forward to that one.

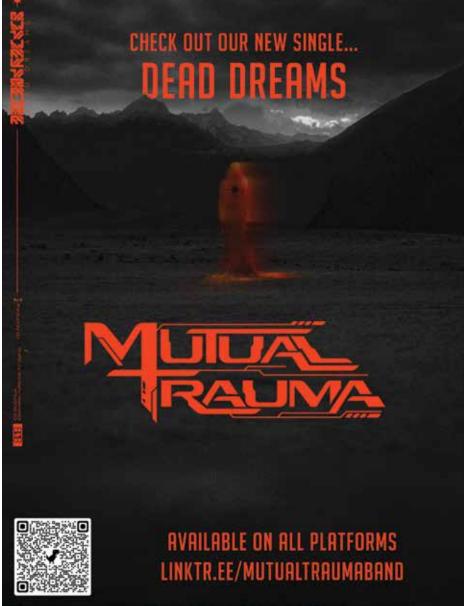
#### AU: Any final words for our readers?

RR: Big thanks to all the fans that have rolled with The Aggrolites all these years. The demand for the band has never seemed to decline and we owe it all to them. We promise to keep bringing you the dirtiest of reggae!

aggrolites.com @theaggrolites facebook.com/theaggrolites piratespressrecords.com

**Band Photo Credit: Joshua Carrasco** 











# Joel Carrillo

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

Joel Carrillo: Joel Carrillo is my name and

chances are you've met me as a street vendor selling my artwork. Born and raised in Watsonville California, after that, a Santa Cruz Cali Resident for 10+ years, Now in L.V., N.V. as a 3year local, still making art still Vending

#### AU: How long have you been an artist? . What got you started?

JC: Since very young like many of us, I started drawing in

school, but my older brother, six years older than me, had some skills that he passed down, ballpoint, pen,

techniques, shading. I recall Lowrider Arte and tattoo flash magazines lying around, into comic books, liquor store on East Lake had teen angel magazine. Older siblings had an artistic touch as well so I watched and learned.

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

JC: For the most part my artwork is

direct, what you see is what you get, unless I start painting something big, tends to be more abstract, with colour I want to make it pop, so it depends on the content, medium, and most of all mindset. What I create is influenced by my surroundings for the most part.

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

JC: Chicano, roquero skater, Lost Boys, good stories, beaches, anything horror, pin up art. Surrealism, creatures, animals, outer space sci-fi, big titties. Batman is dope. Looney Tunes... Making music very much influences my artwork, beats, finding a movie soundtrack in my head and translating it on to paper like a storyboard. Above all, other artists. From Michelangelo, Albrecht Durer, Gustave Dore, to Robert crumb, Jim Lee, to graffiti artists and tattoo artist. Mashkow, Brandon Herrera, and whatever my public library had

#### AU: What are some of your favourite projects you've been involved with?

to offer.

JC: There is a thing called art

finished.

battle which put me on the spot pretty good, painting under pressure and winning people's votes. Some foo was smudging his artwork with incense

I thought to myself 'what an asshole.' I made my own homemade bubbler.

and sage when he

#### AU: How was your **Punk Rock Bowling** experience this year?

JC: I was vending on the street and saw no performances except for the Mormons, and I realized I may have spoken to a

lot of musicians, but I was simply unfamiliar. So much music in the world, old and new,

> so it's hard to keep up. Checked out a bunch of Lowriders on Fremont. Any punker that says, "get out of our scene" is not a punk. I got wind of some mob mentality bullshit and felt I needed to express mvself.

I spent that punk rock Sunday with my family, so that was stoked.

#### AU: What's it like being an artist in Las Vegas?

Ш

JC: Until people think

of me when they hear the name Las Vegas, I'll feel like an artist in Las Vegas.



The art district is full of yuppie assholes, so that sucks. I don't claim any scene. Las Vegas is big so I'm not worried about that. As long as the AC is functioning, artistic techniques and tools aren't as limited.

#### AU: What medium and or media do you work in?

JC: Graphite, aerosol spray, Japanese ink brush, watercolours, whatever I can afford. Crayola markers are surprisingly good. I'll start to geek out on all the tips.

#### AU: Is there something new you've always wanted to try?

JC: Skydiving, Fly a fighter jet. Eating a live Octopussy.

#### AU: Any other hidden talents unrelated to art?

JC: I can do the worm pretty good. I make a badass chicken soup.

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

working?

JC: Something thrashv if

working big and abstract, more oldies or classical for pinups, good hip hop for sketching. Osamenta, NIN, reggae/ska, The Doors, Led Zeppelin. Fuck reggaeton Drake AND Kendrick

I'll press shuffle to feel out of control.

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

JC: Most definitely take commissions, with a 50% deposit. What is strange to you is probably normal

to thee... A suicidal jack in the box... some memories must stav buried.

#### AU: What's the latest thing you have been working on?

JC: Raising my boys Right. Damn, I have like 50 drawings, sketches, ideas always dancing around me, but tattooing is my current goal.

AU: Have vou ever seen vour art tattooed on people?

JC: Yes, a few characters. A tweaked-out cat, alien symbol, owl. Nothing to brag



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

JC: Batman, horror movie, being written out and storyboarded. Working with the Addams Family films.



#### AU: Any upcoming projects or exhibits to promote?

JC: An album cover for a homie, landscape painting for a cousin... Recently opened an online store for apparel.

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

JC: To the readers: respect everyone. Aspiring artists: make mistakes, learn from them. Strive for imperfection, perfection is boring and will drive you mad. Anything, person, place or thing, has potential to inspire, close your eyes and touch it if you have to. A good idea is GOLD. Rock on cabrones!

illartestryshop.com IG: @illartestry

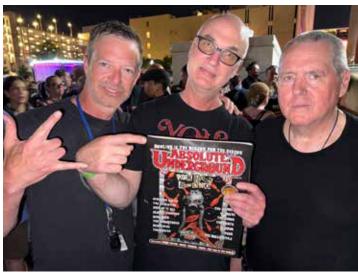












# The Effigies

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

Paul Zamost: Paul Zamost, founding member and bassist for The Effigies

#### AU: Give us a brief history of The Effigies.

PZ: The band was founded by myself, John Kezdy, Steve Economou, and Earl Letiecq. We played our first show at Club OZ in November 1980 and soon fell in with bands like Blag Flag, Hüsker Dü, TSOL,

#### AU: Describe your sound, if possible.

PZ: Our sound has been tough to pinpoint, I like heavy metal disco, personally.

#### AU: Who else is in the band and what do they bring to the table?

PZ: My soulmate Steve Economou on drums, Andy Gerber on guitar, and new member Geoff Sabin guitar/vocals. Andy, Steve, and I had a band in the late '80s called Laughing Man and have always maintained a relationship with Andy who also owns Million Yen Studios and has produced our last two albums, Reside and Burned, as well

as playing guitar on Burned. We met Geoff when he worked on Reside as assistant engineer and he has helped fill a giant void left by the tragic loss of John Kezdy in '23. Everyone brings their own unique set of skills to the table.

#### AU: Where is the band from and what was the music scene like there when you were starting out?

PZ: The Chicago music scene was pretty happening back then for mostly everyone but punk

rock bands. \* IEFFIGIES \* There was not much of a punk scene at the time but in 1979/80, the

> late Dem Hopkins opened a club called OZ and along with Strike Under, The Subverts, and Naked Raygun and their PA we were able to put Chicago on the map. During OZ's short lived run at three different locations, touring bands like Black Flag, DOA, Hüsker Dü, and others played there. The live LP Busted at OZ remains a rare classic.

**CHICAGO** 

#### AU: How were The Effigies important in the development of the Chicago punk scene in your opinion?

PZ: I would like to believe in hindsight that we were damn important and helped lay the groundwork for succeeding bands and that we were able to legitimize punk rock as more than just a novelty or passing fad. Some promoters even allowed us to open for some national acts (our fourth gig was opening for The Plasmatics). We were also at the forefront of the DIY movement that united punk and hardcore bands nationally through fanzines and bootleg

cassettes. By 1982, we released two EPs and a single while hopping in a van and playing on both coasts, representing the Chicago scene.

#### AU: What did people miss if they weren't at the Punk Rock Bowling club show you played this year? Who else was on the bill?

PZ: We played the opening night kick off show with 7 Seconds, Negative Approach, Stalag 13, and Incendiary Device and they missed five kickass performances.

#### AU: What's the most important message you are trying to impart through your music?

PZ: In a nutshell I would say we've always had a never compromise approach to what we were doing and if that conveys as a message, I'm good with that.

#### AU: How can punk rock change the world?

PZ: I wish it could, but like anything else, it could only change your own life and it sure changed mine, I often wonder how different my life would have went had I not wandered into O'Banion's (punk bar) in 1978 and heard Sham 69, The Damned, The Stranglers, Buzzcocks, Wire, and 999 for the first time.

#### **AU: Describe the Punk Rock Bowling music** festival experience for the uninitiated. What makes PRB unique in your opinion?

PZ: Unfortunately, we were only there the one night and didn't actually experience the festival, as we were off to a gig in San Diego.

#### AU: Any crazy Vegas-related stories of debauchery to share?

PZ: We hope to play the festival next year and to have at least one debaucherous tale.

#### AU: Were there any bands playing this year at PRB that you were stoked to check out?

PZ: I would have liked to see Cock Sparrer, The

Adicts, Youth Brigade, The Damned to name a few.

#### AU: What do you love/hate most about Vegas?

**PZ:** I love the architecture and

dazzling lights; I hate gambling, so it's a wash

#### AU: Any plans to play Canada?

PZ: Yes, we hope to play everywhere we can the next few years.

AU: What can you tell us about the 40th Anniversary edition of your album For Ever **Grounded?** 



PZ: The album has been remixed, remastered, and has a lot more bass and is overall a bigger sound. That and the packaging is much better, complete with a poster of the cover art.

#### AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

**PZ:** Our latest album *Burned* is still relatively new. so check that out as well.

#### AU: Final words of wisdom?

PZ: Have more good days than bad.

AU: How do people find you online?

PZ: Sarcastic! effiaies.com

Shorne St. Winnipeg, MB - 204-956- 4400 Shop online @ wildplanetmusic.com Concept/ Script: Roman Panchyshyn-Art Al Tim Wiese





Student Union Building, UVic

# Matinees \$7







# Today's cinema, yesterday's





the original 7" records from when rock n' roll first started. An homage to the birth of rock n' roll or sheer laziness? Only I know the true answer.

#### AU: What are the songs on the record about?

**SC:** "White Guilt Atrocity Quilt" is about the American history of violence and subjugation that the people in charge of our education system and our historical acknowledgements continually subvert and revise to downplay the racial genocide and displacement perpetrated by white people and the financial privilege enjoyed by many of the white family dynasties. It is NOT meant as criticism of all American white people. "Brad Sabbath" is an older song written and recorded with the iteration of Leftöver Crack that included Alec Baillie, Brad Logan, Donny Morris, and myself. It was originally recorded for Constructs of the State.

#### AU: What is Recidivist Bible Camp?

SC: It's a sleep-away camp that's not only unlicensed, but uncredited and off the grid. To find it, you'll need a divining rod, a bed roll, a loaf

of sliced bread, and a horse with

AU: How did your street stage show go at Punk Rock

# **LEFTÖVER CRACK** Will Bowl For Crack

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

Stza Crack: Stza Crack, songwriter, guitar. keyboards, vocals: Choking Victim, Leftöver Crack,

#### AU: Who is in the current band touring with you and what do they bring to the table?

SC: Tibbie X. Jon Yi. Ethan Nickels, Marc Cody. Skunk Society. We play on a stage, not a table, but some of the stages that we've played on have been small enough to rival the size of a table

#### AU: Please tell us about the new Leftöver Crack 7" record that was just released.

**SC**: It's the first 45 RPM single that I've played on and I hope that it ends up on a jukebox somewhere. Also, it doesn't have a cover, like

#### **Bowling this year?**

Leftöher Crack

**SC:** Well, it was less sweltering than I'd thought it might be. I was dressed less like Mimm from Blade Runner and more like Captain Karl from Pee Wee Herman and we attempted to bring the house down with a cover of "Man in the Mirror", but we weren't really that well-rehearsed to make that happen. Luckily, I had a guitar and we had a chance to launch into a more inspired version of "One Dead Cop" which I got Ian (MacDougall) from Riverboat Gamblers/Band of Horses/ Drakulas/Broken Gold to come up and perform with us. I think we made our half hour worthwhile.

AU: What sets Leftöver Crack apart from other punk bands in your opinion?

SC: We're actually punks that play music as opposed to musicians that play "punk".

#### AU: How many times have you caused chaos at **Punk Rock Bowling?**

cinecenta.com

SC: I don't bring any kind of "chaos" to the table. Only the actual spirit of punk and not just the "music," ya know?

#### AU: What is the main message you try to convey through your music?

SC: Tolerance against elitism. An allencompassing inclusivity with an understanding that this thing we call "punk" is a refuge for those of us that are neuro-divergent or just can't fit into society's idea of "productive." Maybe we have trouble

making and keeping friends? Maybe we have trouble finding a reason to get up every day? Maybe we can't stay silent when we are aware of injustices? Maybe we just want to know why someone treats us poorly and try to create some understanding that might battle that

misunderstanding?

# AU: Witness any Vegas debauchery this year?

SC: Las Vegas has never been a place for debauchery in my opinion, too hot and dry. I need tropical climates to keep me hydrated if I'm gonna attempt what most people consider "debauchery".

#### AU: What makes PRB a unique festival experience in your opinion?

**SC:** I think the only part that makes it unique is that you could probably run into most bands that are playing there. There aren't a lot of places where most of the bands are staving that isn't right by the festival.

#### AU: What's on the horizon?

**SC:** The lyrics to a dozen songs to complete if we're gonna have a fulllength album com out this year.

#### AU: Any plans to tour Canada?

SC: I fully plan on touring Canada again.

AU: When on tour, do you prefer to stay at the kitty litter castles or the pit bull palaces?



bit more than a needy, barking whiner. Cats seem a bit more understanding of new guests.

#### AU: Final message for our readers in Canada snuggled up in their igloos.

SC: Well, it's already June, you might want to consider living a bit further south.

#### AU: How do people find you online?

SC: My ghost haunts Instagram

@leftover\_crack\_official



# DJ Evil E Evil Cult

Interview by Ira "New Jack Hustler" Hunter and Coen "Power" Jak

"Now my homeboy Evil was downstairs chillin' in his brand new Benz.

I had many adversaries but very few close friends.

We broke to the set, E parked the car on the arass.

High-signin' was his trademark and he did it with class."

#### Ice-T (Soul On Ice)

#### AU: What are you most famous for?

**Evil E:** You are talking to DJ Evil E. I'm famous for being Ice-T's DJ, right hand man and producer. I love Djing and have been doing it for 40 plus years. I met Ice like 40 years ago and became friends before we became a group. Ice-T's "6 in the Mornin'" was our first single. Then we went on to get signed by Warner Brothers and put out the first album, which is *Rhyme Pays*.

#### AU: How did you get the name Evil E?

**Evil E:** I started when I was like 15 years old and I had different names. I had Master E, Mr. Ness because I wore a hat a lot. Then a friend of mine just came up with the name and I stuck with it because I'm kind of mean when I'm Djing. That's why I kept the name Evil E and the E stands for Eric, so it fit perfectly and I went with it.

#### AU: You were in Vegas for the Punk Rock Bowling Kick-Off Party at Fremont Country Club. Can you tell us about the show?

**Evil E:** I tried an experimental project with Les Warner the drummer from the Cult. We decided to do a DJ battle drum mashup and put together a little group called Evil Cult. I came in and we did a quick rehearsal and then it came out to be great. I did some Djing and he played over my music to create a kind of Cult sound with the music I was playing. What he did was play over it to enhance the music. To make it sound bigger and better with the drum tracks. The way he was beating the drums, it was awesome. It was a combination of hip-hop, punk and more. Who can better do that, but myself and Les from the Cult. We went up there and killed it and the crowd loved it.

#### AU: Bootsy Collins was at your show too?

**Evil E:** He was there, alive and well. He didn't perform but he was walking through the crowd taking pictures, shaking hands, giving hugs.

#### AU: How'd you get started in the music game?

**Evil E:** I'm from New York. Born and raised in Brooklyn and I was listening to Grandmaster Flash because rap was from the Bronx when it first started. I met the Furious Five MCs and other DJs from that time. I listened to a lot of mixtapes.

# AU: Was Ice-T in an earlier group back when he was in those breakdancing movies?

**Evil E:** Yeah, he was in Breakin'. Actually, Ice did that before I met him. He was doing that with Chris "The Glove" Taylor who was Djing at the time for the movie. I met Ice after that at a big event that he was emceeing. We met outside and since I was a DJ and I was talking to him I said, "I

see you rapping. Lets combine with each and see what we can do and have fun with it." That's how we became friends.

# AU: Are you part of Body Count as well?

Evil E: No, I'm not. I stick to the rap side. Ice has got two sides to him. You got the Ice-T rap and you got the Body Count which is the metal band.

# AU: Are you yourself into punk and metal?

**Evil E:** I'm into anything and everything. I'm a DJ. I've got to formulate myself and try to combine myself with everything. You don't want to be stationary just being a hip-hop DJ so I'll tango with anything to do with music, except for opera.

# AU: Did Donald-D really have a black Ferrari Testarossa with Donald-D in gold on the dash?

**Evil E:** You didn't hear it from me but, no. It's funny because a lot of the rappers in New York, they don't really be driving, especially in the

Bronx. That's pretty funny you asking me about him having a Testarossa. I don't think he even drives. I don't know now, but back then he didn't.

# AU: Is it true you introduced Darlene the Syndicate Queen to Ice-T?

**Evil E:** Yes I did, absolutely. It was at the same club that Ice did Breakin' in and every weekend it was going on. He happened to see her and he was kind of shy to talk to her. We were about to

leave when he saw her and when he jumped in the car he said, "Did you see that girl?" I was in my New York state of mind at the time and said, "She is fly, what's up man let's go in and talk to her." We walked back in and went straight to Darlene and I said "Excuse me my friend here is kind of shy but he would like to talk to you." and boom that's how they met and became Ice and Darlene for the 20 years that they were together.

# AU: She was featured on the covers of *Rhyme* Pays and Power albums?

Evil E: Yeah those two album covers were

Darlene. I run into her here and there at different clubs and she is doing good.

AU: In Vegas you had your friend Pauly with you and he mentioned his band 187 (@187bandlv) and being part of Rhyme Syndicate. Is that still going strong?

**Evil E:** Oh absolutely, the Rhyme

Syndicate is still active all over the country.

AU: What are your latest

# **Evil E:** Right now I'm just moving around doing shows and events with Ice-T. I'm doing shows with Schoolly D too. We are working on some projects too, as far as an album.

projects?

#### AU: What's your brother Hen-Gee up to now?

**Evil E:** He's executive producing a few groups.

#### AU: What was the scene like back in the day?

**Evil E:** The whole scene was different as opposed to now. Because the new school is on a trail of, I hate to say it, a disaster when it comes down to killing each other and putting guns and money in the videos. It's not the same. It's all glamour and instead of battling on the mic they're killing each other. The old school generation is always going to stay alive because we respect each other. We're doing this for fun. We doing it for the love of it.

# AU: What was the name of the group Ice-T was in for those Breakin' movies?

**Evil E:** He wasn't in a group. It was just Ice-T and The Glove and Afrika Islam at the time. He produced our first, second and third album.

AU: I saw The Iceberg tour in Vancouver, BC way back in the day.

Evil E: Oh wow, that's cool. I love Vancouver. I had a ball in Canada. I love Canada.



AU: Do you think you'll come through again? Evil E: If they call me, I'm definitely down for it.

AU: Is high-signin' still your trademark?

Evil E: Nah, I just be me, man. That's all I am.

AU: Did you stick around for PRB?

Evil E: No, but I heard it was pretty crazy though.

AU: Anything to say about Ava and Big Daddy Carlos from the Fremont Country Club who

# put your Punk Rock Bowling show together?

Evil E: I've known Ava for almost 30 years. She was one of the owners of the Grand Slam in downtown L.A. She was one of Prince's partners back then and I've known her ever since then. Carlos and Ava are like family to me. Like my younger brother and sister because I'm older but I've got nothing but love for them both. It was a blessing doing that at Punk Rock Bowling with Ava and Carlos and with Les Warner.

That was the first time I've ever done that. I played with a drummer before, but it wasn't as strong and big.

# AU: Any chance you might do a solo album of unreleased beats?

**Evil E:** I'm actually going to do that with the guy that's producing Schoolly D's album. So we got that in the making.

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

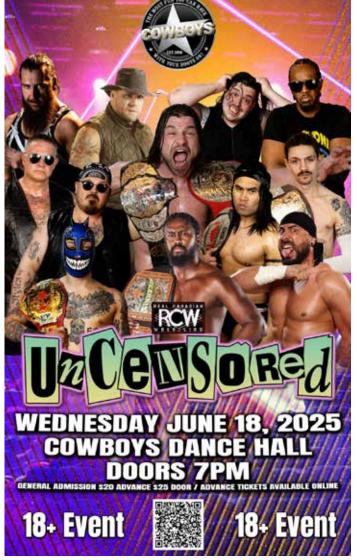
Evil E: Do what you love and love what you do.

Instagram: @djevile\_1

facebook.com/djevile1

facebook.com/eric.e.garcia.796







# Michael McColgan and the Bomb Squad

Do or Die on the Road of the Righteous

Interview with Street Dogs Frontman and **Original Dropkick Murphys Singer** By Ira Hunter and Brenin Barrow

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

MM: Michael McColgan, I'm best known as the original lead singer of the Dropkick Murphys, the singer of Street Dogs, and

**AU: You survived Punk Rock Bowling?** 

also FM359.

MM: I did. I lived to tell the tale.

AU: This year you performed as Michael . McColgan and The Bomb Squad...

MM: Yeah, we performed the Do or Die album in its entirety. Just wanted to pay tribute to that first Dropkick Murphys album. I was fortunate enough to have been a part of it with Ken Casey, Rick Barton, and Matt Kelly. Three great

human beings and extraordinarily exceptional musicians. So, I just wanted to do my part to honour the record.

#### AU: Who are the members of The Bomb Squad?

MM: Paul Rucker is on drums, Johnny Rioux on bass, Rhys Williams is on guitar, Gavin Caswell and Craig Silverman both alternate back and forth.

#### AU: Were you in any other bands before DM?

MM: Yeah, I was in a cover band called The Snots. I'd always had a love of music. In school, I was in the choir because I could sing really high. It was the mid 90s when I started to entertain the idea

of being in a group. Started out with The Snots and that morphed into the Dropkick Murphys. Then in the early 2000s, I started the Street Dogs.

#### AU: What was the reason you left Dropkicks?

MM: I wanted to get on the Boston Fire Department, I had taken the test and it was a lifelong dream so I had the blessings of the band.

AU: Please tell us about the two club shows you played at Punk Rock Bowling

MM: It was just one massive singalong, and the thing that mystified me was just the amount of energy people had after having been out all day in the sun. I figured a lot of people would be spent but that wasn't the case. The shows were energetic from start to finish. Crowd was insane.

AU: Yeah, the pool parties starts at 10:30 in the morning now and then there's the festival in the sun all day. Then the club shows go until 2 or 3 a.m. It's a total endurance test.

MM: Oh, without a doubt, It's a Punk Rock crucible.

AU: What other bands played the show with the Bomb Squad that night?

MM: I know The Briggs were on the show and The Attack. The Attack were phenomenal.

AU: What are some of your favourite songs from the album *Do or Die* to perform live?

MM: I really like doing "Barroom Hero". It sounds like a drink your face off song when in all actuality it's a song about somebody getting their act together and recovering. So I always get a lot out

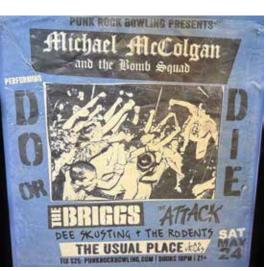
of performing that. The title track, "Do or Die", I like to do, and "Skinhead on the MBTA." Surprisingly, the song "Noble" got a really big response. So that was really rewarding and powerful to play. That was about a childhood friend who was murdered. The crowd was singing it all the way through.

AU: When you started Street Dogs, were you trying to do something different from Dropkick

#### Murphys? Or something similar?

MM: We just wanted to have a band where we could play some local shows. In the beginning it was Johnny Rioux, myself, Rob Guidotti and Jeff Erna and we didn't have any expectations on what it could do. Then lo and behold, there was a significant amount of buzz when we put the demo and then the first record out. It morphed into something bigger than we had anticipated. We just wanted like a rock and roll band that had punk influence on it. I think we've stuck to that.

AU: I saw you had vinyl at the merch table?



MM: This year was the 20th anniversary of our second album, Back to the World, and we decided to put it out on vinyl for the first time. When we played the club show for the Street Dogs at Punk Rock Bowling, we played most of the album.

#### AU: What record label was it re-released on?

MM: SBÄM Records. It was originally on DRT Records and our own imprint Brass Tacks

AU: What is the main message you're trying to convey through your music?

MM: To pay attention to what's going on around you, take care of your people and try to make a positive change in your own life.

#### AU: You mentioned the song "Barroom Heroes" was about getting sober. Do you drink?

MM: No. I've been in recovery since 1992. I drank as a teenager and then into my early 20s. It was not a good thing when I drank and that was one of the biggest reasons why I got clean.

#### AU: Is there any chance you would join the current incarnation of the Dropkick Murphys to perform Do or Die in its entirety as well?

MM: I wouldn't take that off the table. If there was a scenario where Rick and Matt could play the record, I think that's something I'd be open to. There was talk in the past of that happening. If it could benefit some charity or noble cause that's something that would interest me as well.

#### AU: Did you check out any other bands at PRB?

MM: Peter Hook & The Light. I'm a big Joy Division fan. They were phenomenal and then I checked out Spiritual Cramp too, which was incredible.

#### AU: Will the Bomb Squad put together some original material at some point as well?

MM: I think it's completely conceivable and possible we could do a seven inch or an EP.

#### AU: Were the influences that started DM different from those that started Street Dogs?

MM: Yes and no. There is some overlap. I think maybe with Street Dogs, particularly on records like State of Grace, we were looking at some of the groups of the times as an influence. I can

remember listening to Hot Water Music. Alkaline Trio, and even bands outside of the genre like Bloc Party and TV On The radio. Songs like "Mean Fist" and "Guns" on State of Grace really stretch



the parameters of what we do. Even songs like "Two Angry Kids" has a Led Zeppelin feeling to it.

#### AU: What is your other project FM359?

MM: It was myself, Johnny Rioux, Rick Barton, and Hugh Morrison from Murder The Stout. We were kicking around some song ideas and we kind of just wrote like a folk/rock record and people seem to dig the album. It's on Pirates Press Records.

#### AU: What is your Instagram @dharma.practice\_ all about?

MM: About six years ago, I got into Buddhism and mindfulness meditation. It's really helped me live in the moment and put an emphasis on living clean. I found it to be a benefit in my life and I actually went and got trained and certified to



teach meditation in peer recovery centers.

#### AU: What makes Punk Rock Bowling unique?

MM: That the Stern brothers have always done what they want to do, regardless of what's hot or not in music. They put the bands on that move them, that they're into, and that's worked for over 25 years now. That's a pretty impressive run. In the Street Dogs, we have a lot of love for the Stern brothers. Actually, we did a little run of shows on the East Coast back in 2003 with Youth Brigade.

#### AU: Able to check out the Punk Rock Museum?

MM: Yeah, I love it, I think it's very well curated, I really dug on the Joe Strummer from The Clash items that were there. The different eras and timelines of Punk Rock, it's really cool.

#### AU: They got Joe Strummer's last bag of weed.

MM: It doesn't get much cooler than that. There's also a record store in there called Vinvl Threat.

#### AU: Guest tour guides will all of a sudden jump in the jam room and start playing songs live.

MM: That's what's so cool about the Punk Rock museum versus other museums. Things like that.

#### AU: Final words of wisdom.

MM: Be kind whenever possible. It's always possible.

@dharma.practice\_

@streetdogsofficial



#### **DEBT OF NATURE / CREPITUS** Imminent Purge, Eternal Unrest 12" LP | 1991-94 | Extreme Death Metal Victoria, BC, Canada

Featuring members of **Deranged**, **Malevolence**, and **Cremation**.



FREMONT COUNTRY CLUB

**DERANGED** 12" LP | 1988-89



**SACRED BLADE** Of The Sun + Moon 12" LP | 1986



**MORAL DECAY** To Build An End 12" LP | 1989



Self Audopsy 12" MLP | 1978 Punk Rock Edmonton, AB, Canada



12" LP | 1980 Punk / Hardcore Vancouver, BC, Canada



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#### Virvum

#### **Reflections From Amidst the Alps** Interview with Guitarist Nic Gruhn **By Frik Lindholm**

Absolute Underground: Help us set the scene, where are you now? What's out your window and what's in your cup?

Nic: Sitting in my company's office right now-day job. Energy drinks usually keep me afloat.

#### AU: What do you do with the band, and perhaps, what made you want to form it?

Nic: I write songs and then sometimes try to play along them and the guys on guitar. The band has had a solid lineup and its final name since 2013. Before that, it had been my singer Bryan's and my project, with different musicians, also ranging into various spheres and genres. In 2013, the



vision and direction we wanted to take solidified in our heads and thus we focussed on creating a product for commercial release.

AU: As a Swiss citizen, did you have to do mandatory military service? I remember

#### meeting some dudes in Hawaii from Switzerland that had to go on a two-week readiness exercise.

Nic: Even though service is still mandatory, everyone in the band somehow got around it. If you're not into it, luckily, it's not very hard to avoid it nowadays.

AU: Have you played Canada before? If not, what do you believe it will be like? I'm curious for you to imagine it now, and then reflect on it again after your tour. You went out with Archspire a few years back on the Tech Trek, but mostly in America?

Nic: The 2019 Tech Trek with Archspire unfortunately did not route through Canada, making our upcoming 2025 Canada tour our first performances in Canada ever. It's a very important



market for metal, and we finally wanted to make up for the missed opportunity. At the same time, it's pretty much our first real tour since then, because when Covid hit, things slowed down a lot. We keep our expectations extremely low, but of course we are hyped to making some new friends and finally get to play for the people who have been supporting us since the early days.

AU: Can you share with us your direction with your new songs? Illuminance had so many angles, and brilliant compositions. Listeners are no doubt curious where you are heading next! Give us some hints.

Nic: I'm still extremely humbled by the fact that a lot of fans speak so highly of  ${\it Illuminance}$ . The new material will definitely not be a copy of it. Of course, the signature aspects, such as the virtuosity, intricacy, etc., remain, but I don't think I'll ever find that "formula" for Virvum songs. Each song is still built from scratch, with hundreds and thousands of musical trial and error findings, until it suits my vision 100%. That vision has also evolved through the years, and thus I perceive the newer material to be far more emotionally driven than the 2016 album.

#### AU: You're playing Armstrong Metal Fest! This is rad. What are your impressions of British Columbia and the area?

Nic: I have been to Vancouver before, but never to the mountainside, so I'm extremely stoked to be driving through these landscapes for days! Also, only heard very good things about Armstrong Metal Fest, so you can't imagine how much we're all looking forward to this!

#### AU: What is your forecast for recording a new album? When do you think the time will be right? What is your thought pattern?

Nic: Most people who are not in a band don't know this, but it's a fuckton of work to record and produce metal music that lives up to today's standards. Sure, there's many different methods of doing it, but look at us-we've been working on this new material for over eight years, with the ultimate goal of making it the best we can-so the last thing we'll do is compromise on anything, production-wise. Also, we're still doing this band mainly for fun, and life just comes in the way sometimes. But if everything goes smoothly, expect a new release next year.

#### AU: Can you tip your hat to your favourite Swiss bands of the moment? Is there a band which you wish got more attention worldwide you want to lift up?

Nic: Our buddies in STORTREGN have been crafting excellent and exciting death metal for many years. Beyond happy to have them with us as support on the upcoming tour!

If you want to hear my inner nerd: There were many brilliant Swiss underground bands that never really got the attention they deserved. dating back to the '90s (check out Babylon Sad, Caustic, Sickening Gore). Also high in the ranks for me were Switchback in around 2005-2007.

Though, my favourite Swiss band of all time probably has to be Cataract (RIP), even though they were quite popular at some point.

#### AU: Thanks for taking the time with us, good luck on your tour! Last words to metal lovers and punk rockers reading this journal:

Nic: Shout out to our Canadian supporters, looking forward to seeing you at one of the

Photo by T.Koelman-C.Ursu virvum.bandcamp.com



#### **DEBT OF NATURE**

#### **VICTORIA DEATH METAL, 1991-92**

#### **Interview by Jason Flower**

Jade Carter - vocals, Jason Harvey - guitar, Owen Bradley - guitar, Harlow MacFarlane - bass, Pete Locker - drums, Quin McCulloch - vocals.

Owen: We were just a group of kids who hung out constantly and bonded over music. We formed around 1990 when I was 16 or 17. I played guitar, and our sound was loud, fast, and chaotic—spastic drumming, heavily distorted riffs, and raw, intense energy. It was beautifully noisy.

Harlow: I had been playing bass for years before I started jamming with Owen in the early '90s. We were already good friends, committed to our instruments, and passionate about developing something more substantial.

I reached out to ex-Deranged guitarist, Jason Harvey. His progressive, technical edge (reminiscent of early Sadus) pushed us toward a more precise, intricate style. Jason's high-speed, technical guitar work added a controlled, manic energy to our sound that infected the group and quickly moved our sound into a newer direction.

Pete was already playing in other local metal bands, but immediately signed on to the energy and sound—it was a perfect fit! Things moved fast from there. Jade Carter, a friend from high school and the Victoria metal scene, eventually

joined on vocals. His powerful, Martin Van Drunen-style delivery made him my first choice for the role.

Jade: I always had a passion for deep, dark, death metal vocals. I think Harlow originally approached me— or maybe Carl Coger passed along a message. Everyone was extremely stoked to have

Jason on board after his incredible work with Deranged. The band was still in the early writing stages and hadn't played any shows yet

Harlow: When I began writing music with Owen and Jason, my influences shifted more toward Autopsy, Nihilist / Entombed, Napalm Death, Carcass, and Morbid Angel, which shaped the sound we were developing at the time.

Jade: There were a lot of great, diverse influences, but for me it was a mix of some classic early metal. Bands like Pestilence, Death, Immolation, Gorguts, Kreator, Destruction, Rush, Slayer, Iron Maiden, Sacred Reich, Sodom, Sadus, Forced Entry, Faith No More, and so on.

Jason: I was really into bands like Autopsy. Immolation, and Terrorizer, and honestly, was probably still listening to all the same stuff I'd been into for years before

Owen: So many bands influenced me at the time. A few that come to mind are Morbid Angel, Slayer, Carcass, Napalm Death, and Obituary. On

the punk side, I always had a thing for the Dayglo **Abortions** 

Jade: Debt of Nature only recorded one demo. a three-song demo tape that was recorded over two days in 1992. It was engineered by Bert Goulet and recorded in his small studio located in Fernwood Square in Victoria. Some of the band admit that the sessions felt rushed but understood that time was money, and they only had two days. It was a fast, gritty session—very much a "quick and dirty" recording experience.

Jason: Being a young musician during that period was a lot of fun. There were so many bands around, which kept the scene alive and

exciting. That said, there weren't that many bands playing the exact style we were into, so it felt like we were part of something more unique. The landscape was full of energy, with a lot of DIY venues and local spots where you could get up and play. The neighbourhoods and venues we were part of had a strong sense of community, even if the exact style we were playing wasn't the most common. It felt like a special time to be involved in the scene.

Harlow: Although we might have played a house party or a basement show or two. Debt Of Nature didn't have many live appearances during its existence. Most of our focus was on the music and getting the word out through other channels.

Quin: I was playing with Dreadnaut, which formed from the merging of Arcfiend and Abhorance, We played a basement show with Debt of Nature when Jade was still in the band. I later heard Jade had moved away, and someone— maybe Harlow— asked

me to try out since there weren't many vocalists in town with that style. I auditioned and got the spot. Musically, I tried to stick to Jade's vocal style but added more high-pitched screams.

Harlow: We had the incredible honour playing at Harpo's with Napalm Death and Brutal Truth in 1993. That was a major milestone, a moment that



really stood out in our journey.

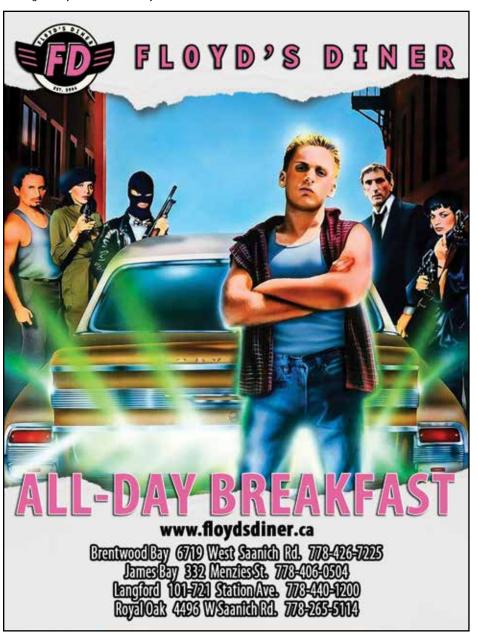
Jade: Debt of Nature went through several lineup changes over its short lifespan. I hauled up roots moving to Roberts Creek, BC. and didn't sing for another band after that but could be heard howling death screams at random social events.

Local-legend, Quin, took the reins after successful stints with other local death-metal bands Arcfiend and Dreadnaut. Quin added a piercing highpitched scream to the vocal range of the band.

Pete, stretched across three bands, opted for stability with Distorted Influence and Malevolence who continued for several years. Liam Morgan was recruited to fill the vacant drummer position. Quin ultimately committed his time to his original group, Dreadnaut, which recorded a demo in 1993, continuing until around 1995. Liam then briefly took over vocals for the group. Harlow soon left for Edmonton, where he replaced original bassist Owen Williamson in the group Cremation.

Meanwhile in Victoria, Cory Taylor joined on bass and took over as lead vocalist. Original members Jason and Owen felt the band had changed enough that it deserved a new name. Debt of Nature was officially dead and Crepitus was born. Photo: band archives

Copy editina by Jade Carter







Photographer: Lisa Thompson From left to right: Marble Ghosts Current Line Up Adam Hansen (Guitar, backing vocals), Dylan Gunnell (Vocals), Paulo Ferraz (Bass), Jer Renaud (Drums) Not shown: Paul Laplante

# Imagine starting your day with the pulse of innovation, the very essence of creative energy.

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rock, punk and metal. Hailing from Ottawa, Canada they present a genre-bending fusion,

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from modern melodies, aggressive riffs, and atmospheric textures, creating an emotional journey that resonates deep within.

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# **Hirst Attack**



Absolute Underground: Who am I speaking to, and what are your roles within First Attack?

Greg: My name is Greg, I play guitar and sing.

AU: Who else is in the band, and what are they responsible for?

Greg: Noah plays bass, Matt's on drums, and Rob also plays quitar.

AU: Where are you guys from and what's the music scene like there?

Greg: We all live in Vancouver. The scene here is small but very unitedin fact, we have some members playing in a few different local bands here (The Enforcers, Buzzers and Alternate Action). We all help each other out and it seems to work. The Oi! Scene is a bit incestuous here, haha.

AU: First Attack just released a 12" record on Longshot Music. What can you tell us about it? What can we expect

tramhorse73

Greg: It was just released on May 23rd-it's a co-release with a label from the Basque Country called Mendeku. It's called NO ESCAPE and it

has eight songs on it. It's now out on all digital platforms as well.

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

Greg: I really like "On the Other Side" and "Enough". AU: Does it touch on any specific themes or topics?

Greg: Yes, "On the Other Side" is just that – we're part of a subculture from our side of the tracks-it's about us and who we are. "Enough" is about how much harder life has become for the working class-it's already such a struggle vet the system makes it worse, it's frustrating and we're pointing it out.

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

Greg: I usually get a melody in my head first

and start to get a sense of how it makes me feel. I can usually come up with a topic dependent on how it sets the tone. There is always lots of fuel for lyrics in this current climate, lol.

AU: Any plans to tour around Canada or in Europe?

**Greg:** We are playing the Why Bovver Weekender in Winnipeg, June 20-21, with a bunch of great bands. In October, we are heading to Europe for a tour, playing the Pogorausch Festival in Dresden, a couple other dates in Germany, the Czech Republic, Belgium and France...

**AU: Any upcoming** local shows that you are excited about playing?

Grea: We will be playing at the Cobalt in Vancouver on July 11, with Toy Tiger.

AU: Who are some of your favourite present Canadian Oi bands?

**Greg:** Canada has a TON of great Oi! bands at the

moment... all you have to do is look at releases like NEW NOISE FROM THE NORTH a comp put

together by Last Year's Youth records... Black Dogs, Buzzers, Pure Impact, Street Code, No Heart... Enforcers, Toy Tiger.

AU: Anything else you'd like to mention or promote?

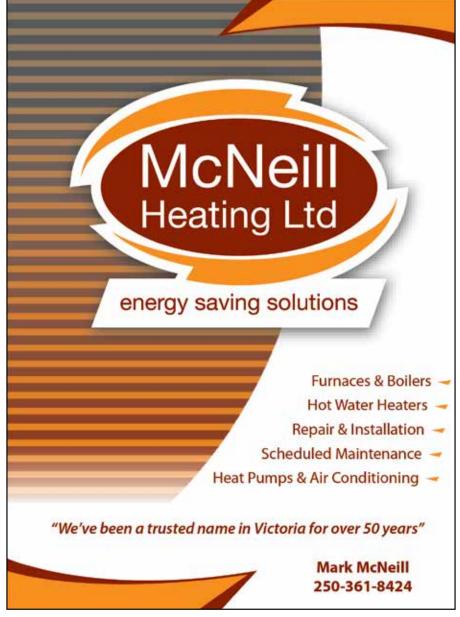
**Greg:** We recorded at Rob's studio here in

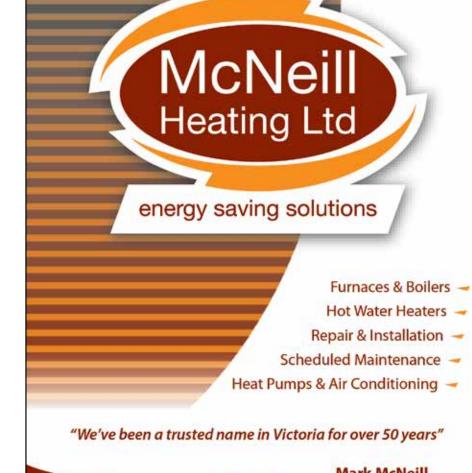
Vancouver- it's called Good Lookin'Out. He did the latest release from Buzzers, The Enforcers and Juice as well.

**AU: Famous last** words?

Greg: Come see us play if you get a chance– we don't

firstattack. bandcamp.com





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# **Symbiotic Growth**

**Interview by Asher Thrasher** 

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with Symbiotic Growth, what can you tell us about the band?

#### **Symbiotic Growth:**

Symbiotic Growth is a progressive death/black metal band, hailing from Sudbury, Ontario. We are a band for people who appreciate a blend of technical proficiency and atmospheric depth in metal.

AU: You just unleashed your second album, Beyond the Sleepless Aether. What can you tell us about this record?

SG: It's a conceptual album following a man on a journey through all of his

alternate realities to try and find meaning in life, trying to find a reason not to kill himself. As the songs progress, it takes him to all his different

realities, vast arid deserts. lush wooded forests, and the unending cosmos.

AU: You stated that the concept of the album was actually loosely based on a dream that Aaron Barriault (vocals, guitar) had and like your debut, "is once again based in fiction and is lyrically conceptual, but dives more into thoughts and emotions of everyday life, and sometimes those thoughts are hard to deal with." What more can you tell us about this?

SG: Essentially, I intertwined and expanded on my dream and all the emotions I was dealing with during COVID. Creating a story about a protagonist traveling between all their different lives in

the multiverse, trying to find meaning in their life.

AU: The songwriting has been a bit mindblowing on this record. What was your favourite song or part to write for this album? Which track would you suggest a first-time listener discover?

> **SG:** Definitely the architect of annihilation. It was one of three tracks we wrote as a whole band, and it came very naturally and quickly. It seemed like once we came up with a part, someone else immediately had an idea for the next section. It seems to be getting the most attention, and we knew it was going to be one of the album's bangers.

AU: How was it working with former Haken bassist Tom Maclean of

Twelve Tone Studio for mixing and mastering of the record?

SG: Tom's amazing and treated us great. We all

work full-time jobs, and he was very lenient with our time frames. Always keeping in touch and working with us to come up with the sound we were looking for. Can't wait to work with him again on the next album.

#### AU: The band was unable to tour for the last album due to COVID. Will there be touring plans in Canada or beyond for this record?

**SG:** We want to get some live shows rolling, so we're currently in the process of finding some new members to pull that off. As of right now, it's just Dan and Aaron as our second guitarist Dev, left right before the album release. We'll keep everyone posted with updates and try to make that happen sooner rather than later.

AU: How's the metal scene in Sudbury these

#### davs?

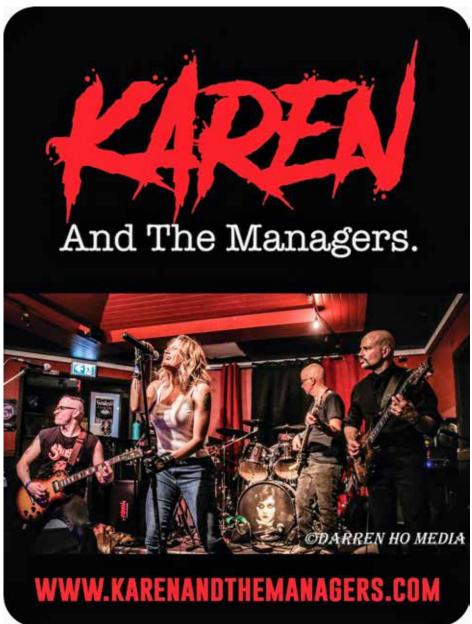
**SG:** Not as great as it used to be after we lost our hot spot venue for metal shows during COVID. The owner of the venue was also our main promoter and doesn't book anymore shows. When there is a show, it's usually pretty small. Toronto is only a four-hour drive away, and not worth it for a band to come here after playing there. Our scene usually goes to them now.

#### AU: Anything you'd like to add for your readers?

**SG:** We appreciate all the people who took the time to listen to the album! We hope you enjoyed it as much as we did making it, and we hope to bring you more very soon!

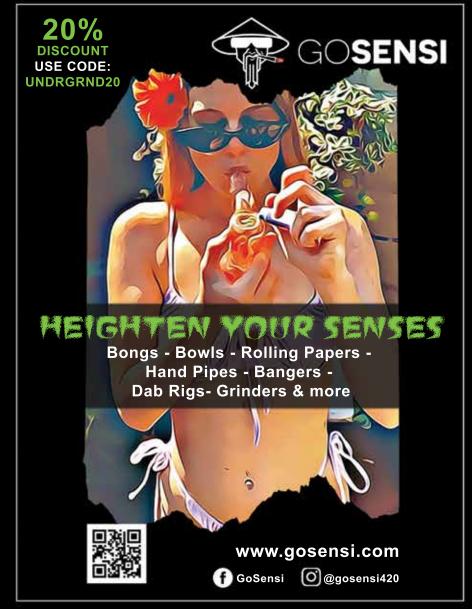
symbioticgrowth.bandcamp.com













**Robb:** Norm came up with it, it's not about *Star Wars*, we promise.

# AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

**STE:** We're from Kelowna, BC nestled in the beautiful Okanagan Valley. The music scene is extremely vibrant and dedicated, and continues to push out amazing music.

# AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if possible.

**STE:** We like to classify ourselves as progressive metalcore due to the progressive nature of the melodies and rhythms in our songs, with the added benefit of clean vocals accompanied by the most brutal of screams. Our live show can often be described as high energy, engaging, entertaining with a tight sonic sound that leaves you wanting more.

#### AU: How do you approach writing music?

**Robb:** Up until recently, I was the main creative writer for lyrics and song structure, then as a band we would go over the ideas presented and work on them. Since Josh has joined and brings such a dynamic and unique sound, we've moved towards a collaborative effort between all members while we write our new stuff.

# AU: Tell us about your latest album. What can we expect to hear?

**STE:** After a tumultuous two-year journey marked by personal struggles, lineup changes, and a relentless pursuit of our sonic identity, Born of Embers captures the essence of overcoming darkness and embracing rebirth. The EP delivers thunderous rhythms, intricate melodies, and a powerful blend of clean vocals and guttural screams that evoke a visceral emotional experience. Each track offers a fresh intensity, inviting listeners to immerse themselves in its depths time and time again.

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

**STE:** This EP explores topics like; personal growth while battling mental health issues like depression, anxiety, self-doubt all while embracing the light that comes from your darkest moments. This EP is a testament to human resilience and what can be achieved if you keep believing in yourself.

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

**Norm:** "Fireflies" is my favorite track mainly because of the catchiness of the instrumentals and vocals, and the breakdown is one of the funnest to play live. It's filthy.

**Robb:** Honestly, it's almost impossible for me to choose one because each song is basically single worthy, but if I had to choose just one, it would be the title track "Born of Embers". The melodies and rhythms in that song can take you places you never imagined, the message behind it is empowering and the breakdown is just disgusting, I love it.

AU: You have a couple of tours coming up.
Where are you headed and what else can you tell us about them?

**STE:** We have three mini tours booked from now till October. We will be hitting the interior first (Salmon Arm, Kamloops, Penticton and Kelowna) then off to the island for some shows (Nanaimo, Victoria and more). Ending off our tour year with the Vancouver area and a special show to wrap things up.

# AU: Anything else you'd like to mention or promote?

**STE:** Make sure to follow us on our socials as we're planning to film and release a ton of content this year as well and don't forget to support your local music scene!

#### AU: Final words for our readers?

**STE:** We want to thank them for the time they took to read this and learn about a group of sweaty metalheads like ourselves. Don't forget to check out the EP and share it, we appreciate all the support and love we receive!

IG/YT/FB: @stormtheempire Spotify: Storm the Empire

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# **Storm the Empire**

# Born of Embers Interior Tour By AU Editorial

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

**Storm The Empire:** Norm Mathers and Robb O'Day, most notably known for being the vocals/ guitarist and bassist of progressive metalcore band Storm the Empire.

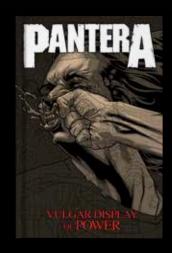
# AU: Give us a brief history of the band. Who else is in Storm the Empire?

**STE:** Storm the Empire was created back in 2019, has seen a handful of different members along with trials and tribulations over the years. Eventually landing on our current lineup that consists of Andy Ashley (drums), Josh Tapp (guitar/backing vocals), Norm Mathers (bass/backing vocals) and Robb O'Day (vocals/guitar).

#### AU: Where did you come up with your name?

**Norm:** It just happened to come from the

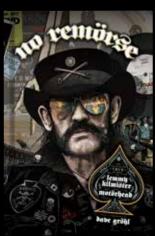




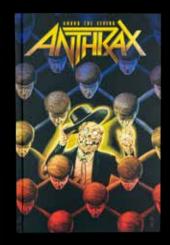












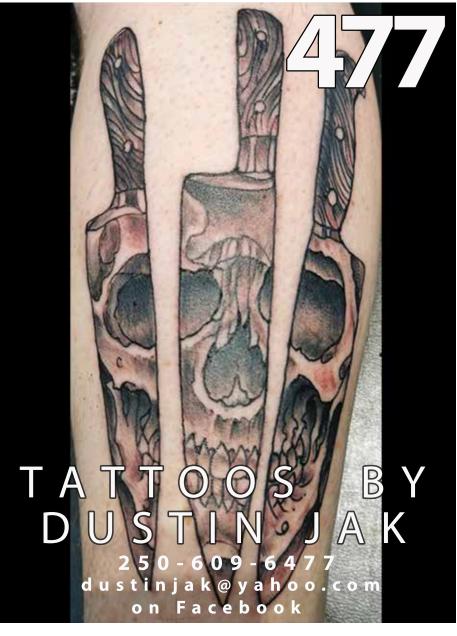


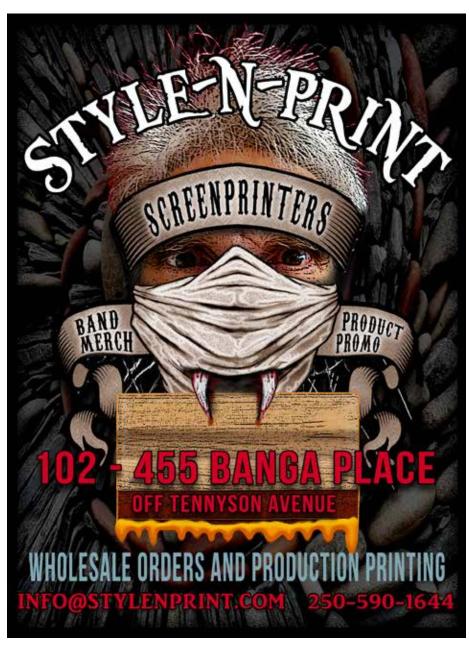


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# **Criptoria**

#### **Interview by Nick Workman** Absolute Underground: What is Criptoria?

Chloe: Criptoria is a centralized resource for access information at shows. I started it because

I had to do a lot of work before attending an event: figuring out if there's seating, if it's wheelchair accessible, if I need to use my wheelchair that day. I realized a lot of people don't have the energy to do this work, so they just don't go. Venues and promoters could easily include access information, but many don't. Criptoria exists to make that info available.

Often, venues and promoters haven't even thought about accessibility. They don't know what access info is or how a disabled person would navigate their space. They're not disabled, so it's just not on their radar. People can check the Criptoria Instagram for event listings with access details or message me for info. I've compiled a document with access details for most venues in town. It's made it easier for people to find what they need and feel like they're welcome.

#### AU: Why is this important?

Chloe: Because disabled people exist. Disabled punks exist. And it's a basic human right to be able to do whatever the fuck you want. We navigate a society that's not just built without us in mind, but often actively hostile to us. Attending shows can take more work than we can manage. Having a centralized space for

access info shows people that we should have

One of my goals with Criptoria is for it to become

obsolete. I want to see every promoter and venue automatically posting access details so my work isn't needed. Right now, I'm both sharing access info and consulting with people on how to create accessible shows. My goal is for promoters to hire me once to learn how to set up an accessible section and write access info, and then carry that



forward themselves. If enough people do this, my work won't be necessary

AU: How's the response been?

Chloe: Really good. For people who've



never thought about accessibility, it can feel overwhelming. They're like, "Oh my God, this is so much extra work." But for disabled people, nothing is simple. We constantly adapt, and sometimes we just can't go to a venue. That should be a deal-breaker for promoters. If certain people in the community can't attend your shows, then what are we doing? The noise community has been amazing. The indie rock and grindcore scenes too.

#### AU: You're a punk. Is Criptoria just for that scene, or does it apply more broadly?

Chloe: I started with the punk and DIY community because accessibility was lacking there. I've been going to DIY shows in Victoria since I was 15, but when I got sober and started using mobility aids, I disappeared from the scene for over a decade. Coming back, I realized how inaccessible everything was.

I mostly focus on punk and DIY, but I also post indie rock events, craft fairs, and other community events. I'll expand more if I have the capacity, but I had to start somewhere.

#### AU: Have artists reached out, saying, "This is great, now I know where I can play"?

Chloe: Absolutely. It actually breaks my heart sometimes. I've had musicians tell me, "I don't see anyone else with a cane or wheelchair on stage, so I just assumed I couldn't do this." Or, "I assumed people wouldn't book me because I'd have to ask, 'Can I get in the building?"

#### AU: Some people feel like accessibility work is shaming them. What can they do to educate themselves?

Chloe: Just think about it. Consider accessibility. Ask questions. Google "How do I make my event accessible?" or "What does accessibility mean?" If you're starting at zero, start

AU: What's an accessible viewing section?

**Chloe:** It's a section near the front where people who need soft seating, space, or protection from the pit can go. A lot of disabled people want to be up front, but getting knocked over can be dangerous. If you're in a wheelchair near the pit, your head is at elbow height, and your temple is at punching height.

Without an accessible section, a lot of disabled people end up at the back, where they can't see or feel like they're not really part of the show. The accessible section allows them to be fully included while staying safe.

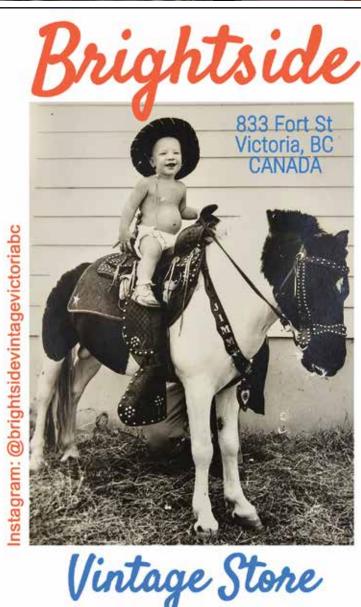
#### AU: Have people from outside Victoria reached out?

Chloe: Yeah, I'm not an innovator, I'm picking up and carrying on work that's been done for generations. This isn't about personal gain. It's not so I can go to shows and feel safe. It's for everyone. I don't expect everything to change in my lifetime. But if future generations keep pushing it forward, that's what matters.

IG: @crip.toria







# DifferentStagesRadio.com

#### **DIFFERENT STAGES RADIO**

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DifferentStagesRadio.com (DSR) is a FREE weekly Hard Rock / Metal / Prog online radio show hosted by SCRAPE Records founder J.J. Caithcart that is celebrating their 2nd Anniversary this April.

DSR offers a strong focus on overlooked albums / bands from the early 90s to present - most of which are still actively releasing new albums and touring like Queensrÿche, and Winger – while still playing new and upcoming releases from bands like Behemoth and The Haunted along with not so obvious tracks from the 70s and 80s and beyond from bands like Rush, Van Halen and Iron Maiden. Lots of unsigned and indie bands too! Plus weekly interviews (audio & video) and contests to win concert tickets

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#### Josh Cadwell

#### By Mike "Fanny Pack" Croy

Welcome to another edition of Turnbuckle Sandwich, as we move into the summer months, we're gonna turn up the heat with a seriously spicy interview, with one of the hottest wrestlers drawing heat and terrorizing the Pacific Northwest, the man with the greatest head of hair on the indie circuit, Sooke BC's own The Kimono Dragon, Josh Cadwell!

#### Absolute Underground: What are you best known for?

#### Josh Cadwell:

These legs and this beautiful head of hair. Oh, and I wrestle too.

#### AU: Who trained you to wrestle?

JC: I originally trained at the Storm Wrestling Academy in Calgary with Lance Storm. I am currently

training with

Eddie Osbourne right here in Victoria at the Pro Wrestling Academy.

#### AU: How long have you been wrestling?

JC: Steadily since February 2023.

#### AU: Who inspires you?

JC: Me. And my lovely lady Karlie, of course.

#### AU: Who has the best mullet after you?

JC: No one, next question...

#### AU: What can you tell people about growing up in Sooke?

JC: I've lived here since I was 12 years old. There's water and trees. Pretty cool.

#### AU: When you're not wrestling, what do you like to do?

JC: I play guitar sometimes. When the mood is right, ya know what I mean.

#### AU: Growing up, who was your favourite wrestler?

JC: Eddie Guerrero is number one. Rikishi is probably a close number two

#### AU: What's the craziest match you've been involved in?

JC: A no holds barred match in Sooke against Devon Shooter. He smashed a mirror over my head and threw me off the stage though a table.

AU: What's the funniest thing you've seen happen at a live show?



JC: There was a match in Seattle where Randy Myers, Kohei Kinoshita, and Yoshihiko all showed their buttholes.

#### AU: Where did you get your kimono from?

**JC:** A custom-made job by a goldsmith in Japan.

#### AU: What's your favourite storyline you've been involved in so far?

JC: I loved beating up Eddie Osbourne. Cutting his hair and stabbing him with scissors was pretty

#### AU: Who are some of your favourite people to work with?

JC: Inferno is probably my biggest rival. I've wrestled him more than anybody. Elliot Tyler brought out the best in me in our last few matches. I'd also like to wrestle Zaye Perez from Oregon again

#### AU: Where's your favourite place to grab a burger?

JC: I'm a pizza guy myself. Pizza would kick burgers ass in a fight.

#### AU: Have you sustained any significant injuries from wrestling so far?

JC: Nah, I'm too good for injuries.

#### AU: Who's a dream opponent you'd like to work with still?

JC: Super Crazy!

AU: Do you still have **Eddie Osbournes and** Zack Andrews hair?

JC: Wouldn't you like to know, baldy!

#### AU: How did you initially get into wrestling?

JC: My dad and cousin were big fans. They took me to see Smackdown and Raw in Halifax when I was seven, and I've been into it ever

#### AU: What companies have you worked

JC: 365 Pro Wrestling is my home base, but I've worked for a few companies in Vancouver like Apex and Wrestlecore, and Wild Rose Wrestling in Alberta.

#### AU: Who are you currently listening to?

**JC:** My wife, she be yappin!

#### AU: What's your favourite venue to wrestle in?

JC: We had the first ever wrestling show at the Empress Hotel, in the Crystal Ballroom. Also the nicest locker room I've been in

#### AU: If you could invite anyone for dinner, who would you invite and why?

JC: Anyone that's willing to cover the check. Free food please!

#### AU: As we wrap things up here Josh, is there anything else you'd like our readers

JC: I saw a turtle live in person for the first time the other day. I like turtles.



Make sure to check out Josh live at 365 Pro Wrestling or on Instagram and Facebook. @ioshcadwell

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

Genevieve Angus: Genevieve Angus, I handle the calendar and run Vertagogo in Hamilton, Ontario and I started Fvck You Too Productions 17 years ago and have been managing venue calendars, booking shows and organizing tours ever since. People who know me probably do so from shows I've hosted or tours I've booked across Ontario. running calendars for a few venues over the years or from seeing me behind the bar at Vertagogo. Vertagogo is known as a stellar 220+ capacity underground live music venue in Hamilton. Ontario with the perfect layout for live shows and being one of the few all-ages-friendly venues left in the area.

#### AU: How and when did Vertagago start?

GA: Just over two years ago, my friend Stevie asked if I could set up a Hamilton show for his band Maldita. Every venue I booked at the time in Hamilton was booked and couldn't squeeze an early show in. There was a failing, super run-down, old man karaoke bar in the east end I was asked to check out. While there, I asked the bartender about the date and they said they had it open. Absolutely everything about the venue was terrible— except the layout-which was unparalleled to anything I've ever seen anywhere. You could see the stage from anywhere in the room and the natural acoustics were phenomenal. Maldita was a great band, but my entire pitch to every local band I asked to play was "let's take over the old man bar and maybe end up with another show space and build something

cool." Every band said yes. I think I unintentionally scared one of them into playing... I guess I'm a lot when I'm passionate about something—oops. I was just weirdly, overly passionate about that show. Aside from the normal routine of booking bands and promoting the show, there was the added

tasks of convincing people to come to a bar with a terrible reputation, renting a PA (because the venue had nothing), suffered through the worst fucking bar regular at the door telling me how I should be running door and that i ShOuLd sMiLe mOrE while being talked at by him. The bar was backed up despite three bartenders on, they ran out of change in the till, they sold out of beer before the second of five bands finished playing. It was a shit show (on the bar's end). We all kind of said. "Well, that was cool—great job, everyone but let's never do it again." But I'm like mentally ill and have a yearning to suffer or something so I went back the next day to pick up a "forgotten" phone charger (vibe check the manager) and they asked me to book again on the spot so I asked to meet the owner. After a brief conversation voicing areas of improvement the owner asked about my bar experience so I shot my shot and he ended up giving me free rein and shortly after the keys. People joked about how The Gladstone would never be the same again when I announced the Bad Friday show...and they were right because now it's Vertagogo. That's the long, detailed version— the TL;DR version: Matt at Doors told me "no," Shawn dragged me to karaoke one night, and now Vertagogo exists.

#### AU: What kind of events/shows do you usually hold there?

GA: A lot of punk, metal, indie, weirdo, noise, electronic, drag, art shows, fundraisers—basically anything that needs a home.

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

GA: There's always that cliquey friend "cool kid" circle that exists in every city—that go to be seen at the "right" shows. But

Hamilton and surrounding cities have a massive community of people who are there for the music and community.

For a city of half a million, the passion and sheer love from the majority of our patrons is incredible and like nothing I've seen in any other city or town. You go to Toronto because there's millions of people there. You come to Vertagogo for the love and the energy and the passion from the crowd.

#### AU: Why is opening an all-ages venue such an important thing?

GA: Vertagogo wouldn't exist if the Embassy/Whippet Lounge in London, Ontario hadn't been all-ages. I honestly doubt I— or a lot of other lifers— would be who we are today without those spaces. All-ages shows introduce kids and teens to the music community. All-ages shows, done right, give a safe, supportive space to kids and teens that don't otherwise have a place to find community and freely be themselves. They keep music scenes alive by inspiring (indoctrinating) the next generation to start bands, keep going to shows, support venue staff, book their own shows, open their own bars... all of the things that keep live music going. All ages shows matter!

#### AU: Any gigs or shows in the works?

GA: Tons! Some notable mentions are: July: Death By Stereo, Kaos Attack (Brazil), Mr. Clarinet (Greece), Solids

August: Dodger Deathfest, Handsome Dick Manitoba (The Dictators), Octopoulpe (South Korea), Bo Senberg (France)



September: The Varukers, Joey Cape (Lagwagon) October: Your.In Fest.ed

Easter Long Weekend 2026: We Came, We Drank, We Conquered Fest, which will be the three-year anniversary of the takeover show... and so so so many more

#### AU: Is there an event calendar people can check out?

GA:Yes! Instagram: @Vertagogo\_Promo At shows: Grab a printed monthly calendar.

Website: vertagogo.com

vertaaoao.com

AU: How can people book a show with you?

GA: Message me on Instagram @Vertagogo Promo or email fvckyoutooproductions@yahoo. com

1385 Main St E Hamilton, Ontario. FB: Vertagogo Fvck You Too Productions IG: @vertagogo promo @fvckyoutooproductions

breakfast so good it should be warrated

## The No No Room

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

Brad Manners: My name is Brad Manners, I'm a musician and play in a band called School Damage. I also run a venue in Toronto called The No No Room

AU: How and when did The Nono Room start? Brad: The No No Room is in the basement of the

bar I work at called The Dock Ellis. We've been around for a while but the venue is two years old. They used it for mostly private events. Birthday parties and all that. It was a good-sized room that I didn't think was being utilized enough. One day I asked my boss if I could toss shows there. He gave me the green light and a day or two later I got a PA system and we started doing shows almost instantly. Word has it the room used to be haunted but I think all the hardcore shows scared that

little dead dude off.

#### AU: What kind of shows do you usually put on?

Brad: We do whatever. Mostly punk and hardcore but I'm open to whatever. Last night we had a noise show where it was just pure chaotic drone and harsh noise. It was packed. We've done hiphop, jazz, grind core. Whatever. We're open to whatever as long as it isn't hateful propaganda bullshit.

#### AU: Any gigs or shows in the works?

Brad: Always. I have gigs all summer. I don't have any weekend availability for a while. But I am always willing to help if I can. Just now I had a band from Vancouver, who are stuck here, reach out to me for a show. A friend of mine hooked them up last minute and now they're playing here and hopefully they're making some cash to get back on the road. Community is important to me. I've done a lot of touring and I will never forget those who helped me out.

#### AU: Is there an event calendar people can check out?

**Brad:** Yeah, I post one every month on our Instagram account.

#### AU: How can people book a show with you?

Brad: Hit me up on the Instagram. I know it's lame to use social media to book things but it makes it easier for me to keep track of things opposed to email or text. Please, don't text me.

#### AU: Anything else you'd like to mention or promote?

Brad: Come check out the room and Dock Ellis if you're in Toronto. I'm usually here and if I'm not



2915 Douglas St | Open 7am to 4pm daily

one of my coworkers will give you a tour and a run down. We're all chill. No egos. People have told me that they love the space and that's the only reason I still do it. It's stressful but when I see a room full of people having fun and see bands going off, I stop caring about all that.

@nonoroom\_dockellis

# OPEY GOPEYS

# Absolute Underground: How and when did Ooey Gooey's start?

Ooey Gooey's: Ooey Gooey's launched in January. We decided to turn our space into a venue because we felt there was a real need for DIY/smaller venues in the city. I went to a show where a friend of mine played to a pretty large room that wasn't heavily attended. He mentioned he loves playing in smaller venues because he always

feels like a rockstar. We thought our space would be the perfect solution to a problem we saw in the city.

#### AU: What kind of events do you usually hold there?

**OG:** Everything! We've had punk, death metal, folk, drag, haunted dolls, crafting tutorials and even hosted a podcast! Ooey Gooey's is for everyone!

# AU: What's the music scene in Hamilton like?

**OG:** Hamilton has a bustling music scene; some amazing talent has come out of our city. The scene is overflowing with

bands in every genre, from hardcore to acoustic acts, indie to noise and all of the in between. The people in the scene here I like to think are some of the best folks you'll ever have the pleasure of meeting. The scene is open minded, welcoming, and tight knit.

AU: Why is opening an all-ages venue such an important thing?

**OG:** Although all ages venues are important, we tend to book more 19+ events because ultimately, we are a bar.

#### AU: Any gigs or shows in the works?

**OG:** We have so many shows coming up at Ooey's! Our weekends are booked through until October, and we may have a pretty big show in the works for November (if you are familiar with The Gruesomes...).

### AU: Is there an event calendar people can check out?

**OG:** We don't have an event calendar at the moment, but we're working on it! For now, you

can check on our Instagram page at all of the show posters for things coming up, and we have a chalkboard at the bar of our events posted that we change every two weeks.

# AU: How can people book a show with you?

**OG:** You can send us an email to book at **booking**@ **ooeygooeys.ca** from there, it's easy as pie! we're free to book, and all you have to do is lock in your date.

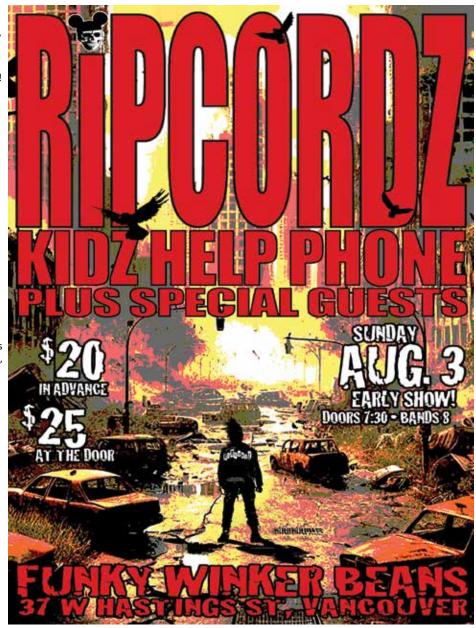
# AU: Anything else you'd like to mention or promote?

OG: Our food! Ooey Gooey's is a venue but it's also a restaurant. We really saw a need for affordable food and drinks in Hamilton and built a menu that could offer that. Our TLC's (tasty

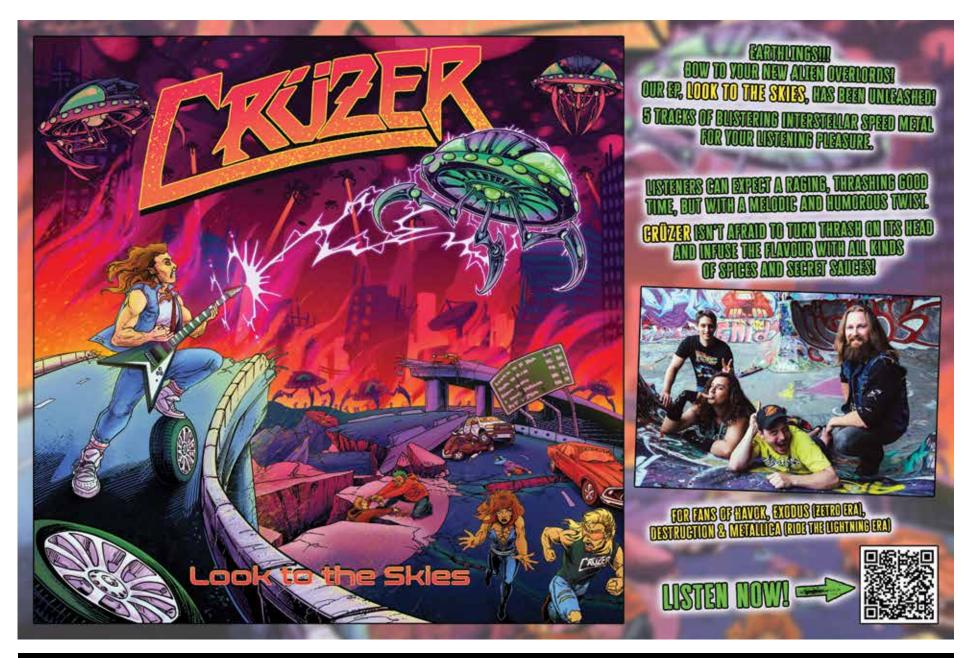
little cheeseburgers) are so delicious and super affordable at \$5.50 each. We offer .99¢ wings Monday-Thursday with a rotating flavour of the week that's always interesting and delicious.

107 George St, Hess Village, Hamilton, Ontario IG: @therealooeygooeys

ooeygooeys.ca







# Herbal Happy Hour! Cocktails & Popsicles

#### By Lily Fawn

Darlings, it's cocktail hour— and the garden is bursting! As days grow longer and the sun starts to turn up the heat, sunset hour is the perfect time for shaking some herbal elixirs into cocktails (or mocktails) and serving them in the kind of glassware your great-aunt stashed in the cupboard for "special occasions." This is a special occasion— it's summer.

Herbal Mixology— is when your medicinal garden meets your favourite neighbourhood gin tippler. Be the perfect host this summer by channelling your inner witch with a collection of herbal-infused sips and treats. Here are some recipes and ideas to get you started. Herbal cocktails aren't just tasty— they're also filled with botanical health benefits. How about a burdock root, ginger, and beet juice martini for the liver? Yummy and good for you.

# The Herbalist's Bar Cart for the PNW:

- Lemon balm gently citrusy and calming for the nervous system
- Mint (wild or spearmint)
  cooling, classic, crisp,
  good for digestion
- Douglas fir tips bright, resinous, slightly citrusy, high in Vitamin C
- Lavender floral, fragrant, delightfully fussy, an aphrodisiac, calming
- Rosemary bold,
- savoury, sassy, good for the lungs
- Elderflower delicate and slightly sweet, good for the immune system

Start by making your favourite herb into a herbal syrup. It's as easy as steeping your favourite tea blend. From there, the cocktail ideas will be

endless and quick to prepare. I like to have at least three different ones on hand (Lavender, fir tips, and rosemary). Herbal teas also make fantastic cocktail bases. The trick is to brew

the tea into a concentrate by letting it steep overnight.

#### How to Make Simple Herbal Syrup

- Choose your herb (fresh or dried)
- Simmer 1 cup water + 1 cup sugar in a saucepan until the sugar dissolves
- Add herbs (about 1/2 cup fresh or 1/4 cup dried)
- Simmer gently for 10–15 minutes, then remove from heat
- Cover and let steep for 20–30 minutes
- Strain out herbs and let cool
- Store in a jar in the fridge for up to 2 weeks

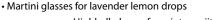
#### A proper cocktail deserves a proper vessel:

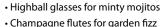
Don't forget about the presentation. Get out your stylish glassware to accompany your beverage. I like to imagine myself in a silk Mrs. Roper-style kaftan, sipping a muddled mint daiguiri from a handpainted martini glass. Or lounging on the patio in Jackie Kennedy sunglasses and a giant sunhat, sipping elderflower spritzers in a retro coupe. Or nodding off behind a novel while lounging under a patio umbrella, enjoying a teacup filled with chamomile-gin

fizz. Whatever your vibe... it's a time for self-indulgence. You do you— to the max.

This is your excuse to bring out all your adorable glassware. Martini glasses, pint glasses, brandy snifters, shot glasses, wine goblets, champagne flutes, highballs, rocks glasses, daiguiri glasses...

dig them out and let them shine.





- Vintage teacups for quirky herbal
- mocktails (yes, really!)

  Coconut shells for tropical tiki-

# inspired drinks Try these quick and easy cocktail

- Basil + watermelon + vodka = an instant patio party
- Rosemary simple syrup + grapefruit + gin = wildly refreshing
- Hibiscus tea + lemon + prosecco = bougie brunch for the win
- Lemon balm + elderflower + tonic = herbalist's happy hour

#### My Favourites:

**Fir Tip Fizz** – If a tree had a fling with a lemon grove, then kissed a mountain breeze.

- 2 oz gin
- 1 oz Douglas fir tip syrup
- Squeeze of lemon
- Sparkling water
- Fir tip sprig for garnish Serve in a vintage highball with a sprig of wild fir for garnish.

**Lavender Lady** – She's softspoken, but her flirtation hits like a punch.

- 1.5 oz vodka
- 1 oz lavender simple syrup
- 1/2 oz lemon juice
- Dash of rose water

Shake it up and pour into a coupe glass. Garnish with a sprig of lavender. It's delicate and divine.



#### Popsicles!

Who says cocktails can't come on a stick? Why not try these yummy patio treats when the temperature spikes? Tropical green tea and raspberry popsicles. A boozy brunch alternative? Maybe. A healthy herbalist-approved treat? Absolutely.

**Tropical Pops Recipe** - Beat the summer heat with a delicious, antioxidant-packed, energy popsicle.

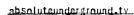
- 1 1/2 cups fresh brewed EarthsHerbal.com
  Tropical Green Tea blend, (cooled)
- 1 cup fresh raspberries
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- •1 tbsp raw honey

Bring 1 1/2 cups water to a boil. Remove from heat and add 2 tsp of your Tropical Green Tea blend. Cover and let steep for 30 minutes, strain. Then refrigerate and make sure it is chilled. Toss all ingredients into a blender. Optional: Strain through cheesecloth to remove raspberry seeds for a smoother texture. Pour into popsicle moulds and freeze. Mix It Up: Feeling frisky? Add a splash of white rum or elderflower herbal syrup before freezing.

There's something deeply joyful about cocktail creativity. Whether

you're crafting herbal mocktails, tea-infused cocktails, or dreamy popsicles, this is your summer to be the herbal mixologist you were born to be. Remember to slow down, sip with intention, and enjoy the taste of nature... one beautifully garnished glass at a time.

www.hushhushnoise.com



martinis...

they're not just

for breakfast

anymore



## MOSH THE ROCK **ISLAND METALFEST 2025**

#### **Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel**

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

Royal Savoie: I am Royal Savoie of Royalty Entertainment, a Vancouver Island based event promoter, host of CFUV 101.9FM THRASHCAN (Loaded Radio) and I hang out with a penguin named Fred. Say hi, Fred... Fred? Where'd he get

#### AU: Tell us about Mosh the Rock Island Metalfest 2025.

RS: Mosh the Rock will take place at Fred Milne Park, Sunday August 10th, Sooke BC Vancouver Island. Gates open at 11am with the last band on at 9pm. Mosh the Rock will be 10 hours of screaming riffs, thunderous breakdowns, and scorching vocals that will assault all your senses. snap your neck and break your spine! It's going to be a great day of metal and community, with most of the bands coming from right here on the island, and a few great bands from the mainland.

#### AU: Who's all playing?

RS: I think we put together a great collection of metal genres, and I think that there's something for most everyone. From a punk-edged "mutt metal" band to some party rock and prog to power metal, stoner metal, a little metalcore and finishing off the night with some good old fashioned death metal! We are wicked stoked to have Victoria death metal heavyweights Torrefy headlining this event, and sharing the top spots co-headliners, Vancouver's Thirteen Goats and from Nanaimo, Yegg. Filling out this epic line up

we have Mutual Trauma, Dead After Dark, Pharm, Burnt Lung, Cyborg, Joker's Revenge, Blacktop Social and Wolf Venom! It was definitely really tough putting the line up together, so many great bands submitted their stuff and I want to give a big shout out and a huge horns up to you all!

#### AU: What inspired you to start

#### Mosh the Rock?

RS: Mosh the Rock came about kinda outta the blue. Although I had been thinking for some time about putting on a festival event on the South Island, it was merely in the thought bubble stage, until, unbeknownst to me Nik Birkett of Wolf Venom, dropped my name to Peter Jonassen the organizer of the Sooke Arts and Music Festival. Peter was looking for someone to share the festival grounds, and take the Sunday. Turn-key infrastructure! Kinda a no-brainer. So, Mosh the Rock was born!

#### AU: What does the VIP upgrade entail?

RS: VIP upgrades will be available on event day only at the event, in limited quantity, and first come first serve. The lucky people will have VIP credentials, tented stage viewing area with a private bar and restroom facilities, pictures with the bands, festival swag, and whatever else we come up with...

#### AU: Mosh the Rock will be open to all ages. Why are all ages events important?

RS: Although I do most of my events at 19+ venues, I have a soft spot for all ages events, and when I do an all ager it is so cool to see the little guffers and not so little, having a blast in the pit, hanging out and sharing the experience with their parents and friends. I think it's very important to pass down this awesome music to the next generation, keep it going. I think it also teaches a great life lesson, if you see someone fall down (in any definition), you pick 'em up! I think the world would be a little better if more people thought that way.

AU: Will there be a beer garden for those of

RS: Yes indeed! For what would an afternoon of awesome metal be without the occasional adult beverage! Jennie and Mike Turner of the Phoenix Bar and Grill will be providing our alcoholic consumables and a big thank you for all their hard work. Please ensure you bring two pieces of ID to get your proof of age wristband... and please drink responsibly!

#### AU: What kind of vendors will be there? How about food trucks?

RS: So far, we have over 20 vendors with more being welcomed every day. Our vendors will be offering artisan jewelry, leather goods, collectibles, and so much more. We will have multiple food trucks with some really good variety from pizza and sweets to vegan and cold frosty treats. Y'all won't be disappointed. Watch your socials for our announcements. There will not be any bank machines on location. Please remember to bring cash as some vendors may not have tap. There will be tap at the gate and at all festival purchase points.

#### AU: Since the event is out in Sooke, will there be a shuttle service? How can people access it?

**RS:** So, the plan is to have shuttles running from the parking lot of Westshore Mall to the event and back all day long, starting at 10am and ending at 11pm, or when you don't need it anymore. There is ample parking near and around the event as well, please try to carpool and have a designated

#### AU: Is there anything else you'd like to

RS: Big thank yous to Peter Jonassen for offering me the space to have this great event, to my committee Nik Birkett my Sooke guy on the ground, Stu "Dowg" Dobel our amazing graphic designer, Jennie Turner (Phoenix), Devon Manning, sage words of wisdom, (Jester Events) and my right-hand lady and vendor rep Sam Storey! Thank you, Mr. Stefano Pasta of Stefano's Artfarm, for our event tent and staging! Ira Hunter and your awesome people (Absolute Underground) for all you do, and Scott Penfold (Loaded Radio) our media sponsors and metal connoisseur... thank you! This all happened so fast... thank you for putting up with me y'all.



#### AU: Where will people be able to get tickets?

RS: Presale tickets are \$45 and are available online at orangetickets.ca, and in Victoria, you can grab \$45 hard copy tickets at Cavity Curiosity Shop, Phoenix Bar and Grill, and both Langford and Victoria Long and McQuade locations. Tickets will also be available in Sooke at Pharmasave and at Forbes IDA. Please watch the socials for evolving children's and under 16 ticketing information. Entrance tickets on event day will be \$60 so grab your presales! Children and youth tickets will be purchased at the gate at their respective prices. The Mosh the Rock Facebook event page is a work in progress, but click interested or going and watch for posts and information.

#### IG: @roval savoie

Email: moshtherock25@gmail.com

FB: @royal.and.fred.the.penguin and Royalty





# **Live Music Venue**

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# Anarchy in the OK

Absolute Underground: Who is the festival speaking to, and what are your skills that keep this all going?

Anarchy is for everybody that still has all their old ticket stubs, it's for people who not only find an escape in the music but use it as an outlet. We're living in some crazy times and live music brings like-minded people together, to celebrate, talk or just listen to that band you love. That's something we could all use right now.

As far as our skills, it's mostly stubbornness. When we decide we're going to do something we can't sleep until we get it done. We moonlight as festival organizers, but our days jobs are restaurateurs I suppose. Whoa, that feels so grown up to say. We own and operate The Small Axe Roadhouse in Enderby BC, located in the

#### AU: Where and when did the idea for Anarchy in the OK first come to life?

The dream of organizing a punk music fest had been just that, a dream since we moved to the Okanagan about five years ago. This dream took real form one night after a D.O.A show at our restaurant. Many drinks were had and ideas were being tossed around. The Enderby/Salmon Arm

area doesn't have much for live music venues and shows or safe spaces for this genre. Coming from Vancouver, this is something that we missed, going to shows has always been a big part of our routine. Our culture. We love live music. That D.O.A show really solidified to us that not only do we have the ability to bring rad bands to the area but also, that other people want this too.

#### AU: Why did 2024 feel like the right time to go for it?

We had been floating the idea around for years but finally had the time, team and resources. We had built up a strong community at The Roadhouse and the right connections through the shows we've hosted there. So, it just felt like the right time to expand into something bigger. We figured, stop talking about it and just get it

#### AU: What can people expect from this year's Anarchy in the OK?

This year is going to be bigger, louder and unforgettable. The music kicks off at 3pm and rolls straight through until midnight. We've got an incredible lineup of bands that are high-energy

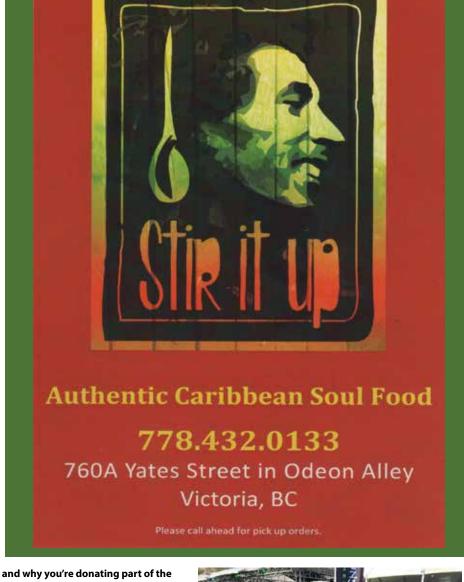
and excited to get on stage and do what they do best.

Harley Davidson is now on board as a sponsor, which is badass, and Long & McQuade is supporting the cause yet again as well. Expect good food, strong drinks, killer bands, and a crowd that's all in. It's not just a concert; we're trying to build a fest that will be around year after year and continue

#### AU: Will camping be an option this year?

Kind of... we don't have camping right on-site as we're in the centre of the city, but we have created a 'Stay in Vernon' link on our website with the four local campsites nearby.

AU: Tell us about Forever Home Sanctuary



#### proceeds.

Forever Home Sanctuary is a local rescue that takes in farm animals who've been through it and gives them a safe, loving place to live out their days. We're huge animal lovers, and their mission really hit home with us. It just felt right to support them. This festival is about building community, and that includes the furry and feathered ones, too.

#### **AU: What about Sweet Smiles Society?**

Last year we met and fell in love with Baritta- she's the owner of a local chocolate shop in Vernon (Cotton's Chocolates) and her passion project is a nonprofit that she created 16 years ago. Sweet Smiles Society started by looking after children in need of dental care in Mexico and has now expanded to supporting and building schools, bedrooms, and care needed for children in many difficult situations. She gives back to our community so much and we are thrilled to give back to her now as well.

#### AU: What does it take to pull off a music festival like this?

It takes absolutely everything. Planning starts months in advance— booking bands, lining up sponsors, securing permits, dealing with logistics, designing merch, marketing, and troubleshooting a million little things. It's exhausting, it's chaotic, but it's also the most rewarding thing we've ever done. None of it would be possible without the A in the OK team. Kris Fuller, our fest manager, knows the Vernon

community like the back of her hand. She knew all the right people and places to connect with to make this thing happen. She also really knows her way around a spreadsheet... Jesse Nelson at Ollie North productions for help booking this year's headliner, A Wilhelm Scream. Heck yeah! Our main man Noah McLeod for managing all



the fest band bookings. Huge love for Noah and his Crew at Local Losers Underground who are also handling the full production of the Fest. From sound, lights, booking the bands, and coordinating everything music for the big day, Local Losers is our go-to dream team.

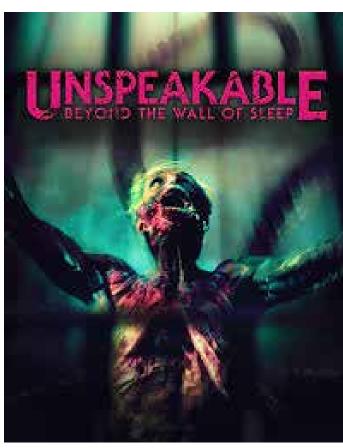
#### AU: Where do you see Anarchy in the OK five or ten years from now?

Our dream is to see it grow into a multi-day festival with camping, food trucks, local vendors, and national acts alongside our amazing local bands. We want to put Vernon and the North Okanagan on the map as a destination for punk and alternative music. In five years, we want thousands of people here. In ten? Who knows! You'll just have to come out and help us grow this

#### AU: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Support your local music scene. Go to shows. Buy merch. Follow bands online. Every ticket sold, every dollar spent, it all matters. Pay for a ticket even if your friends are in the band! Support is key. Show up and keep local venues and touring bands alive. Life's too short for boring music. Find your people, go to shows, be heard, make some memories. We're only here once-so get it done

linktr.ee/anarchyintheok



# Unspeakable: Beyond the Wall of Sleep Interview with Chad Ferrin By Ed Sum

Chad Ferrin is a man who needs no lengthy introduction. As an indie filmmaker who has a love for classical horror, and has worked on many Troma Entertainment films, pretty soon he wanted to explore what he can do by moving out to the West Coast. After a stint at Full Moon, he decided that forming his own studio was the way

to go, and he's made many films under his own company name of Crappy World Films. Despite not initially planning to make a trilogy of Lovecraftian inspired films, what he's fashioned is still a tribute.

Absolute
Underground: When compared to where you were in the past with making The Deep Ones to now, with Unspeakable: Beyond the Wall of Sleep, where do you think you are as a filmmaker?

Chad Ferrin: Well, it was originally going to be a sequel to my first film, *Unspeakable*. Roger Garcia initially came to me and said he wanted to do a sequel to that. He said he has an investor who is up for it, and when he didn't like the draft, I turned it into a H.P. Lovecraft movie because I know that

there's always a demand for that. I intertwined the characters from that first movie into this new one, and it just kind of flowed.

# AU: During writing, did you have any ideas in mind about whom to cast or whether it should connect with *The Deep Ones* and *Old Ones*?

**CF:** Crispin Glover was at one point interested in playing Ambrose London, but it didn't work out. So when I spoke to Robert Miano, who also executive produced, I asked, "Hey, are you still a friend with Edward Furlong? I think he'd be great in giving this character a Columbo meets Lovecraft vibe." Even Ginger Lynn worked great

as his character's wife, and it just started snowballing from there. Everyone had a blast. It was the most fun I've had during a film shoot.

#### AU: Was it weird to not have Robert reprise his character of Russel

CF: I originally hoped Roger Garcia was going to play the role, but he wasn't interested in doing all that extreme stuff, including the nudity. When I bounced it over to Rob, he was game and will go the extra mile. He was fearless and the choices he made when switching from the James Phelps character to the Joe Slater character was just night and day.

AU: What would you say to folks who say this latest doesn't feel like a Lovecraftian style of film?

CF: I've read his stuff since I was a kid and when

I look at it again as an adult, everything hits me differently. I also have to think of how to turn that story into a film. Sometimes, it's just rolling the dice. The first one was Rosemary's Baby meets Lovecraft, and the second more like Phantasm meets

Lovecraft; it's a road trip movie. I would say it has a little more comedy than the first one—which was so balls to the wall. *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* is more like *Lifeforce* meets Lovecraft with *End of Days* 



AU: Although this film marks the "last" of this trilogy of works inspired by H.P. Lovecraft, if you wanted to continue, what other stories would you tap into?

CF: I would love to keep on going, but it's one of those things you have to wait and see. Of course, getting the money to film is important. But of course, never say never? I am moving on to make true-crime films because that's where the market is.

AU: In closing, what would you say to people who say, "oh no, he's hacking apart what Lovecraft's stories represent again?"

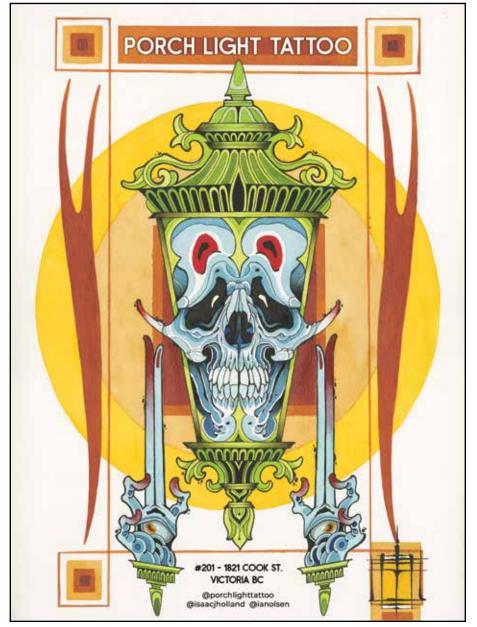
**CF:** I've built quite a thick skin over negative reactions and even positive.

I just keep busy and move on to the next film. If this one does well, great! It's just like reading Lovecraft; you either enjoy it, and it broadens your view of the world–whether that's artistic or in how it entertains.

I get my inspiration from Ed Wood as I do from Stanley Kubrick. Both have their place in cinema. And for me, I like to find a middle ground (Roger Corman to me would be the ultimate) to be a filmmaker. And if I could aspire to the same heights he

achieved, that's success and that's what I try to do.







# LUNGHMEAT

#### We Talked to the Dad from that Iconic Blockbuster **Video Commercial and He Takes Us Behind the Scenes!** By Josh Schafer and Ted Gilbert

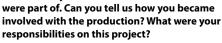
There may be no other commercial that's as synonymous with the video store era, or that made such an impression on the masses that saw it as this classic Blockbuster TV spot.

There was just so much going on. From the selfraising walls and the tapes that magically fill the shelves, to the customer who seems to drop in from the sky- the whole thing was sure to fill the average viewer with wonder and make them ask out loud: How did they do that?

We were lucky enough to speak with Bill D. Russell, the actor who played the dad at the center of

this iconic advertisement, for a peek behind the scenes of its production.

Absolute **Underground:** Firstly, thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with us! We're super excited to learn more about this iconic commercial vou



Bill D. Russell: My only part of the process was playing the dad in the commercial. Blockbuster Video's advertising company at the time was located in Kansas

City. So they hired a Kansas City production company called Third **Guy Productions to set** everything up.

AU: The process of the pop-up/slide-in effect is pretty magical. How did you manage to have things slide into place, and have the titles pop up on the shelf, etc. And the shelves that seem to

grow from the ground - how were these effects

BDR: The store for the commercial was made of a basic wooden construction, like a box van with the sides all folding down. When the walls come up in the commercial, it's stage hands pulling ropes to get them in place, which of course

meant they all had to pull in synchronicity, which didn't always happen.

AU: Can you tell us about the guy in the right-hand portion of the screen that comes down from the sky? He integrates so seamlessly into the rest of the scene, was this effect complicated to create?

**BDR:** The guy who floats down to the counter was a professional stunt man attached to some sort of rig that he stepped away from. Nothing was done with any computergenerated effects.

AU: The internet cites this commercial as being released in 1992. Is that correct? When



BDR: 1992 is correct. I was the only actor they brought in from Chicago. The rest of the talent was local. I can't imagine there weren't a lot of guys my age and type in Kansas City, but sometimes it's a status thing for them to be able to say oh. we brought in a comic actor from Chicago for this bit.

#### AU: How long did the whole process to create the commercial take?

**BDR:** The process took a lot longer than they expected. If memory serves correctly, we spent three days on the set doing absolutely nothing while they tried to coordinate the special effects to work properly

> AU: What were your feelings and thoughts creating the commercial? Thoughts about it now?

**BDR:** It was very exciting for me at the time because it was my first big commercial. I was happy it was for a brand that was well-known, but nobody expected this to be a commercial that would just linger on in

cultural awareness for decades.

AU: What are you doing now? Has creating this iconic Blockbuster Video commercial impacted your career in any way?

BDR: Yes, I'm happy to see it still having a life of its own even though of course I don't make any money often. In itself, no, it hasn't really impacted

> my career. Just a nice little piece of trivia

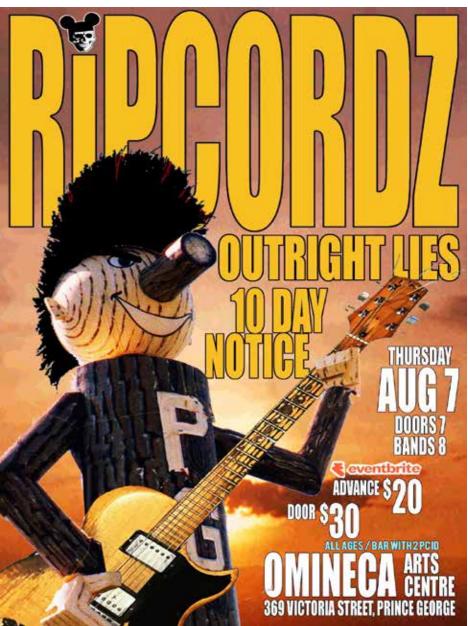
#### AU: Anything else you'd like to add?

BDR: I still do commercials, but my focus is primarily on film. Two movies I'm in recently started streaming on Tubi and another on Amazon Prime. One of them is Puppet Master: Doktor Death..

You can keep up with Bill D. Russell on his Instagram and IMDB page! And if you want to make it a Blockbuster night, fast forward to our VHS release of THE LAST BLOCKBUSTER, available now while VHSupplies last!

lunchmeatvhs.com





# When Def Leppard's *Hysteria* Becomes A Comic...

#### Release Date: July 29, 2025 By Ed Sum

The next band to jump on the comic book bandwagon is Def Leppard! Whether that's good or bad depends on whether readers like me are ready for a story about other characters rather than the band featuring Joe Elliott, Rick Savage, Phil Collen (who wrote this story), and Vivian Campbell. Although they do not have stage personalities like KISS, what's offered with Issue #0 on Free Comic Book Day is more of a prologue, with no sign of the band in sight.

The victims in the opening pages reminded me of Ritchie Valens and his tragic death. Although this musician never bought a cursed guitar or continued playing as that plane crashed, the similarities in appearance could not go unnoticed. The tale then jumps forward a few years and introduces Foz.

Although this woman thinks nothing of it, to play this instrument may well mean good things. This six-string calls to her, success will not be automatic. I suspect this instrument of the devil is like James Dean's Porsche 550 Spyder: whoever comes to possess it is fated to die! As for whether Phil and co-writer Eliot Rahal had these ideas in mind, I guess not. Not even artist Alex Schlitz is thinking of it, otherwise I'd see dents on the instrument.

When Foz leads the band Darkside, I suspect things won't go well in the long run! Just how heavy metal or hysteric this tale gets has me curious. I also doubt *Hysteria* means anything more than letting readers know the comic book is going to borrow from a few songs. I doubt tracks like "Women" and "Pour Some Sugar On Me" are going to translate over at all.

As long as the horror elements come from the



Cot all

right places, then all is good. When it forgets some classical roots, including that of Percy Bysshe Shelley, who put his soul into such an instrument when professing his love for Mary, even I want to know! This poet died soon after! Not that many cursed instruments exist. If there should really be one put on display and behind a protective glass case, that should be Robert Johnson's guitar! I'm willing to bet the devil took that instrument when the two met at the crossroads, and re-tuned it. Afterwards, the Hellhounds can hear it a mile away.

What *Hysteria* needs is just that motif, and I'd be "tremblin' on the tree" too.

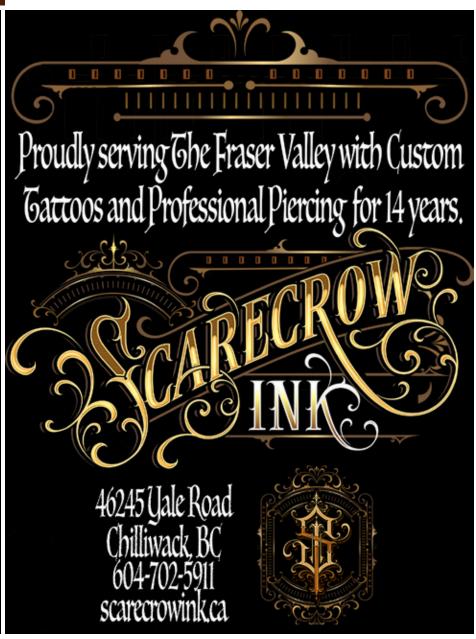
# Love U Forever - Thank You



# Murphy Mason - 1990-2025

We lost someone who was a friend to all. If it was as host of Karaoke nights, Quiz Shoe nights, a purveyor of Tiki drink pop-up nights, weirdo movie nights, Murph will always be with us when we want to get creative and brainstorm. She was a leader that showed everyone what was good in all of us, as well as what fun we could get into on a Sunday or Tuesday night. We will always think of you when anything Nicholas Cage or Watchmen related crosses our path.

Love U Forever, Thank You.



# Absolute Live Reviews

Abbath, Scalding, Ruinous Powe March 24, The Rickshaw Theatre, Vancouver BC Presented by The Invisible Orange



The Doom Occulta, Back to the Raven Realms Tour from Abbath was everything fans would have wanted (and more) from the man who has been at the forefront of black metal since his days in Immortal.

Two-man blackened thrash band Ruinous Powe opened up the show with a devastating and blistering assault of pure black thrash that was the perfect teaser for what was to come throughout the night. The band took full opportunity to show why they are not to be underestimated and why Covenant touts them as a band not to be missed" within the underground After their face melting set, they were followed up by a performance of brutality from the up-and-comionslaught known collectively as Scalding.

Scalding burst onto the scene in 2022

looked back! The music they played on this night was perfect for fans who still wanted something brutal and hate filled but also had enough groove to really get a good headbang in before the headliner.

Abbath then made his presence felt through a perfectly executed set filled with nothing but Immortal covers and raw passion for the craft. All the songs you think would be on an Immortal set were played including the backbone songs like "Mountains of Might", "One by One", and "Damned in Black". These guys absolutely tore through their set and the crowd never seemed to lose any energy at all! If you have the opportunity to see him ur then do it. Abbath is undoubtedly at the top of his game right now.

- Luke B. (IG @ancient\_necromancer)

Photo by Brandynn Leigh Photography

Amyl and the Sniffers, Sheer Mag May 15. The Rooftop at Pier 17. New York City



Amyl and the Sniffers didn't just play New York- they tore through it like a riot. Fresh off a blazing performance on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, the Melbourne punks hit Pier 17 with the subtlety of a wrecking ball. With the Brooklyn Bridge in the distance and the Manhattan skyline glowing, the open-air venue was the perfect setting for a storm.

Amyl and the Sniffers launched into a set that felt more like a siege than a concert. Fan favourites like "Control". "Guided by Angels" and "Chewing Gum" collided with brutal new material from Cartoon Darkness. The band sounded tougher, faster and meaner than ever- tight as a clenched fist and twice as dangerous

Amy Taylor is still one of punk's most compelling

frontwomen- equal parts menace and charisma. Think Poly Styrene's chaos crossed with Kathleen Hanna's Riot Grrrl fire, filtered through her own feral, magnetic energy. She didn't just perform- she provoked, pushed

The band behind her was a machine. Guitarist Dec Martens spat riffs like shrapnel, while bassist Gus Romer and drummer Bryce Wilson drove everything forward at breakneck speed. It was wall-to-wall sound and sweat. The encore, "Big Dreams" and "GFY", felt like a final blow to a demolished crowd.

Opening the night, Sheer Mag delivered a powerful set full of gritty hooks and no-nonsense swagger. They didn't waste time on showmanship-they just hit hard and left scorch marks.

This wasn't a show- it was a statement. Amyl and the Sniffers aren't just waving the punk flag. They've set it

- Jean-François Gosselin

#### Gatorfest 2: 2 Fest 2 Gator 2025



Gatorfest 2: 2 Fest 2 Gator shook up Dickens Pub in Calgary, Alberta May Long Weekend. The second annual festival comprised 28 musical acts; day one featured eight electronic artists and days two and three featured face-melting punk and metal bands with a break for burlesque acts featuring the sensational girls of Hazardous Material between every three sets. Gatorfest had something for everyone from the groovy musical stylings of Buns to TikTok sensations Opal In Sky.

During all three days, event creator (and vocalist for headlining band Our Last Crusade) Adrian could be seen working diligently on all parts of the festival to make sure everything ran to perfection. This man did not sit still for three days. On top of running around like a madman, Our Last Crusade headlined the second night: performing an earth-shattering set composed of twelve songs and those boys gave it their all. Our Last Crusades set went so hard it could get people who aren't even fans of the genre moving. Once they unleashed their fleet of inflatable "gators", all hell broke loose in the pit; creating hilarious chaos as crowd members lovingly beat each other with the inflatables.

All three days had a fantastic collection of band merch consuming the entire back room of Dickens where you could grab hats, shirts, lighters, and more from your favourite bands. The third day featured bands such as A Mile West and Black Pestilence. Headliners Opal In Sky closed the weekend with a killer set that drew everyone to the stage to see the brothers perform. The infectiously energetic set was the cherry on top of this wicked festival.

- Ary Vogelaa

#### Leprous, Wheel April 25, The Palace, Calgary AB



MRG presented a night of prog metal featuring Norway's Leprous and special guests Wheel, from Helsinki, Finland, with around 500 fans piling into the Palace.

I first became aware of Leprous due to their association with Ihsahn after seeing him in Tokyo a number of years ago. This band that he used as his backing band I found, while not as aggressive as Ihsahn, were just as dynamic in their songwriting and were worth exploring

Leprous has come through North America before, and

like any good story of success, previously in Calgary they played a much smaller venue and as their legend has grown, so has the audience and the venue, leading them to the Palace on this night. While 500 seems like a hefty amount, it was not a sold-out show, compared to others at the same place and it could be attributed to Leprous still being very much a cult band– much like prog contemporaries Devin Townsend– those who like Leprous love Leprous. Those who don't love Leprous probably haven't heard Leprous.

Which brings us to the show. What was to love? Wheel rolled out on stage with a Chaosphere-esque image of their album *Charismatic Leaders* on the screen behind them. They weren't as chaotic as Meshuggah, thoughmore Tool-like in their approach, so let's just call it a controlled-Chaosphere.

Leprous, as far as their stage show was concerned, kept it simple with the screens, which bands seem to always go overboard with these days. With the *Melodies of* Atonement album image behind them, they went into a 90-minute set featuring several cuts from the new album with a few trimmings from their past, including an audience choice cut, "Forced Entry" from 2011's *Bilate* On stage, the band sometimes resembled Dillinger Escape Plan in their physicality if DEP were more in tune with their melodic side. Vocalist Einar Solberg was suffering from a cold, which was notably irritating him during the show, though he managed to pull it off, with fans leaving the Palace feeling as high as the notes he

#### Machine Head, In Flames, Lacuna Coil, Unearth May 7, Grey Eagle Resort and Casino, Calgary AB Presented by Live Nation







chine Head keeps proving to be an interesting band as far as how metalheads actually view them. Like any band with a few decades behind them, there have been artistic highs and lows, which build discourse and something intangible, character. Add In Flames, Lacuna Coil and Unearth to the bill and we have a lineup resembling a 2004 Ozzfest second stage billing of bands.

Unearth have always been a solid opener who genuinely get crowds warmed up via metalcore that is potent enough to influence even the most anti-karate-in-thepit headbanger to throw down for 25 minutes. The fans came early for their set and thus the circle pits commenced early and would only get bigger as the

Lacuna Coil brought a sincerely enthusiastic energy to their set—they looked as if they were genuinely happy to be performing their music. It makes sense, as their sound is more or less uniquely their own, and they should be happy with what they've created.

In Flames are another act that are uniquely them and had a lot of fans connected from the start, starting their show with "Cloud Connected." This night, the band brought sarcastic humour aimed at the audience, who were very enthusiastic, but never loud enough when

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the names of albums the upcoming song was from was

It's ironic that the band is called Machine Head as the grit and emotion that makes up their discography is all-too-human. For this run, tried and true classics like "Davidian" and "Ten Ton Hammer" mingled respectably enough with songs from the new release, *Unatoned*—"Bonescraper" and "Outsider".

When Machine Head rolled through last year, a few young kids sat on their father's shoulders. This time, I swear those same kids were now crowd-surfing and circle pitting– proof that Machine "Fucking" Head is entertainment the whole family can enjoy. Next time they come through those kids might be the openers...

- Rvan Dver

Mayhem, Mortiis, Imperial Triumphant, New Skeletal Faces

April 6, The Rickshaw Theatre, Vancouver BC
Presented by Decibel Magazine & The Invisible
Orange





One for the books yet again! New Skeletal Faces opened up the show with a strong set that really got the crowd going and in the mood for the high energy night upon us. I hadn't heard of this band until the show and they definitely did not disappoint. Their blend of rock and roll and gothic-like music was enhanced by their aesthetic that could almost be considered a more darker and evil eighties hairband.

Next up were Imperial Triumphant, and although their music isn't really for me personally, they put on a very good show that seems to gain more and more of a following every time they come through The Rickshaw Theatre in Vancouver. For me, the band's slower and more doomy parts are my favourite along with their very unique aesthetic of golden masks, dark robes, and lights

Mortiis was definitely an unexpected treat as I never thought I would be able to see him perform live. None of us in the crowd were sure whether or not we were going to get his dungeon synth side or his industrial side but once on stage he played an entire set of dungeon synth; tastefully done considering the company he had on this line up. The performance was very solid by him and was complemented by the live drums; the music just seemed to engulf you and bring you into a whole other world.

Finally, the moment we were all eagerly waiting for came. The mighty Mayhem played an absolutely devastating set which brought on a very big emotional reaction from the crowd as the video backdrop played clips, photos, and animations that chronicled the complicated history of the band and its members. This was probably the strongest performance by Mayhem I have seen thus far.

- Luke B. (IG @ancient\_necromancer)

Photo by Emberlit Ethos Photography

#### Ministry, My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult, Die Krupps May 24, The Palace Theatre, Calgary AB



All of the goths who first got into Ministry in the '80s but disliked their shift in style with albums like *Psalm 69* came out of hiding for the Squirrely Years tour, which exclusively featured tracks from the first number of years of Ministry's career, focusing on the albums *With* 





Sympathy and Twitch.

It's a tour Ministry fans thought would never happen, as Al Jourgensen intentionally distanced himself from the material for years. With his change in sentiment over these albums, we get what could be called a treat, as if we were living in an alternative universe: a muscled-up and extravagant synth pop/goth/industrial Ministry.

Jourgensen's choice for openers was on point—Die Krupps, the legendary German industrial band wowed the crowd with their first appearance in the city. Some fans had gone specifically for the band, with their 30-minute set, featuring the iron-clad "Metal Machine Music" ending seemingly as it was just getting going. The band seemed pleased with the reception, so if it is up to Die Krupps, they'll be back.

Between bands, the street outside the Palace looked like a foggy day in London as the goths dragged on their cigarettes. Back inside, My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult brought fever dream, science fiction film fetish club vibes to the Palace dance floor, which was now swelling with dancers.

In sparkly tuxedos, Ministry, accompanied by latex catsuit wearing backup singers/dancers, launched into "Work for Love" off of *With Sympathy*. This material, with live guitars and the trippy visuals on the screens, captivated the crowd from the get-go. The energy was turned up a notch for the *Twitch* material, with "Over the Shoulder" sounding astonishing, making one wonder why it was ignored for so long. The set was compact, with Al giving just as much material as necessary, and after the dance party of "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?", you also can't help but wonder if this is really it for the material, and maybe for Ministry.

- Ryan Dyei

#### East Town Get Down, International Music & Food Festival

# May 24, 17 Ave SE, Calgary AB Which might be Calgary's best kept secret, East Town Get

down features over 400 artists spread over 10 venues in one night. Adding to the fun is that most of the venues are only resturaunts, which never see live music and offer \$5 snacking plates which pairs nice with the cold beers. Rolling into my third straight East Town Get Down fest, started things off at the Paradise Lanes Bowling Alley with Any Which Way, featuring some classic punk stylings for the many pre-teens who were here for the early set times, brought in by their classic punk parents who wanted to teach them how it's done. Needed some food so took off halfway thru and hit up Massawa Bar for their Etritean cusine and caught the last two songs by the Non Ultras.

Still hungry I headed to Saigon Chef for some pork vermicelli/spring rolls while I killed time before hitting Kokonut Kove for the New Orelans drenched muddy stylings of *Jackson and the Janks*, and taking on a plate of the Kove's chicken fingers.

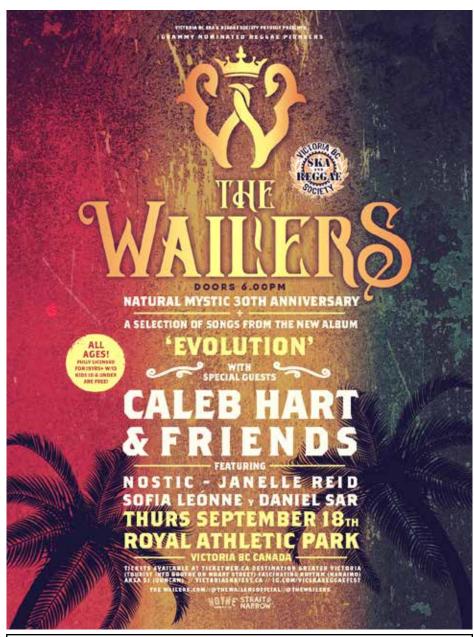
Julius Sumner Miller led me back to the bowling alley for half of their classic punk set, which then I headed back as east as I could go and found *Kue Varo and the Only Hopes* where they showed off a slightly different sound from usual with the *Only Hopes* added into the mix.

ETGD came to a close for me at the Pacific Hut, for some filipino cuisine along with an energetic set from Calgary's *Stucco* and last issue's Vancouver Vengeance profiled noise rock punk band, *Piss* who were definatly worthy of headling status.

Overall a great night, and with so much going on on a very hot late spring night it was good to hit each of the venues quickly before moving onto the next. Make sure you check it out next year!

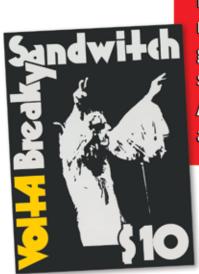
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- Chadsolute



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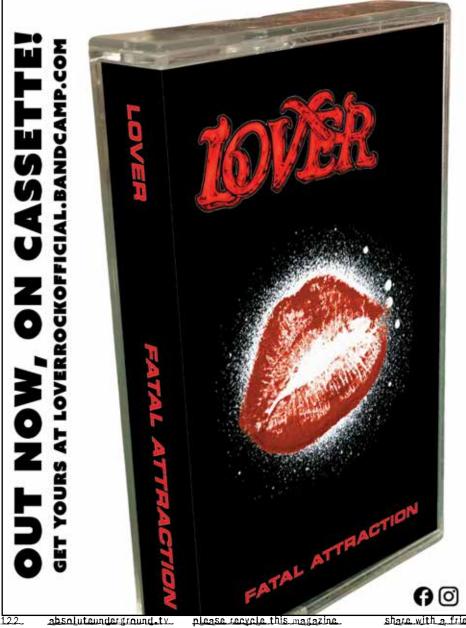


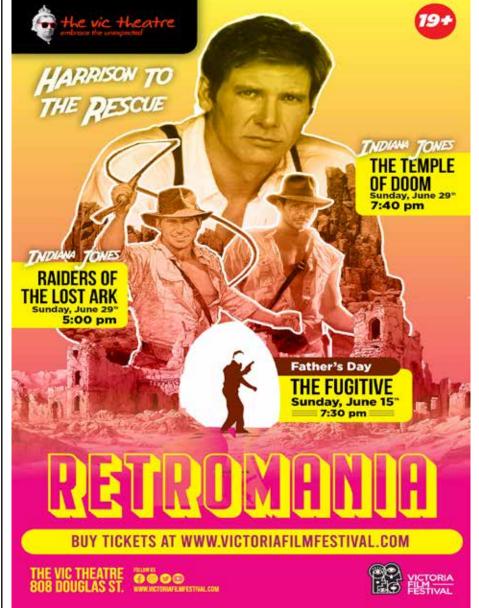
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#### Maryland Deathfest 2025: A Celebration of Extremes

After an unforgettable experience in 2024, I had to go back to Maryland Deathfest and have more of its signature mix of chaos, camaraderie, and crushing soundscapes. But now, instead of a chronological log, I want to describe the experience by the different themes lived.

#### Nostalgia Hits Hard

In a nod to the deep roots of the scene and a gift to longtime fans there were a good number of Special Sets from classic bands performing classic albums: Incantation performing Onward To Golgotha, Obituary with Cause Of Death, Paradise Lost brought Draconian Times. Cynic had Focus, Triptycon performed a Celtic Frost

set, Krisiun had Conquerors Of Armageddon, Devourment with Molesting The Decapitated, and Cenotaph with The Gloomy Reflection Of Our

My Highlights: Cynic even though I have seen them perform Focus a number of times before, somehow this was emotional without the Seans, but playing homage to them all the time.

#### **Timeless Representation**

In addition to the aforementioned classic bands, several classics such as Pentagram, Benediction, Asphyx, Razor, General Surgery, Sigh performed along more recent talent

of underground bands that are making a name such as Cruciamentum, Dragged Into Sunlight,

Wormrot, Caustic Wound. Corpus Offal, Black Curse, and Hulder.

At the same time the supposedly more underground bands like Oxygen Destroyer, Degraved and Warp Chamber had huge crowds that overpassed the capacity of what was the "small" stage. My Highlights: Asphyx and Sigh from the classics, as

well as Cruciamentum and Corpus Offal from the strong underground.

#### **Sonic Representation**

Bands like Devourment, General Surgery, Gorgasm, and Blood Spore reminded

everyone why brutal and slam hit hard. Coke



very present with Razor, Hirax, Atrophy, Excel, Tankard. And the dark emotions of Black Metal were delivered by a wide variety of bands such as: Black Curse, Arizmenda, Hulder, Cult Of Fire, Kampfar and more.

My Highlights: Devourment, 324, Skepticism, Hirax, Arizmenda, Black Curse.

#### **Global Representation**

A show of the international force of extreme metal is obvious when we have acts from different continents, such as 324 from Japan, Wormrot from Singapore, Witchtrap from Colombia, Asphyx from The Netherlands, Cenotaph from Mexico, Kampfar from Norway, Tankard from Germany, Gutalax and Cult Of Fire from Czechia, Krisiun from Brazil, multiple bands from Sweden and the UK, and the Canadian representation of Razor and Saccage.

My highlights: Wormrot, Cenotaph, Gutalax, Saccage really made us realize what a large but tight global community we are.

#### **Highlight Moments**

Friday's unexpected power outage added unpredictability, cutting sets like Ruin Lust and Negative Plane short and delaying others — but



the crowd rolled with it. Plenty of crowsurfing during all the slamming sets, but it was guite

surprising to see so much of that during Unto Others set. Cult of Fire brought a set that made everyone think that the incense and fruit altars were spiked with psychedelics. Gutalax had the most insane moshpit, full with toilet paper, poop and toilet seat floaties, a few thrash cans that were used for crowdsurfing; the madness was neverending. Finally, despite having gear issues Wormrot turned those problems into part of their set, giving more of that raw DIY energy for a perfect festival finale.

#### The Reflection

Whether it was toilet seats flying during Gutalax, the passionate Mexican crowd for Cenotaph, the intense emotions with Cult Of Fire, Cynic, Skepticism or the constant stagediving through Devourment, Unto Others or Wormrot,

the audience helped make MDF what it is: a

convergence of hard core fans that celebrate extreme music for the emotions and life that it gives back and forth in an endless positive reinforcing loop between fans and artist, which in the end, are all one and the same.

- Mayo from The Invisible Orange

deathfests.com theinvisibleorange.com







#### TO THE HILT

#### **Interview with Poet ARBORUS**

#### **By Aeryn Shrapnel**

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

ARBORUS: I'm ARBORUS, a visual artist and thrash metal poet. I worked in the commercial arts as a designer and director for 25 years, before incubating in my headbanger chrysalis and levelling up my work from 85- to what is now uncommercial, 100% thrash metal art and literature.

#### AU: Tell us about your book TO THE HILT. What can readers expect from

**ARBORUS:** TO THE HILT is a punishing assessment of our existence, through the enduring motifs of thrash, of which some obvious ones are war; social justice; and religion Although— or perhaps because— poetry needs to be digested in smaller chunks, as oppose to prose's ability to be read for hours, TO THE HILT is formatted in a way that I hope readers will find engaging beyond the written word. From

layout, to imagery, to the finishing and its unusual appearance, it's designed to captivate as an object, not just as a book

#### AU: What is thrash metal poetry? What sets it apart from other kinds of poetry?

ARBORUS: A lot of poetry is dark, but these poems really celebrate a dimension of preposterousness. The themes and imagery relevant to thrash are very stirring, but they largely exist in their own universe. To set out these ideas in a forum more commonly associated with a general audience, or even a gentler audience, only serves to underscore the severity of their ideas. To be sure, violence and, increasingly, ultraviolence is present in a lot of movies. To then transfer that level of disregard, contempt and celebration of absurdity to poetry is perhaps not unique, but uncommon. Indeed, to provide a succinct answer, a book trailer was created specifically to address the ancient riddle "what is thrash metal poetry," which you will find at ThrashMetal.ca.

## AU: What gave you the idea to put this book

ARBORUS: It wasn't a conscious effort for the first six months. The first piece I wrote, "HUNT", I wrote without purpose; I just needed to describe what it was like living with chronic pain, but I didn't have an objective or a destination for it. I didn't even set out to write a poem, I just began writing. But it eventually got to a point where I couldn't stop writing and, in the end, I selected 100 of these

#### thoughts and committed them to a book. AU: Does TO THE HILT have an overarching message?

**ARBORUS:** Death comes for us all—just pray that it's swift. I loathe greed and selfishness, but those concepts, as well as revenge, hatred and the Underworld all feature prominently because they're fundamental elements of thrash. Really, there's

no escape because by the end of almost all these stanzas, someone's gonna die. AU: What inspired you most while writing it? ARBORUS: When I work, I tend to stay away from

output in the same genre to avoid unconscious

influence. If I'm drawing, for example, my inspiration comes from literature. Because I was writing poetry, I mostly operated in a poetic vacuum, only referencing work from an academic standpoint. Instead, I spent my time listening to album after pummelling thrash album (where to even begin?) and poring over paintings from the past four hundred years depicting human sacrifice; or analyzing schematics for torture

devices. So many of these concepts are baffling in the first place, but the lengths people went to see them realized is... revealing.

#### AU: Did you find yourself listening to anything in particular during the creation process?

**ARBORUS:** I was surprised by this to be honest. I always prefer to have music playing, and I listen to a lot of metal generally. But I calculated that 72.222% of all my waking hours for nearly three

years were spent listening only to metal, and mainly thrash. Just a tiny fraction of my time was spent listening to anything else. I suppose it's analogous to an actor getting into—or stayingin character like the actors in Toe Cutter's gang terrorizing town residents even when they weren't shooting. For the last three months alone, I had FRACTURE's Chaos Alchemy on a near-constant loop. Curiously, I find myself almost incapable of shaking it at this point. Piano and harp, I usually listen to when I need to cool off. Delta blues I play when things in life aren't going well. And Rosalie Cunningham/Purson's occult rock has been a saviour in an attempt to get back to reality. But although I've always been a thrash metal headbanger, I now find I've almost become this gonzo caricature I embody when reading for an audience. Where does my old self end and ARBORUS begin?

#### AU: Where can people find your book?

ARBORUS: I printed this book myself. Poetry isn't a money-maker, and thrash metal poetry is an even tougher sell for publishers. It can be purchased at *ThrashMetal.ca*, which also lists my speaking events where the book can be purchased (check the site to see what a thrash metal poetry reading looks like). If bookshops and record stores HAVE THE GUTS to stock this. you can rest assured, they will be listed with trumpeting fanfare on *ThrashMetal.ca*.

#### AU: Is there anything else you'd like to mention or promote? Any other upcoming projects?

ARBORUS: What turned out to be TO THE HILT, the book, initially began as a series of twelve illustrations which were really just excoriations of public maladies; observations of the revolting, and so forth. I have now returned to these drawings which will form the majority of the TO THE HILT series. However, it also looks increasingly likely that some poems from the book will be reimagined as complete thrash songs. As with the rest, all such information will be posted on the site. Updated items with a faster turnaround like prints, postcards and stickers are also

available on the site

#### AU: Any words of advice for aspiring writers?

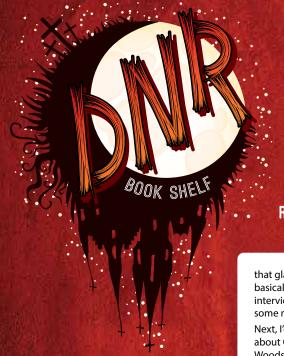
ARBORUS: I can't speak to getting rich, but you are wasting your time if you write for any audience other than yourself. Sincerity will always come through, and although not all work appeals to all readers, if your writing is the honest embodiment of what you want to read, regardless of content, there is someone out there who will flip over it.

#### AU: Where can people find you online?

ARBORUS: For better or worse, I am not, and have never been on social media, which I acknowledge can be a hinderance. But I only release work when it's finalized and these projects span months or longer. That said, I happen to know that Gary Holt posts a picture of a cat every Saturday, so I suppose I needn't focus solely on promoting my cadavers-rotting-under-a-withering-desert-sun collection of writings.

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**LOLLAPALOOZA: THE UNCENSORED** 

STORY OF ALTER-



**NATIVE ROCK'S** WILDEST FESTIVAL Richard Bienstock, Tom Beaujour St. Martin's Press March 25, 2025 Sometimes, a festival is a must-see event. As music and culture shifts throughout

the years, the right festival can represent a shift in musical and cultural ideals. The stars align, the bands are booked, and the people come. The event is remembered as a cultural landmark and thus influences music history. In 1991, Perry Farrell curated what would be

the first real coming out party for the cultural shift of the '90s- the rise of what would be known as alternative rock. Farrell created the festival as a way of saying goodbye to his band, Jane's Addiction, but with it, Lollapalooza presented this new wave of artists which was as integral to shifting taste from the '80s to '90s as Nirvana's Nevermind, which came out after the inaugural festival had finished its dates.

The first (travelling) festival set the stage for the varied lineups which would follow and was important in bringing together artists who you would never see together side by side on a bill otherwise: Jane's Addiction, Ice-T featuring Body Count, Nine Inch Nails, The Butthole Surfers, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Living Colour, Rollins Band, Fishbone, Violent Femmes. Authenticity and inclusivity seemed to be the theme of this festival, and as the first follow-up years rolled on, the formula didn't stray so much from what was set out in the first.

That brings us to the book, which tells the history of Lollapalooza mainly via interviews with the organizers and the artists. The interview sections are edited well, telling a story chronologically via several viewpoints. The book doesn't lie about being uncensored, revealing a lot of juicy bits of Lollapalooza lore that might have otherwise been forgotten in time. Some of these accounts will already seem familiar, though, due to the documentary Lolla coming out in close proximity to this book.

If the documentary had not come out, a lot of this stuff would seem a lot more newsworthy, though there is a lot of new information in here, which makes the book essential for anyone who lived through it or has an interest in early '90s alternative music. The interview omissions weren't really

that glaring, as anyone who is still alive was basically contacted to contribute, and the interviewees were not shy about slinging

Next, I'd like to see something similar put out about Ozzfest, as similarly to Lollapalooza or Woodstock, some band and their success or legacy is tied to that festival, and the stories about it would be suited well in a book form such as this. Ryan Dyer

#### **STRANGE PICTURES**



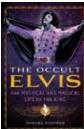
Uketsu. Jim Rion (Translator) HarperVia January 14, 2025 Two college students find a long-dormant blog that is hiding a disturbing secret message. A young boy navigates the knowledge that his

family is more complicated than he knew. A newspaper employee goes to extreme lengths to understand what happened to a former mentor. A traumatized child searches for her place in the world as she grows up and tries to leave her past behind. These four interlocking stories make up the puzzle at the centre of Strange Pictures.

Before hearing some vague buzz about this much-anticipated English-language translation, I had never been aware of the name "Uketsu," nor the anonymous online personality that goes along with it. The nationally best-selling Japanese author had already gained quite the following prior to landing his publishing deal due to his eerie online videos, in which he is always hidden behind an unadorned white mask. Though Strange Pictures is his second novel, it was the first translated and released to the Englishspeaking market, to be followed by his first novel Strange Houses this month.

This narrative leans a little more mystery than horror, yet the format in which it is presented manages to make it feel simultaneously more sinister and more fun—how's that for a winning combination? While it was far from a masterpiece of suspense, it was a thoroughly enjoyable read and I am looking forward to Uketsu's next strange volume.

#### THE OCCULT ELVIS: THE MYSTICAL



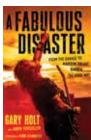
**AND MAGICAL LIFE** OF THE KING **Miguel Conner Destiny Books** April 8, 2025 This has to be the most original concept I've heard for a book in a very long time. However, while the idea and title

may be wild, it's not as crazy an idea as you might think at first glance.

Elvis was a seeker of the truth, so he knew there had to be more to life than the allengulfing cloud of materialism that smothers us. Thus, Elvis studied many significant 19th and 20th Century occultists such as Madame Blavatsky and Manly Hall. Elvis was a devotee of Indian yogi Paramahansa Yogananda. As to some of the more far-out ideas in The Occult Elvis, such as Elvis being an astral traveler or having UFO encounters, I leave it up to the reader to decide on their own truth. Which is as it should be.

What I will say in conclusion is this... this is an extremely well-written, well-researched, and above all, sincere book. Once you have started reading The Occult Elvis it is very hard to put down. Also, in the horrible reality we now find ourselves 'living' in, a world of dictators, bullies, wars and worse, isn't it a lovely idea that there is a positive, magical element to Steve Earles

#### A FABULOUS DISASTER: FROM



THE GARAGE TO **MADISON SQUARE** GARDEN, THE HARD WAY **Gary Holt,** Adem Tepedelen Da Capo April 1, 2025 Holt has been my favorite "metal dude"

for as long as I can

remember. A guy up there smiling while throwing down, never trying to put on some image or facade, one just knows he's as true blue as they come. This book was really hard to put down and I thoroughly enjoyed all three of the sections.

After a nice foreword by childhood friend Kirk Hammett, we get into Part 1, which covers 1964-1992. We step inside Holt's family and adolescent life and grow alongside him in San Pablo California, which also happens to be almost a complete origin story of the Bay Area thrash metal scene. Certainly seeing how and why he is considered one of the patriarchs of the scene. You could clearly make a complex social network visualization chart from all the names that come and go throughout. All intertwined, all connected. There is so much information in these formative years that I'm certain any metal fan would absolutely love to read it.

Gary is nothing but himself through the whole thing and you can't help but connect to his brutal honesty and self-reflection. He doesn't hold anything back from his drug use to his wins and his losses. He lets it all hang out with humour and authenticity.

Part 2 covers 1993-2002, which really gets into the depths of always being the underdogs, the band's dynamics, touring or lack thereof,

the drug use, becoming family men, and the recurring theme of how they could never just get up and ahead. "As the reigning kings of misadventure, this tour wouldn't have been complete without the kind of calamity that seems too far-fetched to believe". Mismanagement, wrong timing, drugs, and day jobs, it's all there, brutally honest and sincerely reflected upon by Holt. I can imagine that this book was very cathartic for the man to write, and how he remembered it all through it, I'll never know!

Part 3 covers 2003 to the present day. We see the band finally gain some momentum with Rob Dukes, as well as Gary's career, along with the invite to fill in for Jeff Hanneman (RIP) in Slayer, which ends up being a relentless touring schedule and turning into a fulltime gig after Jeff's passing. The happiness in his new marriage to Lisa, the loss of his father, the Exodus family, health problems, feeling good in his life and skin, and a lifetime of introspection through his trials and tribulations. One of the most genuine and honest music bios I've ever read by the coolest dude in metal. Highly recommend this one. Demonika

#### THE AUDACITY OF RELEVANCE:



CRITICAL CONVER-SATIONS ON THE **FUTURE OF ARTS** AND CULTURE **Alex Sarian ECW Press** October 1, 2024 Alex Sarian's treatise on bolstering the arts organization to survive

the challenges of this hyper-modern age was full of surprises— not the least of which was the realization that Sarian is the CEO of Calgary's own Arts Commons, a significant detail I had apparently overlooked when deciding on my next read from ECW Press. Very much a citizen of the arts world, Sarian closed out 18 years in New York City to take over the leadership of Canada's third largest performing arts centre and see it through the aftermath of the significant cultural disruption that was COVID-19.

While The Audacity of Relevance was a highly informative read, I felt that the target readership demographic lands somewhere rather above my tax bracket. As neither a CEO, creative director, nor programming coordinator, relatability in certain chapters felt rather low. Nevertheless, the wisdom Alex Sarian imparts, sourced from guidance that has led Arts Commons to a relatively stable presence at a time when so many significant cultural institutions are buckling, can surely be scaled to apply to grassroots and indie arts movements. Though Sarian's words are ultimately hopeful and optimistic, I did find them somewhat lacking in the expected audacity. Laura Phaneuf

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## Trey Helten Grows Up

I was with Ashtrey and a couple of other punks in the park across from my place when the cops rolled up. We watched as they sauntered across the grass towards us, wondering what we'd done to deserve their loving attention. I'm assuming they had nothing better to do, but at least they didn't seem to mind the two-litre bottle of Growers over by the tree. The pigs started with the usual bullshit until one of them squinted curiously at something sticking from Trey's shirt pocket. With a ballpoint pen, he latched onto what was obviously the top of a condom and lifted it up. To his dismay, the rubber contained biological fluid, and a rather large amount of it at that. The cop abruptly dropped the rubber back into Trey's pocket, who explained that he'd had sex with his girlfriend earlier and had decided to keep it as a souvenir. Suddenly, the cops couldn't get out there fast enough. They wanted nothing to do with punk rockers who carried full condoms around in their pockets. Watching the cops leave post haste, Trey said he might start doing that every day.

Ashtrey, however, was much more than someone who would carry his own spooge around. Deeply

creative and talented, the man bounced from one thing to the next, always looking to find his particular niche in life. At one point he wanted to be a tattoo artist, even going as far as to take an apprenticeship at the tattoo shop on Clark Drive where I spent a lot of time. Like a big puppy, Trey was full of energy and enthusiasm but found it difficult to focus on any one thing. That said, he did provide me with some great artwork for my book on the Dayglo Abortions, and later started a band, the Fuck You Pigs, with Dayglo frontman Murray Acton. Like the Neo Nasties before it, the members of the Fuck You Pigs went out of their way to make punk rock nasty again, and Trey pulled out all the stops in his efforts to entertain. I once saw him down a pint of beer and fill it with piss before drinking that too and smashing the empty glass on the overhead monitors at wendythirteen's Astoria Hotel. By then, his addiction was starting to take over, and his time as a punk rock frontman came to an end. Despite all this, my friend was always surprisingly gentle

I still saw Ashtrey around even when he was wired, usually on Commercial Drive near my place. He was homeless and panning to get money for



face, he was a sad sight to behold. I was clean at that point and encouraged him to grow up, but people must get there on their own. Sadly, addicts often die before that happens, and there was nothing I could do but give him a few bucks and hope for the best. Trey made several efforts to get clean but always relapsed. Those were his darkest days.

I'd almost given up hope when I learned that Trey had been clean for almost a year and was volunteering on the Downtown Eastside. He started as a volunteer at the Overdose Prevention Society on Hastings but worked his way up until he was general manager. To say I was overjoyed to see how he'd turned his life around is a major understatement. When I got clean, the only people I really

helped was my family, but Trey was out there kicking ass and saving

Not only did Trey bring hundreds of people back from the dead with timely doses of Narcan, but he visited recovering addicts in the hospital. drove them where they needed to go in his '57 Chevy, and in some cases even sheltered and fed them in his own home. He was here, there, and everywhere, helping everyone like some amazing punk rock angel. It was then that I realized he'd finally found what he was looking for in life. The people who wrote him off as dead changed their

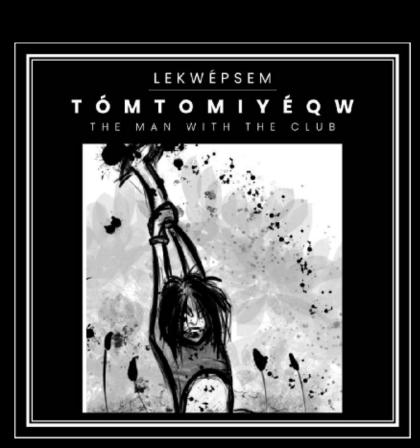
Trey was also good friends with another friend of mine, Mr. Chi Pig of SNFU. When Chi died in 2020 Trey took me on a tour of the safe injection site he ran on the DTES. Everybody there loved him

it was talking to the media, creating beautiful murals with his street artist friend Smokey Devil, or simply telling people to grow up, Trey accomplished more in just a few years than many people do in their entire lives. He'd even turned the shuttered Pub 340 into a shrine for Chi Pig. Sure, Trey slipped a few times on his road to recovery over a five-year span, but the toxicology



report hasn't come out yet— at least not to my knowledge— so it's possible that he died of something unrelated to drugs. Not that it matters. The Downtown Eastside and the rest of the world lost an amazing man when Trey died at age forty-two, and my heart goes out to his pregnant partner Amanda and the other members of his family. An alley in the DTES has officially been named 'Ashtrey Alley' in Trey's honour, partly because he'd successfully petitioned the City to allow spray paint competitions there. Murals in that colourful lane bear his simple catchphrase: GROW UP.

- Chris Walter Photo by Jen Dodds



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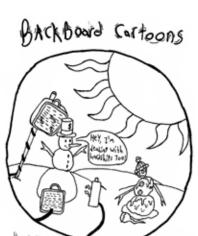




#### Crossword Answers

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# Absolute Movie Reviews

#### Cheech and Chong's Last Movie

Cheech and Chong's Last Movie is perhaps the best documentary made to



everything that's happened in their careers. That's because this road trip movie is the best way to present them fondly recalling their work as they head to some unknown destination, perhaps to smoke their last joint.

Here, this work directed by David Bushell also goes further back in time to consider how each of them got their start as a comedian. It also examines their childhoods and considers the problematic times which still hold today. When parts of the United States of America take issue with immigrants, Tommy left to go live in Vancouver, BC. He wanted to avoid the draft than deal with individuals who didn't like the fact he's of multicultural descent. While there, he met Cheech and the rest is history. Although success wasn't immediate, they kept ongoing.

And like a storybook come to life, the folks they meet along the way give this presentation road markers on when this group is on the path to greater success. And as for why Lou Adler is walking along a desert highway should not be asked. He's a hoot! And he was their agent when the duo were at their prime. And he's not the only one they encounter during this travel montage.

Past interviews only affirmed what I knew when I first saw them. Their act does not differ from those in the past. Whether that's with Laurel and Hardyor Abbott and Costello, their particular performance spoke for the times rather than anything else. The double act is classic and garners the best laughs over solo ones. Some folks may say otherwise after reading about my choice, and I only bring up this bit of observation. Filmmakers sometimes pair comedians with one another for their big-screen debuts instead of an opposite archetype to make the movie successful.

5 Stars out of 5

- Ed Sum

#### Lunatic: The Luna Vachon Story

Folks from my generation will remember the introduction of Luna Vachon to WWF audiences as clear as the sunny day in Las Vegas on Wrestlemania IX- a woman wearing leather chaps with wild blonde hair shaved on the sides- a grimace on her face with veins drawn up the side. She accompanied Shawn

Michaels to the ring and when watching him face off against Tatanka, there was a feeling that Luna would be the one you'd least like to have a brawl with outside of a bar– she played her unhinged character to perfection and brought an element of realism and danger to the idea of what a women's wrestler

Through past shoot interviews, we see that the other side of Vachon was that of a sweet woman with an addiction to wrestling. Kate Kroll's documentary then takes these both sides and shows how art very much imitated life throughout Vachon's time on earth. Like the sinister makeup sporting half of her face, Luna was very much a person divided into two different sides, which is discovered to be due to her bipolar disorder. This is illuminated via interviews with family members

including her son Van Hurd, partner Gangrel and those who shared the ring with her. Much is revealed about Vachon's



personal struggles and at least one serious allegation against a well-known wrestler is included in the documentary– it, according to Kroll, being necessary to keep in the film due to her commitment in respecting Vachon's story.

Vachon seemed to have a supernatural effect on the film, with the interviewees commenting on a storm brewing outside and exclaiming that it was Luna communicating with them. This was confirmed by Kroll, who noted in the Q and A afterwards that more of these incidents happened while she was putting together the documentary.

Vachon's presence in the '90s certainly moved mainstream women's wrestling into a more serious direction, with her battles against the likes of Alundra Blayze, though pivots such as the rise of non-wrestlers like Sable influencing the WWF to take more of a sexualized approach affected Vachon's success, with her never being awarded the women's championship. The WWF/E then could also be seen as bipolar in how it treats women wrestlers, though in this current age a woman's match is treated like a serious attraction, compared to being in small font on posters in the past. This evolution was assisted greatly by Vachon, who is no doubt still watching from the storm clouds above.

- Ryan Dyer

#### The Old Woman With A Knife

Hornclaw (Lee Hye-yeong) was not the assassin she was now until one night, some (American) army guy broke into the restaurant



she worked at and something snapped in her. That first taste of spilled blood turned her worldview around, and she became The Old Woman With The Knife. This tight thriller suggests she is in the business for life. As a lady past her prime, she can get away with nearly anything!

There's a lot of terrific back and forth showing her development as not only an individual who should be a grandmother, but also as a ruthless killer. Lee has that presence which rivals Michelle Yeoh and I'd love to see these two together on a project. As a character who could challenge Georgiou, I'd want to see that match up! Both are like bloodhounds!

However, when she's working with a young man who is also in the business, code-named Bullfight (Kim Sung-cheol), afterwards, the question of who is the better assassin made me wonder if she will be taken down. The relationship they develop seems quite easy, but there are more secrets to be told! I won't spoil the details, but I rather loved the emotions this actor had to go through to convey what the character needed, why he felt betrayed and much more!

When there are features about when mentor and prodigy are at odds, the tale often has wings to see how the feathers get ruffled can sometimes be exciting. I can see why Gu Byeong-mo's novel has its accolades. It's setting up its own version of the John Wick formula. While I'm not sure if this film is a setup for a franchise since it's based on a one-off book, I'd like to see Hornclaw continue as "pest control." Her sense of vigilantism does not differ from Bruce Wayne's, but unlike this DC hero, she's willing to kill!

4 Stars out of 5

- Ed Sum









# Absolute Albums

#### To Shoot Another Day Rosalie Cunningham **Cherry Red Records**

It's always a pleasure to review a Rosalie Cunningham record, for she always sounds like herself. never any other artist, thus there is never the tedious comparisons with other acts you have to do reviewing so many other records.

Rosalie is a truly gifted singer, with a unique beautiful voice, and a talented multi-instrumentalist to boot, so what you hear is uniquely her. Where she most scores is in the songwriting department, her songs are ique, wonderful observations of the world around her and her feelings about it.



Good music should take you on an adventure, to places yo never been before, and with To Shoot Another Day, Rosalie delivers this gift in abundance

- Steve Earles



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# Absolute Graphic Novel Reviews

BATTLE BEAST #1 Written by Robert Kirkman, Art by Ryan Ottley

Robert Kirkmanauthor of Invincible The Walking Dead, and Battle Beast reminds me of Fresh Slice Pizza. If someone tells me they're getting pizza and



. it turns out to be Fresh Slice, I'm disappointed on a fundamental level. But if I'm starving to death at some stranger's place, and there's a Fresh Slice pizza just sitting there for the taking? I'd be kinda glad to see it. It's not what I want— but it's predictable. And when you just need something solid to pass the time or fill a void, it's better than nothing. Better than, say, choking down some nasty peanut butter you already hate smeared on bread that makes you physically uncomfortable.

That's how I feel about the comics Robert Kirkman writes. They're not good, not what I'm afterbut they're generally better than nothing. And there's a lot that's technically worse. On a shitty day, I'm happy to read them.

This book was decent. Epic, bloody, silly, fun— in ways that feel sorta predictable. The art by Ryan Ottley nd colours by Annalisa Leoni are superb. It all makes for a comic that's very readable... I just don't know if it's actually very good.

SUPERGIRI,

#### SUPERGIRL #1 By Sophie Campbell

always been a tricky character to pin down. Is she a teen or in her 20s? Just as strong as or always a step behind? Is she meant to inspire

Supergirl's

young readers, or is she just there for

For me, the last era that really meant anything was back in the '90s, when Peter David had her protoplasmic, shapeshifting and sometimes riding a skateboard.

What brought me back was Sophie Campbell. I've followed Sophie since her beautifully emo WET MOON days, and I'll give anything she touches a look, and in an era of superhero slop, this was a refreshingly straightforward and entertaining read.

This issue is warm, thoughtful, and fun. Campbell brings her signature style to the character, balancing charm and strength without talking down to the reader. There's a bit of queer coding beginning to peek through too— subtle, promising,

It looks great. It reads smooth. It

This isn't exactly my kinda thing, a bit too clean-cut and heroic for m tastes, but if you're looking for a fun ride that's wholesome, heartfelt, and still feels relevant in 2025, this might be the book for you!

#### GODZILLA SKATE OR DIE **Bv Louie Jovce**

I wanted to like this book. On paper, it sounds tailor made for me skate punks mutant lizard kaiju, graffitiinspired art—that's a top-three trifecta of my favourite

things.



But for whatever reason, it just didn't

Maybe the characters skewed a little too young for this old head. Maybe the energy didn't quite translate from panel to pulse. They rode hard, carving pavement and dodging curbs, but even as they jumped their wheels over cracks in the pavement.

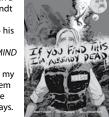
they failed to make the leap off the page and into my heart.

I don't want to come down too harsh— there's creativity here, no doubt. The ideas are playful, and the artwork has its own cool swagger. But if I'm being real with you— and I think we've built that kind of trust by now— I just didn't enjoy it as much as I hoped I would.

It's a frustrating kind of disappointment. Like you're all set for a smooth ride, the sidewalk stretching out like a promise... and then your wheel catches on the one dumb rock in your path. Suddenly, that perfect cruise becomes a tumble, and you're left picking gravel out of your knee, wondering

#### IF YOU FIND THIS I'M ALREADY By Matt Kindt

I've been Matt Kindt fan for years— his earlier series MIND MGMT twisted my brainstem in all the right ways.



This one's another strange and compelling trip: a journalist is embedded with a squad of soldiers stationed on a remote alien world... and naturally everything goes sideways. What follows is a descent into survival horror, soaked in paranoia and

surrounded by a surreal, nightmarish landscape that feels like it wants you dead.

Pages burst with some of the weirdest environments I've seen in comics. The world feels truly alien not just unfamiliar, but unknowable, like it grew in a place where human logic never took root.

Kindt's storytelling style is a curious one. His prose isn't lush or psychedelic like a Grant Morrison or Alan Moore joint, Instead, there's a kind of starkness to it— an almost matter-of-fact delivery of some of the wildest, most reality-warping concepts you'll find in a comic shop.

It's a tight little one-and-done. Won't change your whole worldview, but it'll take you for a hell of a ride while vou're strapped in.

#### AMAZING SPIDER-MAN: MODERN **ERA EPIC COLLECTION VOL. 1** Written by J. Michael Straczynski, Art by John Romita Jr.

I could arqueand I might that this is the last great run of Spider

Before the Disney buyout.

Refore editorial

wiped away the marriage like a chalk

Before the book lost its tether to a genuine human life being lived.

Collected here is the beginning of J. Michael Straczynski's legendary run, a time when *Amazing Spider*-Man remembered how to breathe When it wasn't afraid to be weird, emotional, mythic, personal. JMS gives Peter Parker a sense of weight trying to outrun gravity and grief in

Romita Jr.'s art? Top tier. There's a muscular poetry to his linework here— jagged when it needs to be, soulful when it counts. It might be the best work of his entire career.

This volume also includes the infamous 9/11 issue— a raw, strange piece of history. It teeters between heartfelt and heavy-handed, eulogy and exploitation.

In today's landscape of reboots and editorial resets, this volume feels like the last time Spider-Man really grew up. A modern classic, and a story that deserves to stand shoulde shoulder with the very best of the wall-crawler's long history.

- Hank from Golden Age







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HAZZEP

Ascension Dinchlis D

BLACK FRIDAY

# **SATURDAY**





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# SUNDAY



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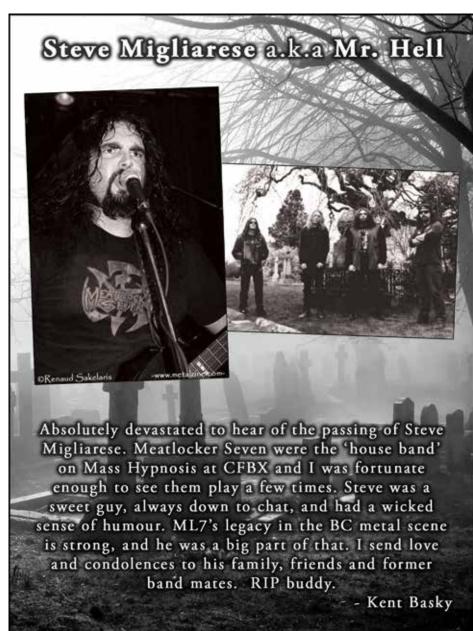
CYBORGOCTOPUS



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Beguiler · Beserker · Cabrakaan · Daniel Martin & the Infamous · Endless Chaos Famous Strangers · Frontal Assault · Lycanthro · Hog Meets Frog · Pharm Pridelands · Reaping Asmodeia · Spectre · Thirteen Goats · Woodhawk











COLIN INSPIRED COUNTLESS OTHER ANARCHO PUNKS TO GO AND FUCK THE SYSTEM. HIS INTENSE LYRICS AND COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE, ANIMAL RIGHTS, AND ANARCHISM INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF FANS AND ACTIVISTS ALIKE.



